

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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**WE WALKED TOGETHER ONCE — AND
WE STILL WALK TOGETHER, FROM
FORMATION TO FLOURISHING**

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

From formation to flourishing is our motto, and I want to explain what this looks like in practice.



Many of us left consecrated life or seminary carrying a gift and a wound bound tightly together. We were given a depth of prayer, knowledge, and purpose that most people never touch — and then we stepped into a world with no category for it. Psychiatrist Curt Thompson writes that the strongest predictor of human wholeness isn't what happened to us, but whether we learn to tell our story honestly to someone who genuinely receives it. A story carried alone stays a wound; a story spoken to someone who understands becomes a history that can be offered back to God.

Here is what Nicholas said after our gathering in Ontario, Canada last month, "One or two decades may have gone by since we last were together, but it's as if no time has passed. Great conversations, good fun, a time to reminisce as brothers and look forward as men. Can't wait for the next one!"

This is why our gatherings are more than just social events. When we gather—at an island cottage in Canada, around a table in Detroit, on a trail in Colorado, or with your local group—we are practicing what the Pope called the art of accompaniment: removing our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 169). In this company, we don't have to explain the vocabulary, apologize for the missing years in your résumé, or compress a decade of your life into a single line. You are simply known.

But healing is only the first step. The Harvard Study of Adult Development confirms that the quality of our relationships determines whether we flourish. We didn't leave formation to fade away; we left to bring our deep formation to bear on the world—in our careers, our families, and our communities.

As we launch our formal membership this year, we aren't just opening a directory; we are building a bridge. Becoming a member gives you access to practical mentorship, professional networking, and a consistent brotherhood and sisterhood. More than that, your membership ensures that no one walking out of religious life ever has to figure out their next step alone.

Whether you join us for an upcoming event or step into full membership today, we are ready to receive your story, honor your past, and help you flourish in your next calling.

To your flourishing,

Kristian Jalloway

Executive Director, *The Next Step Network*

MEMBERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Step Into the Next Chapter: Join The Next Step Network

Our community exists to ensure that no one walking out of religious or consecrated life, seminary, or the priesthood has to navigate their next path alone. By becoming a formal member, you aren't just joining a network—you are securing a community of peers, accessing targeted professional tools, and helping build a permanent bridge for others coming behind you.

Benefit Category	What You Receive
Professional & Career Growth	• Access to our Mentorship Program (1:1 matching with experienced alumni) • Direct connections to vetted employers and job search strategy support • Free full membership to Young Catholic Professionals (YCP) • Resume translation assistance (framing formation as secular experience)
Community & Connection	• Access to the International Peer Networking Groups (including specialized groups like our Entrepreneur/Business Calls)

	• First dibs for regional dinners and international destination events (ski trips, summer gatherings, retreats) plus 10% off • Bi-monthly member updates and insights
Support & Resources	• Access to our vetted Counseling & Professional Referral List • Curated tools for life transitions (financial planning, emotional health, housing) • Advocacy support for smooth ecclesiastical and institutional transitions

Simple, Transparent Pricing

We want membership to be accessible to everyone, whether you left formation recently or decades ago.

- **Monthly Plan: \$9 / month**
- **Annual Plan: \$90 / year** (*Save 16% with an annual pass*)

The Network Effect: Your dues directly fund our 1-on-1 coaching programs, transition playbooks, and outreach for newly exiting religious and seminarians who need immediate support.

Ready to Take the Next Step?

Joining takes less than two minutes through our secure, zero-fee platform.

1. **Click the button below** to set up your profile.
2. **Select your membership option** (\$9/mo or \$90/yr).
3. **Get matched** with a mentor, join an upcoming group call, or browse the member directory.

Questions about membership or need transition support right now? Reach out directly to Executive Director Kristian Jaloway at kristian.jaloway@thenextstepnetwork.com.

[Become a member today](#)

IN-PERSON FEATURE

Father Kurtis Wiedenfeld shares his insights during a recent opportunity to share his testimony.



- ***Where did your journey begin? — What drew you to religious or consecrated life, and what was that formation like for you?***

In my youth religious life seemed the natural path toward a full living of the Christian life. Every other direction seemed to be an indirect route. As I followed my vocation to the priesthood, I wanted the most demanding preparation I could find, and my experience with the Legionaries was

even more demanding than I was prepared for, which made me love it even more. I had always wanted to be a priest for numerous reasons, and the Legionaries seemed to embody the type of priest I was called to be.

