

NEWMAN CENTRE CATHOLIC MISSION

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO'S ST. GEORGE CAMPUS



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THE TORCH

NEWMAN CENTRE CATHOLIC MISSION & ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH | WINTER 2023

OUR LADY OF MERCY

A LOOK BACK
AT 2022 & INTO 2023

STUDENTS IN THE
WORKPLACE

LESSONS FROM
PAPAL VESPERS

MEDITATIONS ON
MARY BOOK REVIEW

Ministry Leaders Training Day | 2022



WELCOME BACK!



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ALL STUDENTS
ARE WELCOME!

From Fr. Mark Kolosowski

Our Pastor & Executive Director



Brothers and Sisters in Christ!
I must admit, I have a weakness! I really like getting good deals. The better the deal, the more excited I get. That is why, for the last two to three years I have been visiting online auctioning sites and trying to land the best deals possible. I have been quite successful finding religious articles, sacred vessels, and missal stands that decorate the St. John Henry Newman Church on campus, and other items are being enjoyed at the Cathedral!

A few months ago, shortly after I came to the Newman Centre, I stumbled on another great deal. It was a statue of Mother Mary. What struck me, was her beautiful face, the fact that she was over 50 inches tall and of course the price (which I will never reveal). I immediately put the statue in my “follow” folder and kept watch of the price for the next couple of days until the auction. Without too much effort, I won the statue and arranged for her to come to Toronto because the auction took place in California.

For the next couple of days, I waited for the statue to arrive. One afternoon, as I was coming from the chapel, a student that I had never seen before, stopped me in the driveway and showed me a scapular which had a crest on it, asking me if I knew what it was. At first glance, I said that I had no idea, but at second glance, I noticed that I had seen that crest before. I tried my best to remember where I had seen it but I could not recall where. After the student left, I sat down at my desk and I remembered that the statue that I had purchased, had a crest on the front. I went to the auction site to look at the pictures again and was amazed that it was the exact same crest as the one on the scapular. With a little bit of research, I found out that the crest was associated with the Mercurian Fathers and the statue was that of Our Lady of Mercy and Ransom of Slaves.

The story of the statue took me back to the 13th century when Spain was being invaded by neighboring countries. Raids along the borders of Spain, took many of the Spanish people into slavery where they were shipped to far off ends of the world, where they were forced to renounce their faith or be tortured. The only way to recover the Spaniards were by literally buying them back and paying a ransom. Hence the Mercurian movement was established and was

dedicated to the patronage of Mother Mary. The religious who entered the movement were obliged to do 3 things: 1. To pray for those enslaved, 2. To collect money to pay the ransom for the slaves, and 3. To offer their lives in exchange for the life of a slave.

When learning about this, it was difficult not to think about the various forms of slavery that we encounter today, sex-trafficking, forced labor, domestic servitude, unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers, etc. The list goes on and on. These seem to be realities far away from us, but there are examples of slavery that come closer to home.

There is slavery to ideologies and philosophies. In the last couple of years this has become a growing problem. The voice of truth has been silenced by certain ideas that go against even natural law and if you do not agree to these abstract ideas you are silenced by the growing number of groups that promote these ridiculous theories.

People also find themselves enslaved to images and fantasies, such as those related to pornography, eroticism, promiscuity and immodesty. Bombarded by images, young people find it very hard or even impossible to think about another person without objectifying them and without falsely categorizing them.

Finally, there is also slavery to sin. In John 8:34 Jesus says to the Pharisees: “Truly, truly, I say to you everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin”. We know this to be true, because we have all struggled with one form of sin or another. How many battles have we fought? How much effort have we put into overcoming our weaknesses and addictions? Only to realize that we need help, that we need grace, that we need someone to save us.

I saw the coming of Our Lady of Mercy as a blessing. She is full of grace, grace which we need. Through her intercession, we are freed, we are ransomed. She continues to pray for us and intercede for us and having her statue in our house, reminds us to pray as well, and beg for mercy in times of need.

Hopefully we all gather around her and find consolation in her beautiful face. All are welcome to the Newman Centre to see her. ■

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We are very grateful for your prayers, well wishes, and ongoing support towards our faith-based programs for the Newman Centre Catholic Mission. As loyal parishioners and friends of the Newman Centre, we ask you to consider making a donation to either the **Newman Centre Foundation of Toronto** or to the **Newman Centre Catholic Mission**.

When you donate to the **Newman Foundation of Toronto** you are supporting our Campus Ministry’s faith based programs.

When you donate to the **Newman Centre Catholic Mission** you are supporting our monthly overhead costs for the Centre and the St. John Henry Newman Catholic Church.

Your financial support helps us to provide unique and one-of-a-kind programming to the University of Toronto students who are an integral part of our Centre. It will also enable us to successfully continue our Faith & Reason lectures, Liturgical seminars, student and adult retreats, Bible study programs, the Way of the Cross, Pray & Play, student pilgrimages, sacramental preparation programs, stewardship training, and much more.

How to Make a Donation:

By Mail: Please make your cheque payable to either: **The Newman Foundation of Toronto** or the **Newman Centre Catholic Mission: 89 St. George Street, Toronto, ON M5S 2E8**

In Person: Our Parish Office is open Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm. You can drop by anytime during our hours of operation to offer your donation (cash or cheque) to our Parish Office Administrator.

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“My time at Newman stretched me, helping me to grow as a student and as a Christian, and for that I am grateful.”
~ Karen Kuang, Pharmacology & Biomedical Toxicology Graduate

Did you know that if you sign up for the Monthly P.A.G. (Pre-Authorized Giving) Program, you will be invited to an exclusive event at the Newman Centre and an invitation to a special annual Mass.

FEATURE STORY

Our Lady of Mercy

AND THE REDEMPTION OF THOSE IN BONDAGE

By Dr. Suzanne Rozell Scorsone, Director of Research at the Archdiocese of Toronto

“Today, though persecutions of religious minorities, including Catholics, and even terrorism continue to exist in some parts of the world, mutually respectful religious dialogue has largely replaced polarization and conflict.”

Photo Courtesy of Catholic

We have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:9-14)

Redemption. The Latin from which English takes the word is redimere, “to buy back”. Christ has offered Himself to redeem us from what is likened to a form of slavery, so that we may live our lives as children of God in His kingdom.

We are so accustomed to these words that we may not always be aware of just how vast what is being said here is. For us in this country in this time, awareness that we are coming into the Kingdom of Christ is an awareness of that infinite love into which our living of our lives in good works and in knowledge of God is joyful and of all that holy significance, for us as individuals and for all those around us.

