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2022 Fall Appeal



THE ORATORY TIMES

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George Cardinal Pell Visits the Oratory

By Fr. Michael Darcy, C.O.

Earlier this year, Friday June 24 provided the occasion for one of the most memorable events I can recall in my life as an Oratorian. Though rather than by the date alone, I suspect we are more likely to remember this day in conjunction with the Feast of the Sacred Heart, having also fallen on the 24th - the day the Oratory was graced by a visit from one of the most eminent Churchmen of our time, George Cardinal Pell.

Everyone to whom I have mentioned this has asked me the same question: “How did that happen?” In case you are wondering the same, Cardinal Pell was in town to celebrate Mass for the Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, the patronal feast of the Order of Malta. Commonly referred to as the Knights of Malta, the Order’s formal name is “The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta.” It was founded in 1048 and consisted originally of crusader knights who devoted themselves to the protection and care of pilgrims to the Holy Land.



His Eminence George Cardinal Pell celebrating Mass at the Oratory

Today the Knights of Malta is a world-wide religious order that includes many lay people who devote themselves to the mission of nurturing the faith and caring for the poor. Cardinal Pell is a Chaplain of the Order and was honored with the Bailiff Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion, the highest honor bestowed by the Knights.

The meeting of the Knights and Dames of Malta in Pittsburgh was itself the work of the Oratory’s friend,

Mike DeVanne, KM, who serves as Hospitaller for the Pittsburgh region, which encompasses the dioceses of Pittsburgh and Greensburg. He convinced the leadership of the Federal Association of the Order, headquartered in Washington, D.C., to hold their annual summer board meeting in Pittsburgh. In the meantime, Cardinal Pell expressed his wish to Mike that he be taken to visit what he described as “points of light” within the Church - places and communities

where the Gospel is active and fruitful in an inspiring way. Mike did us the great honor of pointing the Cardinal in the direction of the Oratory, which occasioned for us a particularly memorable visit.

Cardinal Pell came to us from Rome, which has become for him a kind of home away from home, though his native land is Australia. In his company was his trusted priest secretary, Fr. Joseph Hamilton. Between Australia, the United states, and Fr. Joseph’s birthplace of Ireland, a great deal of the former British Empire was represented in the Oratory’s living room.

Cardinal Pell has had a distinguished career as a priest and bishop in Australia and then as a Cardinal there and in Rome. He holds many impressive academic degrees including a master’s degree in education from Monash University and a PhD in Church history from the University of Oxford.

He has served on committees having to do with English translations of liturgical texts, and the governance of the Church, and in 2014 he was appointed Prefect of the Secretariat for

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Fr. Thomas Skamai, C.O. at his First Mass of Thanksgiving on May 15, 2023 at Epiphany Church.

Fr. Thomas was ordained a priest by Bishop Zubik on Saturday, May 14, 2023.

Reflections of a New Priest

By Fr. Thomas Skamai, C.O.

The start of my priesthood could be considered as four phases. The Monday after ordination, I celebrated a morning mass at St. Paul Cathedral. After elevating the Host, I lowered the Blessed Sacrament to the paten, and – in what was admittedly not the most pious of moments – I thought, “Lord, I think it worked.” In the first few weeks of celebrating Mass and hearing confessions, there were many times where this and similar thoughts crossed my mind. It was hard to believe at first that God is made present in the Eucharist and sins are absolved through me – a priest! Yet, by the mercy of God, it is true. Thus, phase one was the “Lord, I think it worked” phase.

Phase two was “traveling and concelebration.” I traveled to upstate New York (basically Canada), Nebraska, Virginia, and Maryland for the ordinations of seminary friends. During these trips, I had the

opportunity to concelebrate many beautiful ordinations and Masses of Thanksgiving. It was, of course, somewhat sad to no longer be at the seminary with the men with whom I had spent years preparing together for the priesthood. However, I was often encouraged during concelebration. One by one, we joined the whispering thunder of voices at the altar, echoing the voice of Christ: “Take this, all of you, and eat of it. This is My Body.” We had walked the path to priesthood together, and now, although apart by distance, concelebration is a reminder that we have something better: we are united in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, offering sacrifice, repeating his words, and bringing Him to his people.

Although it was a great privilege to be there for my friends’ ordinations, I was relieved when the traveling ceased. Hence, phase three began, which – even to my surprise – could be characterized as the “honeymoon” phase. In July, I started as chaplain at St. Margaret’s hospital in Aspinwall.

I loved being a priest before, but being able to serve in a hospital made me love it all the more. I have experienced the mercy and providence of God in deeper ways than ever before.

As I write this, it is the middle of August. We are preparing for students to return to campus, and there is a sense of excitement in the air. I cannot help but feel that I am at the beginning of phase four. Ten years ago, I came to Pitt as a freshman who knew nothing about St. Philip Neri and basically nothing about the Oratory, except that this place offered more Masses and confessions than I had ever seen. Now, I have the privilege of being a son of St. Philip, offering some of those Masses and hearing confessions while also serving as a campus minister. Phase four could become “failures of a new priest” or “stop talking to college students like they’re an elderly person in a hospital bed.” However, I’m hopeful that it could be named “honeymoon continues,” or – even better – “the life of an Oratorian.”

