



THE ORATORY TIMES

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From Student to Oratorian Priest: *On the Ordination of Fr. Leo Dornan*

By Fr. Michael Darcy, C.O.

One of the clearest memories I have of my own ordination was a brief conversation I had with Bishop Wuerl in St. Paul Cathedral just moments before the ordination Mass began. He was friendly and good-natured, but this was not a completely casual conversation. As the ordaining bishop he was required to ask me if I was seeking ordination freely and was not being compelled in any way, and so the conversation began with a few questions along these lines. After I gave my answers and thanked him for agreeing to ordain me, he responded by saying something I have never forgotten. He said he was glad to do so and that he loved ordinations because they were, as he put it, “the renewal of the Church’s leadership.”

This was the first I remember hearing of this concept – the renewal of the Church’s leadership. It was a little humbling to hear that I was at the center

of so grand an undertaking, and it was at least a little surprising to be introduced to this idea just moments before I was about to participate in it. Looking back, it had the salutary effect of putting me in the right frame of mind for what was about to happen to me. It has stuck with me ever since, and I think of it at every ordination I’ve ever been to. I thought of it again at Fr. Leo’s ordination this past May.

Bishop Wuerl was thinking of the larger Church, but foremost in my mind, of course, is the Oratory. It was wonderful to think that Br. Leo’s elevation to Fr. Leo was a moment of the renewal of the Oratory’s leadership.

I remember the first time I met Leo. It was at a retreat for new Pitt students that was held at our retreat center, Rednal. I thought he was Polish at first because he was wearing the bright red jersey of the Polish national soccer team. When I later learned that his last name was Dornan I thought, “that doesn’t sound

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Polish.” Turns out he just likes the soccer team.

At that point in his life as a young college student, he responded willingly to the leadership of the Oratory, in a sense. He availed himself of the Oratory’s ministry and the guidance of the Oratorians throughout his formation. The work of our FOCUS missionaries was tremendously important too, and especially his

residence at the student-run Catholic men’s house, the “Fratican” (Vatican + fraternity = Fratican). Having received in these ways and advanced to ordination, he will now be undertaking his own ministries, leading others to Christ as he was led. This reminds me of the words of St. Paul, “I hand on to you as of first importance what I myself received...” (1 Cor 15:3).

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Magnify the Lord Campaign Progress: *Transforming Hearts & Bathrooms*

By Fr. Peter Gruber, C.O.

The *Magnify the Lord* Capital Campaign is in full swing, and we are edging ever closer to our \$4.5 million goal. Every one of you who knows and loves the Oratory is making a remarkable difference. For a detailed look at our fundraising progress, see the report on the last page of this edition of *The Oratory Times*.

Thanks to your unwavering support, the first stage of our capital campaign renovations is making significant progress. If you visited the Oratory this summer, you might have noticed the back of the chapel blocked off for the construction of the choir loft. While there’s still work to be done, the chapel and downstairs are on track to be completed by the end of the summer. Offsite, Mr. Paul Fritts is crafting a magnificent pipe organ, which will be installed by the end of the summer. Your support is also making it possible to renovate the lower-level Student Center, including the conference room, game room, and a newly expanded kitchen, which is beginning to take



its final shape. The bathrooms on the first floor are finishing up, while the downstairs bathroom renovations are underway. Significant enhancements are planned for Rednal next summer, contingent on ongoing support and successful planning.

We are delighted to welcome Ms. Hannah Naylor as a full-time Campus Minister. Her presence is vital in our mission to bring college students to Christ, and we are deeply grateful for her dedication. You can read her interview in this edition.

**See more of the construction progress and read the full
Magnify the Lord campaign update on page 8!**

Oratory Welcomes New Campus Minister

With early success of the campaign, we were able to focus on finding a campus minister to which we are happy to announce is a familiar face at the Oratory, with a new title! Hannah Naylor has been with the Oratory as a FOCUS missionary for the past 4 years and has recently accepted the position of Campus Minister at the Oratory, starting in late summer. We asked Hannah some questions and the following are her answers:

Tell us about your background and family.

I was born and raised in Mobile, Alabama and had lived in my hometown through college. I loved growing up in the lower south, close to the beach, surrounded by family, good food, and great traditions - most importantly Mardi Gras. I grew up in a culture where “wasting” time with family and friends was the most valuable way to spend time, and that is a way of life I am grateful to have lived. The rich history, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality of the Gulf Coast shaped me in countless ways, instilling values of resilience, kindness, and appreciation for life’s simple pleasures. I am the third of four children with an older brother, an older sister and a younger sister. I grew up in a Catholic household where we attended Mass together on Sundays, prayed before our meals, attended youth



group, retreats, and even went on my first mission trip when I was a senior in High School; a blessing to say the least. Even still, it wasn’t until college that I fully committed to living out my faith, after much patience and perseverance from my FOCUS Missionaries. My college experience was filled with growing in authentic friendship with friends who love our Lord dearly. I chose to live my life abundantly for the love of God. I was invested in and encountered Christ more fully, and in return wanted to go out and do the same.

That led me to the Pittsburgh Oratory to serve as a FOCUS Missionary at Carnegie Mellon. Truth be told, I cried when I found out I was moving to Pittsburgh out of fear that it would be so different from the life that I had known. Little did I know that Pittsburgh and the community of CMU and Pitt that make up the Newman center would become my home away from home.

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Class of 2024 Graduates, Alumni Receive Newman Award

By Fr. Peter Gruber, C.O.

