



Newman Catholic Community

Forming Disciples on the Campus of Eastern Illinois University

Newman Notes

April 2023

In the Midst of Silence . . .

John Johnson '24

When reflecting on my three silent retreat experiences with Newman, each one seems to unintentionally build off the other. This struck me as I recalled each retreat and the graces God bestowed to me. To put it simply, *God was clearly at work in each retreat.*

The first silent retreat I attended was January 2022 my freshman year. I was nervous because twenty four hours of silence was a foreign concept to me. Never would I have thought to spend silence in this form, but it was through my curiosity and desire to learn more that I decided to make my “yes” and sign up. By the grace of God it so happened that the theme of the retreat was on how to enter into silence and



solitude. For a nervous freshman who didn't know much about silence and solitude, it was very important for me to hear this topic. Allowing silence into your life and understanding how to spend it, is a crucial aspect in fostering a fruitful prayer life. A moment of the retreat that still resonates with me is when Sr. Consolata read Psalm 40:10, *Be still, and know that I am God.* She repeated the verse over and over, while taking a word off the end each time. This eventually ends up with the word *be*. I know for sure that in this moment I had chills, coming to the realization that in solitude God wants us most to simply, **be**. This retreat transformed my love for silence, recognizing that simply **being** with God is the firm foundation that I had to foster.

Desiring to experience the beauty of a silent retreat again, I was thrilled to hear another was being offered November 2022. I immediately signed up, eager to see what God had in store for me. The theme of this retreat was on understanding God's voice in your life. This came at a time when I was

struggling with hearing the voice of God, while also discerning through many decisions. This retreat allowed me to more fully enter into the silence and solitude. Fr. Dominic did a phenomenal job in teaching us different ways to pray, giving his testimony, and tips to understand God's voice. For me, this retreat was a time of learning, relaxing, and being able to soak it all in.

Loving the ability to go on retreat, this takes us to the most recent silent retreat in January 2023. Sr. Karolyn did an amazing job basing the whole retreat on John 15, creating the three themes of prune, abide, and disciple. In the passage we hear that Jesus is the true vine, the Father is the vine grower, and He prunes the branches so that they bear more fruit. The concept of pruning is important to understand, realizing that in our own life there are things that are meant to be, but are perhaps out of control. God will in turn, carefully and tenderly prune with love. Once we begin the pruning process, it is then that we are able to dive into abiding and being a disciple of God.

After this last silent retreat, I came to the realization of how each one has had a particular role in my life of faith and how they all have built off one another, like climbing a mountain. The first one set me up with a basic foundation, learning about silence, and how to enter into it. The second one provided wisdom on how to pray and understand the voice of God. The last retreat focused on a single passage from scripture, taking time to mediate and contemplate. I am extremely thankful for the ability to attend retreats with Newman, because it is through them that I am able to better develop as a young adult in the Catholic church.





Newman Notes

It is Good that You Exist...

Catherine Porter, Campus Minister

Three months after returning from the Focus SEEK Conference in St. Louis, I am still in awe of the graces God poured out. Sister Miriam James, a keynote speaker during the conference stated, "it is good that you exist." This simple message captivated my heart as one of the campus ministers of these 23 men and women. Amidst all that we do day-to-day in ministry, it comes down to helping students encounter the saving love of Jesus Christ. It comes down to them coming to believe in who the Lord is, and therefore, in who He has created them to be. Each of these students' lives are unrepeatable. They have an essential role to play in God's saving work *at this time in history*.

Since SEEK, I have witnessed new commitments to daily prayer, openness to striving in virtue, deepening of friendships in our Newman Center, and excitement for sharing the Gospel to peers. I have listened to stories of conversion, healing, discernment, trust, openness, and renewal of zeal for the Lord. God is moving so differently in each of these young people, yet has brought them all together to bless the entire community upon their return. It is so good that they exist... we cannot wait to see how the Lord continues to bear fruit in them. Please keep these and all of our students in your prayers!

Macy Vogt, EIU Senior

Attending the SEEK conference was a beautiful way to start 2023. In my time at the conference, I felt the Holy Spirit move in my heart through prayer and the messages shared by speakers. Jesus went above and beyond in showing me His love, especially in Adoration. I have come to understand God on a deeper level, and it has greatly strengthened my faith in Him.

Since the conference, I have desired to make prayer a priority every day because I realized that regular conversation with the Lord is what I am made for. I was also reminded of the beauty of our Church. We all want to live in heaven one day, and we can use our God-given gifts to help each other become saints. I didn't just feel like a face in the crowd of 17,000 attendees. *I found belonging, joy, and the love of God at SEEK*. I will be forever grateful for this experience. Thank you to all who generously supported us and made it possible for us.

Brock Vogt, Sophomore, LLC (Coming to EIU in the Fall!)

SEEK '23 is a week that I will always remember and be grateful for having the opportunity to attend. Prior to this week, my faith was holding on by a string and my spiritual habits were those of a "lukewarm" Catholic. Throughout the conference, I felt the presence of Jesus through the speakers, Adoration, Confession, and all of the young adults who attended. As I mentioned before, there were a variety of speakers who talked throughout the week. One talk that particularly touched me on a personal level was Monsignor Shea's. He talked about three lies that the devil wants us to believe and I have deeply struggled with all three in the past. These three lies include: "I am not enough," "tomorrow is the day," and "I am alone." In Shea's speech, however, *I learned why I am not alone and why I am enough*.

Siblings at SEEK



I was able to learn so much about my faith, which I will now use on a daily basis and share with those around me. Seeing thousands of other Catholic students gave me hope for the future. I feel that the world today is filled with so much hate and negativity, and it is our job to spread the Word of God. I am thankful for being surrounded by all the other EIU students who went on the trip. I attend Lake Land College, and I had not spent an extensive amount of time with the EIU Newman Center previously. Being with everyone filled me with joy, and I truly felt a part of the Newman family, which has solidified my decision to attend Eastern in the coming fall semester.

I want to thank the donors and benefactors who made this trip possible. Because of you, I was able to strengthen my relationship with God and meet so many new people.

Our Vision Statement: To invite the EIU Community into transforming relationships with Christ and one another, empowering all to create a lasting impact in the world.



Moments from the SEEK Conference





Rest in Peace Dr. Julian Hamerski

Roy Lanham, Director

*Husband, Father, Grandfather, Professor of Chemistry,
Newman Faculty Advisor, Friend, Christian, Sojourner.*

We all have had to introduce ourselves at a gathering. As part of it we use identifiers. These words are many times built around how we see ourselves in relationship to those around us. Dr. Julian Hamerski lived a life where those relationships defined, not only who he was, but the path he walked. My encounter with Julian was in the spring of 1986 when I interviewed for the position of Director at EIU Newman. He immediately impressed me as a man whose passion for helping young adults to drink deeply from the well of our faith was his primary concern, and he taught Chemistry on the side. Over the years I realized I was not too far off the mark. He longed for a Church where the laity engaged in their call to be *salt of the earth* and *light of the world*. He encouraged and counseled me to give our students the tools to engage in a life of holiness.

And so, when his grandson informed me Julian had died this past fall. I added the last identifier: *Sojourner*. I know Julian wore that moniker well throughout his life. He embraced the journey that leads us to the Father and saw



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through the sorrows and joys of life that our ultimate goal was union with God. Everything else is second to this desire. Thank you Julian for your love of Newman and for showing us all how to walk the path of life that leads to fullness of joy in heaven.

Alternative Spring Break 2023

St. Francis Inn, Philadelphia, PA