Those who first heard what Paul wrote to the Colossians heard this, but they heard more. They lived in society in some ways similar and in others very different. Like ours, it was urban, multi-ethnic and multilingual, organized as a functioning state with a highly effective structure of law, a government with a complex and geographically vast administration, an imposing army, and an international economy. Unlike ours, many of those in its labour force were enslaved, captives in wars of conquest in Europe, the Middle East or North Africa, or they were the children and children’s children of those captives, bought and sold. This was not unique to the Roman Empire. Conquest by a succession of small and large societies, states and empires, with the enslavement of those taken, are known from historical records and from archaeological evidence to have existed, certainly in the Near and Far East, Greece and into the developing societies of Europe and in North Africa for at least three millennia before the Romans. Archaeological evidence beyond the written record indicates that the domination of some by others is a wide and deep occurrence in the human past.

Those to whom Paul wrote, whether themselves slave or free, saw this as part of their lives, of the community

around them, every day. The metaphor of that bondage for the wider, spiritual, social and psychological bondage was all too clear. Redemption--the promise that they would be bought back--from bondage to sin and to all that can need healing in a person’s life, that they would be not only free but members of God’s kingdom, would have all that vivid meaning. As we are now free, God can fill us with His spiritual wisdom and understanding, that we may live lives worthy in good works and knowledge of God. Slave or free, of any class and of any people, all were and are brothers and sisters, children of the one Father, the one God. This is true freedom!

Bondage also had—and can still have—an ideological reality. I say ideological, because it can be religious or secular. Beliefs can be deeply held and shared in a community or among members of a society. They can also be confused with membership in and loyalty to a society or political system. Egyptian Pharaohs were deified in part as unifiers of a potentially fractious society. In the period of the Roman Empire, this identification of worship with loyalty to the state became a requirement of worship and sacrifice to the Emperor. Members of various sects could freely worship any number of deities, the household Lares and Penates, Jupiter and the other Roman gods, the Iranian-derived Mithras, or the Egyptian Serapis and Isis, but only so long as they also gave sacrificial worship to the Emperor as divine. Jews refused, but were a separate people and given exceptions under certain structured circumstances. Christians might be anyone anywhere, and might acknowledge people across social classes as equal, as brothers and sisters--a potentially radiating crack in the system. A Christian who refused to acknowledge the Emperor as a god was considered subversive, a threat to the political and social order, and in various periods could be executed, often in a grotesque and public way as a warning to others. These are the stories of the martyrs.

This human tendency to conflate religious beliefs with social membership and loyalty did not end once Christianity was tolerated in the Empire around the Mediterranean and in Europe, becoming the majority religion. With the coming of Islam, belief again became a social and political movement. Rulers and military forces holding those beliefs in turn over several centuries took most of the Middle East and North Africa, Anatolia, Greece, the Balkans and east as far as what are now Pakistan and parts of India. They pressed north into Europe, at times and in some places for centuries taking much of Spain, Sicily, and parts of Italy and France, pressing populations to show submission by conversion.

The mendicant Mercedarian Friars, once called the Order of Our Lady of Mercy of the Redemption of



“Today, though persecutions of religious minorities, including Catholics, and even terrorism continue to exist in some parts of the world, mutually respectful religious dialogue has largely replaced polarization and conflict.”

Captives and now called the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy, (Ordo Beatae Virginis de Mercede), were founded in Barcelona in the 13th century to raise money, and even to give themselves, to ransom—to redeem, to buy back--European Christians, at first Catalan, Spanish and French, who had been captured by armies or by pirates and enslaved, with pressure to surrender their faith. The very name Mercedarian is rooted in Mercede, Latin for “Mercy”. They have also represented their devotion in the name of Our Lady of Mercy of the Redemption of Captives, or in the past as Our Lady of Ransom. A Feast of Our Lady of Ransom was celebrated under the Tridentine Rite; though it is no longer in the Roman Calendar, the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy is still celebrated by the Mercedarians. Devotion to Our Lady of Mercy is a particular expression of faith to people at the Basilica de la Mercè in Barcelona, at the Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy in Quezon City, Philippines, and where she is now known as Our Lady of Vallarpadam at the Vallarpadam Basilica, National Shrine Basilica of Our Lady of Ransom, in Vallarpadam, Kochi, Kerala, India.

Over the centuries, Christian populations reasserted their social and political control in most of geographical Europe. Then within Europe itself came the Reformation, with people’s deeply and conscientiously-held beliefs on all sides soon becoming once more enmeshed with ethnic and political loyalties and some leaders’ more cynical strategies or genuine defense of the

beliefs of their peoples--depending. It is quite possible for people to think that what they believe is true, and that it would be better for everyone else if they also believed that. It is quite another matter for people to think that it would be in those people’s best interest to force them to change their faith to believe that. It is at still another level, and quite cynically different at root, for a leader or group or party to seek political or economic power, and to use a belief system and people’s personal attachment to it or submission to it, even their zeal, as a motivator or tool or exclusionary instrument to gain and hold that power.

As just one familiar example from one country, even as serious theological issues were dividing England, Henry VIII used them to seize control, not only of the Church, but of its monasteries. He used their resources to pay his huge debts from foreign wars. He distributed their properties to newly-named nobility who would be dependent upon him, thus solidifying his power base against far older noble lineages. The monasteries had been the nearest equivalent to a local social service system in England; that, too, was gone. The next three centuries would see waves of deprivation of civil rights for those who deviated from the religious regime of the period, be they Catholic, many forms of Protestant, Quaker, or, under the Puritan Cromwell’s Protectorate, also members of the Church of England. That time too, God be thanked, is now past.

Today, though persecutions of religious minorities, including Catholics, and even terrorism continue to exist in some parts of the world, mutually respectful religious dialogue has largely replaced polarization and conflict. In 2019, the Holy Father Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Ashar, together issued a joint Declaration. The entire document is of enormous significance. Here follow only a few passages.

Moreover, we resolutely declare that religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. ... This is done for the purpose of achieving objectives that are political, economic, worldly and short-sighted.... (They affirm together:)

>> The firm conviction that authentic teachings of religions invite us to remain rooted in the values of peace; to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious coexistence; to re-establish wisdom, justice and love; and to reawaken religious awareness among young people so that future generations may be protected from the realm of materialistic thinking and from dangerous policies of unbridled greed and indifference that are based on the law of force and not on the force of law;

>> Freedom is a right of every person: each individual enjoys the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives. Therefore, the fact that people are forced to adhere to a certain religion or culture must be rejected, as too the imposition of a cultural way of life that others do not accept;

>> Justice based on mercy is the path to follow in order to achieve a dignified life to which every human being has a right.

