



huskercatholic

forging college students into saints, fully alive in Christ



By Father Robert Matya,
Pastor

Earlier in my priesthood, I would make visits to Monsignor Charlie Keenan, who has now gone on to his eternal reward. I always enjoyed our visits, and would sometimes ask him to hear my confession. Upon leaving he would say the same thing almost

every time, “Live with an attitude of gratitude.” I still take those words to heart and try to live each day with a disposition of gratitude to God. Monsignor Keenan’s advice is rooted in Scripture and the lives of the saints. It is St. Paul himself who says in his first letter to the

Thessalonians, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thes. 5:18)

As Father Timothy Gallagher points out in his book *The Examen Prayer*, Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s basic

(continued on page 2)

(continued from cover)

attitude toward God was one of deep gratitude. “For Ignatius, the cospiritual day or simply a devout practice ... it is the heart itself of the way he understands God and relates to God.” (*The Examen Prayer*, p. 58)

In Father Michael Gaitley’s book, *Consoling the Heart of Jesus*, he quotes Ignatius’ powerful statements about the harm a lack of gratitude causes in the spiritual life. “It seems to me in light of Divine Goodness ... that ingratitude is one of the things most worthy of detestation before our Creator and Lord ... For it is the failure to recognize the good things, the graces, and the gifts received. As such, it is the cause, beginning, and origin of all evil and sins.” (*Consoling the Heart of Jesus*, p. 421)

In another one of my favorite contemporary spiritual writer’s books, Father Jacques Philippe quotes St. Thérèse of Lisieux on gratitude. “What most attracts God’s graces is gratitude, because if we thank Him for a gift, He is touched and hastens to give us ten more, and if we thank Him again with the same enthusiasm, what an incalculable multiplication of graces!” As Father Philippe says following this quotation from St. Thérèse, “The more we cultivate gratitude and thanksgiving, the more open our hearts are to God’s action, so that we can receive life from God and be transformed and enlarged. By contrast, if we bury ourselves in discontent, permanent dissatisfaction, then our hearts close themselves insidiously against life, against God’s gift.” (*The Way of Trust and Love*, p. 111-112)

It does not take but a second at any point in a given day for me to call to mind that I have been given so much to cause me to live in continual gratitude toward God. I grew up with parents who loved me; I am still very close to my siblings, nieces, and nephews. They are a constant source of encouragement and love for me.

I am so grateful for the vocation God has called me to in the priesthood. I shudder to think that for a time, I tried to run from that call. But God has proven to me countless times that His plan is always better. I am grateful to the priests who have mentored me and those I have served with in ministry. At the Chrism Mass this

“The more we cultivate gratitude and thanksgiving, the more open our hearts are to God’s action, so that we can receive life from God and be transformed and enlarged.”
— Father Jacques Philippe

year, we were standing outside the Cathedral afterwards and I just happened to be standing by most of the priests who have served as assistants here at the Newman Center during my time as pastor. At Father Sasse’s suggestion, we snapped a group pic, and that pic puts a big smile on my face every time I look at it.

A great deal of gratitude fills my heart for the directors, support staff, and missionaries who I work side by side with each day in this apostolate. Their dedication to the mission of this apostolic work cannot be beat. They are amazing!

I am so grateful for the students, who are the reason this apostolate exists. Their goodness moves me in multiple ways each day, as it does now, sitting with some of them in front of our Eucharistic Lord here in the chapel. I am still moved at the many ways our students came together preparing so that we could celebrate the Easter Vigil with such beauty and solemnity. Their willingness to serve is truly an inspiration.

There are so many reasons to be grateful; too many to mention in this article. But I would be remiss if I did not express gratitude to our benefactors who fill my heart with so much joy. Thousands of donors have believed in our mission and have supported us in our ‘A Great



Pictured: Fathers Jay Buhman, Ben Holdren, Steve Mills, Robert Matya, Brian Kane, and Alec Sasse. Not pictured, Father Tom Dunavan has also served as an associate pastor with Father Matya.

Problem to Have’ capital campaign and in our ministries. I know that all of us who labor in this apostolate are so inspired and grateful for your generosity.

