

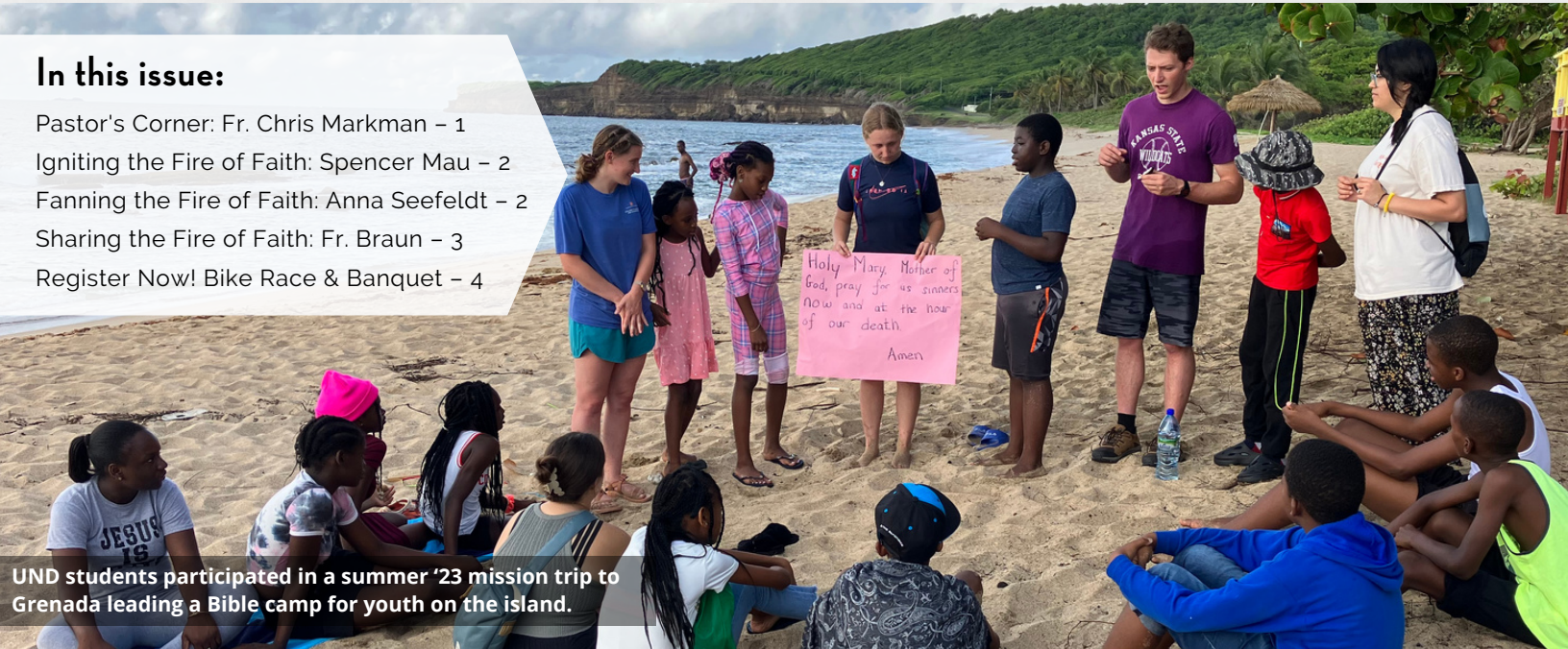


# Newman News

St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center - Spring Newsletter - 2024

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UND students participated in a summer '23 mission trip to Grenada leading a Bible camp for youth on the island.



## Pastor's Corner

### A Message from Fr. Chris Markman

#### Blessings to you all as we celebrate our 100th Anniversary!

This is an excerpt from our 50th Anniversary book: "In August of 1924, a young priest, Lucian J. Arrell was assigned to St. Michael's parish as an assistant pastor. During the trip to Grand Forks, accompanied by the Bishop, he was told he would be expected to do what he could for the students at the University. Father Arrell writes...

"I felt hopelessly inexperienced in the very elements of priestly work, to say nothing of attempting to be a spiritual director to a group of college students in a secular university. Nothing happened that first year. Literally nothing except my own bewilderment."