Their first steps onto campus were masked behind Covid protections. Their first college professors were squares on a screen. Their first hopes for meaningful friendships were challenged by a world in crisis.

This was not the college experience that the graduating class of 2024 wanted.

These students who began their time in college under trying circumstances ended their undergraduate years renewed in their Catholic faith as leaders among their peers.

Seventeen graduating seniors, their families, FOCUS Missionaries, and Oratorians – all gathered on the second floor of the Oratory for the annual Baccalaureate Dinner on April 24th. Their time at the Newman Center was recognized and celebrated as they move on to the next stage of their lives, whether that be the workforce, graduate school, or FOCUS missionary work.

At the Baccalaureate Dinner, the Oratory awarded David and Megan Sanchez the St. John Henry Newman Award for Excellence in Christian Service and Witness. Their example as Catholic parents and Dave’s pioneering of the happiness and human flourishing course as an engineering professor at Pitt was deeply inspiring. While telling their own story of how they met here at the Newman Center, Dave and Megan emphasized the importance of friendship and faith, critical themes for this year’s graduates.

One of this year’s graduates, Mary Grace Oliva, has this to say:

“I was raised in a devout Catholic family and have always held my faith as the most important part of my life, but living in a new city as a freshman during Covid made it difficult to have hope. I tried to accept that I would have to drag myself through four years and start over again somewhere new. But then the FOCUS missionaries helped welcome me into the community at Newman, and now I cannot imagine being anywhere else. The friendships I formed here are unlike any I have ever had. For the first time since childhood, I am able to be myself freely and know I will be received. I know my friends here will be my friends for life. And I am so grateful for the spiritual fatherhood of the Oratorians, which has helped me learn to rest in my identity as a beloved daughter of the Father. Here, I have encountered Christ and Our Lady more profoundly than I ever have before.”

Having braved a difficult freshman year, this year’s graduates rebuilt the community at the Newman Center, while personally rebuilding their identities as sons and daughters of God the Father.

(top:) Students, families, university faculty, and members of the Oratory community gather at Heinz Chapel to celebrate the Senior Baccalaureate Mass.

(left:) Dave and Megan Sanchez receive Newman Award for Excellence in Christian Service and Witness.

(right:) Students and their families celebrating at the Baccalaureate dinner.

(bottom:) Class of 2024 graduates, joined by Oratorians and FOCUS Missionaries.



Students Trade Beach for Mission Work

A Reflection on Time Spent Serving in the Jungle

By Keith Mokry
Pitt FOCUS Missionary

Over Pitt’s Spring Break, I had the privilege of directing a mission trip with four of the other Pitt FOCUS missionaries, ten students, and one Fr. Peter to the rural jungle highlands of the Dominican Republic. We partnered with the non-profit BLUE Missions to provide 12 homes in the town of El Firme with proper sanitation in the form of ventilated improved pit latrines. There is no public sewage system in that area, which presents a challenge to human well-being and health, not to mention social and economic development.

Collaborating with employees and volunteers of BLUE, we constructed the latrines out of wood, corrugated steel, nails, and many bucketfuls of concrete. Each of our days was involved with some step in this process, whether it be laying the foundation, building the hinged door, or hammering the wooden and steel structure into place. It was a gift for us to visit each home for which we would be building a



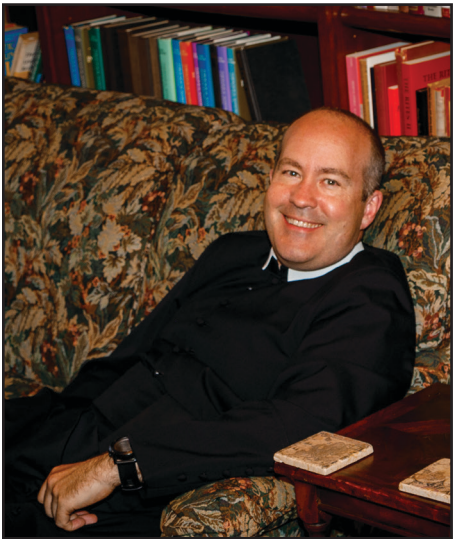
latrine, entering into their daily life in a meaningful way and providing a genuine physical benefit to them.

Yet, what we had to give was so much more than our several days of labor and our pile of materials. Our most impactful moments were instead within the many hours passed in play with the children of the town and in communal worship. In all of my former mission trips, I have never seen children be as welcoming and eager to be around our group as they were in El Firme. During siestas or later into the evenings, the children would flock to our living quarters, and they would play cards with us, clapping games, and the like. One afternoon we even had the chance to play baseball in the local field and interact with the broader number of kids and teens in the community.

Most importantly, their thirst for God was inspiring. Every morning at 6:30AM, the village’s faithful would gather with us to pray a holy hour in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

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“Ask the Provost” with Fr. Michael Darcy, C.O.



The public was asked to submit questions of any type for Fr. Mike to discuss. In this second installment of “Ask the Provost,” we find out what it was like to translate a book, to Fr. Mike’s favorite incense!

Fr. Mike, what was it like translating a book?