>> Dialogue, understanding and the widespread promotion of a culture of tolerance, acceptance of others and of living together peacefully would contribute significantly to reducing many economic, social, political and environmental problems that weigh so heavily on a large part of humanity.

Henry VIII and the centuries of exclusionary divisions which followed him are also now long past. Immediately after the news came of the death of Queen Elizabeth II,

Pope Francis sent a telegram of condolence to King Charles III, assuring him of the Pope's tribute to the life of service of the late Queen, his prayers for her, and his prayers for Charles and God's blessings upon him as he takes up his duties as King. This was pastoral, it was human, but historically and politically it was also an explicit, public and mutually affirming address and blessing to the British monarch by the head of the Catholic Church.

Again, on any issue there can be deeply-held beliefs and also political and social strategies, simple policies of social continuity and modes of survival on all sides. There is need, often not understood, to separate people's freely chosen beliefs from the bondage of what is imposed by particular political administrations or other social powers to enforce unity.

In our own time, we also see ideological belief systems, and for some, bondage, which function psychologically and socially in much the same way, but without—or even in opposition to—religion.

One major strain has been this. The 20th century saw the imposition of versions of Marxist ideology in Russia, China and elsewhere. They were radical takes on what are actually fundamental issues. The specifics of economic structures and the balance and roles of individual rights and freedoms, private and collective state ownership and universal community rights are embodied in diverse national constitutions around the world. What we can say here, however, is that with those forms of Marxism, not only were individual rights essentially denied and the collective absolutized. Atheism was made part of an enforced ideology. Once again religious people—whatever their faith—were persecuted and suppressed because leaders (Marx was by that time long dead) thought their own power required that the people, in effect, worship only the state and its leaders and political system. Much has happened in the 21st century to moderate this picture and make it far more complex in differing regions, but the aftermath remains.

In the modern day, however, there are numbers of other “isms” in the public square and in academe, often raising or exploring important questions in a changing world. They may form serious (or not) academic or political approaches, or perhaps underlie controversies in the news or on social media. While most are secular, simply dealing with secular issues, some are ideologically secularist, actively excluding or even opposing the perspectives of a particular religion or of religion in general. Again, mutually respectful discussion of issues can be productive on all sides and at least allows people

“Do not be so foolish. Let not sin dwell in your soul”

to live in the freedom of their own beliefs. Too often, however, the same human tendency to absolutize one's own (or one's group's own) opinion becomes intolerant of the views of others. Once again, it can become a group motivator, even a thing of group solidarity and zeal, a tendency to discriminate, to exclude or dismiss or even marginalize those who hold a different view. This, for people of faith, can pose a different form of bondage, a subtle or not-so-subtle pressure to conform, to submit to the pressure, to give up their faith or at least to operate as though it did not exist.

There are still and always the many other forms of bondage. The Mercedarians themselves continue to work in 17 countries in North and Latin America, in Africa, Europe and South Asia. “They continue to rescue others from modern types of captivity, such as social, political, and psychological forms. They work in jails, marginal neighborhoods, among addicts, and in hospitals....The Order of Mercy gives special emphasis to educational and parish work.” The Mercedarians now see their vocation as serving those in “new forms of captivity” where they are “in danger of losing their faith” in social situations where 1) it is oppressive and degrading to the human person, 2) it springs from principles and systems opposed to the Gospel; 3) it puts the faith of Christians in danger; 4) it offers the possibility of helping, visiting and redeeming people who are in such situations.

Documenting the continuing reality of the ancient forms of slavery, the United Nations International Labour Organization has just issued a report stating that 50 million people worldwide live in modern slavery, forced labour, sexual exploitation (human trafficking) or forced marriage.

Our Lady Mary is the first of humanity to be fully redeemed by the Father in the Holy Spirit through Christ, who is her Son. She leads us and prays for all of us, in our own interior need of redemption and for redemption in the difficult situations and surroundings and pressures of our lives. She leads and prays for us in the call to aid, to give of ourselves, in the redemption, in the rescue, in the buying-back, of others, near and around the world.

Pope Francis, speaking to the General Chapter of the Mercedarians in May of this year, affirmed their vocation of rescue, of “being” with Mary at the foot of the cross. This is a message also to each and all of us.

In all this, know how to “be”, be with Mary, beside Christ at the foot of the cross, in the suffering flesh of the poor man and the prisoner which he made his own. And prisoners exist today too, as always; they change geography, they change ways, they change colour, but slavery is a reality that is increasingly taking shape. Increasingly, and with more variety. Perhaps, without making a mistake, we can say that there are more slaves now than in the times in which you were founded, it is certain. And this must certainly be a new challenge to your response.

The new forms of slavery, those that are disguised, those that are not known, those that are hidden, but there are many. Even in megalopolises like Rome, London, Paris, everywhere, there are forms of slavery that continue.

Seek them out and ask the Lord: what do I do? ■

Footnotes: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2022/may/documents/20220507-ordine-mercede.html>
<https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dqodm.html>
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“I started a habit of offering up the little sufferings that I experienced in my day-to-day life to the Lord, taking inspiration from St. Therese Liseux...”

By Belinda Kusuma, on summer studentship at SickKids



Belinda in the lab at SickKids Hospital

This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to do a Summer Studentship at SickKids. I was working in an electron cryomicroscopy laboratory, where we shoot proteins with electrons to see their structure and dynamics. My project was to use a protein, streptavidin, to increase the effectiveness of sample preparation. Hopefully, this would lead to proteins being put into the microscope faster and thus more structures can be explored.

The first half of my project was disheartening. It was just to recreate what a different lab had done, but no one in my lab, including my supervisor, had been able to successfully recreate it. It was supposed to be a simple experiment, yet for a month or so I would redo it and still failed to replicate the results. And then, while we were waiting for new materials, my supervisor assigned me a different experiment which also failed for the first two weeks. For a while, I thought that I was not cut out for laboratory work, and that every single experiment I touched would fail.

