



College Ministry at
NEWMAN
— PARISH —

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

NEW DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH NEW NAME FOR NEWMAN

On November 1, 2025, Pope Leo XIV proclaimed Saint John Henry Newman the 38th Doctor of the Church. He joins a list of Saints such as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis de Sales, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and others whose contributions to the church through their research, study, or writings have contributed greatly to the theology or doctrine of the church. Anyone familiar with Newman knows that his body of work includes thousands of pages from books, sermons, songs, and letters.

Newman, while still an Anglican, was a prime mover in the 19th century revival of Catholicism in England thanks to his part as a member of the Oxford Movement and the Tractarians. The Tractarians were making a subtle (or not so subtle) push for change in the Anglican Church asking for a return to their Catholicity. This was a non-starter for many in the Anglican church but for Newman, it was the beginning of his journey into full-communication with Rome which would finally take place in 1845 after many years of spiritual discernment and deliberation. Newman outlines his journey into the Church in his autobiographical book, the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*.

In becoming Catholic, Newman suffered the loss of not only friendships, but also of relationships within his family. Some of these relationships never recovered, however Newman moved forward in faith. He poured out his heart, soul, and mind into volumes and volumes of letters, sermons, songs, poems, and novel-length commentaries of scripture. Newman is the co-patron of education along with none other than St. Thomas Aquinas - so Newman is in good company and those of us in education are blessed to be able to claim them both. Because of Newman's thorough reasoning, his ability to communicate, and his commitment to orthodox teaching, he is also considered the Father of Vatican II so his writings are not just for looking back into the Church Fathers but they have also helped the Church to look forward.

And speaking of looking forward, after a long process - on January 28, 2026, with the signature of Bishop Ralph O'Donnell, our parish finally became officially known as **St. John Henry Newman Parish**. With Newman's 2019 canonization he became eligible to be our patron saint. The process for renaming took nearly four years to complete with Pope Francis approving our request just weeks before his passing. We have long been known as "Newman" so this is coming full circle for us. While acknowledging Newman, we also plan to honor our previous patrons, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Thomas More in some way. Please join us in celebrating our new name **and** the newest Doctor of the Church. St. John Henry Newman, pray for us.



Portrait of John Newman by Sir John Everett Millais, 1st Bt, oil on canvas, 1881, used with permission - National Portrait Gallery 5295 (London)

INTO THE FUTURE WITH BOLDNESS

The bible is filled with examples of God giving someone a new name (Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Mary, Peter, etc.). The new name revealed and called them to something more. Our Parish was originally St. Thomas Aquinas in 1963. With the new church building in 1994, the Bishop dedicated it as St. Thomas More. And now, the Pope has granted that our new and definitive name is St. John Henry Newman. What is being revealed? To what are we being called? First, there is unity. We're no longer a Parish (St. Thomas More) and a Newman Center, but simply a personal parish named after Newman. We're a parish that has campus ministry as our primary apostolate. And therein, perhaps, lies the calling. The man, St. John Henry Newman, effected profound renewal and conversion through his studies and writings, through his outreach to many in the education mission. Our Parish and our parishioners (resident and student alike) are called to profound renewal and conversion as well—through our studies, certainly—but primarily through a deeper conversion to Christ: in the Sacraments, in the Word of God (including bible studies), on retreats, through service and justice projects, through boldness in witnessing and praying.

One thing that our students keep teaching me by their example is their boldness in witnessing to and praying with their peers. We just brought 44 people into full communion with the Church at the Easter Vigil, because the Word of God will not be confined. Instead, it's proclaimed with boldness, and new people are continually invited to come and pray with us. I love that Newman is known as a place of prayer for all peoples!