It was challenging and it was fun! I started working on it during the COVID shutdown. I had a lot of extra time on my hands back then so I decided to take the opportunity to practice French a little. I had bought a copy of the French version of *15 Days of Prayer with St. Philip Neri* at the recommendation of the Oratorians of Port Antonio, Jamaica, Frs. Michael Palud and Sam Aloggia. I hadn’t done much with it since buying it and decided to devote the peace and quiet of the shutdown to reading it. I got into the habit of typing out precise translations of the trickier passages, and after a few days of this I realized that if I kept picking away at it, I would eventually have the entire work translated. I translated a few chapters relatively quickly, but my progress was slowed when I started working at Central Catholic High School in February of 2021. I got back to work with it the following summer, and quickly realized that I was close enough to the end of the project that if I pushed myself I might have it done by the beginning of the next school year. As I neared completion I became afraid that someone out there could also be working on this same project and might beat me to it. So, I started checking Amazon.com, afraid that an English version of the book would suddenly appear and I would be put out of business. The closer I got to the finish line, the stronger this fear became, and my visits to Amazon.com became more frequent! When I realized I only needed another month or two to finish the translation, I called a publisher to see if he was interested. He said “yes” and told me that the first step is to contact the author to get his permission. So I needed to write him an email. This made me nervous. My ability to understand written French is good, but composing and speaking French like a native speaker requires a lot more expertise. I was worried that if I didn’t seem like an expert the author would tell me that he didn’t want me translating his book. I

worried I would sound something like, “Me like book yours very muchly. Me translate it want to do,” and he would think, “I don’t want this guy translating my book.” But it went smoothly, much to my relief. He wrote back congratulating me on nearly being done and told me that he would contact the publisher on my behalf. I was surprised at how easy it was. I had well-polished chapters ready to send him as proof of the job I’d done and its quality, but he never asked for them. Adding to the ease was the fact that the French company who originally published the book has a sister company in the U.S., so transferring the rights across the Atlantic was very easy. The work of translation was hard, but the hardest part for me had less to do with French than English. The translation began in my desire to spend time with a French text, but I spent the vast majority of my time fussing about which English word to use and how to make it sound good in English. Now that the work is done, I am very happy with it. I think the book fills an important gap that has long existed in the biographies of St. Philip. The ones we typically rely on are very good and important, but they are long and too big of a commitment for most people. *15 days of Prayer with St. Philip Neri* is more accessible to one eager for a thorough acquaintance with St. Philip. The book also has the great virtue of being a prayerful introduction to the Saint, exactly the sort of introduction St. Philip would make of himself. Fr. Audrain, the original author, included references to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the writings of recent popes, and the wisdom of great Catholic thinkers like St. Francis de Sales and St. Thomas Aquinas. He expressed to me that his hope is that his book will “make St. Philip better known and loved.” I have the same hope for its English version.

What’s been your experience in being a part of the Oratory’s Magnify the Lord capital campaign? What’s an inside perspective on the campaign?

It has been very pleasant and gratifying! Our Steier Group representative who is helping us manage the campaign said that capital campaigns often have the effect of building community, and he was right. The process provided me with the occasion to revisit old friends and make new ones. It has also been wonderful to see the eagerness people have to help and be generous. It has been wonderful.

Where do you like to vacation?

I like to go camping; that has become a favorite of mine. I have been to Europe a few times but trips like that are starting to seem like more trouble than they are worth for me. I have gone to Montana and Colorado to camp a few times and always come back refreshed

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Visiting St. Philip Neri A Pilgrimage to Rome

By Fr. Thomas Skamai, C.O.

As Oratorians, part of our calling is to continue living out the life of St. Philip Neri. In the 1500s, he was a young man who had made his way from Florence and eventually to Rome. St. Philip sought to keep others out of idleness by occupying their hearts and minds with good things, often times including prayer and pilgrimage. He and his followers would gather for singing hymns, praying litanies, listening to sermons, and sharing their thoughts on various theological matters. After this, they would go on pilgrimage, usually to the seven major basilicas of Rome, stopping along the way to enjoy some food and good company.

Over Carnegie Mellon University’s spring break, we sought to embrace something of this life and holiness of St. Philip Neri. Although some would say that we walked too much, and at too great a pace, we certainly avoided idleness. We stopped at many holy sites, and of course, stopping for food was a necessity. How could we pray without starting our day with a delicious cappuccino and pastry? How could we recover from our tiring travels without homemade pasta and a glass of wine? Regarding the gelato, it may have been a sin of omission had we not indulged.

Throughout it all, we were able to draw close to some of the greatest saints in the history of the Church. We

saw the bones of St. Peter, part of the skull of St. John the Baptist, the foot of St. Mary Magdalene which stepped inside the empty tomb, the finger of St. Thomas the Apostle which entered the side of Christ, the chains which bound St. Paul, the arm of St. Francis Xavier which baptized thousands, as well as the tombs of St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Catherine of Siena, St. John Paul II, our own St. Philip Neri, and many more.

Amidst the astounding beauty of St. Peter’s Basilica and many other churches, we were also fortunate to have a day in Assisi. The quaint, mountainous town is still permeated by the peace and sanctity of St. Francis and St. Clare.

Yet, as friendships were deepened among one another and with the saints in heaven, we returned time and again to the Lord and Creator of all that we enjoyed. We had daily Mass and spent plenty of time in prayer. We prayed on the holy stairs which Christ is believed to have walked to be judged by Pilate, as well as at the pillar at which Christ was scourged, and before a nail and relic of the True Cross.

Thus, in short, we had a wonderful pilgrimage to Rome. Although we cannot help but miss the churches, the nearness of so many saints, the espresso and the gelato, hopefully the graces that we received can lead us further on the pilgrimage to our heavenly homeland.



Fr. Thomas celebrating Mass at the altar of the tomb of St. Philip Neri.



Tomb of St. Francis of Assisi.



