



# THE TORCH



Newman Centre Catholic Mission Newsletter

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Issue 2



MANY LENSES, ONE TRUTH

[newmantoronto.com](http://newmantoronto.com)

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR



Dear brothers and sisters:

Some commentators have labeled 2020 as the “*annus horribilis*”.

Much of the world went under lockdown last March. Schools, businesses and churches were shut down in order to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Cases

skyrocketed once again this Fall leading to yet another lockdown, at least for Toronto. However, the churches remain open this time. Sitting in a quiet chapel before the Lord in the Tabernacle has provided a deep sense of consolation for those seeking quiet and solitude amidst the cacophony of disparate voices which often only increase stress and anxiety. There is so little humility and charity in our world. Unfortunately, the public celebration of the Mass has been temporarily suspended. Understandably, many parishioners have expressed a deep pain for not being able to participate “in the source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC:1324).

While it is true that there were many painful moments last year, it is also important to acknowledge the many graces that were given. Several people have come to recognize the centrality of faith, family and friendships who might not otherwise have done so as a result of always being busy with many other things. Furthermore, while too many drowned themselves in endless hours on the internet or binge watching tv shows, others embraced God’s invitation to silence.

In their powerful book entitled *Personal Prayer: A Guide for Receiving the Father’s Love*, Fr Acklin and Fr Hicks write that “the language of God is most often silence, the silence of the Word in Whom all the words have their meaning... Sometimes we post important questions, and they are only met with silence. If we do not run from the silence, we slowly start to realize He is not refusing to answer but is going beneath our question and often making it irrelevant because He moves us beyond it.” It is good to pray for the pandemic to end, but we also need to ask the Lord what he wants to teach us from this experience. God’s Word is clear in that “we know that in everything God

works for good with those that love him, who are called according to his purpose” (Rm 8:28)

God has something to say to each one of us. He does so as a loving Father and not a harsh judge ready to condemn us. The restlessness many have been feeling is an indication that we may not have fully surrendered to the Lord because we have not understood that he loves us and has something we all need to hear right now. Through the prophet Jeremiah he tells us “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jer 29:11).

One of the joys of accompanying people on their spiritual journey is seeing how the Holy Spirit slowly reveals to them the reason they were created. In other words, their personal vocation. Over the past several months, many young people have begun to reconsider their futures. Recognizing just how uncertain the future truly is, they look to God for direction and purpose. Through God’s grace, some have realized that He is calling them to either priesthood or religious life.

This has inspired us to develop a Virtual Vocations Fair on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the *Feast of the Presentation of the Lord*. This feast, also known as Candlemas, is a feast especially meaningful to those in consecrated life. Both high school and university chaplaincies have been invited to attend a virtual event where they will learn the art of listening and discernment followed by testimonies of priests and male and female religious. We are especially honoured to have both a Trappist monk and Carmelite nun join us from their cloistered communities. The day culminates with the celebration of the Mass and a Holy Hour for vocations to the priesthood and religious life to be celebrated (and live-streamed) by His Eminence Cardinal Collins at St. Michael’s Cathedral Basilica.

Let us pray that 2021 will be an annus illuminationis where all of us will draw closer to God and to each other, because in the end, that is all that really matters.

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

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May the simple and profound prayer of St. Teresa of Avila, the great Carmelite nun and Doctor of the Church, be ever on our lips and in our hearts.

**Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you,  
All things are passing away: God never changes.  
Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God  
lacks nothing; God alone suffices.**

God bless, Fr Peter.



## The Newman Catholic Students' Club

is here for you

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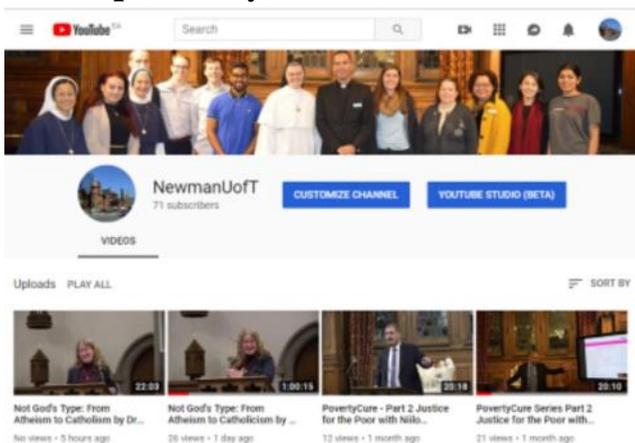
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## WATCH PAST LECTURES AND TALKS ON NEWMAN'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL

<http://bit.ly/NewmanYouTube>



## Cover Photo

The pontifical palace in Castel Gandolfo, with two domes of the **Vatican Observatory** on top.

The domes were built in 1935. The larger one (right) has a diameter of 8.5 m and houses a Zeiss 40/600cm visual refractor. The other has a diameter of 8.0 m and is equipped with Zeiss double telescope, consisting of a four-lens astrograph 40/200 cm and a 60 cm relector that can be used as Newtonian reflector with 240 cm focal length, or in Cassagrain configuration with an focal length of Equivalent 820 cm.

The church of St. Thomas of Villanova is visible to the left of the palace.