A lot of people think that science should just work, especially when you already know the theory. However, there are many factors behind a working experiment, and when an experiment that has worked before suddenly stops working, we do a lot of control experiments, changing one component at a time until we figure out what made the experiment stop working. That was precisely what I ended up doing. I went through every single component of the experiment, and yet, still, nothing worked. The more I tried to find what made it not work, the more frustrated I became.

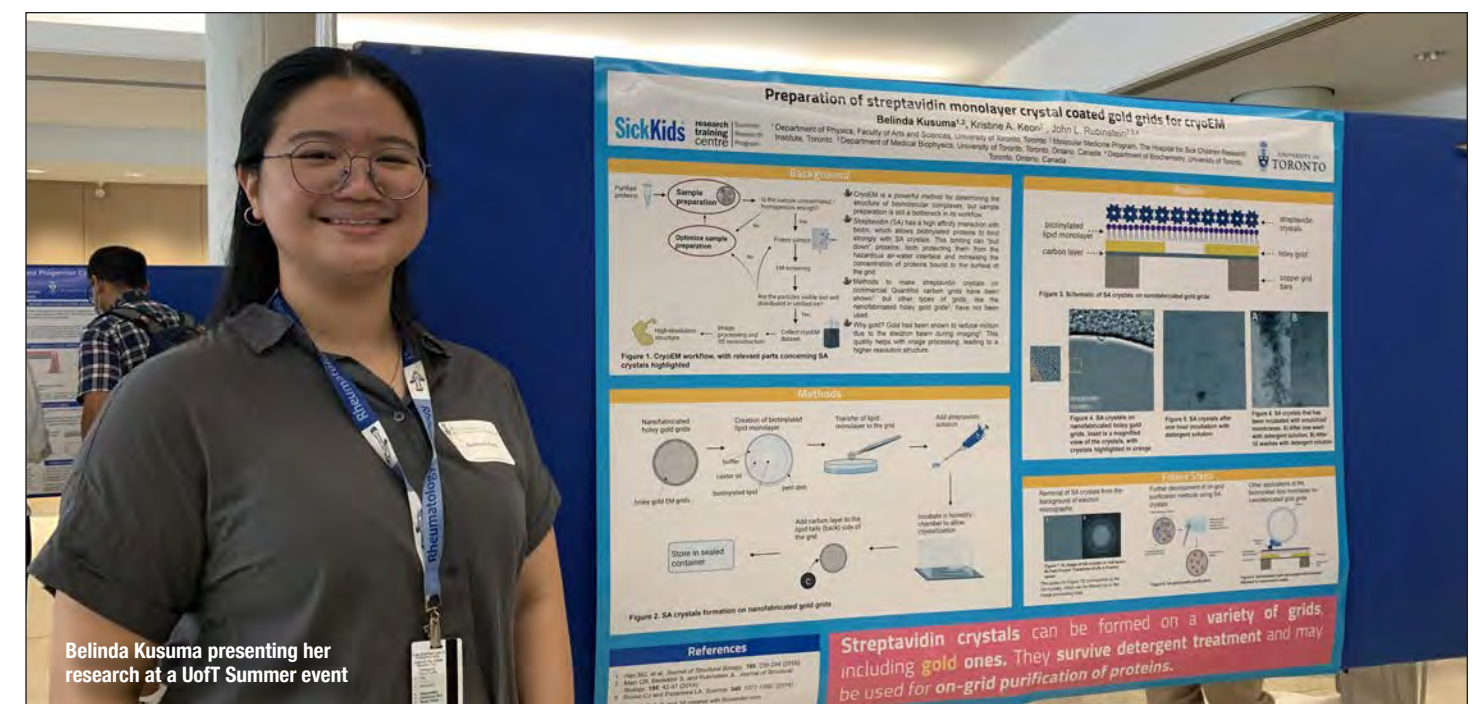
I remember as I was preparing for that last experiment, almost ready to give up. Nothing had worked so far, and

it seemed unlikely that this was what would cause it to work. But it needed to be done, so I offered my frustrations and hopelessness to the Lord. I have started a habit of offering up the little sufferings that I experienced in my day-to-day life to the Lord, taking inspiration from St. Therese Liseux, and though this frustration of a failed experiment was so minor, it should not even be worth mentioning. I offered this to God, much in the same way I offered my exams and my homework. Little things. Inconsequential things.

God is good though and He took all these inconsequential things and made it for His glory. The next day, I checked my experiment, and it had worked! It would have still worked even if I hadn't offered my frustrations to the Lord, but I might not have done it, and thus not known that it had worked. The science did not change, but I did.

This summer had taught me patience and perseverance, and it had also allowed me to learn how to offer my sufferings to the Lord in a different way than my usual 'exams and homework' ways. It had also shown me that no matter what you do, no matter what your vocation is, God can always, always use it for His glory. ■

Belinda Kusuma is a fourth year UofT undergraduate student taking Biological Physics with a with a Minor in Math. She is also a Newman Centre Campus Ministry Aid and a volunteer at Sunday Masses.



Belinda Kusuma presenting her research at a UofT Summer event



September 2022: Tabling Event



September 2022: Ministry Leaders Training + Conference

On Saturday, September 17th, we held a Newman Centre Ministry Leaders Training session and conference. The purpose of this training session was to solidify the importance of each ministry and what each member wanted to bring to the table in 2022/2023. Sandra, our Campus Minister also organized a few team building exercises. We ended the day with Adoration and prayer. Thank you to Fr. Mark and Sandra for a great day.





A MISSIONARY ZEAL: Lessons from Papal Vespers

by Vincent Pham

All Photos by: Vincent Pham

Pope Francis came to Canada for a “penitential pilgrimage,” from July 24th to the 29th, 2022, as a sign of his accompaniment with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada in their journey towards healing and reconciliation, particularly with the Catholic Church. Along with a small group of colleagues from my parish, I decided to take the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Québec in union with the Holy Father - a decision made just over two weeks before Pope Francis was due to arrive in Canada.

A couple hours after booking train tickets to Québec, I received an email invitation to join the celebration of Solemn Vespers presided by Pope Francis at 5:15 pm at Notre-Dame de Québec Cathedral on Thursday July 28th. Since I already had travel arrangements and an AirBnB booked, I graciously accepted. In the days leading up to Papal Vespers, while I was excited to be given this opportunity to attend, I understood the nature of his Papal Visit and wondered what the Pope would say to the bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, religious and pastoral workers who would gather that evening in the context of a “penitential pilgrimage.”

