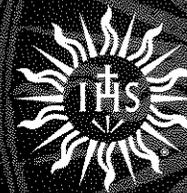


CALLINGS

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT VOCATIONS



JESUITS

SUMMER 2017
VOLUME 18 Nº 2

Alright, Google...Think Jesuit

By Damian Torres-Botello, SJ

I'm sitting at my desk and it's quiet. I work where researchers comb through budgets from the City of Chicago to advocate fiscal responsibility. I'm not one of these people. I'm an event planner. And right now, I'm answering an email, sipping some coffee, and diligently crossing off items from my lengthy to-do list.

Okay, something's happening. My mind is wandering from the tasks at hand. I have a deadline, I cannot be late with it, I must focus. But, this feeling is giving me shortness of breath, sweaty palms – I'm a bit dizzy. Is this a heart attack? I'm having a heart attack!

Nope. No. Wait. There's peace coming over me. And I have an idea – a random idea, but an idea. Let me open a browser. Go to Google. Search, J-E-S-U-I-T.

Archbishop O'Hara High School. That's the high school I went to. It's a Catholic diocesan high school ran by the Christian Brothers in Kansas

City, Missouri. One of those Brothers was Br. Doug. He was a great teacher, but I was not a great student. I had learning disabilities. Still do actually. But in high school, me and studying just did not get along; it was all so difficult to do. Late nights

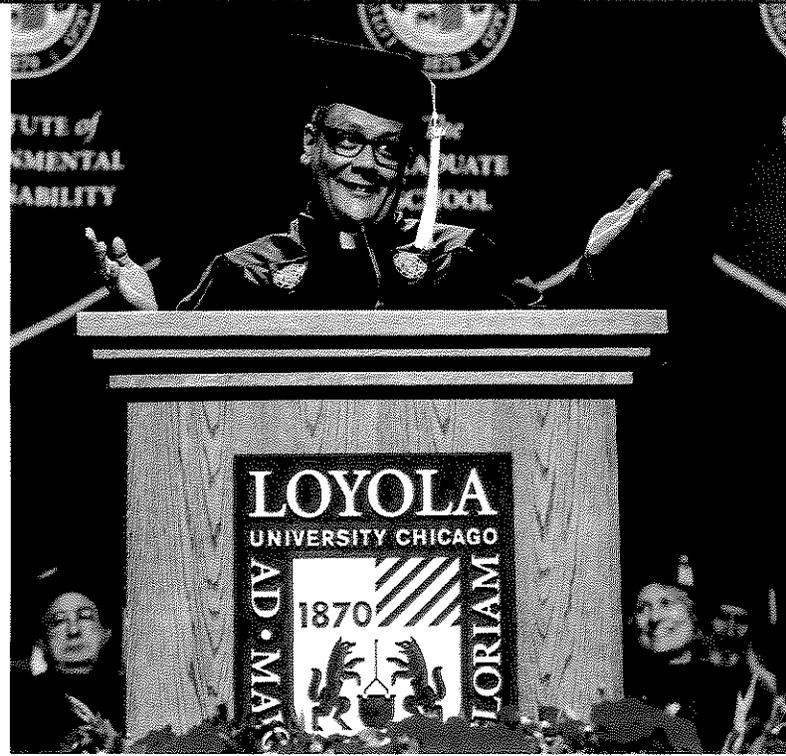
and procrastination, arguments with my parents...school just did not gel with me.

Br. Doug encouraged me to get involved in extracurricular activities. Doing this, he said, would motivate me to work hard in school. And he was right. I had to keep a certain GPA to remain involved, and I wanted to be involved because it was a healthy distraction. And throughout all his counseling, Br. Doug would speak to me about vocations.

The best thing about these conversations were the passes. I could

“A series of moments happened – three to be exact – almost all at once, inviting me back to the Catholic faith.”

(L-R) MARCOS GONZALES, SJ, DAMIAN TORRES-BOTELLO, SJ, MATT IPPEL, SJ, AND RYAN MAK, SJ, AT LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO.



DAMIAN TORRES-BOTELLO, SJ, GIVING THE STUDENT COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS DURING THE GRADUATE SCHOOL GRADUATION AT LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO.

get out of class to talk to Br. Doug. Sure, it would mean a walk outside around campus, or a free snack in the Brother's Residence, but mostly it meant I could skip!

Google is speaking to me very clearly. The first result in my search is this link to ThinkJesuit.org. Let me click on here.