With boldness, we've asked the FOCUS organization for additional missionaries and we're in the process of hiring an Assistant Director of Music to increase the engagement and formation of our parishioners. Music will help us to convert the campus. Service and Justice will help us to convert the campus. Prayer will help us to convert the campus. The Sacraments will help us to convert the campus. Your prayers, your help, your gifts will help us to convert the campus. And when the campus is converted, the world will follow! Thank you for your generosity to Newman. Thank you for being part of our new name, our deeper calling, our bolder witness sing, our heartfelt praying.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!!

Peace and All Good,



Fr. Dan Merz, SLD
Pastor



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BEAUTY IN SILENCE

Connor Souders, Computer Science, Columbia, MO

My experience at the Cor Ad Cor Silent Retreat was something I had never spiritually experienced before. I never realized that strict silence could be such a beautiful way to enter into a state of resting with the Lord.

Throughout the weekend, I read a spiritual book, prayed in adoration in the chapel, got spiritual direction, and took in the beauty of the Marianist Retreat Center which was filled with Catholic art. I couldn't name the last time I read an entire book by my own will, let alone in 48 hours. I read *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* by Brant Pitre, where I was able to take in many new understandings of the way our Lord has revealed and presents himself to us.

Prayer might be the most obvious experience at a silent retreat but remains the most beautiful. When you have an entire weekend at your disposal without worldly distractions, it is wonderful what unexpected topics you take to prayer. It felt great knowing God was entering into places in my life that I hadn't known to let him before. A complement to prayer was the artwork. The main hallway had a different Marian depiction and a description between each set of doors. One depiction I wasn't familiar with, but I thought was beautiful was *Our Lady of Africa*, showing how catholic our Church truly is. I spent a good portion of time browsing the art, thinking, and praying with the amazing ways the Saints move in the Church.

Finally, spiritual direction helped me take the beautiful experiences I got from silence and give me applicable and lasting advice that I could apply to my life. I truly believe my spiritual growth is still boosted by my prayerful weekend at the Marianist Retreat Center.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

New signs. Since we are officially Newman all-around, we were able to make some updates to our signage - old and new. We have been working on better communicating who we are to campus and the community. One aspect of that is improved signage. We have marked the 5th Street and Turner Avenue corner with a sign that lights up at night, placed new lettering on the east side of Newman facing campus (that also lights up!) and were able to give the stone sign on Turner Avenue a makeover. There is also new signage in the Gathering Space. We are grateful to a donor who helped to fund a large portion of the costs of these updates.



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FOCUS ON FOCUS

by Zach Glass



My name is Zach Glass, and I currently serve as the team director here at Newman. I lead a team of 5 other missionaries here on Mizzou's campus. This is my fourth year as a FOCUS missionary, but my first year at Mizzou. I've also served at the University of Illinois (2 years) and the University of Wisconsin - Madison (1 year).

Our mission with FOCUS is simply to make Jesus Christ known to the students on campus and invite them into a deeper personal relationship with Him. We work very closely with Newman Parish's campus ministry to strategize on how we can best engage and form students on Mizzou's campus. We organize weekly bible studies and discipleships (or mentorship groups) for students on campus and are constantly trying to help them unpack the beauty and depth of the Catholic faith. We currently have 220 students in discipleship and 600+ who have come to bible study. We also recruit and

organize for students to go on mission trips, retreats, and even our annual conference called SEEK. Everything we do is focused on helping students build a daily personal relationship with Jesus.

I love this work because the witness and mentorship of many missionaries at my alma mater, the University of Nebraska, truly changed the trajectory of my life. Through their persistent pursuit of me and their consistent invites to bible study and retreats, I came to encounter Jesus Christ for the first time in the Eucharist. It changed my life to experience Jesus in the Eucharist and to realize how real He is. I gave my entire life to him when I was in college, and I made a commitment to Him that I would live the rest of my life with Him in the center. When I put Him into the center of my life, my whole life began to change. I had meaning and purpose, a sense of direction, and peace reigned in my heart. I had found my home in His heart, and I wanted to bring as many people to Him as I could so they could also experience His love. This is why I am a missionary, and one of my greatest joys has been getting to work with the men in Fraternities at Mizzou. Every month at Mizzou, we host Mass in a fraternity, and on average, we see about 150 fraternity men and sorority women show up to worship! Thank you for all of your support in allowing us to serve the men and women on this campus! Attending SEEK 25 was truly one of the best experiences of my life.