The chapel of the first Oratory, San Girolamo della Carità.



Tomb of St. Catherine of Siena



Group photo in front of St. Peter’s Basilica, Vatican City.

Student Reflection: “In a Season of Change”

By Olivia Zeisloft,
Newman Center Class of 2024,
Current FOCUS Missionary

At about this time each year, sometime between early to mid-April, the feelings of dread begin to set in. We have made it to the point in the semester where classes are ending, finals are approaching, every aspect of our lives is chaotic and when I finally slow down to think and pray, I realize that my life is about to change yet again. Each of us face great changes to be made whether that be returning home for the summer, moving to a new city, starting a new internship or job, or entering your vocation. We all are faced with the radical changes to come but the only things in sight are the people you have to leave and the gifts you have to give up. We know that God has provided for us the gifts that we enjoy in the present, yet we often fail to perceive the security God provides for us in the future as though as soon as life changes shape, God will cease to care for us. “The Lord will provide,” echoes throughout the Newman Center, but do we believe that?

These fears however are not based in reality, but in the wounds of our human experiences. Fears of being forgotten and un-cared for are real experiences but not a true representation of reality. How silly are we to believe that our Almighty, all-loving God could ever leave our side! I need the constant reminder that “at every time and at every place, God draws close to man” (CCC). He draws near to us at each moment and goes to prepare a place for us. “And when I go and prepare a place

for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (Jn 14:3). We may rest in the presence of God for the rest of our lives as it will never change throughout each changing season. “And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20).

Throughout my time at the Oratory, I’ve found that a lot of initial movements in my relationship with Jesus were motivated by the deep conviction of the love He has for me, but as I dug into more apologetics and other intellectual podcasts, I got so worked up about the details of the faith that I failed to have ever-present in my mind the abundance of love and mercy of Our Lord. After frustratingly thinking that I have regressed in my faith for not understanding something so simple as God’s presence and His love for me, I realized that there will never be a time for the rest of my life where I am not grappling with a deeper understanding of this truth. For the rest of my life, the God of the universe will continue to show up for me and I will continue to be surprised by His provisions.

As for the upcoming changes in my life, I am within a week of graduating, saying lots of goodbyes to incredible friends as I head off on mission. I think that often when we are on the verge of something beautiful, the devil often tempts us to turn back, to convince us that the leap of faith we’re taking will not bring us to where Christ desires us to be. What we can be sure of is that He has led us here, He loves us here and will continue to be throughout each of these seasons of change.

JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU.



Olivia (left) on “placement day” at FOCUS training earlier this summer, celebrating with her new fellow Team Boston missionaries.



Olivia celebrating her graduation with friends at the Bacclaireate dinner in April.



Posing for Cowboy Friday at FOCUS's Seek2024 conference in January.



Olivia presenting at Newman Night.

Oratory Leads Holy Thursday Seven Church Tour

By Fr. Peter Gruber, C.O.

One of the primary instruments St. Philip Neri used to energize the youth of Rome was to take them on a pilgrimage to seven churches. At each church they would pray and listen to a brief sermon from an Oratorian. Walking and singing as they went, they would traverse the fifteen miles, singing and exuding joy as they went to St. Peter’s Basilica, St. Paul Outside-the-Walls, St. Sebastian’s, St. John Lateran, Holy Cross-in-Jerusalem, St. Lawrence-Outside-the-Walls, and St. Mary Major. The Pilgrimage to the Seven Churches was the Holy Thursday counterpoint to the immoral excesses of the Carnival celebrations that had infected Rome.

Here at the Oratory in Pittsburgh, the tradition continues. Less strenuous than the Roman fifteen mile circuit, we walked seven miles to St. Mary of Mercy, Epiphany, St. Benedict the Moor, St. Patrick, St. Stanislaus, Immaculate Heart of Mary, and St. Paul Cathedral. At each church, we reflected on Christ’s Passion, keeping vigil with Him in the reposed Blessed Sacrament. The sidewalks of Pittsburgh would swell with unusual



Pilgrims of the seven church tour, praying the rosary together as they walk between stops.

foot traffic for a Thursday night, and every Church would feel full while the nearly 100 pilgrims came in to pray silently.

College students and seasoned adults all joined together in prayer and pilgrimage, a cross-section of the people that make the Oratory so wonderful. For the past two years, the Austin family has joined for the full length of the pilgrimage. Meghan Austin has this to say:

“The Seven Church Walk with the Pittsburgh Oratory has become a Holy Thursday family tradition for us. It is our highlight of the Triduum. Our whole family, ages 9-50, is able to participate

in the suffering and joy of this walking pilgrimage. It is a challenging walk, but broken up by the beauty of each of the churches in which we keep watch, it is never overwhelming. The community elements that accompany the walking – prayer, singing, meeting other people seeking Our Lord – really bolster and brighten the journey.”

Meghan asked each of her children what they liked best about the Seven Church Tour. Here are their responses:

“Praying in each church with Fr. Peter’s scripture passages.”

“Meeting people.”

“Praying the Holy Stairs at Old Saint Patrick’s.”



Nearly 100 people assemble outside of Old St. Patrick’s Church waiting to ascend the stairs, then climb Polish Hill to Immaculate Heart of Mary Church.



“Seeing some of the most beautiful churches in Pittsburgh, especially now that they are familiar year after year.”

“The walking itself.”

“It’s a long night, but it really allows us to enter into the idea of ‘watch and pray.’”