Pre-Vespers

Thursday morning, my colleagues woke up early at 3:30am to catch the shuttle to Ste. Anne de Beaupré Shrine for the Papal Mass. I woke up at the same time as them, but unlike them, I took a slow morning as I made some toast and prepared a glass of orange juice. After picking up some grocery items for the evening, I walked to Old Québec, specifically to the two churches of Notre-Dame des Victoires and the Ursuline Chapel which housed the tomb of St. Marie of the Incarnation. Being in the quietness of the chapel the tomb of St. Marie prompted me to think about the missionaries who came to New France in the 1600s and walked the places where I was now walking. I realized and better understood how special Québec City was as the birthplace of Catholicism in Canada, or as I like to call it, “Rome of Canada.” Moreover, the question I pondered was: How can the Catholic Church in Canada better exemplify the missionary spirit that St. Marie and St. François de Laval, the first bishop of Canada, had back then? I believed that understanding this missionary spirit would give better clarity to the ongoing process of Truth and Reconciliation between Catholics and the Indigenous Peoples.

Continued on the next page...

At Vespers

The Cathedral was filled with all members of the Church from cardinals, bishops, priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, and representatives of lay people across Canada. Before the Pope came, people went around, connecting with their bishops, clergy friends, colleagues... it was a first national gathering of sorts since the start of the pandemic, it seemed.

The Pope enters through the front door of the Cathedral in a wheelchair a little earlier than expected. He took his time shaking hands with people he could, and smiling, brightening the atmosphere. The Pope passed by my pew, and I was two people away from him. “Peter is here... he is truly here in the flesh to pray with us,” I thought. My heart was beating to the sound of the organ, and the choir’s singing of “Tu es Petrus.”

Upon reaching the sanctuary, the Pope with some assistance stood up and sat in the big chair in front of the altar. The celebration of Vespers was trilingual – French, English and Latin – to engage as many people as possible in the liturgical celebration. There seemed to be some powerful force as “Come down, O Love divine,” was sung to open the liturgical celebration. It was a profound moment as everyone stood up and joined the choir in the singing of the hymn. As I joined in the hymn, I looked around and was hit by the fact that the people gathered in the Cathedral formed a microcosm of the Church – the Holy Father, Cardinals, bishops, priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, seminarians, lay people... all have different functions yet all necessary. Yet, we can only function under docility to the Holy Spirit – a thought so beautifully expressed in the hymn “Come down, O Love divine.”

Pope Francis Speaks

The liturgical texts used at Vespers came from the Common of Pastors, in honour of St. François de Laval who was buried in the crypt of the Cathedral. The homily of the Holy Father took inspiration from these texts as well as the life of St. François. While the homily was given in Spanish, French and English translations were woven in throughout.

Pope Francis reminded those gathered that the “closeness of God,” is our deepest joy. It is not about the things we can accomplish, but rather the experience of being near His Love – that is “the source of the joy of ministry and above all the joy of faith.”

Pope Francis in a sense wanted to bring the clergy, religious and pastoral workers back to the basics of what it means to a missionary. The Pope spoke at length about

how the proclamation of this joy cannot be halted by secularism, but rather, be fostered in (1) the common goal of making Jesus known, (2) to be credible witnesses of the Gospel and (3) live in fraternity among members of the Church and as brothers and sisters in a society at large, working towards the common good. Pope Francis pointed to the model of St. François de Laval who tirelessly reached out to the most marginalized of society.

Concluding Vespers

One of the most profound moments I had during the celebration of Vespers was after the intercessions, as all sung the Lord’s Prayer in Latin. For me, it was a moment that put everyone on a level playing field – there was no distinction between members of the Church – as we all called God, as “Pater Noster – Our Father.” It is in reciting the Lord’s Prayer that we recognize our human frailty, and that we need God’s help each and every day. The celebration of Solemn Vespers with the Holy Father concluded with the Pope praying in silence by the tomb of St. François. I can only assume that he prayed that members of the Church, including himself will make Jesus known, be witnesses of the Gospel and foster fraternity, through St. François’ intercession.

Discernment and Mission

In the homily at Vespers, Pope Francis gave members of the Church in Canada much to think about. As I left the Cathedral, and still today, I reflect on what it means to be a missionary. The question I pondered at St. Marie of the Incarnation’s tomb seems to have been answered with Pope Francis’ homily later that evening. The path to Truth and Reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, and the path to authentic evangelization lies in the need to rediscover what is essential to the Church’s mission.

A late mentor and friend once said: “You need to clearly know the purpose of what you are doing. If not, you drop everything and figure that out first.” He said this because he realized that sometimes, when people fail to realize the true purpose and goal of their work, they do more harm than good. A loss of foundation of the basics leads people from the very essence of ministry.

The authentic joy that Pope Francis speaks about is what I have been reflecting on in my own course of discernment. As someone discerning a vocation and in parish ministry, I have continually asked myself, “What gives me joy in my ministry? Is it a superficial type of joy that is cheapened by secularism, or the applause of a community?” These are questions I have recently been finding myself having put to prayer and examination before God in discerning His will for me.



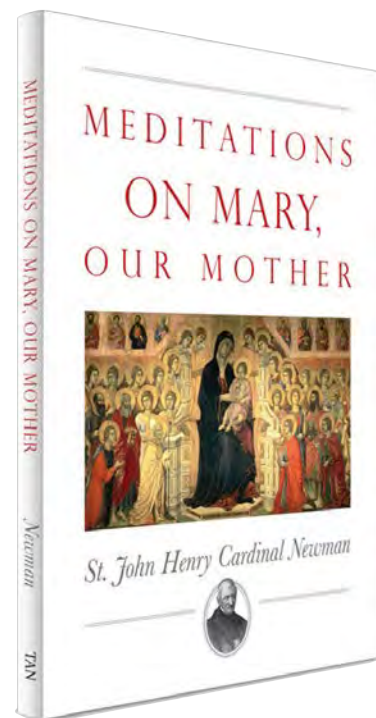
Pope Francis believes the key to evangelization and reconciliation is that we must rediscover the missionary zeal that the early missionaries like St. François and St. Marie had – they met the people where they were at a specific point in time, and in a particular way, the Indigenous. It is the authentic joy that they had deep within them that they were able to live in fraternity with those they ministered to, and in turn, allowed them to be credible witnesses to the Gospel. Through that, they led many souls to God.