Oooh. Videos! Okay. Let me click on a video. So many videos. Looks like guys talking about being a Jesuit and sports, living the vows, Jesuit life in the novitiate...these guys look young. I've been out of college for some time. Oh, wait – look. Who is this guy? Br. Pat Douglas. He had a life before he became a Jesuit? What?! Hmm. Interesting.

High school happened. Then college. I loved college. But I never really thought about anything priestly or brotherly or holy. I struggled real hard with the Catholic Church. I felt like it was oppressive. Too many rules and caveats. So I left the Church.

A series of moments happened – three to be exact – almost all at once, inviting me back to the Catholic faith. First, one of the parishes in town had an amazing choir, and my friend didn't want to audition alone. Though I resisted I auditioned with her and got in. Being in the choir meant I had to go to church every Sunday, which I initially resented, until I didn't. Second, my grandmother died. She was instrumental in my upbringing and her sickness and eventual → *Damian* ON NEXT PAGE

ON THE WEB

jesuitvocations.org

For videos, stories and news

passing affected me very deeply. All this prompted me to go back to church to pray for her. Then, third, I decided to go to confession.

Right now, I'm trying to look as if I'm working: squinting my eyes at the screen, flipping random pages on my desk, tapping on the keyboard as if I'm typing. There's this page that says "Events." What does that mean, events? Let me click on here and...Oh. Okay, they have a "Come and See." Next weekend. Well, okay. Okay. Okay. You know, this form they want me to fill out, I bet it goes to no one. No one will respond. So, I'll just fill it out really quick and be done with it. They'll never respond, but at least I can't say I didn't try, right?

I had written down a list of all my transgressions on a bar napkin and sticky-notes. It'd been awhile since my last confession. Like, years. I had never once, until this moment, had wanted to do anything remotely resembling confession. But there I was. Kneeling behind a screen. Feeling ashamed. Reading off my sins like a grocery list.

The confessor was a Jesuit and interspersed throughout my reading he'd say, "I cannot forgive that; it's not a sin."

"What? I'm sorry, what?"

"You're telling me non-sins. And even if they were sins," the priest

said, "God would still love you."

I walked out of the Church that day floored. Shocked. I'd been carrying all this bitterness and anger towards God because I thought he felt the same way about me. The truth was, according to this Jesuit, I was wrong. God loves me. I'd never heard that before from the Catholic Church. I suppose one could say this moment was the penultimate moment towards my return to Catholicism.

Remember that form I filled out, thinking no one would respond? Well, someone did. They called me that very evening. And on the other end was a voice quite similar to that Jesuit priest in that confessional all those years ago. There was a "Come and See." He asked if I was interested. I said yes. And I went and I saw, and I began to fall in love with what I learned.

The Jesuit high school in my town, from my perspective, was for highly intelligent, rich white boys. I was a poor brown kid who attended a Catholic high school that offered need-based scholarships. The idea of being a Jesuit seemed out of reach, but after a year of discerning I applied anyway, knowing if it was God's will it would happen. And it did. And all because Br. Doug presented the religious life as a legitimate vocation all those years ago. **✠**

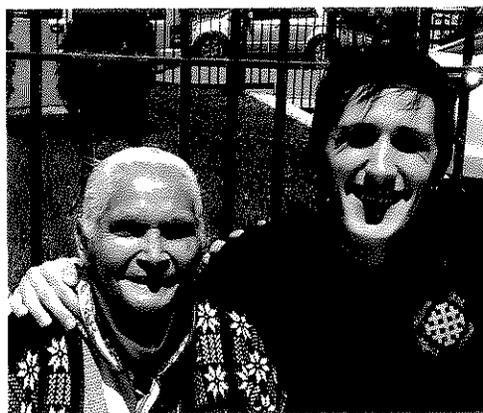
Absurd Questions Lead to Clear Answer

By Alex De Witt, SJ

It's been nine years since I first started thinking about being a Jesuit. I was at St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland, and times were tough. My dad had just lost his job in the 2008 recession, I knew very few people in my class, and my eager desire to make friends was constantly at odds with my shy and introverted personality. I was lonely, doubtful, and scared. But it wasn't too long before God sent some help my way, in the guise of a kind and unassuming Jesuit named Frank Canfield.

Fr. Canfield was a veritable superstar at St. Ignatius, as much as he would cringe to hear it. Every student knew him and felt comfortable seeking his guidance when they needed it, and at the time, I really needed it. Having gathered up the courage one day to interrupt him after school as he was talking to what seemed to be mythically gargantuan seniors in the hallway, I quietly asked if we could talk in his office. Without a moment's hesitation, Fr. Frank ended his conversation and met with me for what would be the first of many heart-to-hearts.

