

Hello, my name is Anika Escalera. I'm 18 years old, and I'm a parishioner and catechist here at Christ the King. Today, I wanted to share with you a bit about my upcoming opportunities with NET Ministries. I am going to graduate from Centennial High School next Saturday and will spend the next school year as a NET missionary.

I have always had a strong relationship with God and with my faith. However, as many of you may know, my life was put on hold when I lost my father, Deacon Stephen Escalera, in October of 2019. I was absolutely terrified of losing my strongest figure in faith and losing my trust in God as He took away any sense of normalcy in my life. Amidst grief and gossip about the beginning of a worldwide pandemic, I decided to attend a NET retreat here at Christ the King in January of 2020. During this time, I saw real Christian joy in the missionaries and in the other attendees. By the end of the night, I felt that joy, and I realized that the loss of my faith figure was not a negative thing. Instead, it was an invitation to be the catalyst of my own faith journey, and learn about how I can walk with God after my time in high school.

NET stands for National Evangelization Team and is a non-profit Catholic organization. NET shares the Gospel with youth from 6th-12<sup>th</sup> grade around the country through retreats and parish and school ministry. It is headquartered in West St. Paul Minnesota, and is one of the largest and most successful Catholic youth ministries around the U.S. This is partially because NET team members are close in age to youth they serve, with missionaries being restricted to 18 through 28 year-olds.

Last January, I went through an interview process to serve as one of the 170 missionaries who will help reach 90,000 young people around the United States. I was accepted and confirmed my YES with them. Come August, I will head out to West St. Paul Minnesota with one suitcase and one backpack for the year, and I will receive training and formation for the first 5 weeks. After that time, NET will send out 16 teams in September that are made up of about 8-12 people on a team. Half of the teams will be traveling from diocese to diocese to put on pre-scheduled retreats for the youth, and could travel 20,000 miles or more! The other NET teams will be parish or school teams, which work within a Catholic parish or school to gather, engage, and lead discipleship for teens.

To help cover costs of training, room and board, healthcare, and transportation, each NET missionary is asked to raise a minimum of \$6,000-\$7,000 dollars in ministry partnership. The actual cost of putting each team member into active ministry for the year is \$20,000, so team members are encouraged to go above and beyond. If possible, I would like to have raised the majority of my funds by the time I begin my 5 week-training period in mid-August, so that I can focus all of my attention on the mission.

This is also a great opportunity for you to be a part of NET's mission in sharing the Gospel! If you feel called and are able to help support me in this mission, I will be in the back of the church with brochures, and envelopes that you can send directly to NET Ministries. You can also donate online at [netusa.org/supportamissionary/](http://netusa.org/supportamissionary/).

If you would like to know more about the ministry or if you have any questions, I would love to talk with you! Thank you all so much for giving me your time and please continue in prayer for the ministry, the youth, and myself.