Christ Comes to Campus

By Fr. Peter Gruber, C.O.

“How could I not want this for you?” Shane, a senior at Pitt, asked the large crowd of students at Newman Night - our Sunday Night event in the basement of St. Paul’s.

His time at Pitt was marked by his own conversion from atheism to Catholicism during his sophomore year and then a deepening of friendship with Christ during his junior year. Now as he finishes his senior year of coursework, he simultaneously serves as a FOCUS missionary, personally investing in students through Bible Studies and discipleship.

During his time in college, he recalled being blown away by the reality of Christ as encountered in the Gospels and in the Eucharist.

“How could I not want this for you?”, Shane prodded the packed room of 100+ students, encouraging each one to commit to a Bible Study.

Pope Benedict XVI once said “There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him.”

Starting off the semester, we packed each day with events: Sunday Newman

Nights, game night at the Newman Center, dodgeball, “Stump a Priest” at CMU, sports on the Cathedral of Learning lawn, Pitt vs. WVU tailgate party, first Friday cookout, a Pirates game with 60 students - we had a lot of fun!

And both Pitt and CMU were blessed with the presence of Christ on their campuses. CMU has been consistently offering Mass once a week in their University Center chapel. And, for the first time in sixteen years, the Oratory offered Mass on Pitt’s campus in Heinz Chapel, moving our Wednesday 9pm Mass there every week, adorned by the grandeur of the space and the sacred music provided by Mr. Nick Will and the Oratory Choir.

The point of these events is not merely to socialize. The point is friendship with Christ. Shane’s experience is but one example of the friendship of Christ taking root. Christ is coming to our campuses in Word and in Sacrament, carried heart to heart in the students we serve.

When you support the Oratory, you enable that friendship, that spreading of the joy of the Gospel among hundreds, maybe even thousands, of college students who are thirsting to be seen, known and loved by Christ.



Students and locals pack the pews at the first Heinz Chapel Mass in sixteen years



(left) Shane speaks to fellow students at Newman Night



(right) Inviting student passersby to Kick-Off Week events at the Newman Center

Renewing Sacred Music with Nicholas Will



Nick Will, the Oratory’s new Director of Sacred Music, playing the organ at Mass in Heinz Chapel

By Fr. Reed Frey, C.O.

Continuing their patron’s great legacy, the Sons of St. Philip have a long tradition of supporting Sacred Music. St. Philip himself directly supported a number of great Renaissance musicians, including perhaps the greatest composer of his time, Palestrina, whose music still stands revered as some of the finest choral compositions in the Church’s tradition. The Pittsburgh Oratory is now blessed to be able to contribute to that tradition in a new way with the hiring of our new Director of Sacred

Music: Nicholas Will. Nick joins a great lineage of musicians associated with Oratories around the world, and has already made great strides in beautifying Oratory liturgies, bringing worship here into closer conformity with the model provided by St. Philip: “I feel like in some small way I’m a part of that [great tradition], and it is a great gift and honor.”

Since 2020, Nick has served as the Director of Liturgical Music at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, of which many of the Fathers are alumni, and where Br. Leo is currently in his third year of theological studies. Although

Nick’s full-time job is in Maryland, it is typically concentrated to three consecutive days per week, allowing him to reside with his wife, Kate, and their three daughters: Greta (9), Cecilia (6), and Elizabeth (1), here in Pittsburgh. The nature of his seminary job also allows him to be in Pittsburgh for all of the major events on the liturgical calendar—which happen to occur precisely when the seminary is out of session. Nick’s unique work and living arrangement has made possible a most beautiful collaboration: Nick remains Director of Liturgical Music at the Mount, while taking on a new part-time position here at the Oratory, coordinating all aspects of liturgical music for us, working with the Oratory Choir, and training students (and Oratorians!) in singing and organ playing. Most felicitously, the major liturgical feasts, from Christmas to Holy Week to St. Philip’s Day, will have at their helm a highly competent organist and choir director in Nicholas Will. In the words of Nick: “This position is a result of God’s good providence,” which echoes a sentiment I have heard from many of my fellow Oratorians.

With roots in Bedford County and Blair County, Nick has a great love for the city of Pittsburgh. “Western PA is culturally rich...the people, the grit, the work ethic, the sort of way of life, the deep roots...I love all of that,” Nick states. Although Nick’s talents might otherwise open many opportunities around the world, he “can’t imagine

living anywhere else.” Nick received his undergraduate education here in Pittsburgh, studying at Duquesne University. He describes his time there as formative—where he was able to come into his own as an organist. Nick’s first job after Duquesne was as Director of Music at the Cathedral of Altoona-Johnstown. During this time, he completed advanced study at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, where he was able to find his own voice, growing as a musician. Nick has also been privileged to study under Dom Theo Flurry, OSB, at the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music in Rome, where he deepened his knowledge of the art of improvisation, an art which pays great dividends in his work as a liturgical organist.