- ***How did you navigate the transition? — What was hard, what surprised you, and what or who helped you find your footing?***

I had two principal guides for my transition, Bishop Gregory Aymond and Fr. Andre La Sana. Fr. Andre, then my superior in Chicago, went above and beyond to accommodate me during my transition. He even let me visit the Austin Diocese before I left the community. Bishop Gregory Aymond, then the bishop of the Austin Diocese, welcomed me with open arms. With their assistance, I moved seamlessly into formation for the Diocese of Austin and was eventually ordained a priest in 2012. Learning to manage daily responsibilities that community life had managed for me had its challenges. Things like bank accounts and my own car, but with the assistance of many, I believe I transitioned well.

- ***What are you doing now — and what drives you? — Work, family, vocation, mission — whatever feels true to where you are.***

I am currently the pastor of a wonderful country parish in Luling, Texas. This little parish has been very underserved, and it really invigorates me to pour myself into this small community. I love teaching, educating, and problem solving. I love being a priest, and I am happy to share with this community all that God has given me.

- ***What has your formation made possible? — How do you see your years of service showing up in the life you're living today?***

To this day the disciplines of prayer, constancy, and early rising are still with me. But, above all else I believe it is the confidence and

boldness that had the deepest impact. For me the life of a Legionary of Christ instilled in me an invitation to dream big. In a more particular way, my experience with the youth during my religious formation has enabled me to develop programs for Altar Servers and share that formation with other pastors. Through these programs I have been able to inspire many boys and girls to serve in the priesthood and religious life, and that has given me the greatest joy.

- ***What would you want to say to a member who is just starting this transition?***

I feel I was abundantly blessed with clarity during my transition. I still wanted to be a priest and that was a real guiding star for me. I joined the Legion because it had an inspiring vision for what a priest is called to be and I left because I did not believe in the cult of personality. Therefore, I have always valued my Legionary experience, and I consider my time with them to be some of the happiest days of my life. If I had to do it again, I would still get on that plane bound for Connecticut in the summer of 1998. If I was to give advice to someone making this transition it would be to honor all that is good about your experience in religious life and to move towards letting go of anything that demonizes your experience. You received wonderful things and still more amazing experiences await you.

BAND OF BROTHERS EVENTS

Canada Lake Trip



In the last week of August, Matthias Kim hosted a group of Next Steppers at his cottage on an island in Lake Simcoe, north of Toronto, Ontario. It was a great time for friends to gather, share their stories in a relaxed setting,

while also having lots of fun with jet skis, water skiing, a lunar eclipse, paddle boarding, good food, golf, and of course Niagara Falls. Four guys were more or less local Canadians including Matthias, Paul Beriault, Nicholas Ferriera, and Fr. Steven Kwon, who is pastor at a local parish. Rick Voor came up from Florida and I flew in from Austin, TX.



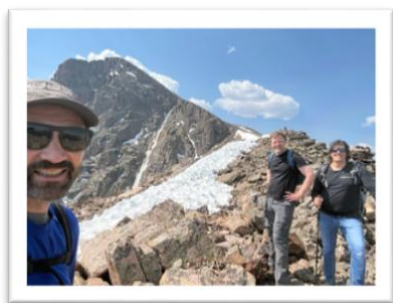
Fourth of July

Let's climb a 14er! For those who don't know, that refers to a mountain over 14,000 feet high, and there is a whole culture and tradition of climbing these. Most are in Colorado (see 14ers.com) and when a friend from our family group suggested we do them all, though I thought it would be a challenge, I didn't realize just how

hard it would be. We also didn't pick the easiest one to start with. Mount of the Holy Cross is close to Vail, CO, about a 2-hour drive from Denver. So, the two of us flew into Denver, rented a Jeep, picked up Fr. Kurtis, who was already there, did some shopping and drove to our campsite.



The location was gorgeous and we pitched out tents close to the trail head to leave early the next morning. It was kind of hard to sleep because people were leaving at midnight, at 3 in the morning, and we got up at 4, had breakfast and left by 5am. The goal is to be up and off the peak before early afternoon because there are often thunderstorms on hot summer afternoons. There were also wildfires to worry about, although they didn't present any trouble for us. Total we hiked 12 miles and climbed over 5,000 feet there and back. We got back to the campsite at 5pm. We were tired but fulfilled and had gotten to know each other much better. Would we do it again? Yes, but we'll pick an easier one next year! Check out the pictures and come join us next year. Hopefully this becomes an annual tradition we can build on.



