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Norfolk woman's career focuses on faith via film

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Arleen Spenceley | For The Virginian-Pilot

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After filming a video, Ashley Zahorian, carrying her 1-year-old son Joseph, helps her family finish a craft. Also pictured, left to right, Dominic Selg, Raymond Selg, and Clare Selg.



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Shares

From behind a camera in a Norfolk studio, Ashley Zahorian shoots scenes with a purpose beyond filmmaking.

To point people "toward Christ," she said.

That's because she's Catholic, and "faith permeates everything we do."

Zahorian, 32, is the executive producer and owner of Something Like Real Pictures, a Catholic media production company she started seven years ago.

But she's been making films since childhood.

"We would do newscasts and talk shows and commercials with a friend's camcorder," she said.

Back then, she didn't expect to do it for a living. She wanted to be a dog trainer, she said, until she turned 15. Then she wanted to start a business.

After high school, she double majored in interpersonal communication and business management at Radford University. She later changed her majors to music and media studies, with a specialization in production technology.

"I needed to work directly in media," she said. "That's where I was happy."

During college, she interned in production for a faith-based organization in Moon Township, Pa., where she lived with an ex-Catholic married couple.

The husband asked "question after question at dinner," Zahorian said.

She needed answers, so she studied.

"It forced me to dive into my faith," she said. "That was a turning point."

It's when she decided that faith would fuel her films.

But when she finished college, she worked as a youth minister at St. Matthew Catholic Church in Virginia Beach.

"I saw firsthand just how much media has an effect on kids," she said.

So she earned a master's degree in communication, with a concentration in directing from Regent University.

Businesses and organizations hire Something Like Real to shoot ads, live stream events and capture conference sessions on film, which Zahorian's company later sells.

But the bulk of her work is a pair of ongoing projects.

"I've got a 5½-year-old, a 3½-year-old and a 1½-year-old who need to learn about the Bible," she said. "So that's what we're working on. Because if our kids need it, other kids do, too."

That project is called The Mass Box, a monthly subscription program aimed at children 4-8. The cost varies depending on the number of children in a family, but ranges from \$20-to-\$40.

"The Catholic Church, along with many mainline Protestant denominations, (follows) a three-year cycle of readings from the Bible every Sunday," she said. "We always know what the readings are going to be."

Catholics are supposed to read them in advance, she said, "to prepare our minds and our hearts."

The boxes families receive come with a magazine that includes the scripture readings and materials for related crafts. Subscribers also have access to videos, which Zahorian produces at her studio.

Her husband, Raymond Selg, stars in them with their children.

Zahorian's other ongoing project is called Awakening the Domestic Church. The program is funded by donations and free to use.

"That's a 200-week series that has videos, discussion guides and daily reflections," she said. "There's a network of faith communities across the country who are constantly struggling" to find content to discuss.

Awakening the Domestic Church is designed to provide it.

In addition, Zahorian hopes to someday produce feature films.

She's already done a short documentary on human trafficking and a film about miscarriages.


As a filmmaker, she can facilitate discussions about difficult topics — and she should, she said.

For information about Zahorian's work, visit somethinglikereal.com.

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