**Photo Credit:** (By H. Raab (User:Vesta) - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikipedia Commons)

## THE CHURCH'S COMMITMENT TO 'TRUE AND SOLID SCIENCE'

In 1993, an Angel gave a brand new telescope to Pope St. John Paul II. Well, to be more precise, a few years prior the new Mirror Laboratory at the University of Arizona completed its first product, an amazingly smooth 1.8 metre mirror. Their customer was the Vatican Observatory, and the mirror had been made using an innovative technique conceived by Dr. Roger Angel, the laboratory's director. It was installed on the Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope (VATT) on Mt. Graham, Arizona, the newly constructed flagship instrument of the Vatican Observatory that observed the heavens for the first time in 1993.

Most people don't know that there is such a thing as a Vatican Observatory, but it is one of the most well-established research institutes in the world. Its roots go back to the 1580's when Pope Gregory XIII commissioned Christopher Clavius (1538–1612), a Jesuit priest, to figure out how to make the calendar more accurate, since over the centuries it had drifted by several days. The result was the Gregorian calendar that the whole world uses today, but back then not everyone was convinced it was a good idea. To demonstrate the superiority of the new system, an observatory was built in the Vatican. If you were to have visited it, you would have noticed something strange: there was no telescope inside. In fact, telescopes had not yet been invented! Instead, it consisted of an empty room with a small hole on the southern wall for the sun to cast a bright spot on the floor. When the spot crossed a line drawn on the floor (a 'meridian line') at noon, you could use its position to demonstrate that the new calendar was keeping the right time.

This building, called 'The Tower of the Winds', is still standing and represents the beginning of a long tradition of astronomy in Catholic Rome. By the nineteenth century, there were telescopes in the Tower of the Winds, and on the roof of the Roman College, the Jesuit university in Rome. From the latter observatory the great Angelo Secchi, S.J. (1818–1878), who is considered by many 'the father of astrophysics', did his ground-breaking work in classifying stars using spectroscopy. But in 1870, the new, unified state of Italy took over much of the Church's property,



The dome of one of the historic telescopes on the roof of the Apostolic Palace in Castel Gandolfo. The plaque contains the motto of the Vatican Observatory: 'Deum creatorem venite adoremus' ('Come, let us adore God the Creator').

including the Roman College and another observatory on the Capitoline Hill. By this time there was no longer an observatory in the Vatican's Tower of the Winds and so the pope's sponsorship of astronomy came to an end.

This dry spell did not last for long. In 1891 Pope Leo XIII founded the current Vatican Observatory. One of his motivations was to demonstrate the Church's openness to and encouragement of scientific research. As he wrote in *Ut Mysticam*, the official document founding the observatory, 'the Church and her pastors ... do not disdain true and solid science, whether of divine or human things, but embrace and foster it, and studiously advance it with whatever means they can'. In other words, Pope Leo not only wanted to *say* that the Church supports science but decided to *do* something concrete about it.

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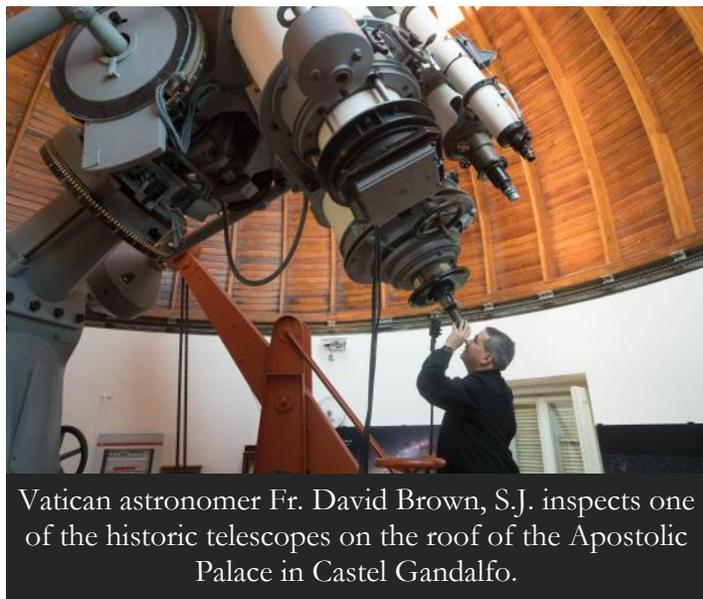
## THE CHURCH'S COMMITMENT TO 'TRUE AND SOLID SCIENCE'



Br. Guy Consolmagno, S.J., director of the Vatican Observatory, and colleague Dr. Melissa Brucker operate the Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope

assigned there in the early nineties: 'Do good science!' It is the same instruction he gave me when I became affiliated with the observatory. And indeed, the Vatican astronomers are involved in a vast range of scientific research. Br. Bob Macke, S.J. is the curator of the Vatican's world-class meteorite collection and has a laboratory at the Vatican headquarters where he studies their physical properties. Fr. Gabriele Gionti, S.J. is an expert in theoretical cosmology and gravitation, as the title of a recent journal article he co-authored—'Scattering of uncharged particles in the field of two extremely charged black holes'—attests. Fr. Jean-Baptiste Kikwaya, S.J. on the other hand, is more observationally focussed and uses the VATT and other observatories to study asteroids and comets in our own Solar System. These are just three examples; other research areas span from stars to galaxies to distant planets around other stars. In general, the Vatican astronomers don't work alone but collaborate with scientists from other research institutes and universities around the world.

