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Students on retreat. Spending time with God... and each other.

ON TIRELESS MISSION

Back on campus in the midst of a pandemic, our students have found new ways to ignite the fire of faith on (a very different) campus.

“I had an opportunity to speak with and listen to God more than I usually do, and am going to strive to deepen my relationship with Him moving forward.” That is how one student described our first-ever “Newcomers Retreat”, but she could have

been describing this whole year.

In 2020, students at UND are lonelier, more distant, and more stressed than ever before. But students at the Newman Center have taken this challenge as an opportunity.

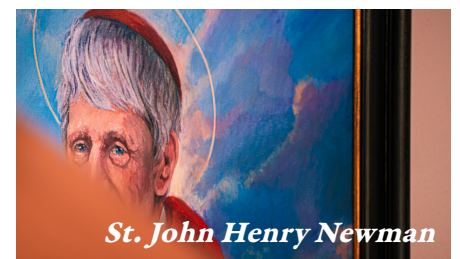
Life here certainly looks very different than it did last year.

We had to move all of our Welcome Week events outside, Bible studies now meet in the bigger rooms, and ropes still mark off certain pews.

Yet, **we’ve had a record-setting start to the year.**

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PATRON SAINTS



St. John Henry Newman

Visitors to the St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center have been greeted by a couple of fresh faces this Fall.

Thanks to the generosity of long-time parishioner Judy Kerr, we now have a painting showing our two patron saints, holding the Newman Center. There is so much detail hidden in this painting, we’ve put together a little guide to help you see more in it and get closer to our patrons through it. **See page 6.**

PAGE 1

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We had 88 students register to be a part of undCatholic during Welcome Week. These students, combined with those returning, have filled 19 Bible Studies. On page 4, you can read an interview with our new FOCUS Director, Seyha Saumweber, who is leading our team of 5 missionaries on campus this year.

On of those returning students is Emily Sears. She has been involved here at the Newman Center since her freshman year. Emily has been a Service Chair on our Student Board and has both participated in and led numerous bible studies during her time with undCatholic.

Emily was kind enough to write a reflection on her time here. You can find that on page 7.

We've been blessed with so many gifts this year. Just in time for St. John Henry Newman's Feast Day, a generous donor gave us a portrait of our two patron saints: St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John Henry Newman. See page 6 for a breakdown of some of the special details hidden in the

painting.

Our Student Board has been hard at work this year. We've had two groundbreaking events since the semester began. First, we had "Ignite the Night" -- a night of adoration, prayer and fellowship. What makes Ignite the Night so special is that groups of students go out on campus to invite whomever they meet to come light a candle and pray at the Newman Center. Over two dozen new students came to the Newman Center in just one night!

Second, we had our "Newcomers Retreat". This retreat was spearheaded by Seyha as a special way to introduce students to the Christian practice of retreat. Many students have never spent intentional time away from their daily lives to intentionally pursue a relationship with Christ. The "Newcomers Retreat" was great way to introduce them to a more intentional and prayerful Christian life. See below for photos of the

retreat.

We have many blessings to be grateful for, and so much has been happening here at the Newman Center. Even when you've finished reading, we'll still be here on mission. Please keep us in your prayers.

IN 2020...

**37 STUDENTS
HAVE SIGNED UP FOR WEEKLY
HOUR OF ADOTATION.**

**74 STUDENTS
PARTICIPATE IN 19 BIBLE STUDIES.**

**172 STUDENTS
COME TO MASS WEEKLY.**



The whole group.

**Our inagural
New-Comers
Retreat was held
in October --
giving students
a chance to get
off campus and
pray in a more
intentional way.**



Growing close on retreat.



During free time, card games ensued.



A student encounters God in the silence.

I Will Send You Shepherds

A letter from Fr. Luke Meyer to the alumni and patrons of the St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center



Fr. Luke Meyer

Greetings! On the evening of Friday, November 6th, I was walking through the Newman Center. It had been a very quiet day on campus. Not many cars in parking lots, and not many students strolling on the sidewalks.. Most of the noise coming from brittle leaves tumbling in the restless air. I was on my way to the Fireside Room -- so many of our alumni know it well -- to host the priests of Deanery 3 for a social gathering. As I walked the halls I heard something so different from the quiet Friday on campus: students upstairs in the lounge playing a board game with Conor (one of our FOCUS missionaries). **They were laughing, cheering, taking deep joy in each other's company. I was heartened by their lively presence.**

As I continued downstairs, I came upon another group of students in the Social Hall having a movie night. In years past, movies might be watched in the Fireside Room or at a student's apartment, but these days the students are keeping some physical distance. So they have weekly set up chairs the past few weeks in the larger Social Hall so they can be together and enjoy a film -- even if they have to be sitting further apart.

