



NEWMAN NEWS

in the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland



Case Western Reserve University and The College of Wooster

Newman Students in Rome during the Conclave and the Inauguration of Pope Francis

A group of sixteen pilgrims from Case Western Reserve University and The College of Wooster traveled to Rome on March 9-21 for a spring break immersion trip and pilgrimage. Our focus was to spend time in service, dialogue, and contemplation – exploring connections of the Christian community since ancient times, visiting historic and holy sites, and working and praying with the Community of Sant'Egidio, a Catholic lay association dedicated to living and sharing the values of charity, prayer, dialogue, and solidarity with the poor (www.santegidio.org). Through a blessed coincidence in timing, our pilgrimage to Rome overlapped with the convening of the papal conclave, as well as the election and installation of Pope Francis. In this truly once-in-a-lifetime event, we pilgrims could witness firsthand the Spirit at work in history, through the universal Church.

The pilgrimage began by learning about and exploring ancient Rome, including the Coliseum and the ruins of the Roman forum, giving context to the radical shift that Christian faith, teachings and practices represented within the setting of the Roman Empire. The historical contexts were explored through visits to the Vatican Museums, the Scavi (excavations) beneath St. Peter's Basilica, where the tomb of St. Peter is located, the catacombs of Priscilla, and the Jewish Synagogue museum and ghetto. "Noticing God in Rome arrived at an unexpected time for me upon entering the church of St. Agnes," one student commented, "There happened to be Confession available at that time and I had been praying for God to spiritually pick me up." Another shared, "I felt very much moved by the Spirit during this pilgrimage... through seeing the layers of history within Rome and how the Church developed in different stages even in this one city. The service aspect of the trip was powerful to me; it was striking to see the modern needs of this ancient city."

Our group learned from, prayed with, and worked alongside members of the Community of Sant'Egidio. Leaders and members of the Community met with our group to share more about their history, vision, and mission. The Community was founded shortly after the Second Vatican Council when a group of young Catholics



decided to take seriously the call to pray together and put the Gospel into action in their daily lives. In the years since, the Community has grown to include more than 70,000 members in 70 countries around the world. In the evenings, we often joined the Community's beautiful service of prayer and reflection in the basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere. "The people that we met during our trip were so warm and welcoming. They emanated love for those around them - even for complete strangers! God is calling me in my own life; to recognize and love the 'strangers' around me."

We shared in the Community's service to the poor in Rome through visiting and bringing food to homeless people in the streets, sorting clothing and furniture, and by visiting and doing some spring cleaning at a home for the sick and dying. These ministries reached out to the poor as friends with a sense of solidarity, intentionally honoring one another's human dignity. "While in Rome, I experienced a great outpouring of love for God and His people in many places," one pilgrim said. "Working with the homeless alongside the Community was a life-inspiring experience, one that I will act upon in my own life." Another said that "building community through faith and service to the poor" is where he met God in Rome.

Powerfully, these pilgrims' reflections echo the themes of Pope Francis' homily at his installation: that all of creation was made for Love, measured by compassion with the marginalized, and the path to unity for Christians and all humanity is found in such Love. May the Spirit continue to inspire each of us to respond in our own ways to this mission, together in the Body of Christ!

Tony Vento and Karen Hahn, Campus Ministers



Ashland University

Ashland University Student Makes the Year of Faith Her Own

The Year of Faith proclaimed by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI this past autumn held significant meaning for senior Ashland University student Desirae Kierner as she has been preparing for full initiation into the Catholic Church. Desirae, baptized as a child in 1990 at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Rochester, New York, found herself falling away from the Church during her adolescent years and into her first three years of college.

“I had been struggling in my faith for some time, and in college I had tried to seek out some guidance through protestant youth groups. But I didn’t feel fulfilled. After talking to a friend and sorority sister I decided to attend Mass, and it was then that I felt the call to restart my life of faith as a Catholic woman,” says Desirae, who will receive her First Communion and Confirmation on April 21st.