Through a generous donor we were able to add a sixth missionary for this semester and we are already seeing the fruits of this decision. Thanks be to God!

We are grateful for our FOCUS missionaries and for the work they are called to do on our college campuses.

*Top row L to R - Isaac Whitrock, Zachary Glass, Kennedee Weber
Front row L to R - Delaney Olmer, Julia Hejkal, Sophia Portner*



SPRING BREAK 2026

Grant Kingery, Business Administration with an emphasis in Finance, Platte City, MO (Grant was among ten students and two staff who traveled to Rutledge, TN for an alternative Spring Break with the Glenmary Home Missioners, glenmary.org).

During our time with the Glenmary Home Missioners, our group split into teams each day to carry out various acts of service. While one team worked on building and repairing a deck for a local resident, the other assisted at a food bank, packaging meals and helping community members carry supplies to their vehicles. These tasks allowed us to provide tangible support to the area, but the experience went much deeper than the manual labor itself.

The true highlight of the trip was the opportunity to make genuine, loving connections with the people Glenmary serves. We were welcomed with incredible hospitality everywhere we went, from our service sites to the local churches where we joined the community for Daily Mass. I truly felt the Lord's presence not just in our work, but in the communication and fellowship we shared with those we met. It was a powerful experience of holy growth and an amazing reminder of the importance of community and care.



Larissa Nogueira, Biology/Pre-Med, Salem VA (Larissa was one of more than 20 students and missionaries from Newman who traveled to Pamplona Alta, Peru to work and to build community.



This year for Spring break I decided to go on a mission trip with FOCUS. Initially our mission trip was planned for Ecuador; however, due to safety concerns it was cancelled. And so, two days before departure, we were redirected to Peru!

The Lord's will was for us to go to a small town in the mountains outside Lima, called Pamplona Alta, and help build a retaining wall to extend the road so a water truck could pass.

We spent a week on this project but quickly learned that mission work is not about efficiency – it is about making connections and sharing the love of Christ. Though the labor was physically demanding at times, it often felt like play. We mixed concrete by hand, and with such a great group of people, it never felt difficult.

This was my first time in a Spanish-speaking country, and I was blessed to serve as a translator for my team. I joined house visits with our priest, Fr. Andrew, translating conversations and prayers so all could understand.

This trip was truly the best adventure of my life. I've never experienced so much joy and love that it is difficult to put into words. But with the help of some pictures, you may begin to see how amazing this trip was. The Lord blessed us with love, charity, and hope.



NEWMAN RETREATS

AWAKENINGS

Students experience God's love in a powerful way at Awakenings, a retreat held once each semester by students for students. It's an opportunity to meet new people and build relationships. Awakenings is held at Cross Pointe Retreat Center at the Lake of the Ozarks. Fellow students give talks and lead discussion groups.



BUSY PERSONS

During this retreat, students meet with a spiritual director for 45 minutes each day and commit to 30 minutes of personal prayer each day while still going to classes, work and all of their other life commitments.

COR ad COR SILENT RETREAT

Cor ad Cor is a retreat focused on receiving and responding to God's call. Participants are encouraged to step back from decisions and focus on their relationship with God. This retreat is open to college-age students who are of junior, senior and graduates. Participants will hear talks from spiritual leaders, then spend time in quiet reflection and prayer.

FRESHMAN IGNITE

Ignite is a 2-day retreat for incoming freshman students each fall. Participants will meet other students who want to live out their faith in college, while learning more about the Newman Center and how they can get involved in their faith community on campus.