I am so grateful for each gift, but I also want to highlight a recent gift that was given to the Newman Center. In expressing our gratitude to God for the gifts that we have been given, He has multiplied those gifts.

So much so that he recently caused our jaws to drop to the ground when through the generosity of John and Pat Miller, our remaining church construction debt has been retired. John and Pat have been behind me and with me since the very beginning of my time here as pastor. I remember well, in those early days John asking me, “What is your vision, Father?” And now to receive this gift from John and Pat makes

me sit and weep tears of joy and gratitude for their generosity and God’s goodness.

So, thank you Monsignor Keenan, St. Paul, St. Ignatius, and Thérèse for teaching me the importance of gratitude. I fully believe that “what most attracts God’s grace is gratitude.”



“Jesus does not demand great actions from us, but simply surrender and gratitude.”

— St. Thérèse of Lisieux

A FOCUS on Christian Discipleship

Throughout this Spring semester, our FOCUS team has worked to embrace a deeper relationship with Christ and His Church by imitating the main practices of the first Christians. In the New Testament, the earliest converts to Christianity “held steadfastly to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42). These practices were

evident in our first event of the semester called “UNL Christian Fellowship,” which collaborated with six other campus ministries. We gathered in friendship for prayer and ecumenical dialogue regarding topics unique to our faith communities.

Just a few weeks later we hosted our SEEK22 FOCUS Conference and hundreds of UNL students gathered in true fellowship to learn more of the rich teachings of the Catholic Church and encounter Christ through prayer and the Sacraments. These events were great avenues for strengthening one another in the faith and casting a wider net to those outside of Catholic or Newman Center circles.



An estimated 150 missionaries and student leaders gathered from denominations across campus in Rosary Hall for their discussion and prayer.

(continued on page 4)

Mission in Mexico!



The Newman Center group poses in front of Antigua Parroquia de Indios (The Old Parish Church of the Indians). Father Sasse was given an Our Lady of Guadalupe chasuble as an expression of gratitude from the missionaries and students.

A FOCUS on Christian Discipleship (continued from page 3)

Over Spring Break, four FOCUS missionaries from our team joined Father Sasse and 34 students on a mission trip to Mexico City. Our Newman Center family was blessed to visit Our Lady of Guadalupe and had many opportunities to meet Christ in the poor. Though our group was no longer in Lincoln, Nebraska, the same Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, made Himself known through the fellowship with one another on the trip and the rhythm of daily Mass and Holy Hour.

This week was transformative and a catalyst to deeper friendship and zeal for mission as everyone returned to campus.

While large events and mission trips are exciting and wonderful opportunities to encounter Christ and His Church, the habits of Acts 2:42 have continued to flourish in our Bible studies. Many FOCUS missionaries and students have been leading Bible studies about the “Story of Salvation.” This has allowed our evangelistic efforts to concentrate on the narrative of God’s love for humanity from the

beginning of creation all the way to our present day and age. The history of salvation revealed throughout the Scriptures is our story. Our hearts are like the hearts of the disciples on the road to Emmaus that burn within us when we gather together as friends to open the Scriptures in our homes and on campus. Our spiritual conversations, centered on the Word of God, lead us back to the sacramental life, the breaking of the bread and prayer (Acts 2:42).

By Max Chapman,
Varsity Catholic Missionary



From left to right: Student Rosie Lang, Father Alec Sasse and FOCUS missionary Anders Peterson share the joy of Christ’s love with children in Mexico City.

Being Known, Chosen, and Loved

By Ashton Armenta, Sophomore Student

Hello, my name is Ashton Armenta, I am a second-year student at UNL from Albuquerque, New Mexico and I was just baptized and confirmed this past Easter Vigil at the Newman Center! Growing up, faith was always a foundation in my household - family nightly prayer and attending church regularly.

Over the course of my childhood, I attended several different denominational churches, but the Catholic Church was always a constant. We attended Mass on Easter, Christmas, and throughout the year. My freshman year of college I wanted to deepen my relationship with Jesus and find people who could help me do just that.