An important part of the life of the Observatory is hosting meetings. For instance, in 2018 Br. Macke hosted a workshop for 30 curators of meteorite collections from around the world. In 2017 Fr. Gionti organised a conference on 'Black Holes, Gravitational Waves and Spacetime Singularities'. In attendance was Sir Roger Penrose, one of recipients of the 2020



Vatican astronomer Fr. David Brown, S.J. inspects one of the historic telescopes on the roof of the Apostolic Palace in Castel Gandolfo.

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Today, the Vatican Observatory is a fully functional, modern research institute. There are a dozen scientists on staff—eight Jesuit priests, two Jesuit brothers and two diocesan priests—and a number of adjunct scholars, including myself, who have full time appointments at other academic institutions but collaborate in the mission of the Observatory. The director is Br. Guy Consolmagno, S.J., and one of his vice-directors, Fr. Paul Mueller, S.J., is a scholar in the philosophy of science. Finally, a whole network of other staff, lay and Jesuit, provide library, technical and administrative support. The headquarters are near the papal summer villa in Castel Gandolfo just outside Rome, but, as mentioned above, the research telescope is located in Arizona. This is because by the 1980's, the city lights of Rome were too bright for the telescopes at Castel Gandolfo to do serious research, and the decision was made to open a second office in Tucson, where the nearby mountains have some of the best observing conditions in the world.

The *raison d'être* of the Observatory remains as Pope Leo XIII envisioned: making meaningful contributions to astronomy. In fact, Br. Consolmagno remembers well the orders he was given when he was first

## THE CHURCH'S COMMITMENT TO 'TRUE AND SOLID SCIENCE'

Nobel Prize in Physics, Gerard 't Hooft, also a Nobel laureate, and several other leading scientists.

Occasionally there will be more interdisciplinary gatherings, such as a 2015 meeting on 'The role of astronomy in Christianity and Islam'. Finally, a major undertaking is the Vatican Observatory Summer School that occurs every two or three years. About 25 students embarking on graduate studies from around the world are selected for four weeks of intensive study on a specific topic in astronomy taught by experts in the field. Past instructors include Nobel laureate Didier Queloz as well as the late Vera Rubin, namesake of the upcoming Vera C. Rubin Observatory in Chile.

Of course, one thing that makes the Vatican Observatory special is the engagement its staff has with questions of science and faith. Br. Consolmango, for instance, is a popular public speaker and has authored several books aimed at the general public. Most recently, he and Fr. Mueller wrote *Would you Baptise an Extraterrestrial? ... and Other Questions from the Astronomers' In-box at the Vatican Observatory*. I highly recommend this accessible and thought-provoking volume. While the Observatory doesn't have the resources for public tours, it will occasionally host special groups, such as the students in the Gilson Seminar in Faith and Ideas at St. Michael's College, who were able to make brief visits during their study experience in Rome in 2018 and 2019.

The Vatican funds much of the Observatory's activity, but it also relies on benefactors through the Vatican Observatory Foundation ([www.vofoundation.org](http://www.vofoundation.org)). This is a meaningful way for those who believe in the Church's engagement with science to provide financial support. The Foundation website is also a terrific resource for information on the Vatican Observatory. It has many links to videos and written material on faith and science, and hosts an excellent blog written by Vatican astronomers and colleagues that is updated almost daily. If this article piques your interest to know more about the Church and astronomy, that website should be your next stop.



The Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope on Mt. Graham, Arizona.

Finally, the Vatican Observatory is by no means the only way the Church is involved in science. Another exciting and recent initiative is the Society of Catholic Scientists (<https://www.catholicscientists.org/>). This year a local chapter opened here in Toronto and, in partnership with the Newman Centre, has some fantastic programmes, including a monthly study group on faith and science for students and a special lecture on 28 January 2021 by the celebrated philosopher Robert Spitzer, S.J. on the implications of fine-tuning in the universe.

So, next time someone asks you what the Church thinks about science, you can say that she doesn't just think about science: she has members who actually *do* science and see it as part of their Christian vocation.

Photo credits: Vatican Observatory

**Fr. Adam D. Hincks, S.J.** is an assistant professor at the University of Toronto in the department of Astronomy and Astrophysics and at St. Michael's College. He is the inaugural holder of the Sutton Family Chair in Science, Christianity and Cultures.



# DEFINING POVERTY: A KEY TO ENDING IT

“The poor you will always have with you,” Christ warned his disciples. (Matthew 26:11) But why? Why will they always be with us?

The answer is that we, who now form the living body of Christ on earth, have work to do before we can follow him to heaven: we must, by showing continuous, steadfast love to those in need, ensure that the glory of God shows forth through us to the entire world. (Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25)

The next question is, “Who are the poor, and what do they need?” or in other words, what is poverty? This is the question that opened the online workshop “Ending Poverty Together” presented by the Canadian organization Food for the Hungry and hosted by the Newman Centre on November 15. Participants learned that the key to durable and effective poverty-reduction programs is a proper understanding of the answer.

Experience has shown that attempts by “rich” cultures to assist the “poor” of other cultures sometimes fail due to lack of a common understanding of life, including its purpose and requisites for happiness. If we accept that the purpose of life is for each of us to increase our closeness to God by doing God’s work with all the time, talent, and treasure that have been entrusted to us, we see that poverty consists of lacking the means to engage in meaningful, dignified work – raising families, for example, while serving others and celebrating God’s love.