SEEK

Held each year in January, (at different locations around the country each year) Newman takes a large group of students to the SEEK Conference, hosted by FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students). Students get to participate in Mass, Adoration and hear from some of today's most dynamic Catholic speakers.

(Peru continued)

Playing tag, soccer, volleyball, and jumping rope with the kids was a beautiful gift. Even greater was seeing Christ shine through their smiles.

On our day off, we visited Lima and explored churches, museums, and the local market. My favorite part was learning about St. Rose of Lima, whom I've grown deeply devoted to.

One of the most amazing moments was processing up the mountain with Jesus in the Eucharist. The path was steep and difficult, yet with the Lord leading, it didn't feel as hard. To me, this reflects following Christ—there will be rocky paths, but He lifts us and guides us towards the Father.

Although I am back in the United States, part of me will remain in Pamplona with the children, families, and workers.

A verse that stayed with us was from Matthew: "And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me.' (Mt 25:40)

I am so thankful for this opportunity to serve His people in Peru and share His love and light. There is nothing greater than that!



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

THE BAHR FAMILY



Ryan, Claire, and Maggie Bahr

When we think of places that are doing good work and are meaningful to us as a couple, Newman in Columbia tops that list. We each took our own path to involvement at Newman during our college years. Claire may have never ended up at Mizzou if not for a phone call her senior year of high school with campus minister Angelle Hall. After feeling a bit lost as an out-of-state student freshman year at Mizzou, Claire took a trip with Newman to their sister parish in El Salvador sophomore year, deepening her faith and friendships, and establishing Newman as a home base for her college career. Ryan was one of the students she met on that trip. He rather quickly found a home in Newman, attending the Awakenings retreat and regular small group Bible studies during his first couple years at Mizzou.

We were each involved with various activities and campus organizations throughout our college careers, yet Newman served as a steady refuge to encounter Christ, walk alongside others, and grapple with big questions and major life decisions. So many of Newman's programs left an impact: Ephesians 3, spring break and service

trips, Awakenings and busy persons retreats, Bible studies, weekly adoration and more. Newman was Ryan's literal home for one year when he served as the campus ministry intern and lived in the apartment upstairs. And Claire, for her part, played the rainstick occasionally at Sunday evening student Masses.

Newman was special to us as individuals and has become that much more special to us as a couple (fun fact: Ryan first asked Claire on a date in the Newman student lounge). We married in 2021, and several members of our wedding party were friends we met through Newman. One is even the godfather to our daughter, Maggie, who was born in August 2024. We now live in Rockford, IL -- Claire's hometown -- where Claire works as a medical speech-language pathologist and Ryan as a mental health nurse. Just last fall we enjoyed a full-circle moment when Maggie got to meet Angelle, at Newman of course.

We felt especially called to give to the Martha Trauth Social Justice Education Endowment because our time at Mizzou was fundamental in shaping our knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching and our worldview with a heart and lens for justice. We feel fortunate to be able to contribute to such a dynamic ministry, supporting Mizzou students in finding valued relationships with God, others, themselves, the community, and the larger world during their college years, just as we did.

Your gifts to campus ministry make a difference for our students. We are a busy bunch here at Newman and whether its renting a facility for Awakenings, the Cor Ad Cor Retreat, buying pizza for a Bible study small group, or helping students have experiences in Columbia and abroad - **your gifts** help us engage students while they are here on campus and they also help us help them share the gospel with others who may never have had a chance to hear or see the gospel in action anywhere else.

If you haven't given this year, please consider a gift to Newman's campus ministry. If you'd like to be a monthly supporter you can return the slip with the newsletter or contact the Advancement Office at 573.449.5424, ext. 205 or email me (Thomas Rose) at thomas@comonewman.org. Also if you or your alum from Newman has moved, let us know so that we can update our mailing list. You can update that information from our website under the Alumni tab (comonewman.org/alumni/) or email me.

Thank you for your support and may God bless you. ~ *Thomas*

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