Every pilgrimage is marked by toil and sufferings, and this pilgrimage is no different. The aching feet, the drowsy prayer, the meditation on Christ’s physical sufferings – these, however, give way to the joy of the Gospel.

Hear from Nick Marshall, student and seven church pilgrim, about another Triduum tradition on page 6.

Alumni Reflect on Oratory Impact

Rookie to Roman

- Zach Shelin -
Class of 2011



*Undergraduate Retreat at Rednal (fall, 2008).
(Zach in green, next to his fellow undergrad, Fr. Peter)*

“Are you Roman Catholic?” a friend asked me in high school. “I’m not sure,” I said. “Are you ashamed?” she asked.

It wasn’t that. I wasn’t used to the term Roman Catholic. And Rome had so much baggage through history and the recent abuse scandal. Just “Catholic” was safer.

Twenty years later, we are on a family pilgrimage to Rome. Every morning, my two sons kneel up against the altar that holds the body of Saint Philip Neri. It was an Oratory inspired by this great Roman saint that taught me to live the Roman Catholic tradition.

Daily Mass. Holy hours. Incense. Liturgical calendars. Total fidelity to all Church teaching. Spiritual reading. Gregorian chant. Prayers in Latin. Singing Marian antiphons after Mass. And yes, chanted rosaries. When I arrived on Pitt’s campus, these were all radical and foreign concepts to me. They weren’t things that “real people” did.

At the Oratory though, these things became part of my life. The transformation was not via military discipline or social pressure. No one gave me guilt trips about not attending daily Mass or pushed me to pray a weekly holy hour. I did them because the grace of God, shown through the people who came before, inspired me. I began to realize why it all mattered, how these traditions helped us live the life of Christ on a deeper level. Alone before the Blessed Sacrament at Rednal, I realized the Oratory was giving me a

foundation that would stay with me. The Oratory challenged my faith. There were events called “Proposal of Doubt.” We learned about where and why Protestants disagreed with Catholic teaching. We had a forum to talk about applying Catholic teaching to politics. The Oratorians asked important questions for aughts college students, like: “Is Starcraft heresy?”

At the Oratory, I learned to love my favorite saints: Thomas More, Edmund Campion, and, of course, Philip Neri. A plaque in the student center reminded us that being a saint did not mean giving up our sense of humor.

The Oratory showed us how to build a strong community of faithful Catholics. I’ve applied those lessons to growing a community of Catholic families here in Delaware.

The prayers at the beginning of the traditional Mass say: “I will go to the altar of God, to the God who gives joy to my youth.” The Pittsburgh Oratory was one way God brought joy to my youth, saving me from the painful mistakes people often make in college. That foundation has stayed with our family through the years. It has helped us through some health scares, a flood that forced us to leave our home for a year, and the trials of Covid.

Now we have experienced the depth of Catholic liturgy, the cult of the saints, art, music, and history in Rome. As we seek to share those riches with our community, I remember that the Oratory first taught me to appreciate it all.



Zach with his wife Michelle, their son, and Fr. Stephen, at a reception following the first Mass of the newly ordained Fr. Peter (spring, 2017).

A Worthy Investment

- Conner & Kristen Van Pevenage -
Class of 2017



Conner and Kristen at Barn Dance (fall, 2017).

We first became involved with the Oratory through campus ministry while students at the University of Pittsburgh, both serving as officers of the Newman Club (Kristen as Service Coordinator and Conner as Business Manager) and student leaders through FOCUS. During our time as undergraduates, with the guidance of the Oratory community, our faith flourished through participation in Perpetual Adoration and profoundly reverent liturgies. The sacramental living, intellectual formation, and engaging community cultivated by the Oratorians transformed our Catholic faith and provided a firm foundation after graduation.

Presently, we live in New York City with our two daughters and newborn son, where we continue to seek and cultivate an environment which reflects our desire for sacramental living, intellectual formation, and development of community fostered by the Oratory. Recently, I (Conner) continued my commitment to intellectual formation by joining a Catholic Social Teaching formation program for young professionals, the Leonine Forum. Additionally, I (Kristen), desiring to foster a love for sacramental living in our children, encourage our family to participate in frequent Mass, Adoration, and Catechism of the Good Shepherd classes.

Our relationship with the Oratory and the student community continue to anchor our lives today. When we travel to Pittsburgh, our priority is always to visit the Oratory Chapel. As a member of the Oratory’s Budget and Finance Advisory Board, Conner is

actively involved in the community’s commitment to ensure the health and longevity of the ministries of the Oratory. In considering our continued financial support of the Oratory, we are confident students and the greater Pittsburgh community will continue to be formed and cultivated with hearts disposed towards Christ.

Since our graduation, we have become acutely aware that the offerings of the Oratory are rare among college campuses. Our personal experience has demonstrated the profound impact the Oratory can have on students seeking to ignite their faith. We firmly believe the Oratory is uniquely positioned and qualified to invest in students at critical moments in their human development. We are confident an investment in the Oratory is an investment in the future of the Church, and are grateful for the opportunity to support the ministry of the Oratorians.



Conner and Kristen with their daughters, celebrating with the newly ordained Fr. Reed after his first Mass (spring, 2021).

Are you a Newman Center Alumni?

Join your class in giving back to the Oratory!

Visit pghco.org/classgiving or scan the QR code to support the next generation of Newman Center students.



Oratory Welcomes New Campus Minister

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What do you like to do in your free time/what are some of your hobbies?