By this standard, many of us are poor - including not only those in “developing” countries, but many of those around us in our “rich” worlds. In fact, participants learned, by this standard a large majority of people are impoverished - through broken or damaged relationships with God, or with one another, the world, and even ourselves.

But we are not all equally vulnerable. And so we are called to identify the most vulnerable, and by spending time with them, “by walking together through life lived in their shoes,” learning what they



need in order to fulfill the plans God has for them, rather than acting on our own preconceived notions of what they need for wealth and well-being. This process can require years. But it has brought remarkable success to Food for the Hungry’s mission. Moreover, organization members have found that listening to those they intend to help can result in learning things on their own part, through a process called mutual transformation - resulting in the enrichment of both parties.

All this should seem familiar to those familiar with the writings of Pope Francis, including his *Fratelli Tutti* and *The Joy of the Gospel*: what the world needs to make it more human, Pope Francis teaches, is conversation: conversation based firmly on the Word of God and informed by commitment at a personal level. To know others and to help them, he says, we must spend time with them. Those who would be shepherds must “take on the smell of the sheep.”

Only in this way can we avoid band-aid ‘fixes’ that in truth serve only to hinder growth in dignity. Herein lies a call to action: how can we help to re-establish, as the foundation of civic discourse, the Good News of Jesus Christ, born to us in Nazareth, sacrificed on the Cross, raised again; and calling us now, by name, from the gate that leads to life?

**Matthew Marquardt** is a lay Redemptorist and the founder of Catholic Conscience, a Canadian organization devoted to civic evangelization.



# DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL: GOING DEEPER

I didn't want to commit when I was asked to participate in an (online) book study of "The Dark Night of the Soul" by St. John of the Cross. Who wants to reflect on darkness during a global pandemic? Plus, I am a person who is guilt-ridden and overly scrupulous enough as it is. It sounded like an awful idea and I had little interest. No, I did not need to sacrifice any more personal time for parish activities.

But somehow, I found myself attending anyway, perhaps out of a sense of duty. I reluctantly listened to a summary of the life of St. John of the Cross, who wrote the poem while imprisoned. The poem describes the soul's ascent towards union with Christ, even in isolation.

The next morning, I read the poem. I was perplexed by the profound intimacy communicated by St. John of the Cross, even during a period of suffering and solitary confinement. How was it that he was able to praise God from his prison cell? What made him see that Christ was loving him *in* the darkness?

No light. No consolation. Perpetually shut in, and yet, he was able to recognize the presence of the 'Other'. They say our vision is often 20/20 in hindsight, but why? Can I only appreciate God loving me fiercely through a period of suffering once I am on the other side?



The famous poet T.S. Elliot wrote, "darkness declares the glory of light". Events like this global pandemic and a second lockdown seem to spur us to cry out to God; with an increasing awareness of the darkness, and our subsequent *need* for Light.

**Annie Flaherty** is happily apprenticing to become a licensed hair stylist.



## RETREATS AT NEWMAN

### Lenten Retreat

- Fr. David Belusci, O.P.

Saturday, February 20, 2021 | Live Webinar

Register here - <https://lentenretreat2021.eventbrite.ca>



# RE-IMAGINING THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Review of Newman Centre's inaugural Faith and Reason Lecture Series – Samuel Gregg's *From Logos to Enlightenment and Back Again* based on his recent book, *Reason, Faith, and the Struggle for Western Civilization* (Gateway Editions, 2019).

Today, educated Catholics are more likely to see "Enlightenment" as a smug propaganda term launched by the academic establishment to accrue power to itself and turn minds away from both God and reason. Such Catholics might suggest that the "Enlightenment" simply hijacked what was already inevitable in Christendom – the progress of science

begun centuries before from the best of Catholic thinkers. They may suggest the "Enlightenment" is the darkness creeping across the world to end not just faith but also reason. In its modern form, isn't the Enlightenment the movement that guillotines anything more than a century old? "Endarkenment" is more like it.

Or is the Enlightenment as the establishment claims? The victory of intelligence over the long dark age of the Church?

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## MENTORSHIP SERIES

### THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE PANDEMIC



Speakers:

**Geoffrey Woollard**, PhD Student, University of Toronto  
**Fr Peter Turrone**, Executive Director, Newman Centre

Thursday, February 4, 2021 | 6:30 - 8:00 PM

Register: <https://2021mentorshipseries2.eventbrite.ca>

# RE-IMAGINING THE ENLIGHTENMENT

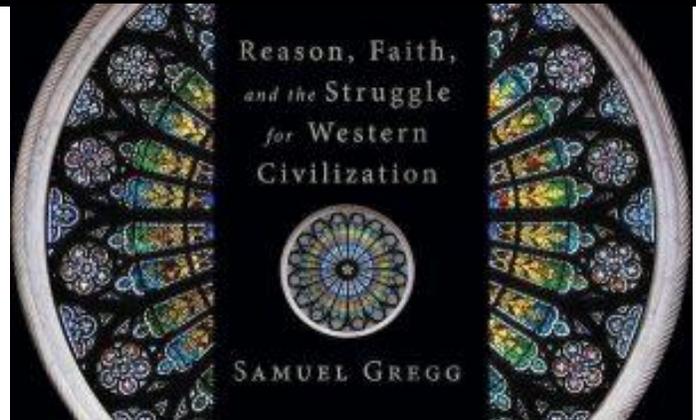
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Dr Samuel Gregg weaves the issue with far finer thread than this and succeeds in overcoming the polemics to engage in reasoned discourse. He skillfully outlines the tensions between faith and materialism from a historical and philosophical perspective.

