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Showcase Talk – “Our Faith: Growing Vocation”
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I often have conversations with friends and family of other faith backgrounds about why I identify as a Christian. More specifically, a question that often comes up in these conversations is “Why is there an obligation as a Christian to serve others and do good in the world if you believe Jesus died for all sins to be forgiven?” I will admit, I have grappled with this question individually many times, especially as a child. If Jesus died for all sins to be forgiven, then no matter what I do, I will be welcomed into God’s embrace at the end of my life, right? This is a passive stance on Christianity that can be taken, that belief is the sole requirement for admittance into God’s kingdom. However, I understand that there is much more to faith than just passive belief. Action is required. Each child of God is called to live as Jesus did, providing healing and care for the marginalized, exposing and opposing corrupt powers, and loving all. Mistakes can be made, and sins are forgiven, but we are brought to this earth to serve a purpose. This purpose is defined as vocation.

Vocation, in its very essence, is defined as a calling. When I think of vocation in relation to faith, 1 Peter 2:21 comes to mind: “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” We are called to continue the work that Jesus started during his time on earth. We are blessed with unending forgiveness, and in gratitude and thanks for this gift, we are presented with the opportunity and the freedom to help others as Jesus did. For me, vocation has had a profound impact on the way I have navigated my college experience. One of the most valuable lessons I learned at LCM was that Jesus has always sided with the marginalized and oppressed. This statement creates the foundation of my vocation and is what I refer back to when making decisions that impact those around me.

I believe that right now, in my present moment, I am being called to learn and challenge. Being at Northwestern has opened my eyes to many injustices that are ingrained in our institutions, such as systemic racism, gun violence, and violence against indigenous communities. Through participation in 21Theo, enrolling in specific classes, and reading on my own, I have expanded my knowledge on how these systems promote and maintain the marginalization and oppression of certain communities. I not only learn but also am presented with the opportunity to challenge these systems through participation in protests demanding gun and police reform to interning with a pro bono law firm helping the economically disadvantaged find representation in court. In these ways, I am fulfilling the commitment I made when I was baptized to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to dedicate myself towards helping others who are suffering.

I also see my vocation played out on a smaller scale due to being in a constant community with like-minded, young individuals. Two years ago, I was hospitalized for an eating disorder and other major mental health issues, which at the time I saw as a burden and a disadvantage. However, having gone through the experience of recovery, I feel a sense of urgency and a desire to ensure others who struggle with mental health and wellbeing feel supported and loved. Mental health, especially on college campuses, is rarely addressed and is often miscared for. In my daily interactions with friends and

acquaintances, I feel a constant pull towards challenging mental health stigma, diet culture and fatphobia, and a call to promote self-love and care. Although this consists in small actions, such as offering a listening ear or a hug, I believe it is part of my overall vocation to love neighbor and align with the suffering. I believe this is my most immediate calling from God, and I am trying to listen and respond.