Things started looking up for me after that. I became much more well-adapted to my new environs by the time the second semester began. I made friends, joined clubs and teams, and enjoyed the palpable sense of fraternity that my "famed alma mater" fosters. And as the cloud of my fears shrank, a few questions stood before me in the clarity: What exactly did Fr. Canfield do all day? What made a Jesuit different from the priest at my parish?



ALEX AND MICAELA (BETTER KNOWN AS "MIQUITA") IBARRA AT ST. PROCOPIUS PARISH IN CHICAGO.

Who was St. Ignatius, and why did everyone talk about him so much? Such questions were eventually answered, but one question in particular remained: What if I became a Jesuit? However, that was a ridiculous idea. I had so much planned for my life. So many people watching me, and honestly, being a Jesuit just did not fit into the picture. But despite how strange the idea seemed to me at first, I couldn't help wondering what it would be like to live like Fr. Canfield, to do the work that he did, to help people like he helped me. And as my time at Ignatius passed, I met more Jesuits who had the same effect on me that Fr. Canfield did. Gradually the question lost its absurdity, and I knew that I wanted to be a Jesuit, too.

I was excited by the consolation I felt when this answer settled into my heart, and that consolation has never been matched by anything else. But everyone's discernment journey is different and possesses its own unique challenges designed by God to put that person's resolve to the test. For some men in discernment, answering the question is a lot harder than it was for me. In my case, the hard part came later, after I answered the question, after I submitted my application, and even after I was accepted to the novitiate in November 2015.

Up until I was accepted, I engaged with discernment on entirely hypothetical terms: "If I apply...If I'm accepted...If I do this work or that..." But in January of 2016, my discernment took an entirely different shape as I began a *donné* semester in Chicago. I moved into a rather large Jesuit community of about sixteen men, with ages stretching from 22 to 86 (I was the youngest). The house was right next to downtown and was surrounded by the hustle and bustle of America's third-largest city. During a normal week (except on

Mondays when I took Spanish classes downtown), I worked at St. Procopius in the predominantly Hispanic Pilsen neighborhood.

At the church, there were several service ministries aimed at helping the poor of the community. These primarily consisted of a clothes room and soup kitchen run out of the basement of the rectory. My job was to help

"I couldn't help wondering what it would be like to live like Fr. Canfield, to do the work that he did, to help people like he helped me."

Discovering the Dreams God has for Me

By Christopher Staab, SJ

Throughout my Jesuit formation, I often think about my vocation, seeking to discover what God was up to by giving me a desire to live my life in the Society of Jesus. I sometimes ponder within myself: what was God imagining by leading me to the Society of Jesus? This is also a question that I bring to me now. I continue to wonder: what are the dreams God has for me now in my life? I like to think that the initial call I felt continues to expand, grow, and reveal (to me) great truth and happiness in my daily life.

As a theology student in Brazil, much has remained the same in my vocation: a desire to know the Lord and serve his people. Much though has changed. I have learned to listen more attentively to the people with whom I live and work. They are for me the ones helping me to discover and to deepen my vocation. My Jesuit formation, then through my philosophy studies in Lima, Perú, to my work as a teacher of English and Spanish literature at Cristo Rey High School in Chicago, has taught me to listen for God's voice in the voice of the people.

Here in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, where I now study, my pastoral work takes me to a parish

in a neighborhood called "Jardim Felicidade." This is a very beautiful name, the Garden of Happiness, and this in spite of many social realities that threaten the lives and the happiness of the people. The parish is a place of respite, celebration, and deep prayer.

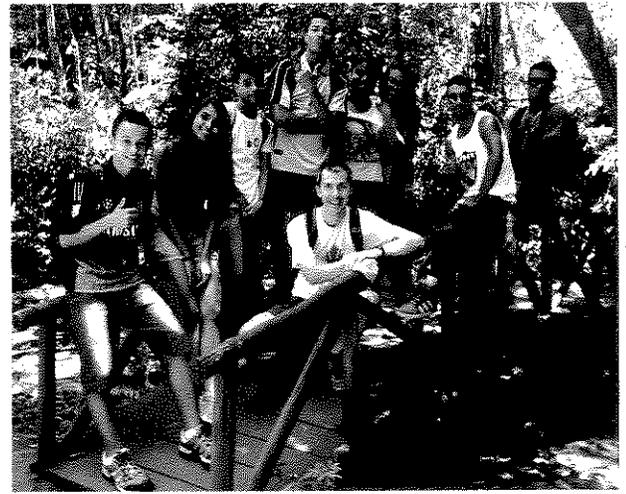
Recently, at a faith sharing and pot-luck dinner, one of the members of the parish composed a song that she had written which included several verses about my presence in the parish community. Her words struck me as singularly meaningful regarding my Jesuit vocation.