The Jewish people were the authors of the first Enlightenment, says Gregg: “Without the Hebrew prophets there is no Western Civilization.” Their rejection of pagan idolatry is a “powerful affirmation of human rationality.” Then, with the Incarnation, the logos comes among us and makes evident to Greeks, Romans and Jews that God is reasonable. His Creation is infused with order and can be studied. He is not like the selfish, jealous, lustful and deceptive pagan gods. And so the pagan religions go extinct to be replaced by an ingenious civilization founded on both faith and reason which operate together to balance against superstition at one extreme and rationalism at the other.

The Enlightenment began, in other words, long before the Enlightenment. It was also much more complex than the polemics would indicate. Most Enlightenment figures saw no contrast between reason and faith. Examples abound: the Scottish Enlightenment seems to have been organized between a large number of Presbyterian clergymen. A devout Christian, Isaac Newton defended science from scientism. Even such apparently material sciences as geology were led by faithful people who had no intention of excluding God from their study.

Gregg suggests that a more balanced historical view will help recapture religious credibility from those who portray history in purely binary terms. Philosophical reflection on the nature of God as logos will also help. Gregg points out that our image of God is reflected in the way we think of ourselves. Thinking of God as an imprecise softie who doesn't mean what He actually says explains society's current descent into sentimentalism.



Gregg concludes, however, that the decline of Western Civilization is not inevitable. The free choice for logos – thus for reason, faith, liberty, justice and truth – are “simply part of who we are.”

Will this re-imagined understanding of the Enlightenment work? I wonder if we might need something more robust. Self-styled children of the Enlightenment are today trying to exclude Christians from the top positions in law, politics and medicine. With shrill cries they've assaulted basic rights like freedom of conscience because these rights are not subject to material examination. Gregg's answer is to educate these people in history and philosophy. But does reason work against a movement now on a mindless rampage to destroy everything? One hopes.

In any case, Gregg has succeeded in whetting appetites for what must be an excellent book on the subject.

**Watch the Faith & Reason lectures on Newman's YouTube channel:**

<http://bit.ly/NewmanYouTube>

**Fr Alexander MacDonald** is an author and novelist who has written for many Catholic publications including *L'Osservatore Romano*. He has been a broadcaster and commentator for Vatican Radio and is currently associate pastor at St Margaret of Scotland Parish, Toronto.



# VIEWING REALITY AS AN UNDIVIDED WHOLE

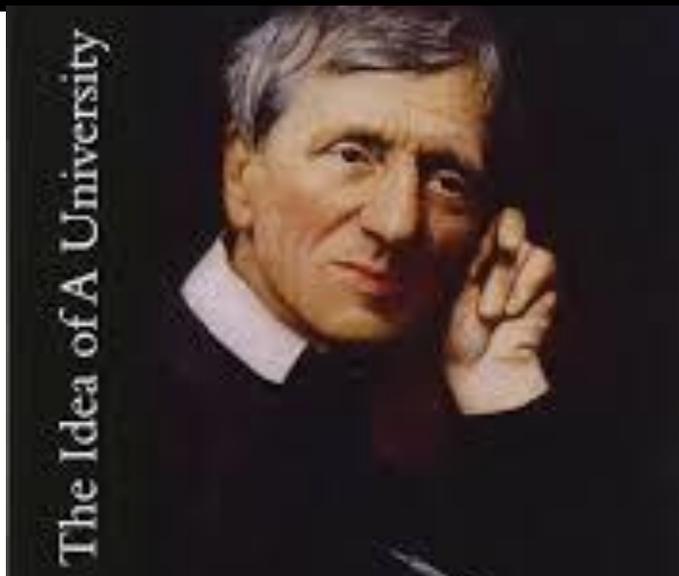
## *A review of Dr. Peter Gittens's Lecture: The Idea of the University*

Dr. Gittens's lecture resonated with me, as I often think about the things that he identifies as John Henry Newman's qualms with teaching methods in higher learning. Today, I believe that Newman would have been even more concerned. Among the aspects of Knowledge discussed were the distinction between liberal education and servile learning, the two-fold end of Knowledge, and more. However, I think that this is all summed up in the notion that Knowledge is fundamentally the viewing of reality as an undivided whole.

Gittens states that Newman saw knowledge as renouncing a particular one-sidedness where each discipline sees itself as the central vantage point from which to view the world. Instead, Knowledge sees all these disciplines as part and parcel of the whole. In other words, for those of us who specialize in a particular field, there exists a tendency to allow that field to wholly inform our worldview. If I am a lawyer, it is possible that I may view reality very legalistically. I might turn encounters with others into a legal analysis and forget the humanity between us.