A missionary’s heart should not be tangled up, nor rigid in bureaucratic structures that makes God seemingly inaccessible to others. No matter our place in the Church, we are called to embrace authentic joy and meet people where they are like the early missionaries in Canada. We must find ways to reach out to the most marginalized populations, listen and walk with them and strive to understand them. Only when we can be docile to the Holy Spirit, meet people where they are, see Jesus in them and bring Jesus to them, then can we truly have authentic missionary zeal in this secularized world. That is what I learned from Papal Vespers. ■

Pope Francis reminded those gathered that the “closeness of God,” is our deepest joy. It is not about the things we can accomplish, but rather the experience of being near His Love – that is “the source of the joy of ministry and above all the joy of faith.”

Vincent Pham is a fourth-year undergraduate student double-majoring in Ethics, Society e³ Law and Philosophy, with a minor in Christianity e³ Culture.

He is a member of the NCSC Liturgical Team.



God Alone, Through Mary

MEDITATIONS ON MARY, OUR MOTHER

Reflection by Erica Figueiredo, Recruitment & Enrollment Officer,
University of Toronto, St. Michael's College

“Kings of the earth, when they have sons born to them, forthwith scatter some large bounty or raise some high memorial. (In) the coming of Emmanuel, these were to be exhibited in a special manner in the person of His Mother.”

- St. John Henry Cardinal Newman

Until I encountered this text recently, I did not know that St. John Henry Newman penned several profound reflections on Mary. While he wrote many other works describing his famous conversion from Protestantism, this short but moving text leaves little doubt that the Mother of God played a monumental role in leading him to Catholicism. The Meditations on Mary is organized under various themes and titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are comprised of varied writings including letters to friends, addresses to congregations, poetic prose, scriptural commentaries and apologetic arguments.

His relationship with Mary and acceptance of the dogmas surrounding her, stems directly from his belief in the Incarnation. “Christ became incarnate in time through a woman - who was this woman? Could she really be an insignificant figure?” Thus, flowing from the fact of the Incarnation, he scripturally unpacks many of the Marian dogmas and titles that people (including his former Protestant self) wrestle with. As she is the Mother of God, Christ is in a position to uniquely create the vessel through which He would enter humanity. To view Mary as the Second Eve, the belief in her Immaculate Conception is necessary for Mary to be placed in the same state of grace as first Mother of the Living. Furthermore, in her, the curse placed on Eve was transformed into a blessing for mankind. Newman comments that, “Eve was doomed to bear children in sorrow but now this very dispensation... was made the means by which salvation came into the world.”

Mary is referred to as the “Gate of Heaven” since the Lord passed from heaven to earth through her person. Though remarkably little is mentioned about Mary, for Newman “again in this silence we find instruction, as much as in the mention of her.” He argues that Scripture exists not to extoll individual figures but primarily to exalt the Almighty God. Thus, in the few moments in which the Blessed Virgin is mentioned and when she speaks, it is important to note how her entire life and person are used to magnify the Lord. He further notes that in the history of the Church, she increased very gradually. Instead, the first few centuries were devoted to clarifying important truths about the nature of Christ. Meanwhile, “she remained waiting for the time, when her own glory should be necessary for His.” Thus, all the later doctrines, dogmas, and apparitions surrounding her were established so that people might grow in greater devotion to Christ. Based on her nurturing of Him in her womb, her thirty hidden years with Him, and the torture she felt in union with Him at His passion, she is more intimately connected with Jesus than any other human being. She cannot but point us to Him.

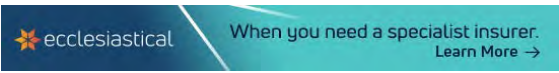
Though completely human, the meditation on her life is an exemplary model of holiness for us. While I have encountered several moving insights into the life of Mary, I found some of Newman’s reflections particularly illuminating. For example, he notes that based on the reference to the seed of the woman in Genesis 3, many Jews were at one point convinced that the Messiah would be born of their race. Hence, Jewish couples emphasized the importance of marriage in the hopes that their child could fulfill this prophecy. Yet, in contrast to other women in her day, Newman says that Mary was too humble for such aspirations; thus she chose the state of virginity. “She preferred to be His spouse to being His Mother.” And yet, in the Angel Gabriel’s visit, God chose her to become both. As in Scripture, God selected the meek and the lowly to shame the proud and strong.

It would be difficult in this short write up to recount of all the jewels contained in this text. However, Newman’s work profoundly conveys the salvific and intercessory role of Mary and inspires readers to devote themselves to her. “She will show you her Son, your God and your all. When your spirit within you is excited, or relaxed, or depressed, when it loses its balance, when it is restless and wayward, when it is sick of what it has, and hankers after what is has not, when your eye is solicited with evil and your mortal frame trembles under the shadow of the tempter, what will bring you to yourselves, to peace and to health, but the cool breath of the Immaculate (Mary)?” ■

MARY, OUR MOTHER

“Christ became
incarnate in time
through a woman -
who was this
woman?”

Photo by: Alex Gindin



Home » / Canada » / Date Night sets couples on a vocational journey

TRENDING: Frank Leo archdiocese of Montreal archdiocese of Toronto



Couples get in the baking mood on Date Night at the Newman Centre.

Photo courtesy Newman Centre Catholic Chaplaincy

Date Night sets couples on a vocational journey

BY QUINTON AMUNDSON, THE CATHOLIC REGISTER

February 9, 2023

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The team of the Newman Centre Catholic Chaplaincy at the University of Toronto was struck by inspiration while planning activities for the 2022-23 academic year. They realized a lot of the program's alumni have met, fallen in love and even married at the centre.

"These were great love stories in a lot of ways," said Rachelle Ezechiels, the Newman Centre's operations manager. "We thought 'why don't we give our parishioners, married couples and engaged couples something to journey towards so there is guidance and structure in knowing how to discern the vocation of marriage while you're dating.' You also get support through having other couples journeying with you as well."

The Newman Centre Date Night Series debuted on Oct. 19, 2022 with an event called Theology of...Dance? Ezechiels said the team wanted to set a fun tone for the series with the initial gathering.

"We had an instructor who was really familiar with English country-style dancing. He taught our participants some moves. It was that Jane Austen style of dancing from the era of *Pride and Prejudice* with couples dancing together in groups of six or eight. The dancing was accompanied with a talk about understanding the movements, the flow between male and female and connecting that to dating and how you court one another in a very structured and wholesome way."

A month later, on Nov. 16, a second date night was held. It was entitled Striving for Sainthood...Together! The night centred on meditating on the lives of the saints, specifically the married couples, and how they can become models for young Catholics seeking matrimony today. On Dec. 21, the couples did some fun baking together, enjoyed a meal for two and learned how to bring Christ into Christmas celebrations at A Newman Centre's Family Christmas.