I reached out to a friend in my sorority on Ash Wednesday last year and asked her if I could tag along to our Delta Gamma Bible study. Little

did I know, this would change my life forever. The women in this Bible study are now my dearest friends; my favorite church buddies, shoulders to cry on, and the women who have walked alongside me on my journey home.

Not long after attending that Bible study, I was introduced to the Newman Center. I began going to daily Mass, asking Father Sasse about a million questions, spending weekends on retreats, and going to RCIA. The truth I found and the relationship I developed with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were beyond words. Throughout this past year at the Newman Center, I have received so many graces and have been surrounded by truly the most joyful and faithful people.

The Lord has shown me so much of His love through them.



“I will never forget, after receiving the Eucharist for the first time, kneeling and weeping tears of joy ...”

I will never forget, after receiving the Eucharist for the first time, kneeling and weeping tears of joy, my friends walking past, hugging, and embracing me. I have never felt so known, chosen, and loved. I am truly blessed to be a part of this community, alongside my new brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Splendor of the Triduum

By Father Alec Sasse, Associate Pastor

We began the Holy Triduum with the Mass of The Lord’s Supper. Father Robert Matya celebrated the Mass, highlighting the importance and the gift of the Eucharist and the Priesthood. As part of the liturgy, Father Matya also washed the feet of twelve students who serve as acolytes.

After Mass, the students worshipped Our Lord at the altar of repose, the Marian Chapel tabernacle, to keep watch with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Good Friday was a day of penance and prayer at the Newman Center. Confessions were available for almost six hours, and there were students going to Confession nearly the entire time! Father Matya offered Stations of the Cross at Noon, and then Father Caleb La Rue celebrated the Commemoration of Our Lord’s Passion at 3pm.

Both liturgies were full, and many students were praying in the church throughout the day. The Knights of Columbus hosted a viewing of Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* in the evening in Rosary Hall, and afterwards pancakes were served.

The highlight of the Triduum and one of the highlights of the entire school year was the Easter Vigil. After seven months of RCIA, nine people were baptized, 19 Christians converted to Catholicism, and two Catholics were confirmed. In total, 30 people received the Sacraments at the Easter Vigil!

The church was completely full as I celebrated the Easter Vigil Mass. A party was held afterwards in Rosary Hall, and the Newman Center was filled with joy and the Holy Spirit!



The Splendor of the Triduum



Holy Thursday



Good
Friday



Easter
Vigil





Curtis Martin, founder and CEO of FOCUS, presented Emily and Drew Hines with the annual St. Francis Xavier Award during the 2022 FOCUS Seek Conference.

St. Francis Xavier Honorees

By Brendon Pond, Director of Collegiate Outreach at FOCUS

Every year FOCUS honors a missionary for their continued efforts in evangelization and continued pursuit of the Lord. This year, of the thousands of former missionaries, Drew and Emily Hines were chosen to receive the St. Francis Xavier Award. Their example and character serves as a witness to the Lord's goodness and as a beacon of hope in the Church.

Drew and Emily have four children and are members of St. Joseph Parish in Lincoln, Nebraska. As a couple, they regularly host students for rosary and breakfast in their home. Drew has served on the parish Stewardship Committee and is involved in men's small group. Emily leads a women's small group and is active in the parish Women at the Well ministry.

Following their years as FOCUS missionaries, Drew began working at the UNL Newman Center in June 2016 where he serves as Associate Director of Development.



"Getting married while serving as missionaries in FOCUS was a tremendous gift to our vocation. We are grateful for so many people that have poured into us, and desire to share what we can with others."

-Emily Hines



Fan the Flames!

By Drew Hines, Associate Director of Development

Recently, my wife met a young family who had just moved to Lincoln from out of state. As they were visiting, Emily shared that she and I had met at the Newman Center. The wife replied, "It seems like everyone around here met their spouse at the Newman Center!" Obviously, it isn't a bad thing for couples to meet elsewhere. But no matter where a couple meets, if the foundation of who they are is rooted in a relationship with Christ, they are off to a pretty good start. That is why the Newman Center exists (not to be an in-person matchmaker) but to forge young people in this relationship with Christ at an incredibly crucial time.

