

COWBOY Catholic

St. Paul's Newman Center
University Catholic Community

Spring 2021



Outdoor Student Mass at the Park

Room for Healing in a Time of Discord

PARISH STAFF

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Director of Campus Ministry

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Associate Director of Campus Ministry

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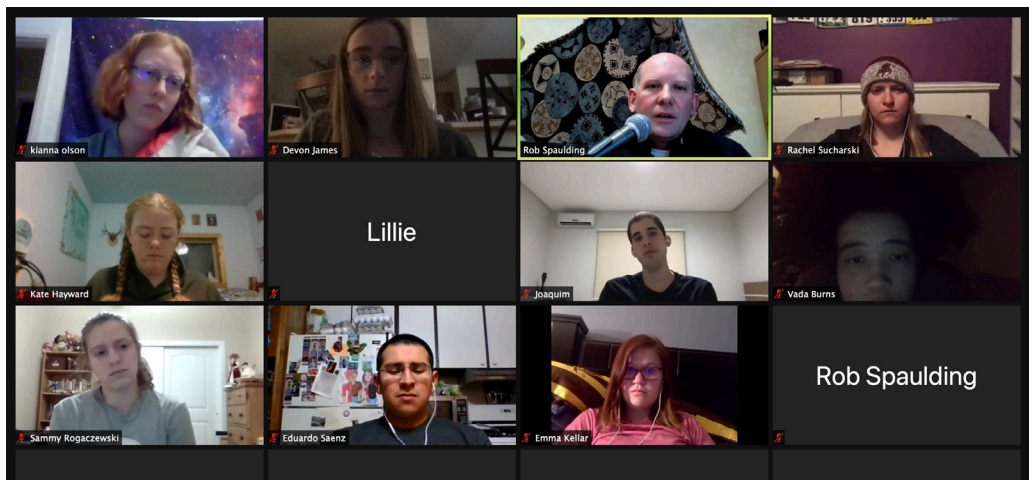


This edition of Cowboy Catholic is COVID inspired and inspiring. I have been amazed by the creativity of our students, staff, and resident community in finding ways to continue to serve one another while taking precautions to keep us all safe. From the beginning of the pandemic, we've been invited to move from asking "Why is God doing this?" to, "What is God doing with us in the midst of this?"

One answer to that question is that the pandemic is opening up space for God to help us return to the Eucharist as a sign of love and source of unity. As I'm sure you've experienced, these past months have been tense. Violence and anger have surrounded us. Even within our church there is conflict around wearing masks. Into this tension, the Eucharist offers the gift of healing. In the second Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation, we pray, "Even more, by your Spirit you move human hearts that enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries join hands, and peoples seek to meet together." The prayer continues, "By the working of your power it comes about, O Lord, that hatred is overcome by love, revenge gives way to forgiveness, and discord is changed to mutual respect."

These are the promises of Eucharistic transformation—not just of bread and wine into the presence of Christ—but of our very lives. Whether you've been able to return to Mass or are still longing for the day, may we open our hearts to the power of the presence of Christ to heal the divisions in our lives and our world. When I find my temper running short or feelings of despair creeping in, I return to the prayer of Jesus that all may be one (John 17:21). The pandemic is helping me to see the Eucharistic table as the ultimate source of reconciliation and healing.

Fr. Rob Spaulding
Pastor



Theological Virtues Discussion Group Screenshot

Front Page: Grace Zielinski at Student Mass

Foundational Mantras for Social Justice



by Lillie Rodgers

Masks on!

Maintain six feet of distance!

Don't eat that cookie until you're outside!

These have been some of the guiding mantras for Campus Ministry this Fall. Yet they are not the only ones, thankfully! More importantly, we have been asking students to:

Dialogue honestly, respectfully.

Pray with words and actions.

Love creatively, beyond touch.

These last three mantras have guided our weekly Cowboy Catholic discussions, which have centered on pertinent social justice issues of our day: racism, the death penalty, care for creation, immigration, abortion and disability. Though the group is smaller than normal, given illness and

quarantines, the students nevertheless have engaged this challenging set of topics with remarkable openness and vulnerability. We are prone to seeing things simplistically – black vs. white, good vs. bad, right vs. wrong – yet our discussions have reminded each of us that these issues are, in fact, mightily complex, for they involve real people, God's beloveds. To be a disciple of Jesus requires that we too love God's people by working for justice in our own little corner of the world, Laramie, Wyoming.

Beyond Cowboy Catholic, the Fall semester also featured two stellar retreats that took place in Laramie – an adapted Search Retreat, and a new day-long silent retreat. Coupled with a host of student and staff-led small groups (Bible studies, book studies, etc.), students have had many outlets to prayerfully process and discuss their life situations amidst COVID and online classes.

