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Showcase Talk – “Our Faith: Growing Vocation”
April 30, 2023

The second Sunday of Easter, I preached at our Sunday service for my “senior sermon”. My text was the Thomas text from John, which, fittingly, is all about faith and vocation. In this text, Jesus says, “Do not doubt, but believe.” This is faith. In the same passage, Jesus says, “Peace be with you. As the Father sends me, so I send you.” This is vocation. My own sense of faith and vocation has grown so much through LCMNU, and it is through LCMNU that I am now at a place today where I can say that I have a strong sense of faith and of my vocation. I would never have had the opportunity to exercise and contemplate my faith and vocation without this community.

I was a junior when I first came to an LCMNU event, searching for spiritual answers and community. For years prior, I had been grappling with my religiousness and spirituality. I experienced the loss of my father at a young age, while a freshman in high school, and since that experience and from many other places in my life, I have desired to explore deeper topics and conversations. Beginning my senior year of high school and throughout college, I sought to slowly but surely chip away at what felt like a cloudy sense of how I understood this world, how I understood life and death. At one point on my journey, I came to decide that I had better reexamine the religion I was raised in and am thus rooted in to see if the answers there might satisfy my spiritual needs and desire to go deeper. And thankfully, LCMNU was here. Being raised in the Lutheran church, I was familiar with the doctrine, but I came with a lot of doubt and uncertainty. I could not say the Apostle’s Creed—I could not say I believed in Jesus Christ—without feeling a sense of falseness. I needed to explore that, and I wanted to find a more full emotional truth to the religious community I was a part of and my own religious practice.

Once I came to LCMNU, I felt so seen and immediately accepted by the community here. I began going to 21theo, feeling nervous at first that I might “say something wrong” because it had been so long since I had ever engaged in discussion centered around Jesus. In engaging with the community here, I had the space to ask these questions I had that sought to truly understand faith and scripture. And it was a meaningful step, bringing these questions to this community, rather than sitting with them myself. I met one-on-one with Pastor Deanna, and we talked through the questions I had and the foundations of Lutheran belief. A turning point for me came when I asked Pastor Deanna, in regard to faith in Jesus, how to grapple with that sense of never feeling certain, a feeling of “I’ll never be able to reach full certainty or belief.” Pastor Deanna responded with something along the lines of, it’s simply a choice you make. One day, just say, “I believe”. I then realized that there was a simple choice to make. I wanted to make that choice, to believe. I wanted to continue to invest in asking questions and fully understanding, to try to fully understand with my whole being, and at the end of the day alongside any doubts, choose to simply believe for the sake of believing and hoping.

In investigating and learning about the foundations of our faith—a faith of love and forgiveness—through the spaces here, through scripture, and through life experience, the definition of belief changed for me. I no longer equated it with certainty. I came to realize it was myself and my doubts—not the outside world of facts, connections, and observations—that was holding me back from believing in the Lord’s name. Because, when I thought about it, the world around me had shown me many times, time and time again, God’s presence and God’s love. I decided to make that choice of belief and faith, and I now see God in everyone, listen to God’s call, and do my best to act out God’s love in the world. I notice now that I feel more grounded in my faith, that I am better equipped to center myself when I feel lost or anxious. I can connect more easily to Jesus’ call of “Peace be with you”, and in finding that sense of peace become more easily attuned to where I am needed. This is how I now define following my vocation. It is this desire to seek out the truth, to act in love, and to listen.

I am a theatre major here at Northwestern, and many times I go through periods of doubt in my choice to pursue my dreams and my artistic passions, because we live in this world that does not always support dreamers. I know that in pursuing my dreams though, that I am following my vocation. Through LCM, I feel so supported and uplifted as an artist, and in learning about and deeply understanding vocation I feel empowered to follow my passion and an outward call. My career may change, and I know that where I am in life will change. I am on the precipice of graduating college and there are so many scary unknowns, but I know, because I am grounded in my faith, to listen to God’s call. I am not so fearful of the future now because I trust and because I believe.