I have heard, more than once over the past few months, "Wow, that's amazing the church is paid off ... what is there to do now?" It's a fair question, but a beautiful center and church were not just built for the sake of it. An incredible number of things happen here, and now is the time—now is the time to fan the flames! There are young men in the Phi Kapp house to help form, Newman student board members

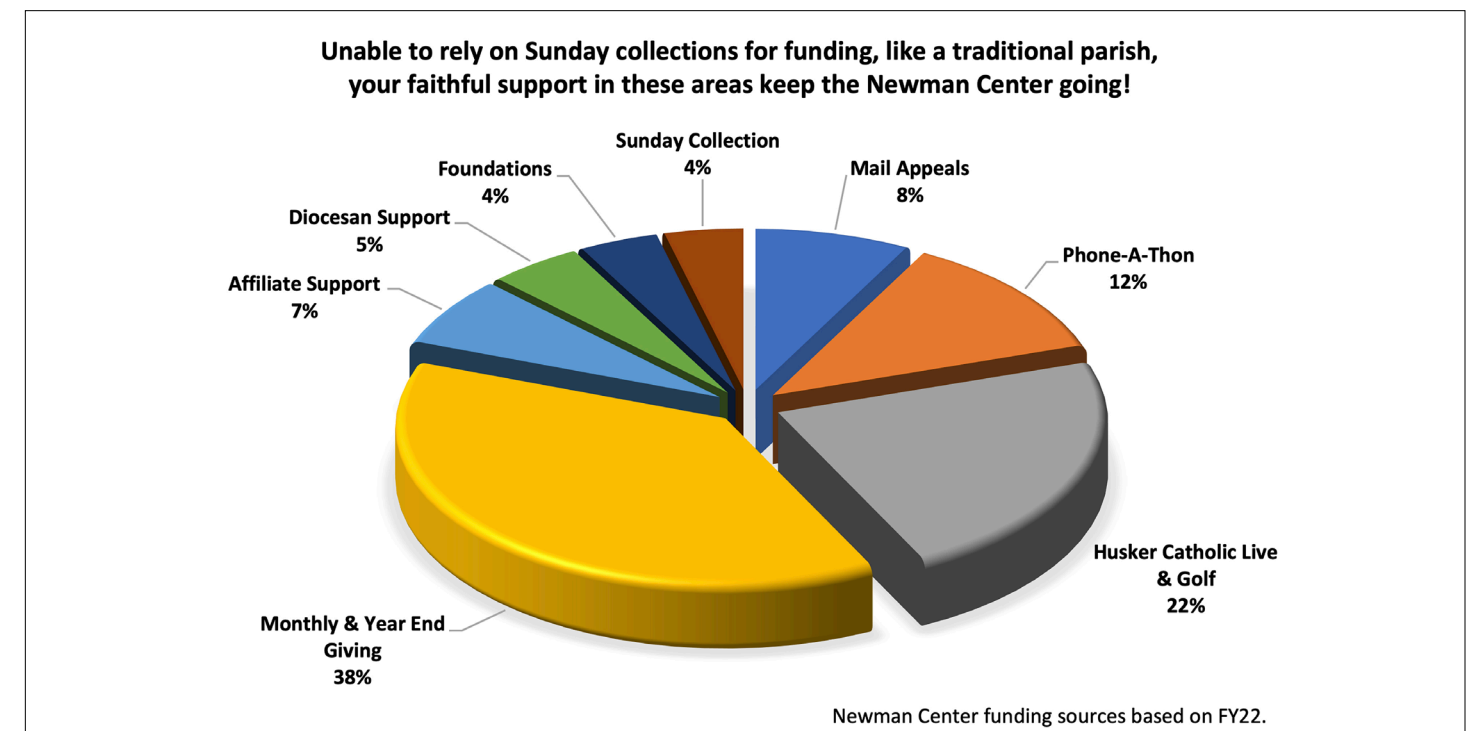
to develop, Pi Chi ladies to invest in, as well as a slew of retreats, conferences, and counseling services that an innumerable number of students could benefit from if we are able to offer more than what is already here. The mission of the Newman Center is to forge college students into saints, fully alive in Christ. Now is the time to do that more than ever. Now is the time to fan the flames!