I think many people tend to become satisfied with their own idea of truth, and though they may not invalidate other people's perspectives, they view those perspectives as not pertinent to them. This is common in subjects like sex, morality, and our very own Catholic faith. For example, there are those who profess that they believe in God and are Catholic, but for them, going to Church regularly is not necessary. For others, it is a weekly, if not daily, imperative. Each has their truth, and there is no conversation to be had.

I think this is the one-sidedness with which Newman takes issue. Knowledge for him seeks the truth and makes the object of truth subjectively our own. It incorporates the views of others and of other disciplines and extracts the truth from it. Under this definition, the two parties in my example would consider the other's perspective and contemplate why the other perspective is wrong.



In my undergraduate studies, I sought a multidisciplinary degree for this reason. I personally grew tired of the rhetoric that compartmentalised religion and separated it from the rest of society. In other words, if some proposition might be true in religion or theology, it is often given less weight in the field of science or law until that field can validate it within its own rules. I felt inclined to expose myself to numerous disciplines because for me, questions should not have two different answers simply because they are asked in two different fields.

This is Newman's idea of a University. It is the place where students learn to exercise their minds in pursuit of Knowledge and to cultivate the intellect to consider reality as a whole by pursuing the objective truth. In his closing comments, Gittens notes the higher goal, which is to fit men of the world for the world. This is an enriching summary of why one should accept Knowledge as Newman described it, and an excellent point of departure.

**Jeremy Hernandez-Lum Tong** is a Student Campus Minister at Newman Centre and is in his first year of law school. He has studied politics, religion, philosophy and ethics.



# WHAT IS OUR PLACE IN THE COSMOS?

What is the meaning of the anthropic principle and convergent evolution?

What is our place in the cosmos? The 20th century theologian Romano Guardini explored this topic in his work *The End of the Modern World* (1956). During the medieval era in Christian Europe, there was a cultural consensus of our place in creation. The rhythm of life was taken up into the liturgy. Cosmic unity permeates Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Subsequent scientific discoveries and technological power introduced a new and exciting historical epoch, but unfortunately "progress" was not always satisfactorily integrated and sometimes led to intellectual and cultural "regress". By the early 20th century, modern man, the master-explorer was no longer at home in the world. Psychiatrist and Shoah survivor Viktor Frankl, centred his practice around meaning, and science can be part of a larger interdisciplinary conversation involving philosophy and theology.

However, theologian Christopher Baglow points out that a "twist in the tale" happened in the 20th century that challenges to some extent the postmodern narrative of alienation. Various scientific advances rooted out an implicit presupposition that the contingent conditions of our humble home (our planet's physics, chemistry, biology) do not influence the unfolding of the Universe. In Newman's upcoming *Angelic Doctor Lecture* (7 PM Thurs 28 January 2021), the Jesuit priest Dr. Robert Spitzer will lecture on the Anthropic Principle. To offer a loose definition,

the Anthropic Principle, in its various flavours (strong/weak/etc.), is about how statistically likely are various fundamental physical observations, given that we are here, and we need to be here to observe them.

In 1974 Brandon Carter first proposed the term "Anthropic Cosmological Principle", followed by the 1986 book "The Anthropic Cosmological Principle", by cosmologists John Barrow and Frank Tipler. Scientists are in a privileged position to reflect deeper on this topic when they know the relevant science thoroughly. Science generalizes local phenomena to more global principles. However, precisely because of this, physical cosmology can reach a methodological boundary when generalization reaches its limits, i.e. the "problem of the whole". At this point experimental science can help pose boundary questions that interdisciplinary perspectives (e.g. science with philosophy and theology) can engage with. Indeed, we are not completely independent from the Universe, but a part of it!

It can be tempting for believers to assign scientific coincidences to God. Science can be a path towards God and it can strengthen the faith of believers, as the *praeambula fidei* do. However, the latest and greatest experiments, observations, and theory do not impart God's supernatural gift of faith. They might catch our eye in a way that perennial metaphysical arguments do not. But what do they really offer?



## *Angelic Doctor Lecture* **Anthropic Principles**

- Rev. Dr Robert Spitzer

**January 28, 2021 | 7 PM**  
Live Webinar

Register here -

<https://angelicdoctorlecture2021.eventbrite.ca>

# WHAT IS OUR PLACE IN THE COSMOS?

The timeless arguments offering metaphysical certainty were from ordinary experience accessible to everyone, and are called “scientific” in the sense that they demonstrate certain conclusions from certain principles (scientia). But of course it is not possible to write down a number expressing the statistical likelihood of God’s existence, as we do for other created entities and causes (see Drake equation below). In this sense experimental science can never “prove” the existence of God, and it can not disprove it either, for that matter. Experimental science, by its methodological definition, deals with the material world. It can observe a plethora of phenomena scattered throughout the Universe and determine causes and find explanations. Sometimes, these phenomena may seem to have no explanation and sometimes, they seem to harmonize with theological teaching. In these cases, it might be tempting to invoke "god of the gaps" as the cause, perhaps all the more if we lack rigorous scientific and theological training.

This is bad science and bad theology. God is not one being (ens) among many, but rather being itself (ipsum esse subsistens), in the language of St. Thomas. God is not a competing cause among the many physical causes in the Universe. God is the primary cause that gets everything else going, constantly sustaining everything in existence. With this distinction, we can avoid the fallacious usage of the god of the gaps, which some commentators have connected with mindsets sympathetic to intelligent design.