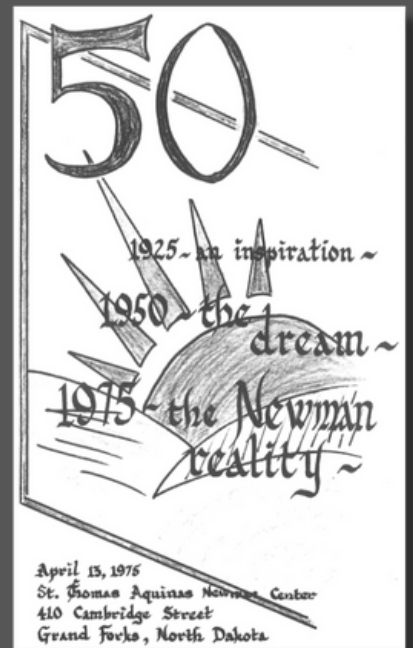
Maybe not every Newman Center pastor has felt that in their first year of ministry at the Newman Center, but I would be lying if I said I hadn't. Perhaps those are the sentiments of many freshmen after their first year of college, or of seniors as they end their time at university and wonder where the time went, and what did happen over those 4 years of nearly constant activity and very little sleep.

Yet, even in our "bewilderments," it is amazing how Jesus can enter into, and even take hold of, our minds and hearts and turn and focus us toward Him. For 100 years now Newman Center ministry has been on campus at UND trying to help students have that experience and take something with them from college that will last hopefully the rest of their lives and into eternity.

You'll see some of those stories shared in this Newsletter, but many more of those stories are being written here every day, and we hope they will continue to be long into the future of undCatholic's ministry here.

**Thank you for your help and support in making that happen!**

Scan here to view the 50th Anniversary book!







## SEEK 2024, Experiencing the Greater Church

Spencer Mau, Freshman, Political Science

When Spencer Mau began the journey of college, he was already on another journey—to find his faith. He wanted to become a Christian because of the witness of morally good Christians he had met in his life. With so many Christian churches to choose from, Spencer embarked on an historical and philosophical journey to choose the right one. Studying the history of the Christian church led Spencer to two options—both Catholic—Roman or Eastern Orthodox.

Invited to the Newman Center by a friend, Spencer experienced his first Catholic Mass. "Every time I go to Mass, it is a spiritual experience like never before," he asserts. That first Mass was just the start of Spencer's journey at the Newman Center. He regularly attends bible study, chess club, and other undCatholic events. "Anytime there is something going on, I am there," he readily admits. "I love the Newman Center being on campus so that I can just stop in."

In January, Spencer attended SEEK 2024 with other undCatholic students and Catholics of all ages from all over the country. "It was the first Catholic, actually, first of any conference, I have ever been to.

Watching the procession of priests, listening to great sermons, and talking to brothers and priests, it felt like I was meeting the Church as a broader institution." Being able to visit many different church buildings while in St. Louis for SEEK also left a big impression on Spencer. "Seeing these places connected me to the traditions of the Church, this long tradition of people serving God. I am part of that institution now and will have a chance to contribute to this Church for people like me in the future."

Spencer returned from SEEK on fire with his new faith. He is looking forward to his Baptism in the spring and his future as part of his new-found Church. "I have been getting more out of life than ever," Spencer says about being a part of undCatholic. "It is a great community, living your best life with the support and camaraderie to be that person that God wants you to be." As for the future, Spencer asserts, "I want to put the essence of my life into the service of God."

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Altar at Shrine of St. Joseph. Taken by Spencer while attending SEEK.



Spencer (in plaid) at the Rite of Election for OCIA.



Spencer and friends enjoy gathering spaces at the Newman Center.



Spencer at Beloved Dinner at the Newman Center.



## Encountering God's Beauty in Grenada

Anna Seefeldt, Senior, Psychology major

"Amazing, life-changing!" is Anna Seefeldt's quick response when asked about her mission trip to Grenada last summer. And to think, she almost let the opportunity slip away. It took the prodding of two FOCUS missionaries and several other people signing up before Anna applied to go on the mission.

The group of student missionaries had been told they would be working in nursing homes, but shortly before departure they learned that they would instead help to run a bible camp for children from the island. "Some of the kids were very religious and some had maybe only been to a church once or twice in their lives. The sisters welcomed everyone." The group led different age groups. Anna was placed with the older kids. They taught three sessions of Catechesis, one on their identity as children of God and their relationship with God, one on the Sacraments, and one on communal life which was a bible study on a gospel reading.

