

NEWMAN NEWS



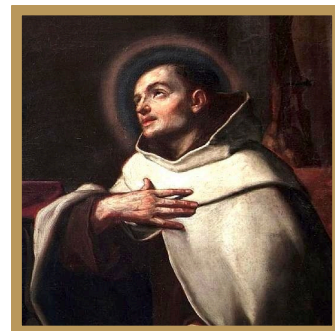
AWAKENINGS 50



This year, Newman had 182 student participants and student leaders at A50. We were overjoyed to welcome so many students into Newman's community and to witness each person receive God's grace in a powerful way. The retreat reminded us that we are **completely one** with Him, held together in His love. We are especially grateful for our campus ministry staff and our incredible student leaders, whose dedication, prayer, and hard work made this weekend possible.

Awakenings is a weekend-long retreat for students, led by students. It offers a chance to grow in a faith-filled community and step away from the busyness of college life. Participants experience prayer, student talks, Mass, games, fellowship, and more. The retreat is held at Cross Pointe Camp & Retreat Center at Lake of the Ozarks.

SAINT WALL ADDITIONS



Sts. Joachim and Anne & St. John of the Cross

Who were Sts. Joachim and Anne?

Saints Joachim and Anne are honored as the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the grandparents of Jesus. They are remembered for their deep trust in God, their steady devotion, and the loving, holy home they created, one that nurtured the Mother of God herself.

Who was St. John of the Cross?

St. John of the Cross embraced the cross with courage and love. A Carmelite priest and partner in St. Teresa of Ávila's reform, he endured persecution and imprisonment, where his deepest spiritual insights were born. As a mystic, poet, and theologian, he taught that the path to union with God requires trust in the paradox of the Gospel: that darkness leads to light, suffering to new life, and the cross to resurrection.

A MESSAGE FROM FR. DAN

“The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Jn. 3:8

The wind is always blowing somewhere, and sometimes we can experience a wind storm. It seems like the Holy Spirit is blowing up a wind storm on campuses across the country, including here at Mizzou. We have nearly 50 people in OCIA to become Catholic. We had a record number of new participants in our Fall Awakenings retreat (97 participants, 182 total). We're on track for a record number of student-led bible studies and students participating in bible studies. The number of students coming to Sunday Masses is the largest in the nearly six years that I've been here.

I keep telling people. It's not my doing or our staff. It's the Holy Spirit! And we're doing our best to keep up. That's where we need you. (Cue the dramatic music.) Pray that our staff and the students continue to respond to how the Holy Spirit is blowing in our lives, and to whom He's blowing our way. The Holy Spirit is calling us to prayer. Our students come here first and foremost to pray, feeling a need to connect with Jesus in their lives. If this is truly the Holy Spirit, He will always lead us to a deeper relationship with Jesus.

One of the ways that I feel convinced we need to respond to the work of the Holy Spirit here at Newman is to hire more FOCUS Missionaries—we don't yet have the funds for this, but I've already asked FOCUS to send us more, trusting that the Holy Spirit won't send us so many students without also enabling the capacity to minister to them. Our current Missionaries are more and more overwhelmed trying to keep up with the mentoring and discipleship that is needed.

But I trust the Holy Spirit. And I'm hopeful with you. Your financial gift can truly make a difference, a Spirit-led difference. I also feel convinced to expand our staff, but will wait on this until more funding is available. We could really use an Assistant Director of Music, a full time Campus Ministry Office Assistant, and a second Pastoral Counselor. Can you help?

I invite you to respond to the Holy Spirit, too. Please help us to grow into the campus ministry that's needed today. Help us to convert the campus to convert the world. I'm sure the Holy Spirit is blowing in your life, too. We can respond together. And please know of my prayers for you! As the Pastor here, I carry in my heart not only our student and resident parishioners, but all who help us in this important ministry, you! May the Holy Spirit fill all of our hearts with Jesus!