From a biological perspective, authors such as Simon Conway Morris, Javier Novo, and others are cautious on this account, while still open to speculating about the meaning of it all. Morris’ writings, especially on convergent evolution, are about the probability of life, and of life being as it is, given what conditions evolution (the specifics of our planet, solar system, galaxy, etc.). If we rewind the tape of time and played it again, would life turn out radically differently?

This is different from the anthropic principle, which asks how compatible are physical conditions with life, given fundamental physical constants such as the



speed of light or the masses and charges of elementary particles. While the anthropic principle has to do with the necessity of conditions for habitable life, evolutionary convergence also has to do with sufficiency . The cosmological and biological come together when asking if we are alone in this Universe. In 1961, at the first meeting of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI), the astronomer and astrophysicist Frank Drake offered an equation as food for thought that breaks this question down into various terms that could be estimated (fraction of habitable planets, likelihood of life developing on a habitable planet). Planetary scientist and physicist Jonathan Lunine has written and lectured about the optimistic and pessimistic estimates of this, as well as recent results from Mars and moons in our solar system like Europa (Jupiter) and Enceladus (Saturn). If we find evidence of simple life in our solar systems, we’ll be one step closer to getting an estimate of how lonely or how crowded our Universe is via the Drake equation.

How then can theology be part of the conversation? Scientific results continue to be digested into meaning, and this is playing out differently in various cultures in our globalized world. For instance, in some parts of Oriental Christian Orthodoxy, or in indigenous

# WHAT IS OUR PLACE IN THE COSMOS?

communities, intellectual and existential growing pains are felt due to encounters between scientific knowledge and ancestral wisdom, as well as industrialization and saturation of life by technology. An accompanying theological synthesis does not happen automatically, and well principled explorations into these areas via interdisciplinary scholarship is of great help to the magisterium of the Church. For instance, some theologians have proposed that just as we are wayfarers through our life, so creation is on a cosmic journey. “Once it is assumed that our created Universe has to reproduce the same logic of the paschal mystery, then the existence of a narrow window of opportunity for life [...] no longer appears contradictory”.

We look forward to the Angelic Lecture by Fr. Spitzer, and also warmly welcome undergraduate/graduate

students and young career scientists (postdocs, etc.) to the group study of the Toronto Chapter of the Society of Catholic Scientists (SCS). Our Toronto Chapter elections are around the corner, so now is a great opportunity to formally join SCS and get involved in a leadership position. This summer the SCS is hosting a conference on “Extraterrestrials, AI, and Minds Beyond the Human” (June 4-6, Washington DC), featuring invited talks by Lunine, Morris, and Baglow, and other experts. We hope to see you there!

Citations and references have been removed from this article for readability. To receive the original properly cited version, please contact the authors at: [geoffwoollard@gmail.com](mailto:geoffwoollard@gmail.com)

**Geoffrey Woollard**, PhD student in UofT Medical Biophysics, uses electron cryomicroscopy to study the 3D shapes of biomolecules. He helps organize the Toronto Chapter of the Society of Catholic Scientists.



**Gabriel Santucci** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Physics Department of York University. He works on neutrino oscillation experiments and searches for the instability of nuclear constituents.



## SACRED ART SERIES



Presented by

**Fr Eric Nicolai**

Opus Dei Priest, Art Historian, Artist

Monthly on Thursdays

7:30 - 8:30 pm

Register here:

<https://artserieswitharthistorian.eventbrite.ca>

All are welcome.

# NEWMAN FOUNDATION OF TORONTO



## WELCOME TO OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER Patrick Douglas

Patrick has accepted a nomination to the Newman Foundation Board in 2020. He is excited to continue to support the Newman Centre

Catholic Mission after having worked here for 17 years.

His role evolved from Chaplaincy Coordinator to Director of Human Resources and Operations. In his position, he also served as the treasurer of the Newman Foundation for 11 years. Since 2018, he has been serving as the Associate Director of Family Life and Special Projects in the Archdiocese of Toronto's Office of Formation for Discipleship. He is

responsible for working with parish leaders to provide networks, events, and formation opportunities in intergenerational family ministry.

Patrick is a Certified Human Resources Leader and member of the Human Resources Professionals Association in Ontario, with a certificate from the University of Toronto. He also holds a Bachelor's of Science in Engineering Chemistry from Queen's University. To complete the circle, he is now studying in the Conjoint Certificate in Theological Studies program at St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto.

Patrick lives in Sutton, Ontario with his wife, Carissa, and 13 children (14th on the way), ages 1-17. He is passionate about promoting the presence of the Church among young people, student peer ministry, and the necessity of mentorship so that all may encounter Christ and serve as missionary disciples.

## Thank you to our generous donors!

Your support during a year of many surprises is gratefully appreciated.

Our mission continues together thanks to you.



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# FAITH AND REASON LECTURE

**Tolkien: Faith and Imagination**  
- Dr. Holly Ordway

Thursday, March 18, 2021 | 7 PM | Live Webinar

Register here - <https://faithandreasonlecturebydrhollyordway.eventbrite.ca>



## MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT LINE



### ATTENTION STUDENTS

**CATHOLIC FAMILY  
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TORONTO IS  
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For students (18 - 35 years old) experiencing stress, isolation, or struggling with school-life or work-life balance. All callers accessing the line during non-operational hours will be directed to our main CFS Toronto line which is monitored during our regular office hours 9-5 pm (Mon, Wed, and Fri) and 9-9 pm (Tues and Thurs).