Navigating Life Together was the theme of the most recent date night on Jan. 18. Participant couples, whether they be boyfriend and girlfriend, fiancées or husband and wife, contemplated how to handle the different hills and valleys of life together. They spoke about individual prayer, and praying together as a couple.

"Participants said this was one of the most enjoyable nights yet," said Ezechiels. "They got time in the chapel with the Blessed Sacrament exposed, and they got a nice blessing as individuals and as a couple from Fr. Mark (Kolosowski)."

The next date night is scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 15 starting at 6 p.m. at the Newman Centre on Toronto's George Street in the heart of the University of Toronto campus. This Valentine's Day edition features dinner, fellowship and an opportunity to hear stories and ask questions of Catholic couples with varying years of marriage under their belt. This event, like all date nights, costs \$50 per couple.

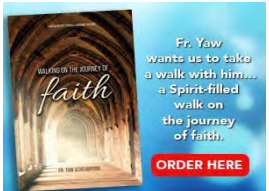
"They will speak about their vocational journeys and how they keep Christ at the centre of their relationship," said Ezechiels. "This night was actually a request from our participants. We asked them a couple months ago what they would like to see in one of our next nights, and they wanted to meet other couples who could give them the goods and straight talk about marriage."

Ezechiels shared some anonymous testimonials about the Date Night Series with *The Catholic Register* to provide a sense of what the young people are taking away from these gatherings.

One participant praised the talks as "beautiful, deep and intimate."

Ezechiels said the friendships that have bloomed might be the best success story of the Newman Centre Date Night Series.

"A lot of them say that they struggle to find other couples who are actually trying to fulfill the Church's teaching on chastity before marriage. A lot of them are struggling to find others who are navigating through the secular world in the same way. And really having that support from each other helps them to better achieve in growing towards God as individuals and grounding themselves in their faith first."



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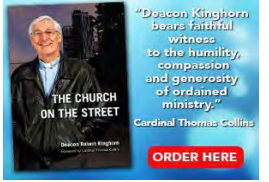
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2022-23 Date Night Series



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2022-2023 Faith & Reason Events



September 22: Guest speaker Rod Dreher with our mediator Peter Copeland



October 27: Dr. Natasha Duquette



November 24: Panelists: Brendan Steven, Samantha Rossi, Maria Lucas



January 26: Peter Copeland and guest speaker Prof. Randy Boyagoda

On Thursday, September 22nd, we kicked off our first in-person Faith & Reason Event since 2019.

Our first guest speaker was New York Times best selling author, Rod Dreher, followed by Dr. Natasha Duquette (Oct. 27), Panelists: Brendan Steven, Samantha Rossi, and Maria Lucas (Nov. 24).

On January 26th, 2023 our guest speaker was Professor Randy Boyagoda. **This event was featured in the Catholic Register: bit.ly/3IPjMtm.**

On March 30th, our guest speaker will be Anthony Annett, Ph.D. This will be a virtual event focussing on Cathonomics & Integral Ecology.

The Faith & Reason events are presented in partnership with Catholic Conscience and The St. Monica Institute. Visit our YouTube channel to watch our past and most recent events: <https://bit.ly/3N3fnEQ>



At our first in-person Faith & Reason Event: L to R: Barry White, Fr. Mark Kolosowski, Cardinal Thomas Collins, Rod Dreher, Peter Copeland & Matthew Marquardt

All photos and event livestreaming were generously provided by Dominic Chan & Sammy Paraguas Jr.



Every year we invite new students to attend the New Newmanite Supper so that they can learn more about our faith based programs, events, and much more.



October 2022: Thanksgiving Food Drive

On behalf of the Newman Centre Social Justice Ministry, we would like to thank our parishioners, students, and community at large for your very generous food donations towards this year's Thanksgiving Food Drive. All food donations were given to the Good Shepherd Ministries.



St. John Henry Newman Feast Day



**COMMUNITY
MASS FOR THE
FEAST DAY OF
ST. JOHN HENRY
NEWMAN**

16 OCTOBER
11:00 am

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are invited to ask their
families to attend.

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2022-23 Pray & Play Events - Tuesdays During the Academic Year



Every Tuesday evening, throughout the academic school year, the students gather together for Holy Hour and board games.

This has been a successful and rewarding way for students to journey together in their faith while having a great time.



Bible Parallel Project 2022-2023

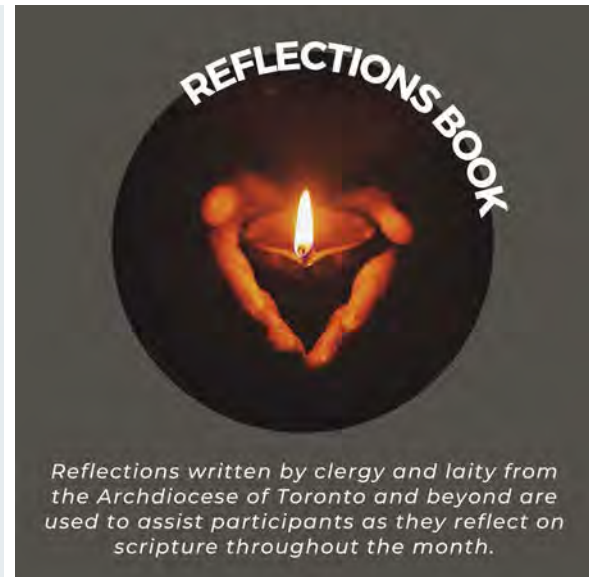
WHAT IS IT?



A program that invites you to see the **parallel** between your everyday life and scripture.

Our monthly Bible Parallel Project took place every first Friday of the month throughout the University school year. It started with Liturgy of the Word, Adoration, and Student Social. Our special guest speakers were: Fr. Matthew McCarthy, Fr. Mark Kolosowski, Fr. Michael Corpus, Fr. Eric Mah, and Cardinal Thomas Collins with music provided by Steadfast Worship.

Photos by: Sammy Paraguas Jr. and Michael Nebesney



DIVE
DEEPER
INTO
SCRIPTURE
WITH OUR...