Perhaps the best part of Campus Ministry's Fall semester has been the leadership of SPNC's newest staff member, Devon James, whom we welcomed in July as the Associate Director of Campus Ministry. Coming to us from Chicago and Michigan, Devon brings a zest for ministering to students and sharing her faith,

particularly her love for all things Jesuit! With fewer programs to manage and additional staff power, Devon and I have happily attempted to connect with more students on a one-to-one basis this Fall. These meetings for spiritual direction and mentorship have proven fruitful, even when undertaken via Zoom. It seems there simply is no way to limit or restrain the Holy Spirit, who is constantly doing something new!

And with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we certainly can love creatively, as God loves us. Even with masks on.



Joe Melia & Kimberly Solti raking leaves for an older parishioner



Tripped into a Life of Service

How MissionTrips Changed Who I Am

by Julia Cathey

I have had the privilege to participate in Newman activities for a little over four years now. I am entering the last semester of my Bachelor's degree in Social Work here at UW. I would not be who I am, or entering the field I am, without the Newman Center.

My adventure with the Newman Center really began with a service trip. Since then, I have gone on every trip possible. My life was changed by seeing the true reality people around us live. It is so easy to live day to day in our normal routine. What happens when you change that routine? What if you decide, even in a rush, to have an authentic conversation with the retail worker, the barista handing you your coffee, the person shunned at school because they are considered weird, or by the person sitting by you who is always by themselves? What about

when you say hello to the homeless man or woman on the street corner? Maybe it's time to have a conversation with someone different from you. I'll tell you; your life will change. When we choose to see the people others look away from, we will find that there is love we didn't notice before. We will find understanding and companionship for the person in front of you besides our own biases.

In my life, I am still finding ways to see and serve those on the margins. The ways I mentioned before have made a huge difference in my own life. If I don't

understand a situation or a person, I want to sit and listen to their story. If I see someone who looks down, I want to offer a smile or a wave. I make real conversations with strangers. I seek out ways to love those that others are not loving. Really, I seek to see Jesus in every single person I meet. If you change your life to this, I promise you will see him. Be careful though, your life will radically change once you do.



Left: Chimayó Pilgrimage: Julia Cathey with Sarah Maze

Above: Julia on Christ in the City Denver Mission Trip

Destined for Campus Ministry

by Devon James

Associate Director of Campus Ministry

Hello! My name is Devon James and I am the new Associate Director of Campus Ministry at St. Paul's Newman Center. I am from a suburb of Chicago and I have my Bachelor's degree in Theology and Public Relations with a minor in Deaf Studies from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio and a Master's in Pastoral Ministry from the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio. I enjoy hiking (when it's warm out), reading, writing, practicing calligraphy, and watching movies. I also enjoy sharing the gift of singing that God gave me with others through cantoring and other opportunities (fun-fact: I was in a female a cappella group in college). I was heavily involved in campus ministry in high school and college, which inspired me to become a campus minister myself. In graduate school I was a graduate assistant in campus ministry working part-time on retreats and small faith communities.

I first felt the call to become a campus minister in high school, and I feel very blessed to finally be a full-time campus minister here serving the students of UW! So far in ministry, I have led a small group in which we read church documents. We started with the USCCB's letter on racism, "*Open Wide Our Hearts*" and then we read *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis' encyclical on the call to holiness. I have facilitated conversations at Cowboy Catholic about the death penalty and immigration, helped with the SEARCH Retreat, and shared my love for Ignatian Spirituality and social justice with students as we participated in the virtual Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice. With my public



relations background, I am the face behind Facebook and Instagram for the Newman Center. I enjoy this part of my job because it allows me to find creative ways to share our programs, as well as some inspiration, with our followers. I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to walk with students in one-on-one mentorship and spiritual direction as they navigate their faith journeys. Working with Lillie and Fr. Rob has been a true gift and I don't know what I'd do without their guidance and support as I transition to life in Laramie.





Caroling for a man experiencing homelessness



Sandy Rupp

Hello from the streets of Laramie! I say this because as Service & Outreach Coordinator my position has no place for an office or desk (except to write this letter!). You can find me weaving through the neighborhoods of Laramie with students and parishioners of all ages.

I would say this semester began with a cloud from COVID hanging around since March 2020. While eager to meet students at the first Sunday Mass this experience was unlike previous Masses. The Mass was celebrated at Washington Park with everyone wearing masks. Yes, Fr. Rob delivered a memorable homily, but my heart sank with sadness not being able to see smiles from students. Upon greeting students I found myself looking into their eyes as if I might see a smile emerge from the edges of the mask.