As mentioned before, I grew up in a culture where free time was best spent with other people. That remains true for me and most of my hobbies reflect this ideal! I love to rock climb, play spike ball, pickleball – really any sport – and it is always much better when someone is with me! I love to play board games or card games and am quick to say yes to spontaneous adventures! Whether it is hiking up mountains, taking long road trips with friends, or just spending an average Tuesday evening watching a movie, quality time with friends is my favorite way to spend my free time.

I also love music and have been blessed with opportunities to get to share the talents the Lord has given me! I have served on several music committees and led praise for retreats and FOCUS gatherings. I am also a part of the Oratory Choir which has allowed me to expand my knowledge of music, ability to sing, and love of liturgical music! It is such a gift and I love getting to share it with others!

Other random things I enjoy are bike riding, juggling, swing dancing, writing parodies, making videos and posters for random events, and simply being a goofball with friends.



Hannah (right) performing with her FOCUS teammate Lucia at Coffee House, a semesterly variety show held by the students.



Tabling on CMU campus and enjoying Rita's water ice with new and returning students during Welcome Week.

What are your goals for your new position at the Oratory?

I am so excited to be working full time as a campus minister at the Pittsburgh Oratory! Throughout my years of serving as a FOCUS Missionary, I have seen how the role of a lay campus minister could be beneficial to the ministry of the Oratory and am honored to get the chance to help create this new position. We are already extremely blessed here through the unwavering generosity and guidance of the Oratorians so that many students at our campuses can call the Newman Center “home”. My goals for serving as campus minister are to complement and sustain the momentum of our ministry while exploring new avenues for fostering a vibrant, inclusive community so that more students will come to know the goodness and mercy of God.

One way of accomplishing this is through serving our student leaders. My desire is to aid in the ministry of the student leaders so that they can more effectively evangelize on campus, reaching students who wouldn't seek out the Newman Center on their own. Having served as a FOCUS Missionary at the Newman Center for the past four years, I am in a unique position to not simply “take the load off” the student leaders but to also empower them to confidently evangelize by helping equip them with skills, knowledge, and conviction to share their faith authentically and compassionately with their peers.

Another way I hope to aid the Newman center is by cultivating the center itself as a warm and welcoming haven for all students. I aspire to create an atmosphere of hospitality where every student who walks through the doors feels welcomed, valued, and supported in their journey of faith and education!

What excites you about working here?

I am excited to add to an environment where hearts are nourished, minds are enriched, and authentic friendships are deepened. By stepping into this new role as a campus minister at the Newman Center, I will have the opportunity to create and shape the position according to the needs of the community. I'm incredibly grateful to the fathers at the Pittsburgh Oratory for entrusting me with

the freedom to explore and implement new ideas in my role. The ideas have been flowing and I am excited to collaborate with the Oratorians, FOCUS Missionaries, and students to see many of them come to life!

I am also eager to spend more time with students at the Newman Center. Building meaningful relationships, sharing in their joys and challenges, and walking alongside them in their faith journey is an opportunity I cherish and anticipate with great joy. We will also continue to grow in our outreach efforts at Chatham University. I am excited to help foster an environment to show that their faith matters, and that they have a community of students, missionaries, and chaplains who want to support them!

What's something about yourself that would surprise others?

To answer this question, I must first preface by stating that I have pretty good initiative, leadership skills, and learn quickly. It might surprise people to learn that in my second year as a FOCUS missionary I took on the responsibility of directing a two-week mission trip to Costa Rica, despite never having led a trip of that nature before. That's right. Just me and eight girls who don't speak Spanish traveled to serve a community of people in Costa Rica, and I was in charge of making sure everyone made it there and back safely. Oh - and I was only 24 years old and standing at 4'11" tall!

While it was a daunting task, I embraced the challenge wholeheartedly, was properly trained and relied much on others and my past experiences of mission trips. This trip was incredibly rewarding and left a lasting impact on all of us. I have had a deep love for serving in other countries and have traveled to many different places for extended periods of time, the longest being a month in Calcutta, India as a junior in college, serving the destitute and dying at the homes started by Mother Teresa. Most recently, I directed a week-long mission trip to Peru with a group from The University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University!

The Oratorians and staff are happy to welcome Hannah to the team. Please say hello and introduce yourself if you see her around the Oratory.

Triduum Tradition Continues: Overnight Chanting of the Psalter

By Nick Marshall,
Newman Center Student,
Class of 2025

Every year on Good Friday, shortly after midnight, a group of particularly monastic (or particularly reckless) undergrads, alumni, missionaries, and friends opens up the book of Psalms, their mouths, and - hopefully - their hearts. This tradition has survived years among the students of the Newman Center, and it is the fulcrum of my Triduum practice.

Our Lord is reposed upstairs. The altar is stripped bare. The seven-church pilgrims have largely dispersed. “Blessed indeed is the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked...” We have begun.

No one of us is entirely sure how to chant this. Some drone monotone while others sing normally. It is all beautiful. Each of us intones three Psalms before allowing another to carry on the theme. It is fitting that Psalm 88 is chanted at nearly 3:00AM, when each “has reached the end of [their] strength.”

Slightly before 5:00AM, just as it begins to lighten outside, the beginning of Psalm 147, “How good to sing Psalms to our God; how pleasant to chant fitting praise!” My whole body and soul are tempted to revolt: exhausted, sore, and a bit cold. But even that is liturgically fitting. Good Friday is the time to exalt the greatest pain, those wounds of Calvary, not from sadistic obsession but with a view towards the sweetness of Sunday. The whole Psalter highlights the radical nature of human suffering but points us, prophetically, towards Easter. I am already excited to do it again next year.