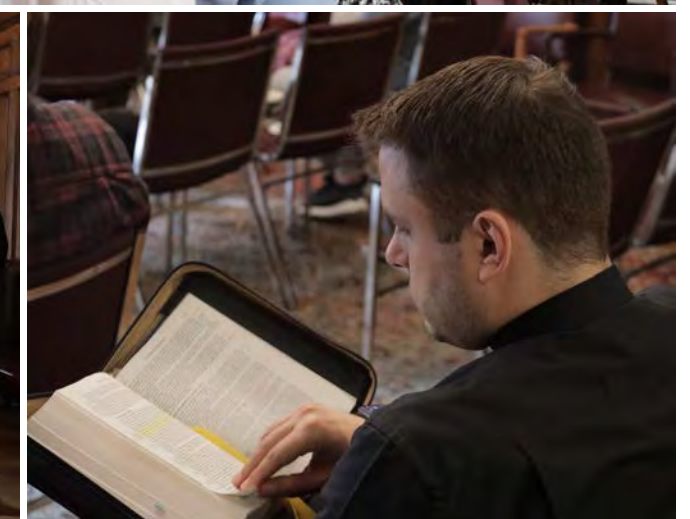


MONTHLY
LITURGY OF THE
WORD &
ADORATION

PRAISE
& WORSHIP



Bible Parallel Project 2022-2023



From Sexual Brokenness to Sexual Freedom

A STORY FROM A FORMER PORNOGRAPHY ADDICT

By Kimberly May Torio



Photo by: Samuel Schmslaw

Who would have known that small encounter when I was 4 years old with a clearly 18+ show would have changed the trajectory of my life. What did I know? All I really knew was that channel 25 at 10pm wasn't showing anything good, so as the unsatisfied little girl that I was, I flipped through those channels until I found something interesting. And let me tell you, naked men and women on television, was that "interesting channel" that caught my attention. And from that first moment I was exposed to pornography on TV, pornography continued to grab my interest until it became more than a curiosity filler – it became my drug that slowly started to enslave me.

One of the ways it impacted my life was through my romantic relationships, both in the past and current. During the seasons of my life where I was the most active in engaging in pornography, I was highly undisciplined whenever I had a heightened desire for sexual pleasure. I was so used to the pattern, that whenever I felt aroused, anxious, sometimes even bored, I would immediately seek gratification and relief through pornography.

Continued on the next page.

This undisciplined pattern started manifesting in my previous relationship. In a deceitful way to myself, and to my significant other, I masked my undisciplined passion for the other as "love." But when I reflect about it now, it was far from love, because love, is supposed to be an emptying of one's own self-interest for the good of the other, but in the heat of the moment between my significant other and I, I would inevitably focus on how to use my significant other to satisfy my sexual cravings. My previous relationship was overwhelmingly based on using the other, rather than truly loving the other.

Most of the time, I would fail to stop using the person until I've reached some sort of climax, and the moment I hit climax, that's when a rush of reasoning, guilt and shame would come over me – just like my encounters with pornography. And for a while, I justified my actions. I believed that as long as I mutually provided some kind of pleasure to my partner, that it was okay to use him for me.

But as I grew in understanding more about what love is, that lie eventually fell flat on its face, and my unhealthy relationship with my sexuality gradually made me see, not pornography as the problem, but rather my sexuality as the problem. My sexual desires as the problem. Now, there was truth to that – there were clear distortions of my sexuality because it was formed by years and years of pornographic consumption. The only thing it taught me was how to use the other for my benefit. The lie, however, in what I believed, was that my sexual desires were irredeemable. That they were bad, and I had to get rid of them.

Personally, I would say that this was the most devastating part of my journey because I started to misperceive that my body, my sexuality in its entirety, was the problem, making me believe that the way of freedom from pornography - freedom from lust in general - was freedom from my desires. Freedom from my body.

In hindsight, this was the most absurd idea ever because the suppression of my sexual desires led to episodes of indulging into sexual pleasure/ pornography whenever I was in a situation that triggered my desire for intimacy and pleasure, which led me to hate my sexuality even more! I started to believe that there was no real and good purpose of these desires and my sexuality, rather than identifying the sin, and other problems in my life. This is because after every pornography indulgence, after every non-marital sexual encounter with my previous partner, I was always left with so much shame, guilt, and self-condemnation, and I hated myself each time for being so attached to pornography. All in all, it was just a really bad cycle of the suppression of my sexual desires and indulgence of my sexual desires that I never really tasted what true freedom meant.

Then in the summer of 2019, when I went on a retreat all about the Theology of the Body, was when everything changed. Okay, maybe that sounds a bit dramatic, but that was the summer the Lord redeemed the truth of human sexuality to me. There's so much to say, but I will share with you two major revelations that till this day help me choose love over using other people, whether in my actual relationship or within pornography: Firstly, I learned that ... my desires actually have a good purpose - no matter how distorted the desire may be, I learned that at the heart of every desire is a longing for God. Longing for the infinite, and that's how deep my desires were. This made absolute sense to me because I knew that every time I fell into porn, my heart would really be longing for intimacy, love, union, satisfaction, and yet, at the end of watching and reaching a temporary climax, I would end up just feeling hollow and disappointed, and those same desires for intimacy, love, union and satisfaction, would inevitably resurface again.

Secondly, along with learning that at the heart of all my desires having a good purpose, I learned that God is the true satisfier of the deepest longings of my heart. As Christopher West shared with me with his BIG energy: Christianity, the Good News, is not that God wants to starve us from our desires, but that he wants to satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts! In times of my deepest desires, He was never asking me to suppress them – He was only calling me to something greater, to Himself.

These two truths really helped me not only in overcoming my pornography addiction and temptation, but they also helped me achieve true freedom, particularly in my dating life. By slowly rooting pornography out of my life, and slowly rooting myself into a greater dependency on God to satisfy my heart, I was able to start loving my now fiancé, despite the temptations of using him. Don't get me wrong, I'm still haunted by a lot of things that I've watched. That's the natural consequence of being addicted to something so visual and connected to pleasure. But by depending on God's graces through the sacraments and prayer, God has helped purify my heart and mind to continue loving better each day, and to experience true sexual freedom. I pray that whoever is struggling with pornography or any kind of sexual addiction may also find that freedom in Jesus Christ. ■

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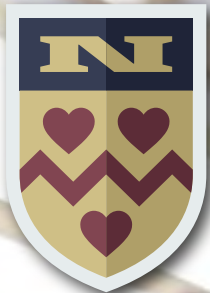
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Please scan the QR Code to complete the Google Form or contact Rachelle at: rachelle.ezechiels@newmantoronto.com



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