

CHANGING LIVES ON CAMPUS frannie's story



It was my first night of college and I had no idea what to do. One minute I was in a new friend's dorm room telling her how excited I was for classes, and the next I found myself lost at a pre-game on our floor. A guy came up to me and asked if I wanted a drink. Coming from 12 years of Catholic education and a very sheltered family life, I'd stayed away from alcohol and had no idea what it was like. I was curious about the taste of "fun" though, and I tried it.

From that moment on I fell into a dark world, sadly wrapped up in temporary highs. I began to live from party to party, hook-up to hook-up, and text to text until I was completely on the wrong track. I knew they weren't right, but the more I filled up my life with those things, the more they overcame me. I kept receiving the Sacraments, praise God, but both my self-respect and love for Him were lost. I remember looking at myself in the mirror one day and asking, "Who am I? What have I become?" All I could do was respond with laughter.

After a year of living for these temptations, I hit rock bottom. In general, the addiction to temporary highs made my emotions inconsistent. They followed an up and down pattern, and as time went on, the highs and lows got lower and lower. I was sad a lot of the time, and eventually I found that my desires were no longer met by making a mess of myself every Friday and Saturday night.

I wanted to clean up my act, but I knew it would be difficult to break away from college culture. At the time I had no one to look up to, and no one to speak with about my issues. It wasn't until late my sophomore year that God handed me a beautiful escape route.

I entered discipleship with a FOCUS missionary, and she began to ask me the important questions I'd been avoiding. She was a role model I could confide in, and a witness I could follow. My soul was like a Cathedral filled with junk, and through my discipler, God helped me to carry it out one piece at a time so that I could be His once again. With her help, I broke away from the destructive life I had been living, and I was able to form more virtuous habits.

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As I experienced these changes, I became more involved in Vandy Catholic. I participated in and led women's Bible studies, and I began to look for women that I could disciple as well. It wasn't until FOCUS conference my junior year, though, that I truly understood what it meant to be a Catholic.

There were thousands of students there in Orlando. They were all young, spirited, and fast to their knees when the Blessed Sacrament entered the room. With beautiful witnesses surrounding me, I couldn't help but feel like I was part of a movement. There I learned



that Catholicism isn't just something to be kept inside with the pews and tabernacle. We are supposed to breathe it out into the culture around us. Curtis Martin told us all that we are made for something more, and that our commitment to Christ would change the world we live in. I felt called to be a part of that change. And I finally felt like I had the freedom to live my life as it was meant to be lived.

Since those beautiful days of conversion, life has been a constant crusade. Throughout my remaining time at Vanderbilt, I attempted to propose the Truth to fellow students in my campus newspaper and through personal relationships. I fell more in love with Vandy Catholic, and I received inspiration and guidance from our chaplain and FOCUS missionaries. I was blessed enough to participate in a FOCUS mission trip to the Bronx as well.

Now I am doing work in marriage and family policy for The Heritage Foundation in Washington D.C. I plan to pursue graduate studies in political theory and theology, and I pray that God will use these experiences and allow me to serve the Church as a soldier for Christ.

I wouldn't be where I am today without FOCUS. My experience with the missionaries in college helped me to understand the importance of resting in the Lord, and this has revealed a greater path than I ever could have even imagined when I first stepped foot on campus. I pray that university students across the nation will be as blessed as I was.



WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN PUBLISHED:

The Vanderbilt Torch, The Vanderbilt Hustler, CBS News.com, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Foundry

YOUR EDUCATION BACKGROUND:

I just graduated from Vanderbilt University where I majored in History and Earth & Environmental Science, and minored in Islamic Studies. I went to Villa Duchesne High School in St. Louis, MO.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW/FUTURE PLANS:

I am currently working at The Heritage Foundation and I hope to pursue a career in public policy, particularly focusing on issues that affect marriage and family. I also hope to explore the intersection of Catholic Social Teaching and Conservative ideas. Most importantly, I feel called to marriage and to raise a family.