- Forward FOCUS: New Missionaries Join Pitt and CMU Teams! -



2024-2025 University of Pittsburgh Team (left to right): Katie Creamer, Dan Tully, Joseph Heaney, John Wang, Constance Viollet, Marykate O'Brien (not pictured)



2024-2025 Carnegie Mellon University Team (left to right): Abbie Hedglen, Morgan Gillis, Matthew Ayers, Corinne Gorski

From Student to Oratorian Priest

Continued from Page 1

Our plans for Fr. Leo so far are that he will slip into the current campus ministry at the Oratory and begin his priestly ministry there. But, other ministerial possibilities are all around us, and I have learned to expect the unexpected when it comes to where the Spirit will lead us. St. Philip Neri himself witnessed to the need to be docile and the willingness to be led and directed by the exigencies of the apostolates. He said often that there is no “masterplan,” even for the formation of the Oratory. He contradicted those who regarded him as its founder. Rather, he responded to this saying that either the Holy Spirit or His spouse, the Blessed Virgin, was its founder. He was quite aware that the Oratory’s form and manner emerged from the process of recognizing needs and seeking to meet them. In light of this I am quite sure Fr. Leo’s priesthood will occasion the expansion of our ministries and will give rise to new, fruitful undertakings. The Spirit’s summons to Fr. Leo, and the Oratory as a whole, will be to see in the unexpected new possibilities and opportunities.



(left:) The moment of ordination, Bishop Waltersheid lays his hands on Fr. Leo’s head and recites the Prayer of Ordination.
(right:) Fr. Leo’s family excitedly receives their first blessing.
(below:) Fr. Leo’s first Mass, Heinz Chapel.



Ask the Provost

Continued from Page 3

and relaxed. The pace is slow, and there is something about being close to nature and the rhythm of the sun’s rising and setting that facilitates prayer and meditation. I recall a moment during my first big trip to Montana when I was seated at our camp on the Missouri River and reading the Canticle of Daniel that says, “Let the earth bless the Lord. Praise and exalt him above all forever. Mountains and hills, bless the Lord. Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord. You springs, bless the Lord. Seas and rivers, bless the Lord. You dolphins and all water creatures, bless the Lord. All you birds of the air, bless the Lord. All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord. You sons of men, bless the Lord.”

As I read these lines, memories of the previous week rushed into my mind with images of the mountains and hills, rivers and lakes all around us, as well as the countless animals, the fish, osprey, eagles, moose, cattle, horses—beasts wild and tame—that were constant companions. I think of that whenever that text comes up in the Divine Office. I’ll never forget it.

What does growth look like for the Oratory? Are we expecting more vocations?

By now, yes, I am expecting vocations, but that was not always the case. I have always hoped for vocations, but by now it seems that our ministries and community are established well enough that vocational interest will never be lacking. May it please God for this to ever be so! Growth looks different and the same as things are right now: more Oratorians means more priests in more ministries, the growth of present ministries, and a constant fidelity of all Oratorians to a sound community life.

I saw some construction happening at 4040 Bigelow; what’s the status of it? When will we get to see it?

Our house at 4040 Bigelow Blvd. was built around the time of World War I, and not long after that the back porch was enclosed to function like a new wing of the house. Though it was not a part of the house’s original design, it was put in place not long after the initial construction. The original porch wasn’t built to last, so we decided to renovate it. I am pleased to say that everything is now finished except for the landscaping. Be on the lookout for an invite to gatherings there and maybe even an open house!

Is Br. Matthew going to seminary? Where?

My expectation is that he will eventually go to Mount St. Mary’s seminary in Emmitsburg, MD. Until then, he will do some academic work at Franciscan University at Steubenville, but he will be able to commute to and from the Oratory for that.

When are the pews coming back?

Relatively soon. At some point over the summer we will be sitting on new pews and kneeling on spring-loaded kneelers that fall to the ground as gently as a maple leaf in October.

What is your favorite lecture series you’ve given?

I presented a lecture series on the Crusades a few years ago that I enjoyed and I received a lot of positive feedback on it. I am still fascinated by the Crusades.

What would you tell your 21-year-old self?

Pray and go to daily Mass more often.

What is your current favorite incense?

The kind that smells good! There is an incense in the sacristy that looks like beads of roasted honey—it has a beautiful golden-brown color to it. It looks like it would be delicious to eat. Of all the incense in our vast collection I think that is my favorite.

Several years ago, you expressed concern about the health of the Oratory. What are your thoughts about that now?

I think we are doing great! If I am remembering correctly I probably had in mind the COVID shutdown and the financial meltdown that never really materialized, at least not to the extent the worst predictions described. The support we received at that time got us to where we are now and those fears are a distant memory, thanks be to God.

How often do you use Facebook or Instagram? Is your X (formerly Twitter) still active and do you have plans to go viral again?

I look at Instagram once in a while, but I gave up on Twitter a long time ago (it will always be Twitter for me). All I notice there now is the noise, and it is so noisy to me. I describe above my love for camping trips. Well, time on Twitter is the opposite of that, so I stay away. I check Facebook once in a while, but I don’t spend much time there either.

Which Gospel passage is your current favorite?

John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.”

Students Trade Beach for Mission Work

Continued from Page 2

Even the kids would wake up early, just so they could sit and pray with us before they attended school. Every evening, the townspeople would convene again with us for Holy Mass. They shared with us at our farewell celebration that it was the closest that they had ever felt to God - a fact that was deeply moving to our group!