"Wow, that's amazing the church is paid off ... what is there to do now?"

Why still support the Newman Center? The Newman Center has to operate a bit differently than a normal parish in terms of its financial structure. By definition, the St. Thomas Aquinas Church-Newman Center was established as a private, student parish of Lincoln. We give students plenty of opportunities to financially contribute, but the reason for the Newman Center's existence is first and foremost the

spiritual health of our students. They, for the most part, don't have the financial means to support a parish. But what we do have are people who were deeply impacted by their time here and want to see young people's lives changed like their lives were, as well as parents and relatives of students and other supportive individuals in the community. People like you!

It certainly isn't lip-service to say this outreach to college students wouldn't be possible without you. Without your support, there wouldn't be a FOCUS team here, there would not be catechesis classes, there would not be priests, and frankly there would not be a church! It would still be a club operating out of a university building like it was in 1906 when it started. Your support is what fuels our ability to invest in students every year. Below is a breakdown of where the Newman Center's support comes from every year. Thank you for being so faithfully supportive!



How I Found Myself at the Newman Center

By Katharine Hills, Freshman Student

Hello! My name is Katharine Hills and I'm a freshman from Tennessee majoring in Chemical Engineering. The University of Nebraska Lincoln prides itself on its program "The Complete Engineer", but I didn't end up choosing to become a Husker for the education. I chose it for my faith; I chose it because of the Newman Center.

Before seventh grade, I didn't have any connection to Nebraska whatsoever. I couldn't even point it out on a map. But God knew where I needed to be, so He began planting seeds. In 2015, my brother ended up going to the College World Series in Omaha and while visiting the state, he drove down to Lincoln where St. Thomas Aquinas was finishing up construction. He didn't go inside, but when he came back home from his trip, he ended up telling me and my parents that I was going to go to college there.

I didn't think much of it. Then again, I was twelve years old, but my dad was very intrigued. He followed the Newman Center on Facebook and began donating to the parish. When I started filling out college applications five years later, my dad asked me to apply to UNL. I started the

application but found myself stopping about halfway through. I thought to myself, "Why would I want to go somewhere that's twelve hours away from home?" I just didn't really see the point, so I set it aside. The next day, I received a phone call from one of the representatives at UNL. She said, "We saw you didn't fill out your application all the way. Do you need any help completing it?" Admittedly, due to my pride, I told her, "No, I was just taking a break. I'll finish it up tonight." Later that night, I did just that and sent off my application.

A couple months passed, and the acceptance letters began rolling in, along with the notices of financial aid. I have to admit, I was a bit disappointed by some of the scholarship offers. Arrogantly, I complained to my dad, "It honestly hurts me that all of these colleges are giving me so little aid. I'm worth more than this, aren't I?"

The same day, only two hours later, I ended up receiving a letter from the University of Nebraska Lincoln offering me \$80,000 in financial aid. I fell to my knees, calling out, "Okay Lord, I'm listening!" Maybe it was time to give UNL a chance after all!

I toured the campus and wound up falling in love with the Newman Center. Back home, I can't even receive the Eucharist on the tongue. But here, there's an altar rail where all can receive Him on their knees. I took UNL's offer with open arms, and my relationship with the Lord has grown so much in these past six months. I've even been able to work on my pride! The opportunities this place gives to the broken and weary is so beautiful; I can see Christ's love in this place's members.

I am now Pi Alpha Chi's Social and Campus Activities Chair, I attend two Bible studies weekly, and I attend Mass daily. While I may be twelve hours away from Tennessee, Newman has become what I call home...and I can even point it out on a map!



"The opportunities this place gives to the broken and weary is so beautiful; I can see Christ's love in this place's members."

What's New at the Newman Institute?



Patrick Callahan
Director, Newman Institute for Catholic Thought & Culture

The last year has witnessed tremendous change and growth at the Newman Institute for Catholic Thought & Culture. I was honored in July of 2021 to take over as director of the Institute and moved my family of seven from rural Kansas to the Good Life.