Settling into my chair in the Fireside Room, **I thought of all the other nights I've seen this year at the Newman Center, and how lively they are.** Bible studies fill almost every room Monday through Thursday. On a recent Wednesday afternoon, some men from the Newman Center started some pickup basketball, and ended up playing with some of the neighboring fraternities in a game of basketball. Then there are those young men and women meeting here daily to encourage each

other as disciples of Jesus Christ. In a time when students have told me of their stressful semester with online classes and the limited number of friends they see, I realize how important the presence of the Newman Center is on-campus. **We've become a place that stabilizes students' lives, that gives them things that endure, the truth of the faith, the experience of God in prayer, authentic friendships.**

I am so grateful to serve at this Newman Center. Grateful for the Father's providential care, grateful for the extraordinary students He has brought to our Newman Center. The Newman Student Board merits special mention. **While so many groups have reduced or eliminated their activities in the face of Covid-19, our Student Board has been tireless and creative in adapting our activities to the times.** They've moved some events outside, shuffled rooms to allow for more space, and have come up with new events to serve their fellow students. They have stepped up their leadership in worshipping God, teaching the truth and serving the poor through many and varied service opportunities.

And my final thanks go to you! Thank you for all you've done to support the life and mission of the Newman Center. **We continue to work hard to ignite the fire of faith on campus.**

Peace of the Lord,

Fr. Luke Meyer, Pastor



Reach Higher

How our FOCUS director found Christ on campus -- and leads others to Him.



Seyha has made climbing a major part of his ministry, meeting students at the climbing wall to share the Gospel with them.

SEYHA SAUMWEBER, OUR FOCUS DIRECTOR WAS INTERVIEWED BY JOHN GOERKE. SEYHA IS "S" AND JOHN IS "J". THIS INTERVIEW HAS BEEN EDITED.

J: So, Seyhah, who is Jesus?

S: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Father. He is both fully God and fully man. He came and lived amongst us and died for our sins so that we can have a relationship with God the Father. He invites us into a relationship, not only just a personal relationship with Him through prayer, but also a relationship with the Church.

J: Now, how often do you have a student ask the question that buntly?

S: Not often...

J: What is a typical interaction with a student like as a FOCUS missionary?

S: When I'm out bare-handing, normally I'm asking the question. "Who is Jesus to you?"

(Both laugh.)

J: What is "bare-handing" for those who

don't know?

S: We just go out [on-campus]. It's called bare-handing because we don't bring anything with us and we go out with the intention to meet someone new. That's the first thing, the main point: just to meet people where they're at and spark up a conversation. The second thing is to share the Gospel if time permits.

J: Are there other things you do on campus, as a FOCUS missionary, besides bare-handing?

S: There's three specific things that we really focus on.

J: No pun intended?

S: ...

J: FOCUS on?

S: Oh yeah. *(Laughs)* That happens a lot to us.

J: *(Laughs)* I'm certain it does. They didn't pick a more obscure word, or some, like, "Faithfully Offering Christ..."

S: Or as I like to say: "Freakishly Obscure

Cult Under Seyha."

(Both laugh.)

J: That's good. Can I put that in the Newsletter? That's actually really good.

S: *(Cracking up.)* Yeah. You can.

(Both continue laughing.)

S: So there are three things we want to achieve. One is Divine Intimacy. That's about growing in our relationship with Christ, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, and drawing others into that. [Two is] building Authentic Friendship. We want to encourage true friendship amongst one another. But not just among [ourselves] or even fellow Christians, but also amongst the world. And the third thing is clarity and conviction for the Little Way of Evangelization.

J: What's that?

S: I invest in a few people and build them up and help them to invest in others. And to invite them into that Divine Intimacy and Authentic Friendship. The main way we accomplish this mission is through Bible studies and group discipleship. Bible studies range from 4 to 10 people. And from there we discern [a smaller group] who might be called to this way of evangelization. So we start equipping them to do the same and teach others to do the same.

J: So how did it happen for you? How did you get involved? Maybe we could, I don't know, go all the way back to [your childhood in] Cambodia for a second?