She wrote that I arrived in the parish as a blessing, and that I came to live and share my life with the people, to walk with the people, and to profess my faith in the message of Jesus.

I offer these words from Katarina, a simple, hard-working Brazilian woman because in them is a call from the Lord. Her words revealed to me the truth and the depth of my vocation: to share my life with the people, to walk with them in their struggles, and to share my faith with them—that is, to share with them the

person of Jesus. In her song, she was teaching me what it means to be a Jesuit about to be ordained to the priesthood. It is to walk with the people, an image so dear to the experience of the Latin American church. To

(L-R) CHRIS, BISHOP EDSON JOSÉ ORIOLO AND SEGUNDO RAFAEL PÉREZ, SJ, (PERUVIAN PROVINCE) DURING DIACONATE ORDINATION.

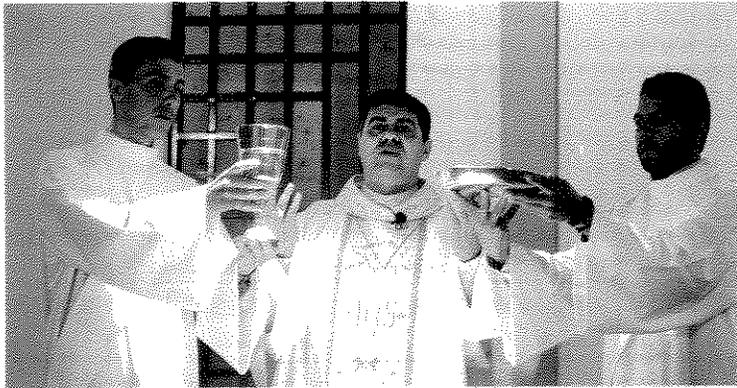


CHRISTOPHER (center, front) WITH A YOUTH GROUP ON A FIELD TRIP TO A PARK IN BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL.

walk with the people is to be their friend and to share life experiences with them.

I was touched by Katarina's song, and by her generosity and creativity in sharing this with me and the other parishioners. It is in the neighborhood called the Garden of Happiness, where God continues to reveal the depth of that initial call that I felt upon entering the Society of Jesus in 2005. God calls all of us to return to and to inhabit that garden of truth and happiness that God proposed to Adam and Eve. We make this garden a reality by sharing creatively who we are. Some sing, some write, some are Jesuits; all of us share our unique gifts. The garden of happiness is not just a place in Brazil, nor is it that lost Eden from the Bible; it is the place of our very lives, made real and present when we respond to those around us with generosity and creativity.

Thanks to Katarina and the people of "Jardim Felicidade," I continue to find great happiness in God's call for me as a Jesuit priest. **E**



Miquita, the 86-year-old woman who organized these services, with whatever she needed. The only problem was that she spoke no English and I spoke very hesitant and rudimentary Spanish.

At first, my experience in Chicago was smooth and exciting. I fell into a routine of going to class on Mondays, working at the church for the rest of the week, and spending time at the community in the evenings. But soon enough, several challenges presented themselves. My discernment was no longer hypothetical; I was doing real work and living as a real member of a real community. I had no training, formation, or experience for any of this. What I knew of Jesuit life was quickly

revealed to be only the tip of the iceberg.

I learned many lessons through these challenges, but perhaps most importantly I learned that Jesuit life is replete with loving people who want nothing more than to support and encourage you. At the church, Miquita was one of these people. She taught me many lessons about faith, service, and hard work. Her quiet way of reaching out to anyone in need with a loving hand was nothing short of inspiring. She provided me with perhaps the clearest understanding of what a life of service can do and how I can best live that life with the talents God has given me. In the Jesuit community, the people who showed me love and encouragement were the very men I

saw at dinner. They never tired of explaining things to me or including me in their lives and ministries. In fact, the challenges I faced in community life were often overcome by engaging with the community even more.

My discernment journey so far has been filled with such lessons taught by people that have inspired and helped me. In the grand scheme of things, it really hasn't been that long of a journey. There is so much more that lies ahead and so many more people that God wants me to meet. As I continue my journey in the novitiate, my prayer is that I may be to others some fraction of what all these great people have been to me. **E**

Finding Support During the Discernment Journey

When men who are discerning a Jesuit vocation contact me, I always ask them to highlight the spiritual movements in their lives that have led them to this moment. Their responses are very edifying, and I am touched by the joy and excitement that stems from their genuine desire to serve God and God's people. I can hear the energy in their voices as they explain this desire to me.