**Phone number(s):** Local: (647) 249-9059 | Toll free: (877) 794-8373

**Hours of operation:** Every Wednesday 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

**Fee for service:** Free

*Callers' anonymity is respected and there is no paper work required of them.*



**NEWMAN CENTRE  
CATHOLIC MISSION**

at the University of Toronto's St. George Campus



**Catholic  
Family Services  
of Toronto**

# STAFF PROFILE



**Sandra Hallig**  
Campus Minister  
Newman Centre

## How does the Newman Centre inspire you?

What stood out to me about Newman Centre is the way it encourages the integration of faith and intellect. It's inspiring to know that I am part of a community where I get to witness others and myself grow spiritually and academically. In addition to this, the beautiful building I get to call my workplace inspires me too! My great hope is that students, faculty and staff at University of Toronto will continue to look at Newman Centre as their Catholic home on campus.

## My favourite quote from St. John Henry Newman?

I have to go with our motto: "Cor ad cor loquitur. Heart speaks to heart." I first heard this quote last year, around the time of St. John Henry Newman's canonization. In my time serving campus ministry, I've carried these words with me as a reminder of the importance in meeting people where they are.

## Words I live by:

"Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, or even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them" - St. Therese of Lisieux.

## When did you join the Newman Centre?

I joined the Newman Centre team in November 2020.

## What do you do at the Newman Centre?

I have the incredible honour of being the Campus Minister for Newman. There has always been a special place in my heart for campus ministry. My work is dedicated to fostering a welcoming environment for all students and staff on campus and promoting our Centre's Catholic presence and mission. You'll find me designing and implementing campus programs that are focused on Catholic leadership formation, outreach and discipleship in our community.

## **FAREWELL FROM ERIN KINSELLA**

Dear Newman community,

Thank you for the gift of the past seven years!!

To past and present students- the biggest joys I've had here have been the random (but deep) conversations, and the moments of humour and grace where I've seen the Lord move and somehow participated in that. What an incredible thing it is to be with you at a time in your lives when you're wrestling with some of the biggest questions that you'll ever have to answer. Your desire for holiness has inspired me in my own relationship with Jesus.

To the members of the parish (and wider!) Newman community- I'm so grateful for your love and support. It has been an absolute joy to see how much you love this place, your fellow parishioners, and all the students who cycle in and out. Your kindness to me has been such a gift. I will miss seeing you, but the experiences we've navigated together have shaped me and will be times I'll treasure for the rest of my life. Even though Our Lord is calling me away so that I can work on my health at this time, please know that I'll be praying for you all. I am sad to leave, but I have much affection in my heart for this place and for everyone who is part of the Newman family.

Please pray for me as well!



# NEWMAN EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Tear off this quick reference guide to events at Newman and put it on your fridge.  
For more details, visit our website: [www.newmantoronto.com](http://www.newmantoronto.com) or social media links.

EVENT	DATE
The Image of God & the Sciences of Human Origins (The Society of Catholic Scientists - University Chapter)	Thursday, January 14, 2021, 5:30 pm
Angelic Doctor Lecture: Anthropic Principles - Rev. Dr Robert Spitzer	Thursday, January 28, 2021, 7:00 pm
Virtual Vocations Fair	Tuesday, February 2, 2021 11:00 am - 5:00 pm
Mentorship Series: The Environment and the Pandemic	Thursday, February 4, 2021 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm
Human Sin and Modern Science: The Tragic History of the Image of God (The Society of Catholic Scientists - University Chapter)	Thursday, February 11, 2021 5:30 pm
Arts & Crafts Mandala Art Newman Young Adults Ministry	February 5 & 12, 2021
Lenten Retreat - Fr. David Belusci, O.P.	Saturday, February 20, 2021 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Tolkien: Faith and Imagination - Dr. Holly Ordway	Thursday, March 18, 2021, 7:00 pm

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## CONNECTING WITH NEWMAN CENTRE

### Newman Chapel Open for Private Prayer Only

Monday-Friday 11am - 3pm

Saturdays 8:30am - 10am

Sundays 12pm - 2pm

(11am Livestreamed Sunday Mass without public)

(Confessions 11:45am - 12:30pm Mon-Fri)

MAX 10 People AT A TIME

(\*Visiting hours are subject to change following Public Health and Archdiocese of Toronto protocols)

The Centre is closed until further notice.

Please visit our website and social media channels for regular updates.

Newman Centre Catholic Mission

(Charitable Registration Number: 10791 0259 RR0021)  
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Interested in receiving Newman Centre's bi-weekly event updates? Email: [maria.dasilva@newmantoronto.com](mailto:maria.dasilva@newmantoronto.com)

# VIRTUAL VOCATIONS FAIR & MASS

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord



*Reflections, Testimonies, Virtual Visits, Walking Pilgrimage,  
Mass and Holy Hour celebrated by His Eminence Cardinal Collins*

**Tuesday, February 2, 2021 | 11:00 am - 5:00 pm**

Registration: <https://2021virtualvocationsfair.eventbrite.ca>



NEWMAN CENTRE  
CATHOLIC MISSION  
at the University of Toronto's St. George Campus



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