S: Do you want to hear my testimony?



Seyha prays during Holy Hour.

J: Yes, please.

S: Like you said, I grew up in Cambodia. And I actually was born very poor. My mom and I were homeless for the first six years of my life. My mom contracted HIV/AIDS and had a daughter who also had it (AIDS) and passed away. And as my mom was dying -- I was taking care of her in the hospital -- this priest, Fr. Jim, who's a Maryknoll priest, he helped both my mom and I get set up with the Missionaries of Charity. The Missionaries had two homes and one was for people dying of HIV/AIDS at the time. So as my mom was passing away she was asking for this priest to adopt me. And he said, "I can't. I'm a Catholic priest. I can't adopt him. But I promise he'll be taken care of."

And around that same time, after my mom passed, my parents -- my adopted family now -- were looking to adopt a kid. They didn't care about age. I was roughly around six-years-old. Oh! Fun fact: I don't know my real age. *(Chuckles.)*

J: Oh really?

S: Yeah. So my parents adopted me. And they happened to know Fr. Jim because they were Maryknoll missionaries as well. So that's how I became adopted. And even back then, God's grace was moving in my life. There's no... there's nothing that I earned to be adopted. To, like, come out of poverty. To come out of homelessness. But the sheer gift of God the Father through this amazing family that I have now.

And fast forward when I went to college. I was living the typical college life. I got into partying and drugs. And, you know, women.

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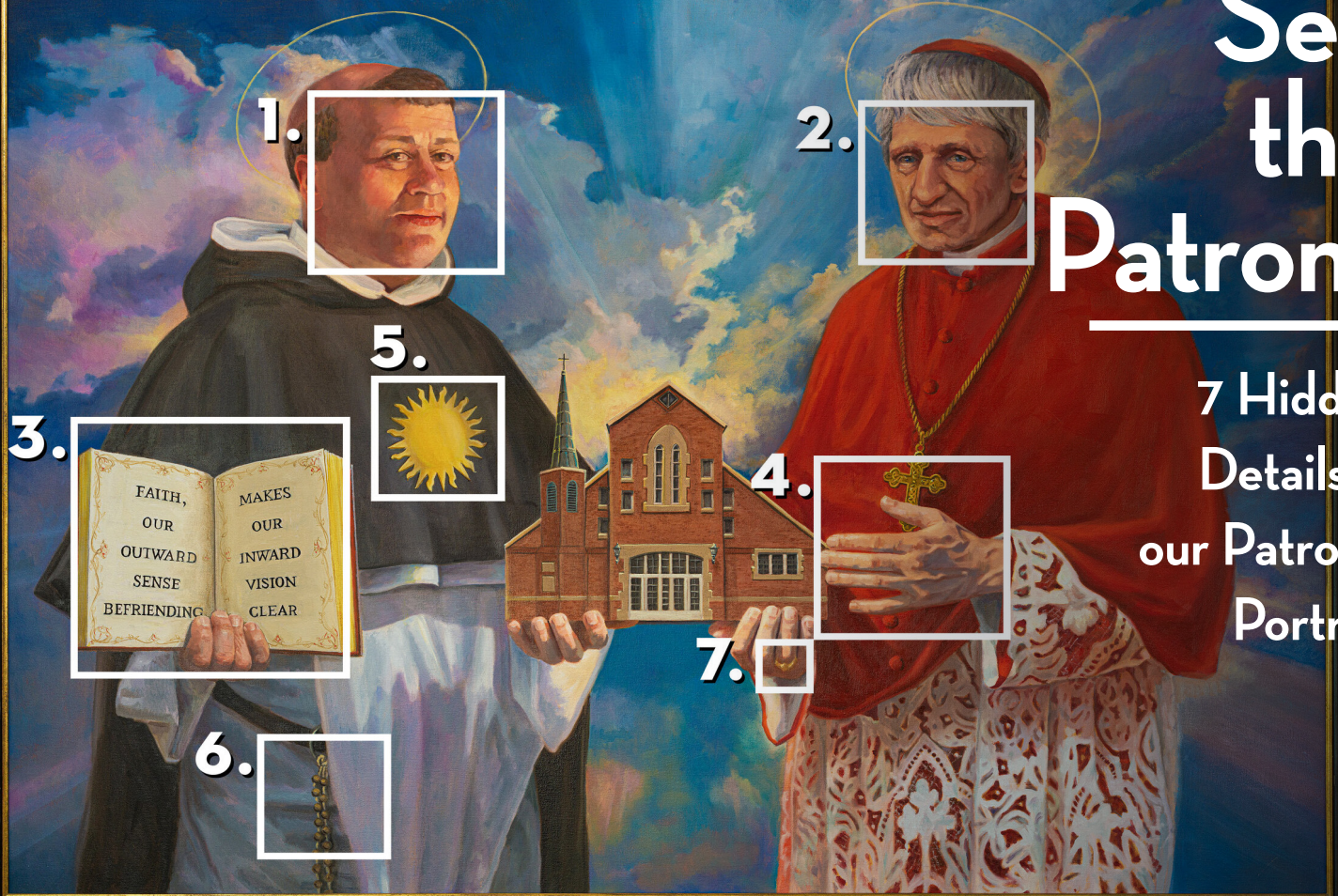
IGNITE THE NIGHT