"It was nice to be with the older kids," Anna reflected, "We could have authentic, mature conversations and dig deeper into our faith."

Continued on page 3



## Encountering God's Beauty in Grenada Continued from page 2

Having been in bible studies at undCatholic since Freshman year, and now leading one, Anna felt that she was using the gifts that God had given her to make an impact on the lives of the kids in Grenada. "The sisters helped us to teach the children about the beauty of God's creation that they were living in every day," Anna recalled.

Since returning to school and the Newman Center this year, Anna has been able to reflect on her own personal growth during her time on the mission. "I have been able to encounter God's beauty more, His constant presence, His love for me. I can think about some of the poverty in my life, and patiently wait to see what He wants to show me, wants me to experience." As Anna nears graduation, she is grateful for all that she has learned both at undCatholic and in Grenada, and hopeful that she will find another community within which she can share her love of God and His Church.

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### Sharing the Fire of Faith



## A Critical Rock of Truth

**Father Gerard Braun**  
Former Pastor 1991-1997  
Associate Pastor 1989-1991

**"The Newman Center is a foundation, the rock of Truth, that stands against the winds of change, a culture that wants to sweep it away."**

Father Gerard Braun first experienced the Newman Center at UND as a student, where he served as a student peer minister in the school year of 1978-79. When he returned to serve as Associate and then Pastor at the Newman Center, just 4 years after being ordained a priest in 1985, he knew the importance of reaching out to students, inviting them to experience the community at the Newman Center.

"That community of faith that is a Newman Center, is critical." Fr. Braun uses Psalm 62 to explain, "The Newman Center is a foundation, the rock of Truth, that stands against the winds of change, a culture that wants to sweep it away." Fr. Braun feels that his time as Pastor at the Newman Center helped him build confidence as a servant of God. "Being able to socialize with students, while promoting the faith and providing spiritual direction that helps students see hope in that time of life and gives encouragement to them is important," he stressed. He also feels that the great need for evangelization on a secular campus helped him to grow in his ministry of preaching.

In his time as pastor, Fr. Braun enjoyed welcoming in new students each fall semester. Fr. Braun remembers the many activities of the Newman Center, including Mass, Bible Studies, Catechesis classes, canoe trips, mission trips for Habitat for Humanity in Alabama, Christmas Breakfasts, Ecumenical traveling dinners, dances, movie nights, casino nights, and of course—the bike race. "Of all the events, my favorite was dinners with the peer ministers, served family-style, and the fellowship around the table."

Unfortunately, Fr. Braun's tenure at the Newman Center ended in 1997 with a fire and a flood that led to the need for a new, renewed facility. "I always tell people, 'Fire came in one door, a flood in the other door, so I went out the back door.'" Although it seemed like a tragedy at the time, Fr. Braun is glad that it led to improvements in the facility. He appreciates being close enough to return to the Newman Center when additional priests are needed. Since his time at Newman, Fr. Braun has served at St. Catherine's in Valley City, St. Michael's in Grand Forks, and St. Anthony's in Fargo, where he currently serves as Pastor.




Fr. Braun celebrates his birthday with students.



Fr. Braun, Former Pastor, circa 1990



Celebrating 100 Years!  
1924-2024



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St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center

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Celebrating 100 Years!  
1924-2024



**undCatholic**  
St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center

39th Annual  
**BIKE RACE**  
Saturday, April 27, 2024



In celebration 100-Years of ministry, undCatholic is seeking 100 Alumni and 100 Students to join us as we raise funds to help us "Ignite the Fire of Faith" in our students - and, of course, to battle for victory against NDSU!

Scan the QR Code to REGISTER TODAY!




**Anniversary Banquet**

Registration Now Open!

September 28, 2024

**WHAT:** St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center  
100th Anniversary Banquet

**WHO:** Donors, Alumni, Friends & Guests

**WHERE:** Memorial Union Ballroom  
University Of North Dakota



Scan here to register today!

**Bike With Us!**







Financial Support + Number In-Person Riders + Number & Distance by Remote Riders + Fastest Finish Times =

**We need you on our team! Will you join us?**