Fr. Daniel J. Merz

Fr. Dan Merz, SLD Pastor



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A GOLDEN CELEBRATION

Celebrating 50 Awakenings Retreats

A celebration in honor of 50 Awakenings Retreats at the St. John Henry Newman Center was held on October 12th at the Reynolds Alumni Center. Fr. Dennis Schmidt was in attendance and gave a speech!



A few words on Awakenings from Angelle Hall Director of Campus Ministry

Newman just celebrated our 50th Awakenings Retreat with 182 students! It's been quite a journey from our first Awakenings in the Spring of 1994. We are so grateful to Fr. Dennis Schmidt, Steve Allgeyer, Eddie Hamer, and many others who attended Awakenings at Missouri State and were inspired to bring this to Newman. Awakenings is a retreat in the style of Cursillo-like retreats that began in 1974 at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana. It was developed by Fr. Sam Jacobs, who became Bishop Sam Jacobs. There is no centralized organizing group that tends Awakenings; they are learned and then planted at new campuses with each campus taking on the responsibility for the planning.

In the early years, Awakenings was held at the National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church in Laurie, MO. In the early 2000s, Awakenings moved to St. Joseph's Church and Retreat Center in Edina,

MO. The number of participants and staff continued to grow, and by 2012, the retreat moved to a larger space at Lake Doniphan Retreat Center in Excelsior Springs, MO. In just four short years, we outgrew that space and moved the retreat to Cross Pointe Camp Retreat Center in Rocky Mount, MO in 2016.

No matter the location, faithful student leaders have taken up the opportunity to share their faith in Jesus and offer an opportunity for new retreatants to encounter the Lord. Students attend, and then become the staff for the next retreats. They make many invitations to their friends and classmates, and then place them and their trust in the Lord who always is at work in the Sacraments (Reconciliation and Eucharist), the student talks, the conversations, and the fun! All Glory to God! We are looking forward to the next 50!

AWAKENINGS 50 STUDENT TESTIMONIES



ELIZABETH "BIT" SOCHACKI - SENIOR

College is a journey of growth and self-discovery, where young adults learn to define their own values and priorities. For me, this meant going to Sunday Mass not because my mom told me to, but because I genuinely wanted to, beginning to form my own understanding of what it means to have a relationship with God. It took me about a year and a half into college to realize that I wanted more than just to go to mass, I truly wanted to understand the "why" behind my Catholic roots. Saying "yes" to prioritizing God can be nerve racking when you do not know where to start. I am so grateful that I did not need to figure this out on my own. Through the encouragement of friends, I got involved in an AXO Bible study and discipleship, which opened the door to spending more time at the Newman Center. There, I found a welcoming community and countless opportunities to grow deeper in my faith. As I began attending more events, I was inspired by seeing so many students taking the lead, living out their faith boldly and joyfully. Their example continues to encourage me as I strive to live out my own relationship with Christ every day. I sometimes wish I had found this community sooner.

but I've come to see the beauty in how God meets us right where we are when we open our hearts and allow Him in. These people also encouraged me to attend Awakenings. At first, I thought they were crazy for asking me to go as a senior. I figured this retreat was meant for underclassmen and that I had missed my chance. But deep down, I knew I needed a reset and time surrounded by people with similar values, priorities, and love for Christ. I, yet again, was so amazed by the amount of work and love students and Newman put into such an amazing retreat. I could feel my heart on fire, and it felt like everyone was using their flame to light mine brighter. Faith isn't something meant to be figured out alone. It can be confusing, humbling, and even overwhelming at times, especially when you're trying to make sense of it by yourself. That's why fellowship is so important. Having people who walk beside you, who share their own experiences and help you see how God is working in your life. The Newman community has given me friends who inspire me, mentors who guide me, and a space where I can ask questions, grow, and strengthen my relationship with Christ.



MICHAEL HARK - JUNIOR

When I first came to Mizzou, I was really excited to get involved with other Catholic students. Unfortunately, I got more and more wrapped up in my major and other extracurriculars. I struggled to put God first, and my faith became an afterthought for a long time. Last spring, I really felt called back to the Lord and started attending Newman events again. Even though I'm usually good at talking to people, I was honestly a little scared to get involved because I felt like I had failed as a Christian. But the Newman Center welcomed me immediately and was so excited to have me there—quick to get me involved in as many ways as I wanted.

