

# BENGAL CATHOLICS

EST. 1966



## AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM

*translates: For the Greater Glory of God*

*The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.*

*- Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, par. 1 -*

10 years ago, Pope Francis was elected as the Successor of Peter. One of his first written contributions as Pope was the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* or, The Joy of the Gospel. The quote at the top is the opening words and perfectly describes what has been happening at St. John's and in the lives of our Bengal Catholics this year.

Firstly, there is an immense joy within the community. We continue to grow in faith & fellowship. We have seen students accept Jesus' offer of salvation and the fruits of it are seen in many ways. We continue to see an increasing number of students availing themselves to the sacraments, especially Reconciliation (set free from sin). Our regular and special events are filled with happy, joyous students who are excited to be a part of St. John's (set free from sorrow). Our bible studies, RCIA, theology evenings, and service opportunities have helped our students find meaning and purpose (set free from inner emptiness). The growing number of students at Sunday Mass

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## FALL 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- All of our FOCUS Missionaries returned to serve another year at St. John's.
- Fr. Aleksander and Fr. Jorge joined the Catholic community in Pocatello as Parochial Vicars.
- 9 Bible studies began right after our initial outreach - 5 are led by student leaders.
- Men's & Women's events began, including a 'Little Flower' party for our women on the feast of St. Therese (pictured above)

## HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED

By Isabelle Eppich

My name is Isabelle, and I'm from a tiny little town called Council in central Idaho. I'm currently a freshman at Idaho State University.

When I chose to attend college at Idaho State University, I was aware that St. John's Catholic Center was available for ISU students. However, when my parents attended ISU, few people attended Mass there. As such, when I went to church that first Sunday and met the FOCUS missionaries and Catholic students there, it was a nice surprise to see so many friendly faces. Now that I have been at ISU for eight weeks, I have made many of my friends through St. John's.

Coming from a small town of 800, where my three siblings and I are the only youth at church, I have never been surrounded by Catholic peers. Now that

I see my friends from St. John's nearly every day, I feel like I'm part of a community.

In fact, when walking across campus, I often wave to someone I know from St. John's, or I'll see the FOCUS missionaries doing some sort of outreach, whether it be advertising National Cinnamon Roll Day (and St. John's Catholic Center, of course) or inviting passing students to shoot a volleyball into a trashcan to enter a raffle. It's awesome to see Catholic ministry in action and know that in southeastern Idaho with its LDS dominant culture, there are Catholic college students who are actively practicing their faith.

Before setting foot in St. John's, I had never heard of FOCUS, but when I was told that there are actually FOCUS

missionaries at multiple college campuses across Idaho, I thought 'This is great news!'

This school year, I am excited about many aspects of being involved at St. John's. I am definitely looking forward to growing spiritually. Each Sunday, I attend Mass and sing in the music group. In addition, I've joined a Bible study led by one of ISU's FOCUS missionaries, Jessi. I'm also looking

forward to going to SEEK (a national Catholic conference for college students held by FOCUS) during the first week of January 2024.

Overall, St. John's Catholic Center is my favorite place on Idaho State's campus, and I'm thankful that I have three and a half more years to be there!

Help our students get to SEEK - read more on page 4.



## A CULTURE OF CATHOLICISM

The Bengal Catholics are not only willing to participate in the faith with you, but will happily share their own hot takes, favorite doctrines (that will brook no compromise!), and other particulars about their experience of Catholicism. Being Catholic, for me, was often solitary. Every sacrament, service, and other part of the Catholic life encouraged deep, interior examination that I felt excluded me from participating in my faith on a social level. But here, every effort is made to reach out to even the most monastic of believers, with community events, RCIA and Bible study programs, and almost-weekly opportunities to help out fellow parishioners. They've given me the opportunity to not only participate academically and socially in my faith, but to form connections and

relationships with believers off the written page.

Each one of the people that I've had the pleasure of befriending here makes an effort to truly live the faith. There's no conversation that can't be connected to Catholic teaching in one way or another, and so I've truly come to see what it means to live as a Catholic: to allow our beliefs to influence how we act in every part of our lives. Being near such determinedly devout individuals has me second-guessing many choices I would usually make without a twinge of conscience--little compromises between my intellectual love of the faith and my preference for more worldly living.

At the same time, this earnest effort to live the faith is all-encompassing: a Bengal Catholic accepts failure, and

- RCIA has begun with 1 student (so far) seeking to become Catholic. Another student is preparing for Confirmation. There are at least 5 other students discerning joining RCIA soon. RCIA is being led by Ethan (student) & Veronica (recent graduate) Lang, who got married this past summer.
- Braxton Simpson will be received into full communion with the Catholic Church on October 28.
- Shanae Van Leuven, a recent convert and current student, got engaged to Connor Brachtl, a former community leader.
- 23 students have already signed up to attend the annual SEEK Conference in St. Louis held by FOCUS.
- St. John's has developed a stronger relationship with Holy Spirit Catholic Community, especially in collaborating with shared Mass/Confession/Adoration schedules and through mutual participation in the events of the Pocatello Catholic community.



## A CULTURE OF CATHOLICISM

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they seek to boost you up, rather than tearing you down for it. This is often the sort of true community that a person needs: one where moral and personal failures are called out, but where you're never far away from a hand that will help you up from it.

## AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM

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and Sunday Supper show how our students have found communion and community (set free from loneliness).

None of this would be possible but for the grace of God. We are especially encouraged through your prayerful support of the ministry here at St. John's. We, in turn, have offered over 400 rosaries and 40+ hours before the Blessed Sacrament this semester, so far, in thanksgiving for you and for

your intentions. We remain committed to the building blocks of growing our community - the sacraments, prayer, strengthening fellowship especially through bible studies, and putting our faith into action through serving the Church. Thank you for helping St. John's continue its tradition of being a place of welcome, a community of believers, and a witness to faith on the ISU campus and beyond.

Lastly, I wish to finish with another exhortation of our Holy Father from *Evangelii Gaudium* and I pray that it may be a source of inspiration and an opportunity to share the beauty of a relationship with Christ to your loved ones.

*I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord".* - *Evangelii Gaudium* par. 3 -

## SUPPORT ST. JOHN'S

This Semester we are embarking on an ambitious \$40,000 campaign to support 3 major areas of our ministry:

- Scholarships to help our students attend the SEEK Conference in St. Louis. GOAL \$10,000
- Building Maintenance Funds to allow for improved heating/cooling, lighting, plumbing, and important upkeep to ensure the legacy of St. John's can continue unencumbered by repairs. GOAL \$20,000
- Daily Ministry Needs to expand our outreach capacity, to accommodate our increased growth at our regular events, and to ensure the continued presence of FOCUS as ministry partners at St. John's. GOAL \$10,000

If you feel called to give, please use the included envelope to send your check. Please indicate which area you'd like to support in the memo line. You can also give online at [www.bengalcatholics.com](http://www.bengalcatholics.com) and click the 'Give Now' tab in the top right corner. We appreciate your continued support and look forward to sharing more stories of the lives being changed through the ministry at St. John's Catholic Student Center.

Please prayerfully consider supporting St. John's as we aim to raise \$40,000 to further our mission of knowing Christ and making Christ known at ISU