On October 3rd, students and missionaries of ~~und~~Catholic held a night of adoration, prayer and fellowship to pray for our campus and the world. They invited students who had never been to the Newman Center before.

A student kneels in adoration of the Eucharist during Ignite the Night.

See the Patrons

7 Hidden Details in our Patrons' Portrait



1. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

St. Thomas Aquinas is our patron saint. Known as the “Angelic Doctor”, Thomas Aquinas was a mediaeval monk who produced a huge corpus of theological work. Thomas Aquinas was so confident that faith and reason are compatible, he synthesized or brought together the revelations of Scripture and the philosophy of ancient Greece. His work remains one of the greatest theological achievements ever.

2. ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

Newman Centers all over the world are named in honor of St. John Henry Newman. “Newman Centers” are so named because Newman had a passion and a genius for Catholic education. He wrote one of his most famous books — *The Idea of a University* — about how Catholic faith and universal learning complemented one another. He also was the founding president of The Catholic University of Ireland.

3. TANTUM ERGO

The Pange Lingua by St. Thomas Aquinas is one of the most beautiful hymns ever written about the Eucharist. Father Luke and the Missionaries often sing it at the end of their daily Holy Hour. Here, in the painting, Aquinas displays a short lyric from this hymn, describing the help that faith gives our “outward senses” — in modern terms: the compatibility of faith and reason.

4. NEWMAN'S HAND

John Henry Newman wrote over 20,000 letters in his lifetime. He also suffered from arthritis. Late in his life, a simple note — 4 or 5 sentences — could take an hour to painfully etch. Yet he took the time to write to the many pupils he taught, in addition to fellow priests and friends.

5. THE SUN

St. Thomas Aquinas is almost always shown with a sun on his chest. That's where we got the idea for the undCarholic logo. But why a sun? The

short answer is that the sun is a way to symbolize wisdom. Wisdom illuminates the truth as the sun illuminates the world.

6. AQUINAS' ROSARY

St. Thomas Aquinas was a Dominican priest. One of the distinctive features of the Dominican habit is the rosary worn at the waist. Here's the thing: In mediaeval times, a sword would typically be worn in this spot on the waist. So, by putting their rosaries there, Dominicans were showing that the true weapon is prayer.

7. NEWMAN'S RING

John Henry Newman was made a Cardinal toward the end of his life. What makes his elevation to the College of Cardinals unique is that he was never a bishop. This leads us to the ring. Today, a priest receives a ring when he is consecrated a bishop. But in Newman Day, every new Cardinal was given a special ring by Pope Leo XIII. .



“My Second Home”

A Student Reflection

by Emily Sears

Greetings! My name is Emily Sears. I am a senior anthropology and history student at UND. I originally hail from the bustling city of Maddock, North Dakota. My upcoming graduation in December has led me to reflect on my time here at UND. Many, many things have changed since my freshman year—my hair is longer, my classes are harder. But, through all the growing and changing, and renovations, one thing has been steadfast in my university life: the Newman Center.

The Newman Center has been a constant in my life—a comfort and refuge amidst this wild semester. I have the privilege of being involved in FOCUS bible studies that are offered here. This year especially, the study that I lead and the study I attend **have provided me with the much-needed human interaction that is lacking in my academic classes this fall.** My courses are hybrid: we meet in class once a week and the rest of the class periods are on Zoom. This means long days in my apartment, staring at a screen with little more than my house plants to keep me company. But my Bible studies have provided me with a community that strives to follow Christ -- a source of hope and solidarity in these bizarre times.