While my undergraduate education at the University of Dallas instilled in me a great love for the value of a small, Catholic liberal arts college (my wife and I were both received fully into the Church during our sophomore year), I came during graduate school to realize that the vast majority of Catholics, around 90%, do not receive the same opportunities as I had. For the last eight years, my mission has been to bring the riches of the Catholic intellectual tradition to students at secular universities. I was, therefore, thrilled to accept this position since it so directly aligns with this vision of academic outreach in service of the Gospel.

But the truly exceptional thing about working at UNL is the student culture. Nowhere else have I found such enthusiasm for wedding together the Catholic intellectual, moral, spiritual, and liturgical traditions into the unity that Christ desires in the human person.


"Nowhere else have I found such enthusiasm for wedding together the Catholic intellectual, moral, spiritual, and liturgical traditions into the unity that Christ desires in the human person."

Over the course of this year, we have more than doubled the number of UNL students involved in our for-credit courses. This Spring, we also welcomed Father Matthew Rolling (UNL, '04) from St. Gregory the Great Seminary who has introduced a new course, "PHL 265: Faith and Reason", to our students. In addition to continuing the good work

of my predecessor, by offering these courses and hosting a distinguished lecture series, we have also added outreach and formation opportunities in collaboration with the Newman Center.

Our faculty-led book club has been well received, doubling in number between the Fall and Spring semester. And UNL students joined Father Alec Sasse and myself for a unique retreat to the Black Hills and Badlands of South Dakota over Fall Break. We will continue next year to offer more retreats that engage the whole of the human person—body, mind, and soul—with trips to Colorado and beyond.

Next year, in addition to offering more courses and increasing faculty, we will also roll out our Certificate in Catholic Thought program. Through classes and seminar experiences, students can continue their Catholic education while enjoying the diversity of majors and opportunities afforded at UNL. Go Big Red!




ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN LEGACY SOCIETY

The St. John Henry Newman Legacy Society is an honorary association of individuals who have made a lasting commitment to St. Thomas Aquinas Church – Newman Center and its mission to share the Gospel Message

Membership in the society is possible during one's lifetime by establishing an endowed fund, through a documented gift in one's estate plans or both.

Members of the St. John Henry Newman Legacy Society will be remembered monthly during a Mass offered for their intentions.



Newman Center Staff

Father Robert Matya
Pastor and Chaplain
rmatya2@unl.edu

Father Alec Sasse
Associate Pastor
fr.alec-sasse@huskercatholic.com

Marlene Beyke
University Director
marlene-beyke@huskercatholic.com

Jude Werner, CFRE
Director of Development
jude-werner@huskercatholic.com

Patricia Montgomery
Controller & HR Manager
patti-montgomery@huskercatholic.com

Patrick Callahan
Director, Newman Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture
pcallahan5@unl.edu

Christine Cremer
FOCUS Team Director
christine.cremer@focus.org

Robert Creal
Maintenance Supervisor
robert-creal@huskercatholic.com

Victoria Fassett
Campus Minister
victoria-fassett@huskercatholic.com

Drew Hines
Associate Development Director
drew-hines@huskercatholic.com

Keri-Timmerman, J.D.
Senior Administrative Assistant to the Development Office
keri-timmerman@huskercatholic.com

Noah Miller
Staff Accountant/Parish Secretary
noah-miller@huskercatholic.com

Emma Breitfelder
Events and Weddings

Father Matthew Rolling, PhD
Instructor, Newman Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture

Peter Martin, PsyD, LP
Licensed Psychologist, Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center
pmartin@cssisus.org

Kloe Sander
Newman Center Board President
newmancenter@unl.edu



Newman Center

St. Thomas Aquinas Church

320 N. 16th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508
(402) 474-7914

newmancenter@unl.edu

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Lincoln, NE
Permit No. 94



Newman Center and FreeWill Partnership

Having an estate plan in place is a powerful way to protect the people you love, steward the resources God has entrusted to you, and create a legacy that extends your faith and values for generations to come.

The Newman Center has partnered with FreeWill to assist our community in completing this important act of stewardship! Using this free estate planning resource, you can write your legal will in 20 minutes or less online at www.freewill.com/huskeratholic



DO YOU HAVE AN ESTATE PLAN?

What will your legacy be?



husker**catholic**

F R E E W I L L