At some point in the conversation I ask each man what their friends and family think about the possibility of him becoming a Jesuit. Some respond that their friends and family are very supportive and encouraging in their vocation. Others say they have not received much support from friends or family, and some say they do not feel ready to tell anyone yet.

Being in discernment can be a lonely and confusing time. A man might feel a genuine desire to serve God, yet many people in his life might not understand this or are even opposed to his discernment. This can often be a result of where people are in their own faith journey. I remember when I was in discernment and started telling people I wanted to be a Jesuit Brother, I was bombarded by people's opinions on why this was not a good idea. I often felt like a lightning rod for everyone's hurt

and anger with God, the Church, or the Jesuits. I realized that the people who felt distant from God or felt hurt the most were often the ones with the most to say. Though I was able to feel compassion for them, it still was not helpful in supporting my vocation. It was not until I started going to spiritual direction, meeting Jesuits, and

going on discernment events that I began to feel comfortable sharing this desire to serve God with others.

When a man is discerning the possibility of religious life, it is a challenging time and it is imperative that the man receives some support. As a vocation promoter, I encourage guys to seek out this support by joining a Jesuit discernment group or going to a "come and see" weekend or discernment retreat. It can be very helpful for the man in discernment to see a room full of others who also are discerning a Jesuit vocation and realize that he is not alone. In these safe environments, the men

can share the joys and struggles that come with considering a vocation to Religious life. The man in discernment is often comforted to hear he doesn't have to have it all figured out, that discernment is a journey and one that he does not need to walk alone. 



By Br. Pat Douglas, S.J.
VOCAATION DIRECTOR
U.S. MIDWEST
PROVINCE

"I realized that the people who felt distant from God or felt hurt the most were often the ones with the most to say."

St. Stanislaus Kostka (1550-1568)

Stanislaus Kostka was born in 1550 to a distinguished Polish family. His parents raised him as a disciplined person and devout Catholic. When he was 14 he and his older brother Paul were sent to the Jesuit college (think: high school) in Vienna. Stanislaus came across as meek and Paul as abusing towards him. Stanislaus grew in his reserved virtue and in a desire to become a Jesuit.

Within a year Stanislaus approached the Jesuit provincial in Vienna, requesting entrance into the Society. The provincial required his parents' permission, which Stanislaus knew his parents would not grant. On the suggestion of another Jesuit, he walked 450 miles to Augsburg, Germany, where the German provincial, Fr. Peter Canisius (a future saint), listened to his heartfelt story and was willing to admit him to the Society.



So that he could be further from his father's political influence, he was sent to the novitiate in Rome. He and two companions made the trip across the Alps on foot. In Rome he handed his letter of introduction from Fr. Canisius to superior general Fr. Francis Borgia (another future saint). That letter included: "He is a Polish

noble and his name is Stanislaus. He is an excellent, intelligent young man... On his arrival here he was so eager to carry out his long-standing ambition —some years ago he committed himself unreservedly to the Society, though not yet admitted to it...he is very eager to be sent to Rome to be as far away as possible from any harassment from his family. He also wishes to advance as much as he can in the path of holiness... We expect great things from him."

Stanislaus' fellow novices admired him for his devotion in prayer and penances. They also found him a congenial companion, generous and positive. He also became known among the Roman people who benefitted from the novices' ministries. Sadly, after just ten months as a Jesuit novice, he became seriously ill. He died on August 15, 1568. He was 17 years old. He had become so well-known in Rome that "the entire city proclaimed him a saint." Beatified in 1605, he was the first Jesuit to be so honored. He is the patron saint of Jesuit novices.

Source: *Jesuit Saints and Martyrs* by Joseph Tylanda, SJ 

UPCOMING EVENTS

WEEKEND AT THE NOVITIATE in St. Paul, Minn.

OCT 6-8 Spend the weekend with the Jesuit novices, learning about Jesuit life and training.

COME AND SEE WEEKEND at Loyola University, Chicago

OCT 27-29 This weekend experience is for inquirers who are interested in learning more about Jesuit life and meet young Jesuits in training.

Please contact a Vocation Promoter or Director for more information on these events.

CALLINGS A NEWSLETTER ABOUT VOCATIONS

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Ignatius Says:

"You should trust in God enough to believe that you could cross the seas on a bare plank if there were no ship..."