Desirae began meeting with the campus ministry staff weekly, working through each chapter of the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults. Changes were evident with each passing week. “I began to feel more

accomplished and more joyous in everything that I did. I feel more connected to God and I feel like I can portray that to people better than I ever could before.”



Desirae, who will graduate with a dual degree in environmental science and biology this May, is looking forward to engaging with the Church on a deeper level once she leaves Ashland, saying she is currently hoping to get plugged into a silent retreat and learning more about the spiritual disciplines of fasting and planned solitude. She hopes to take those experiences with her as she begins the transition out of Campus Ministry and into her own Parish home, thus allowing her to be an example for others who are searching for something deeper.

“If you feel disconnected in your faith, or you want a more joyous relationship with God, and those feelings won’t go away, you need to talk to somebody. Talk to anybody about your feelings, and most importantly, go to Mass and see what it does for you. Then just have fun doing research about your faith. I know I did.”

Nate Addington, Campus Minister

Oberlin College

My Spiritual Journey to the Love of Christ

One of my earliest memories is my grandmother teaching me to pray when I was three or four years old. I grew up regularly attending Church with my family and played electric bass in our parish’s folk group. However, as I grew older I began to dread the prospect of going to Mass. Rather than a special time to be with God and my family, Mass became for me an awful and arbitrary obligation. “Who is this God they keep talking about anyway?” I asked myself and stopped playing bass in the folk group soon after my confirmation in 8th grade.

I began my journey back to God in college after ending a serious relationship. It was the first time I had ever been in love and it changed me. Although even in the heights of my teenage rebellion I don’t think I ever denied God’s existence, there was something about being in love for the first time that brought immediacy to God’s presence. I think what really prompted my reflection was the idea that love between human beings is more than the sum of its parts. Deep down I had an intuition that my feelings towards my girlfriend and her feelings towards me were bigger than just the two of us. Despite my irreligiosity at the time, the power of human love was strong enough to force me to realize that it must be the reflection of something greater, no matter how imperfect that reflection might be.

I broke up with my girlfriend because I wanted to find the

source of our love. It was a very difficult thing to do, but it felt right. I tried Buddhist meditation for a while with a friend, but I quickly realized that Jesus had always been an important part of my spirituality. One day I surprised myself by beginning to pray. Sitting in my dorm room, missing my girlfriend, but committed to the idea that I was called to something different, I asked God: “You made the universe (when I first started praying again I always began that way for some reason) and you made me. You showed me love and then made me question it. What are you doing? What do you want me to do?”

Over the next several months God showed me what he wanted me to do. I started attending daily Mass and learned about Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement. I traveled to Rochester, NY and lived in the attic of a homeless shelter run by the Sisters of Mercy. I began to discern a priestly vocation. Through it all, I was constantly surprised by the love of Christ. The simple power of the Gospel resonates wherever members of our Church are found. The past year has taught me that no matter what our vocation, we are all called through baptism to share Christ’s love with the world. I can’t imagine any greater gift. I am proud to be a member of the Newman Group at Oberlin and am looking forward to volunteering with the Diocese of Cleveland’s Migration and Refugee Services.

Ian Gutgold, Junior, Oberlin College

The University of Akron

Spring Break Mission Trip to Nashville, Tennessee



The current celebration of the Year of Faith is a “summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world” (Porta Fidei 6). In other words, the Year of Faith is an opportunity for Catholics to experience a conversion – to turn back to Jesus and enter into a deeper relationship with him. The “door of faith” is opened at one’s baptism, but during this year Catholics are called to open it again, walk through it and rediscover and renew their relationship with Christ and his Church.

— United States College of Catholic Bishops

In 2012, twelve University of Akron Newman Students boarded a Megabus in Pittsburgh for New York City and the borough of Manhattan to minister to the most needy citizens of the inner city.

The “door of faith” has opened again. This past Holy Week, twelve students from the Newman Center made a trip to Nashville. We were able to see the city from a unique perspective with the help of the Center for Student Missions (CSM). The mission was to serve the needy, but we received something special in return.

