

- **Bro. Daniele, would you share with us a bit about your background: your family, childhood, early education etc.?**

Bro. Daniele – I was born in August 1990 in Bergamo, Italy to an Italian father and an American mother. They had met in the States when my father was studying English (they met at a New Year's Eve party, oddly enough!), and had since moved back to Italy. I have very fond memories of my early childhood: I'm blessed to have a very warm, loving family, and this was only magnified in Italy, where family of key cultural importance. When I think back to that time, I remember smiling and laughing with friends in my preschool class and listening to my Nonna talk about life.

My sister was also born in Italy, three years after me, and very soon after she was born my father accepted an offer to head a new United States branch of the book binding company he works for, Meccanotecnica, Inc. As he is wont to do, my father accepted this challenge with gusto, so we moved to Redding, Connecticut when I was four years old. This transition really was my first educational experience. I experienced what it felt like to be a foreigner in the States, and the challenge of learning English. I dealt with a lot of bullying those first years, but, with the care of my teachers, I eventually was able to integrate myself into my new environment.

That experience of difference and inadequacy really marked my development and education. As a student, even today, I'm driven by a desire for perfection that grew from this experience of not being good enough. This lack of self-confidence also translated to my social life, as I preferred

to spend time alone rather than risk rejection by my peers in a desire for friendship.

A perfectionist who also experiences a great lack of self-confidence? Sounds a very volatile cocktail. And indeed it was, until I found personal freedom and acceptance in Urbino, Italy, during my junior year of college, when I went to study abroad. It was there that I would meet a group of students from the University of Texas at San Antonio, who would change my life. It is because of them that I affectionately refer to my experience in Urbino, Italy, as my "*rinasciment o* ," my renaissance. I experienced true friendship in Urbino, and I came to see that life was to be lived in relationships like these, not in closing oneself off from the world. Those three months I spent with them were filled with real, lasting joy.

Looking back on it now, my experience in Urbino was a real gift of grace. When I first moved to the States, I can remember dreaming about how my life would be different if I had grown up in Italy. I felt like I was missing a part of my life in some way….This return home, then, was my chance to experience something new and, as it happened, my trust in and love for God grew as I let ***Him*** guide me through this pivotal moment. It was in this act of self-surrender that I truly "found God."

– Where did your Assumption roots begin and who in particular had a significant impact on your life?

– The pastor of the church in which I had made my first communion and confirmation suggested I look at Assumption, as he had done graduate studies in French literature there. I knew him well, as I had served in my parish as an altar boy, and I greatly admired him for his patience and tenderness. I wondered if the College did not have a hand in forming this man…

Later as a student at Assumption, I was very much involved on the Core Team in campus ministry, helping to organize and attending Masses and retreats. It was in this context that I discovered the true joy of service, how it can impact not only those one serves, but the server himself. Oftentimes, I was being taught by the very people I was engaging with.

The greatest evidence of this was my involvement in the Senior Retreat for my class, in 2013. Working with Ashley Januszewski and Stephanie McCaffrey allowed me to experience a real

powerful witness to Christ and His love. It was on this retreat that I began considering a call to religious life and priesthood.

Upon graduating in May of 2013, I continued my discernment in the context of what turned in to Assumptionist candidacy back home in Florence, Italy. I spent the year working in youth ministry at our parish there. The joy of living Christ-centered relationships continued to draw me to the Assumption.

This opportunity would not have been possible without the initiative and care of Fr. John Franck, who sensed an opening to God's grace in my heart and an opportunity for deep personal and spiritual growth. His role encapsulates my relationship with the many Assumptionists I've encountered over the years, each of whom helped me to become the man I am today: Fr. Dennis (who reached out to me during the first week of my freshman year), Fr. Dinh (who first invited me to a discernment group at the Emmanuel House), and Fr. Barry (whose Problem of God course gave rise to the initial questions in my discernment) are just a few…

Following candidacy, I returned to Worcester for postulancy at the Emmanuel House. It was here that I was introduced to the real challenge of living a balanced, integrated Assumption religious life. A year later, I travelled to the Philippines for my novitiate. This was the first time I had been to an Asian country, so I had to adapt to a new culture, language, food, etc. Pair this with the detachment that novitiate requires (some of which I found very emotionally taxing), and novitiate became an opportunity, once again, for self-surrender to God's grace. A key moment for me while I was there was the experience of living with a family in Tondo, a part of Manila, for ten days in extreme poverty. It was a blessed experience to be evangelized by the poor!

– **How have you experienced growth in living out your Assumptionist charism?**

– In the novitiate I spent much time reflecting on our charism and its expression in our motto, "Thy Kingdom come." Thanks to the writings of Fr. Andre' Seve and the meditations of d'Alzon, I came to understand that this is a call to nurture total interior freedom and a sure hope in Christ. Many of our fears, our struggles, and our sins, are barriers to our truly inviting God into the temples of our hearts, and we must work to make them worthy of His indwelling. This development involves a daily conversion, as we seek to be more like Christ and live the divine life as He lives it. Our founder's desire for us to incarnate Jesus Christ in our own souls can take on many different forms. There is a beauty in this diversity, but an underlying unity as well.

– **Would you share any happy memories?**

– My happiest memories, so far, are times spent in community living with my brothers. As the youngest member of these communities, I've really come to see my elder brothers as my "formators," not just my assigned formator himself. I treasure all of the wisdom that has been shared with me, especially when communicated with the frankness and good humor that is so typical of the Assumptionists! J

– **What hobbies or other interests do you have?**

– I enjoy running, dancing (a lot! J), my friendships, reading pastoral theology and going to art museums.

– **What is your vision and hope for the congregation?**

– I would like to see us continue to build bridges among peoples around the world by living and witnessing to the reality of "God's kingdom in us and among us," as Fr. d'Alzon was fond of saying.

– **Is there anything else you would like to share?**

– I find it both daunting and exciting to grow in self-confidence through prayer, study, formation experiences and sharing ministry with the laity. Our Rule of Life reads, "We are called to follow Christ radically on the paths of the Gospel. Prompted by his Spirit and inspired by Mary's example, we choose to risk our lives in ***the adventure of encountering God***." Joining the Assumptionists has truly been an adventure and opportunity to truly embrace my life.