For many of the students in our group, this was their first time going to daily Mass or praying a holy hour. Some were particularly struck by the openness and love of both the Pitt Newman community as well as that of the townspeople, and they returned with a desire to spread this culture in our own community. Bonding over some of the practical challenges of living out in the campo, and united in service and prayer under the banner of Christ, our group became quite close in such a short span of days. It was abundantly clear to me that God was moving in the hearts of all of the participants and in those of the community, uniting us beyond language and nationality and drawing us back to Himself in the power of the Spirit.



Magnify the Lord Campaign Progress

Continued from Page 1

Additionally this fall, we will be joined by two Varsity Catholic FOCUS Missionaries, who will concentrate on outreach to student-athletes at Pitt, CMU, and Chatham. We hope to welcome even more missionaries next year, particularly to support evangelization at Chatham.

Your support have enabled us to hire Mr. Nicholas Will as our full-time Director of Sacred Music. Nicholas is already expanding our sacred music fellowship program, enriching the Oratory’s liturgical life through sacred music.

We are thrilled about the positive impact these improvements will have on the Oratory and its ministries, both this fall and for many years to come. We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the Magnify the Lord campaign. With the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may Our Lord continue to be magnified here at the Oratory.



The lobby-level bathrooms are coming along! Expected completion in the coming weeks.



The steel beam to support the choir loft was lifted via crane, brought in through a window, and installed along the back wall of the chapel.



- Now -

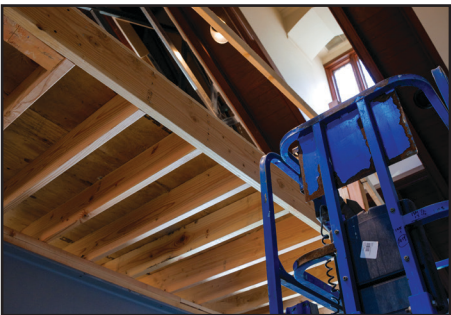
Current progress of campaign renovations:



Demolition of the downstairs Student Center:



Old lighting, well-worn carpeting and aged ceiling tiles removed from student center in preparation for replacement.



Choir loft landing has been built out from the steel beam, ready for wiring installation.

- Later -

Renderings from the same vantage:



View upon entry of completed Student Center:



Upgraded lighting, new hardwood flooring, and engineered soundproofing ceiling tiles will enhance the space.



View from below of the completed choir loft.

We Still Need Your Help!

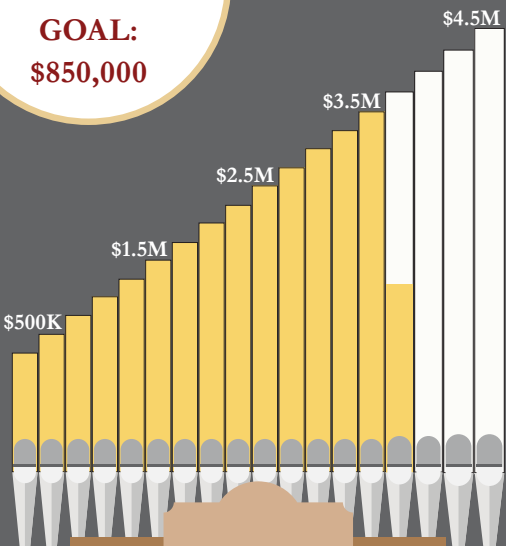


MAGNIFY THE LORD CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Throughout the winter and spring, Oratorians, Oratory staff and many lay leaders have been busy working on the *Magnify the Lord* Capital Campaign. This major fundraising effort is focused on raising funds to expand our campus ministry initiatives while addressing essential liturgical and infrastructure needs. The campaign will ensure the Oratory’s continued ability to serve students and the wider Catholic community for years to come.

Thank you to the many members of our community who have given of their time, talent and treasure to the campaign! We are so grateful to be **over 81% of the way to our \$4.5 million campaign goal**, which, God-willing, we will reach later this year – but only with your help! Below are details regarding our progress to date and how our community can help it to a successful completion.

NEEDED
TO REACH
GOAL:
\$850,000



CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS (As of June 20)



50 leaders and volunteers assisting with requests for gifts



100% pledge participation among campaign leadership



308 gifts and pledges received



63 new donors made their first gift to the Oratory

FINAL STEPS TO \$4.5 MILLION

Throughout the remainder of 2024, Oratory leaders will continue the journey to our \$4.5 million goal. We are excited and grateful for the **\$3.65 million raised to date**, though we know our ultimate goal is within reach. We are relying on the generosity and sacrifice of our community as we aim to *Magnify the Lord* through this historic campaign.

How can you help?

- **PRAY:** Please continue to pray for the success of this campaign – through the intercession of our most Glorious and Blessed Virgin – and for the Lord’s guidance of Oratory leaders.
- **SHARE:** For those who have already financially supported the campaign, please spread the word to others who have been impacted by the Oratory or may be willing to make a gift to *Magnify the Lord*.
- **SUPPORT:** If you have not yet had the opportunity to make a pledge, we ask you to discern a meaningful commitment and make your pledge soon.

To learn more about the *Magnify the Lord* campaign, view the campaign video and make a pledge, visit magnifythelordpgh.org or scan the QR code:



In the coming months, we will keep our community apprised of our progress in both fundraising and construction. Your generosity to this campaign will leave a lasting impact for many years to come!