Our service was done at several ministry sites in the city. The sites included food pantries and soup kitchens, elderly and youth centers. A helping hand was needed, but help also came in a different form. We were encouraged to talk with the people who came to use the services that the ministries provided. We were able to share food and stories on a mutual level. This kind of service opened our eyes to a need, other than a physical one, an emotional one.

CSM pointed out that the student mission groups did not have to bring God to the city, but that God was already there. This was visible in the ways in which the city responded to the needs of their poor with food and clothing. It was apparent in the blessing of the meals and in the sharing of stories of faith. The Christian community is alive in the city, and it enabled us to see faith in another way.

In some ways Nashville is similar to Akron. Both have people in need and people that meet some need. The hot meals and breakfast programs here are much like the ones there. Just like the problem one ministry in Nashville is

addressing, Akron also has families that don’t know how to get food for healthy meals or even how to cook them. And, just as in Nashville, God is present in the city.

This trip was a learning experience for us. We returned with something more than we left with. Thank you to all who participated in the fundraisers. God Bless!

Charles Klein, student, University of Akron



Akron students in Nashville, Tennessee.

The University of Akron

Fundraising for the Mission Trip to Nashville



Serving a pancake breakfast at St. Bernard Parish.

Newman students worked together to help fund the cost of this trip. Many hands “flipped” pancakes, poured coffee and juice, experienced “Cup Cake Wars,” washed dishes ... tasted spaghetti sauce until it was perfect, washed dishes again ... and all through this time the main goal was to bring to those in need of care and friendship a smiling face, a helping hand, and the Faith in Jesus Christ and His Church. Funding was also made possible through the University of Akron, SOURCE, an undergraduate organization whose Mission is: “The Department of Student Life is committed to building community through collaborative learning experiences that provide our students the opportunity to: Engage, Serve, Lead.”

John Szarwark, Campus Minister

*Cleveland State University***Regrowth and Rebirth of the Land within Our Hearts**

As the new campus minister, my task is to work with the students of Cleveland State in the process of rebuilding and growing what had been started many years ago. Through a partnership with the newly re-opened St. Peter's Church, we began collaboration on a few programs for this Year of Faith. A highlight was the celebration of Ash Wednesday Mass by Bishop Roger Gries. On February 20th for the Diocesan Evening of Reconciliation, the students from CSU hosted a time of Eucharistic Adoration and confessions with the St. Peter community, our first project together. Our Busy Student/Busy Person Retreat the first week of March used meeting space and the chapel

at St. Peter. The theme for the week was *Stress, God and Prayer*. A first time students reflected afterwards, "Even in our busiest times, it's nice to be heard both by God and your spiritual director."

Now is a time for discerning new leadership and setting new directions at CSU Newman. This June, the newly discerned leadership hopes to head off to the Campus Ministry Leadership Institute (CMLI) at the University of San Diego to help develop programming and leadership skills. Lots of exciting things are happening and more are yet to come for the Newman Campus Ministry at Cleveland State.

Carol Wallington, Campus Minister

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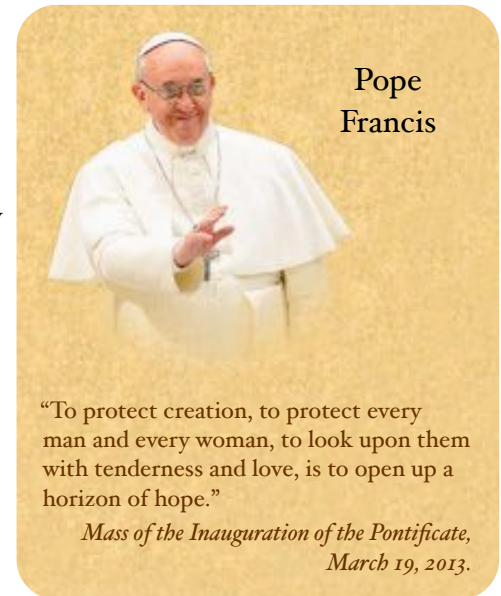
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Pope Francis

"To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope."

*Mass of the Inauguration of the Pontificate,
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