Since freshman year, the Newman has become my second home. Whether it be for Mass, Bible studies, discipleship, Student Board meetings, or just praying in the chapel -- I find myself inside its brick façade nearly every day of the week. I have deepened my relationship with Christ and I desire to share the love of God with others. Sometimes I wonder what my life would have looked like if I had not encountered the Newman Center ... back in 7th grade.

I am proud to have witnessed 10 Welcome Weekends

here in Grand Forks. I have three older siblings who also attended UND, with my eldest brother starting his college career in 2010. My youngest sibling status also gained me the title of “move-in crew”. **Along with arguing about who had to move in the bed, my family also had a tradition of going to Mass at the Newman Center on the Sunday of Welcome Weekend.** As the years went by and I started to grow in my own faith, I found it inspiring that young college people would desire to pursue their faith in a culture that seems so contrary to it. When I decided that I wanted to go to UND, I also decided I wanted to make my faith a priority. I knew a great place to start would be the Newman Center.

As an eleven-year-old, I could never have imagined the impact the Newman Center would have on my life. **I am incredibly grateful for the Newman because it not only provides opportunities for spiritual formation, but it has also graced me with life-long authentic friends who challenge me in my faith.** I am also immensely thankful the Newman offers easy access to the sacraments on campus. Daily Mass, adoration, and confession have been safe harbors from the sometimes-overwhelming sea of college life. **Having a church so close to where I live has kindled within me and my friends the fire of faith and the love of Christ.**

Adoration has been a notably beautiful gift that the Newman has given me, and I cannot express my gratitude for its presence on campus. Needless to say, having daily adoration in a rural community is difficult to accomplish. However, **I have experienced many healing and transformative moments in adoration at the Newman Center.** Being able to attend adoration almost daily on campus is extremely special to me. No matter what kind of day I am having, entering the quiet and tranquil chapel to meet Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament always puts my life into focus. **Adoration at the Newman has given me a place to go when the rigors of university life are too much,** and a haven to surrender the deepest longings of my heart to the one who knows them better than even I know myself.

I am but one person, and the effects the Newman Center at UND has had on my life and my endless gratitude for it are no doubt shared by countless others who have also experienced a deepened faith. **The Newman Center is so much more than a place that provides fun social activities; it is a place to cultivate friendships and a lasting faith that students will carry with them throughout their lives, planting into new spiritual communities -- making the world a lot more fruitful.** I can safely say that my life at the Newman has given me the best gift anyone could receive—a love for Christ and his children and a desire to share this with others.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS NEWMAN CENTER

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See more photos on our website...

...undcatholic.org/media-home.



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And I was just playing football one evening during Welcome Week and a FOCUS missionary comes by. His name was Andy. We started a conversation.

Now my parents had been pushing me to go to the Newman Center, but I was like “I’m not. That’s not for me. I’m not religious. That sounds stupid.” I told Andy that. And he said, “I just feel like the Lord is calling me to talk to you.” And I think it was first -- in my entire life -- the first genuine conversation I’d had with someone that was my age.

So Andy invited me to a Newman “house party”. We went to that house and there was a bonfire. And I thought there was going to be a keg, but it was a root beer keg.

J: Get ya every time.

S: Works every time. “Come on over! We have a keg! No gonna tell you what’s in it...”

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J: (Laughs.)

S: But Andy was pretty honest with me, and from our conversation he asked me if I had a faith life. I said, “Not really, I was raised Catholic but... I haven’t gone to church in probably, like, 3 years.” Then he started inviting me to come to Church with him. And then I went on a retreat. And on that retreat, I encountered Jesus in confession. I encountered him, and I’m like, “OK. I can no longer be agnostic about God. He’s either real and has to mean something or He’s not and nothing matters.” And to me, in my mind, there’s just too much evidence of God. So I made a decision that night at the retreat, after confession to find out what this means for me. And that started this journey. -- and a FOCUS missionary was a huge part of it.



What a year to live at the Newman House! With most classes being online, many of the community rooms have become classrooms, and more time at home has also meant movie nights, fun activities, and sharing meals. Along with Women’s Nights (continuing with precautions), we plan to keep offering community as safely and authentically as we can!

Thank you to everyone who has supported our house and our Newman Center! These womens’ lives are better for having been here.

- Traci Kulesa, House Director