



## ONE YOUNG LADY'S FAITH JOURNEY

By Kathleen Molaro, OFS

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*With her permission, I share with you a conversation I had with my young adult granddaughter. We hadn't been together in person for a while, and sat with a cup of tea, enjoying each other's company.*

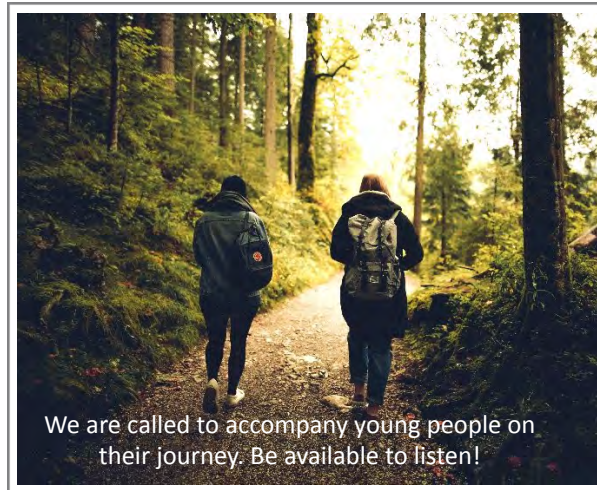
**Me:** A while ago I talked to you when you were struggling with depression and a lack of enthusiasm for going to Church or even praying.

**Sophia:** I was going through a rough time. Going to Mass seemed like a burden, something I had to do. I didn't believe I had any relationship with God. As a high schooler, I also felt a bit used. Our youth group was always being asked to set up chairs, serve at Church dinners, babysit, and that sort of thing. I really didn't feel like I belonged in any meaningful way. There was something missing in my life, and I didn't know what it was.

**Me:** Now you seem focused and strong in your faith. What caused that change, do you think?

**Sophia:** I felt lost and alone when my family moved across the country. I had no friends, no school because I had just graduated from high school, and had a brand-new environment to get used to. Then COVID struck. The only socializing I had with people my age was online. When I shared my feeling of loss and confusion with a stranger in a blog, she encouraged me to pray for God's will for my life. "God has a purpose for you," she said. "Pray for Him to reveal it to you. You may be in for a surprise. There's something waiting for you." We had a simple conversation that I pondered for quite a while. That little comment stirred a change in me.

**Me:** Sometimes even little moments in our life really transform us. Sounds like that was one of them! Did you have any other particular bigger incidents that influenced where you are now in your faith life?



**Sophia:** When my friend died in a car accident, I came to a point in my life where I had to make a choice. I could run from God and wallow in despair and anger, or I could seek God to help me through. I also really believed if I wanted to see my friend again someday in Heaven, I would need to live a

worthy life and keep my eyes on the Kingdom! The conversation about purpose in life resurfaced in my heart. I chose the path toward God, and now I have a great desire to encourage others to walk the same path. Maybe purpose isn't necessarily going to school or choosing a job or vocation. Instead, living with purpose might mean choosing a way of life... living with holy intention.

**Me:** Sounds like your "pondering" bore fruit and sent you on a search.

**Sophia:** It really did. I delved into many things. I started studying scripture by using Father Mike Schmitz's *Bible in a Year* program. I immersed myself in an on-line 14-part series about the Holy Spirit with Fr. Dave Pivonka. I learned to take Mass more seriously when my mom bought me an *Every Sacred Sunday Mass Journal* to use during the COVID shut down. Of course, I didn't

do all these things at once. But I just couldn't get enough. I was so excited, I moved from one study to another.

**Me: Did things get better when your Church reopened?**

**Sophia:** My Church has a lot to offer, so I joined the Church choir and a few groups. At a women's group, one day we were discussing how we share our faith with others. One of the other members asked me, "How do you share your faith with your friends? I imagine it's different than for us older folks." My answer was, "What friends? There's no one my age in the Church. You are my people now, and I really appreciate how you accept me, love me, and listen to me even though I'm a good 30 years or more younger than everyone else."

**Me: So you enjoy your involvement?**

**Sophia:** Certainly, and I know I'm growing closer and closer to God. I am respected as a valuable member of the community. I haven't been asked to set up chairs in a long time! But I am a little frustrated that there's no help for me to find other young people. I don't know how to do that. There might be people my age I don't know about, maybe even in the Catholic Churches nearby. I really wish there could be a young adult group.

**Me: If there was such a group, what would it look like?**

**Sophia:** I think it would be fairly simple. There are so many books and programs to use. We could invite speakers, even folks who could help us with life skills like budgeting or getting a job. The group could find social service projects to work on together and would benefit from lots of sharing and supporting one another in our journeys. We would pray and sometimes go to Mass together. We'd be able to run the group on our own once we have the support and gain leadership skills.

**Me: So, back to how to find a purpose in life. What do you think it takes?**

**Sophia:** Determination and follow through—we can't just talk about it; I believe we need four things:

1. We need to take action!
2. We need a consistent prayer life—we have to schedule in prayer time and remain faithful to it. It won't just happen automatically.
3. We need each other. An inspiring and spiritually healthy community helps a lot, whether it's people our age or not.
4. It's imperative to develop a deep relationship with God. I probably should have said that first!

**Sophia:** And now, I have a question for you, Grandma. Aren't these all the things you need too? Do we ever stop looking for purpose, a relationship with God, and a community to help us do all that?

**Me:** You're right, Sophia. That's why I hope we (older and younger) can walk together and bless each other in that journey. You've expressed many of the ideas our Youth and Young Adult Commission has discovered in our studying how to bring the Gospel to young people. Hearing from you has validated our work. Thanks for spending this time sharing with me.