When I saw the sign-up for Awakenings, I just knew it was something I needed to do, even though I've never been super fond of retreats. I ended up connecting with so many people I had already met at Newman, but on a much deeper level. I felt like I built a small brotherhood while also discerning a much clearer vision of what Christ wants for my life and the relationship He's inviting me into. I learned so much about the importance of prayer and community through Awakenings, and by the time it ended, I was genuinely excited to give back. I hope to join staff for A51!

AWAKENINGS 50 STUDENT TESTIMONIES CONT.



SHEA MCGRAW - SENIOR

Retreats have never been my cup of tea, but I knew that if I didn't go on one, I would regret it. I was nervous going into this – I didn't know many people in the Newman community, and I was nervous that I would feel out of place as a senior. I have to begin with honesty, though. When I first got to the retreat spot, I did start to regret it. Thoughts like "Why did I sign up for this again?" and "Man, I miss my bed right now" were running through my head. I wanted the answer to why I was called there immediately, but that's not how it works. It was only when I started to really listen to the talks given by friends and those I hadn't met yet, to start to understand. I took notes and listened, praying that I would see the reason I was called here after three years of not caring. He met me where I was. As a senior, I have been afraid of what the future is going to hold for me. Where will I live? What will I do? "I'm scared, Lord. Please help me," and He did. Through the talks and time with my small group, I learned to put my trust in Him; to understand how much He has my back, and He has yours too. His blessings didn't stop there, though. I made friends that I would most likely not have met otherwise.

I got closer with girls I was acquainted with but didn't really know. Through intimate talks with my small group to karaoke in the chapel into the late hours of the night, the Lord surprised me with the all the friends I made. Most importantly, He surprised me with how deep my friendship with Jesus became. In only three days, my love for Him was reignited and I learned how to express that through friendship. One of the best parts was that it really didn't matter what year I was. At Awakenings, we weren't freshman or seniors or grad students or anything else but children of God. We laughed together, we prayed together, we were lit by the fire of the Lord together. I never liked retreats, but Jesus showed me goodness anyways. He can turn any bad thing good. He can show you His love and goodness if you give Him the chance. Like Father Andrew told me, "God just wants a daddy/daughter camping trip with you to get to know you better." Whether man or woman, God wants that with you too. Just like a normal camping trip, it isn't required to go in order to have a relationship with your camping partner, but it sure does help you get to know them better.

NEWMAN'S SAINT WALL

Inside Newman's Student Lounge, one wall is dedicated as the "Saint Wall," filled with images of saints nominated by the student community. Established in 2017 after students and campus ministry staff were inspired by the Tulane Catholic Center's saint-filled space, the wall began with eleven saints and a focal-point painting of Our Mother Mary, an original work by Newman alumnus Clayton Jezewak titled "Behold, I am the Handmaid of the Lord," honoring Mary's Fiat in the Gospel of Luke. As the Blessed Virgin watches over our students, we pray that they, too, offer their own "Fiat" when the Lord calls. Since its inception, new saints have been added each year on November 1 in celebration of the Feast of All Saints, nominated by students and selected by campus ministry staff. From 2018 to 2024, five saints were added annually, and in November 2025, St. John of the Cross and Sts. Joachim & Anne joined the wall, bringing the total to 48 saints—with many more still to come.

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5 QUESTIONS WITH TOM NASH



Tom Nash has served the Church professionally for more than 35 years, including as a theology advisor at the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN). He is a staff apologist for Catholic Answers, and a contributing writer for both the *National Catholic Register* and *Catholic World Report*.

1. Reflecting on your time at Mizzou and at Newman, how did it shape your spiritual life and inspire you to work in media and apologetics?