WHAT'S COMING NEXT

We are busy planning the next adventure!

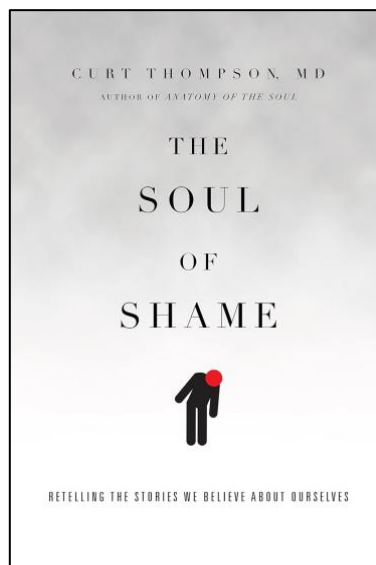
To express your interest in any of the upcoming events, please RSVP online or by emailing info@thenextstepnetwork.com

Plan Your Next Gathering A Shared Resource for the Network

Whether you're organizing a regional dinner, a cohort reunion, or a multi-day retreat, the Next Step Network now has a shared Trip & Gathering Planning Guide available to all members as a Google Doc. Built around our five core values — Gratitude, Connection, Healing, Growth, and Accompaniment — the guide walks organizers through everything from an 18-week planning timeline and role assignments to activity formats, finance tracking, and post-event feedback.

It's designed to flex across any gathering type: formation-era cohorts reconnecting around a shared chapter of history, mixed-generational events that pair newer departees with longer-tenured alumni, or local and regional meetups that bring the network to your own backyard. If you've been thinking about hosting something — a dinner, a weekend away, a campfire night — this is your starting point. Click [here](#) to access the shared document and get your next gathering off the ground. As you pull your event details together, we can help you with the event promotion!

PUBLICATION TO CONSIDER



The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves by Curt Thompson.

We're all infected with a spiritual disease. Its name is shame. Whether we realize it or not, shame affects every aspect of our personal lives and vocational endeavors. It seeks to destroy our identity in Christ, replacing it with a damaged version of ourselves that results in unhealed pain and brokenness. But God is telling a different story for your life.

Psychiatrist Curt Thompson unpacks the soul of shame, revealing its ubiquitous nature and neurobiological roots. He also provides

the theological and practical tools necessary to dismantle shame, based on years of researching its damaging effects and counseling people to overcome those wounds.

Thompson's expertise and compassion will help you

- Identify your own pains and struggles.
- Find freedom from lifelong negative messages that bind you.
- Embrace healing and wholeness.
- Discover and defeat shame's hidden agenda in your life.

Don't wait to begin your journey toward healing and renewal. Break free from the grip of shame and rewrite the story of your life as you learn to undo the damage shame has caused. Get your copy of *The Soul of Shame* today and start transforming your life from the inside out.

If you have any news of a publication, project; a life update, need or achievement; a prayer request, please forward a title, description, link, and photo or graphic design piece as is appropriate to: info@thenextstepnetwork.com.

TRANSITION TIP

Money 101: Starting Fresh with Your Finances

From Vow of Poverty to Personal Budget: A Practical Starting Point

For many returning from religious life, handling personal finances is brand new territory. There's no shame in that — it simply means you need a starting point, not a lecture.

Here are a few foundational steps. First, open a single checking account and get a debit card. Using a debit card forces you to spend only what you have. Avoid credit cards until you have a clear budget in place — credit card debt is one of the most common and hardest-to-escape financial traps for people in transition.

Second, draft a basic monthly budget. Track your income and your fixed expenses (rent, transportation, food) and leave a buffer for unexpected costs. A common rule of thumb: aim to spend no more than one-third of your monthly income on housing.

Third, don't panic about big financial goals right away. Retirement accounts, investments, and home ownership are real goals — but they come after you've stabilized your monthly cash flow and built up a small emergency fund of three to six months of expenses.

Financial advisors within The Next Step Network community can offer personalized guidance. For now, the goal is simply to get

grounded, spend less than you earn, and build from there. Small, consistent steps make a significant difference over time.