How was I going to invite students on a spiritual journey into the streets of Laramie and engage with those most vulnerable and have an experience that could be life changing if our faces are hidden?



Meal Prep: Kimberly Solti & Samantha Rogaczewski

What I quickly discovered is, our eyes tell a story greater than any smile.

This semester the students have gained more than an education since moving to Laramie. They are engaged in weekly outreach visits to our dear brothers and sisters who are more isolated than before COVID.

Service & Outreach is providing experiences that include a weekly walk through a neighborhood to knock on doors to say hello, pray, and even do some yard work. There is also shopping and food prep for the sick and the surprise of baked goods arrives often from a student's apartment to share with those we visit. Daily, there are students involved in making sure lunch is on the table for the person who is unable to remember it's mealtime. Daily, there are students picking up a meal from the Soup Kitchen and delivering to the hungry who are isolated in their homes. And with winter arriving, some students have already offered their services to shovel snow in the community all winter!

The students are also taking communion to residents at long term care facilities including

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SERVICE AND OUTREACH

SEEKING THE FACE OF CHRIST IN LARAMIE

by Sandy Rupp

Meeting a Need for Food & Fellowship by Myra Belser

On Thursdays during the school year, students gather in the University Union to celebrate Mass on Campus. Every Thursday, except for this past semester. As COVID-19 presented limitations on university property, reluctantly, Mass on Campus became Mass Off Campus and was moved to the Worship Space. Unfortunately, that move altered a popular component to Thursdays. Following prayer, students would congregate at the Union food court to eat lunch and hang out with one another. When liturgy was moved to the Newman Center, the opportunity for sharing a meal and socializing took a hit. This is when parish staff stepped up and into the kitchen.



*Myra Belser
checking recipes*

With the help of Communication Coordinator, Myra Belser, Parish Business Manager, Sandy Gaddis, and Service and Outreach Coordinator, Sandy Rupp, a simple lunch is prepared each week following liturgy, bringing eats and relationship building back into play. Director of Campus Ministry, Lillie Rodgers, believes that the success of Mass Off Campus can't be measured by numbers when only 10 to 12 individuals show for liturgy and lunch. She feels that success is measured by a need being fulfilled that fosters spiritual enrichment. Students have expressed that time spent together on Thursdays is important to their faith and social needs.

"It has been difficult to personally get to know students this semester, since much of ministry has been virtual," says Myra Belser. "I love being able to call students by name and to sit down with them and ask how their day is going. Providing this meal is a way to say we care about them and we appreciate their presence. Amid COVID testing, quarantines, and sheltering-in-place combined with class loads, exams and assignments, it's important students have time to unpack daily difficulties with their peers. Lunch on Thursdays provides that outlet."

Vada Burns, a freshman from Sheridan says, "I really like having lunch after mass. For me it provides an opportunity to meet with people over a meal. It also serves as a nice break during the middle of my day."

With the beginning of the new semester, Thursdays Mass Off Campus and Lunch hopes to continue to nourish the students through prayer and companionship.



*From left: Rachel Sucharski, Camryn Lanctot,
and Chandra Frank*

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ARC housing, and yes, we did all these visits outside to keep our dear friends safe and healthy.

No wind or cold could separate us from praying and experiencing the face of Jesus in those who so desperately need someone with which to talk to, laugh, and even cry. I am witnessing a selfless gift of time when students

are already time challenged with schoolwork and a gentle compassionate love for our neighbors in the Laramie community.

I hope these words will inspire you to seek the face of Jesus in your communities. You will not only change someone's life, but change yours as well.



St. Paul's Newman Center
University Catholic Parish
1800 East Grand Avenue
Laramie WY 82070-4316

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



For over 40 years, St. Paul's Newman Center has been graced by a woman who has given her all to her faith community. Sandy Gaddis is retiring from the position as Parish Business Manager. That title in no way describes what her job encompassed over 4 decades, nor does it portray the manner and servitude, wrapped in love, with which she professionally represented St. Paul's.

Undeniable, it is her faith witness that will most be remembered. She has been a witness to staff she served alongside and to members of the Body of Christ with whom she has worshipped and celebrated Eucharist. Faith has been foundational in seeing her through broken boilers, budgets and even pandemics.



A Time for Every Season

As Fr. Rob shared Sandy's retirement with the parish, he said, "The news of Sandy's full retirement is indeed bittersweet. While we are delighted that Sandy will have more time with her husband, David, and family, it is very difficult to imagine the office without Sandy. Words cannot express our gratitude for all that she has done."

Notes of congratulations are welcome and may be sent to St. Paul's Newman Center, 1800 E Grand Avenue, Laramie, WY 82070