While earning my master's degree in journalism at Mizzou (1984-1985), I was blessed to participate in Catholic life at the Newman Center, including joining the Knights of Columbus—and I remain a Knight forty-plus years later.

I had developed an interest in apologetics prior to grad school, and I thought I'd use the public platform of serving as a journalist (whether in sports or news) to give witness in my personal life. However, a key event at Mizzou contributed to my serving the Church professionally longer term, particularly in the area of apologetics and evangelization. On February 4, 1985, the *Missourian* ran an editorial disagreeing with the Church's opposition to contraception. In a letter to the editor, I responded that the Church supports NFP which maintains the love-giving and life-giving aspects of the marital act, and that God is faithful to those who seek first his kingdom (Matt. 6:33).

2. You've been working for the Church in various roles for more than three decades - what has been the most rewarding? What has been the most challenging?

Being restricted to serving as a conventional reporter for *The Catholic Observer* (Diocese of Springfield, Mass., 1987-1989) was challenging, because I didn't get to write related commentaries directly defending the truth of the Church's position on dealing with AIDS and other controversies, although my experiences convinced me to seek to serve as an advocate/apologist in the long term. In addition, while serving as a theology advisor at EWTN (2007-2015), I did very important work in calling for faithful edits in different programs and movies that we broadcast throughout the world.

My most rewarding service has been serving as an apologist and evangelist: at Catholics United for the Faith (CUF) from 1994-2007, and with Catholic Answers since March 2017. I became a staff apologist at Catholic Answers in July 2025, and I have since moved out to work at our headquarters in El Cajon, California.

3. You've written about the Mass in your book, *The Biblical Roots of the Mass*, is there something that you think Catholics may often overlook or forget regarding the Mass?

I would argue that many Catholics fail to see, or at least don't really appreciate, that the Mass is the New Covenant

5 QUESTIONS WITH TOM NASH

cont. fulfillment of the Old Covenant Passover, and thus a communion sacrifice. Active Catholics typically understand that we partake of our Eucharistic Lord Jesus at Mass, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and provides us eternal life (John 1:29, 35; 6:51-58). But what I think that many Catholics don't grasp well is that Jesus' one sacrifice of Calvary did not begin and end on that first Good Friday. Rather, it began with his Passion, continued with his Resurrection, and culminated in everlasting glory at his Ascension into the heavenly sanctuary, taking not the blood of goats and calves in fulfilling the Old Covenant Day of Atonement/Yom Kippur sacrifices, but his own blood (Heb. 9:11-14). Indeed, the prime function of a priest is to offer gifts and sacrifices (Heb. 5:1), Jesus is a priest in heaven and so must have something to offer *now* (Heb. 8:1-3; 9:23-24); and thus the sacrifice of the Mass is our "window onto heaven," enabling us to offer anew Christ's *one* sacrifice, yet in sacramental form.

4. Do you have any advice for our college students trying to stay engaged in their Catholic faith?

Cultivate and maintain good, faithful fellowship at Mizzou and beyond. Chastity, sobriety, and excellence are foundational, as FOCUS emphasizes so well. Also, as the Lord says, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18); that applies to all of us, not just to those called to the sacrament of Marriage. The Holy Trinity is "an eternal exchange of love" (CCC 221), and

we are called to share in that communal Triune love united with each other. Receive the Holy Eucharist and Confession reverently and regularly, and get in the habit of even about eight to 10 minutes of quiet prayer every day, so that you can hear God's still, small voice in your hearts (1 Kings 19:11-13). Ask for his insight and guidance daily.

5. Who is your go-to Saint?

I have many, including Our Lady of Guadalupe. I was blessed to venerate her and her miraculous tilma in 1990 in Mexico City. Also, I'm drawn to saints who have suffered redemptively for Christ and his Church, including SS. Maximilian Kolbe and Thomas More, and those who fruitfully battled Satan, e.g., SS. John Vianney and Padre Pio, two of the greatest priest confessors of the last two hundred years. What an effective spiritual weapon and means to deeper holiness is the sacrament of Confession!

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