PRAYER UPDATE & REQUESTS

Daniel Welter

Here is a posts from his Caring Bridge site, posted in July:

Almost a year out...

*The recent results of Daniel's scan: **No evidence of recurrent or metastatic disease in the chest. His last exam of his pelvic area was also clear! Thank you, Jesus!***

***Would be grateful, if you have any prayers to spare and, in your charity, for healing of some other health things he is trying to figure out that are just the consequences of his first big surgery.** So grateful for all of your faithful prayers- you have truly helped us carry this cross. Know of our prayers of gratitude for you and for all of our other friends who are dealing with the cross of cancer.*

God is so good to us, always giving us opportunities to turn to him, surrender and trust him more deeply. There is always so much meaning to the joys and trials in all of our lives. We can count on him, rely on him and expect help from him.

"For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you." Isaiah 54:10

Please keep Neil McNeil in your prayers since his brother Scott passed away recently. Prayers for the repose of Scott's soul and for the whole family.

Neil McNeil

Neil's brother Scott passed away recently. Please offer your prayers for the repose of Scott's soul, and for the whole family as they navigate the days ahead.

OPEN POSITIONS

James Grzadzinski, Talent Acquisition Specialist, is seeking a qualified candidate. In his words, "I am collaborating with Catholic Recruiter Associates on the search for the next Executive Director of Catholic Social Services in the Diocese of Birmingham, Alabama.

Would you be interested in being considered for this opportunity, or do you know of anyone who might be interested in the role?

Compensation is \$120,000-130,000.

He can be reached at:

jamesg@catholicrecruiter.com or (708) 218-3737.

John Antonio, a Next-Stepper, is seeking an Implementation Specialist II at Pushpay. This role will manage the onboarding of customers in all segments by successfully implementing the Pushpay product suite. The right individual provides a distinctive post sale service that makes Pushpay the market leader and preferred choice for digital giving in the non-profit space. Compensation range is \$67,500-\$78,489.

Stephen Henley, president of Legatus, also a Next-Stepper, is seeking a full-time Events & Pilgrimages Coordinator to join our team at our headquarters in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

This role supports the planning and execution of national events, pilgrimages, and the annual Summit, helping create meaningful experiences that serve our mission of forming Catholic leaders in business and professional life.

Interested candidates may apply by sending a cover letter and resume to kwallace@legatus.org with "Events & Pilgrimages Coordinator Position" in the subject line. Visit [here](#) to learn more.

If you are aware of a job or work opportunity, please forward a title, description, link, and graphic design piece as is appropriate to: info@thenextstepnetwork.com.

CALL TO ACTION

- **Share the Newsletter** - Forward this to someone who could be a future member or potential donor.
- **Let's Connect** – Whichever stage you are in, we are here to assist you on the journey. Connect with us [here](#).
- **Support Our Cause** - Membership dues help to cover operating costs, but additional donations are vital for covering growth costs and, eventually, supporting scholarships for specific events and needs
- **Get Involved** - We need volunteers for mentoring in specific life or career areas, fundraising and networking, organizing international groups, planning local or regional events, and supporting RC women's groups. If you're interested, let's schedule a time to discuss your involvement. Please email us at info@thenextstepnetwork.com.
- **Discover Everything the Network Has to Offer – Visit our website!** If you haven't explored the Next Step Network website lately, now is a great time. At

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Web:
thenextstepnetwork.com
 - Email:
info@thenextstepnetwork.com
 - Event Sign-Up:
<https://www.thenextstepnetwork.com/events>
 - Meeting with Kristian:
[Sign up here](#)
 - [BECOME A MEMBER APPLICATION](#)
-

thenextstepnetwork.com, you'll find the full picture of who we are and what we're building together — from our mission of accompanying one another from formation to flourishing, to upcoming events, member stories, and active projects like *Helvetian: The Last Stand*. Whether you're newly discerned out, years into your next chapter, or ready to mentor someone just starting the journey, the site has resources, connection points, and ways to get involved at every stage. You can learn about our core values, explore what we do, register for upcoming gatherings, or simply read what fellow members have said about what this community has meant to them. Take a few minutes to browse — and if you haven't yet filled out a membership form or connected with us on LinkedIn, both are just a click away. Visit us at thenextstepnetwork.com.