Nick recalls with fondness that he “first met the Oratorians and their funny collars,” as an undergraduate, when his wife was in a collaborative RCIA program between the Oratory and the Cathedral, and was himself growing in a love for the liturgy and the sacraments. He distinctly remembers his first visits to Mass at the Oratory chapel: “there was something very different about it. It was very reverent. The chapel was very beautiful, but modest. Everyone was so prayerful, and it just felt different to me.”

Nick’s love for the Oratory chapel and its liturgies continues from those days many years ago, although he recognizes the unique challenges and

Forward FOCUS: Mission in the Year Ahead

FOCUS Team at the University of Pittsburgh

Team Pitt is excited to get back on campus and enter into another year with lots of new faces!

This year's team consists of six missionaries, which is an incredible blessing. The female missionaries are Amanda Emerson, Lizzie Tecklenburg, and Marykate O'Brien.

Amanda is originally from Vienna, Virginia and is beginning her first year as a missionary. She graduated from James Madison University with a degree in Elementary Education. Her favorite food is hot dogs, and she loves going for long drives. She is most excited to walk with students as they encounter the Lord and live more fully in Christ's love.

Lizzie is returning for her second year as a missionary at Pitt. She is from Humboldt, Iowa and graduated from Iowa State with a degree in Psychology. She is excited to watch the women she has come to know fall even more in love with Jesus.

Marykate is entering her third year serving at Pitt and is the Team Director this year. She is from Glenmoore, PA and graduated from Penn State University with a degree in Speech Language Pathology. She is excited to get to know more deeply both her teammates and the women she has been walking with for the past two years. She has a huge heart for reaching out to student athletes, as well as encountering women in their brokenness to bring freedom, peace, and joy into their lives.

This year we are blessed to have three male missionaries: Keith Mokry, Ben Gustafson, and Shane Chilcott, each of whom are eager to meet all of the students and develop meaningful Christ centered relationships with them.

Keith is from Somonauk, Illinois and is a recent Massachusetts Institute of



*Pitt's 2022-2023 FOCUS Team (from left to right):
Keith Mokry, Amanda Emerson, Marykate O'Brien (Team Director), Shane Chilcott,
Ben Gustafson, and Lizzie Tecklenburg*

Technology graduate where he studied Physics. Keith is an avid coffee and tea enthusiast. He can't wait to walk with students towards a personal encounter with Christ and learn each of their unique and fascinating stories along the way, maybe over a cup of coffee.

Ben is from Edina, Minnesota and just graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in government and foreign affairs. Ben has a deep passion for dancing, especially when it comes to salsa. He is a convert to the faith and is most excited to reach out to those who don't know Christ and are searching for goodness, truth, and beauty.

Shane is from Hudson, Ohio and is entering into his senior year of college here at Pitt, where he studies social work. As he finishes his degree, Shane will be a part-time missionary. He will be placed as a full-time missionary this coming summer. Shane finds a lot of joy in playing any and all sports with students, and is excited to foster current relationships and form new ones during his senior year.

FOCUS Team at Carnegie Mellon University

With four returning missionaries, Team CMU is overjoyed to be coming back to campus this fall and continuing their journey with new and familiar faces alike.

Marcel Lu is a fifth year missionary and the Team Director at Carnegie Mellon University. Originally from Indonesia, he moved to Philadelphia when he was 13. He enjoys all kinds of physical activities, especially boxing, Brazilian jiu jitsu, dancing (swing, salsa, bachata, and two step), lifting, volleyball, and soccer. One day, Marcel hopes to be a therapist specializing in the treatment of victims of trauma.

Hannah Naylor is returning for her third year as a missionary at CMU. She is from the home of Mardi Gras: Mobile, Alabama. She studied secondary education and math at the University of South Alabama. She loves taking students rock climbing, hiking, and hosting women's nights. She is excited to be back on campus this year, meeting new people and sharing the gospel.

Lucia Boulos is a second year FOCUS missionary returning to CMU. She is originally from Ohio, and studied psychology at Bowling State University. She enjoys art, music, and reading, and always loves sharing these things with others. She is excited to be back in Pittsburgh, and can't wait to meet new people while diving deeper into mission with those she met last year.

Adam Basinger is a second year missionary, having graduated from Franciscan University of Steubenville. He married Hannah Basinger on July 3rd, 2021 and they are expecting their first child in December. Adam loves to meditate on what it means to live as God intended. He dreams of a church that is filled with the Holy Spirit and living radically in the world for the sake of the kingdom.



*CMU's 2022-2023 FOCUS Team (from left to right):
Adam Basinger, Hannah Basinger, Hannah Naylor, Lucia Boulos,
and Marcel Lu (Team Director)*

Fall 2022 Campus Outreach



Kick-Off Week Game Night



Sports on the Cathedral of Learning Lawn



Foosball Tournament



Students at Mass in Heinz Chapel



*Students at the First Friday Feast
Cookout to kick off the semester*



A Visit from George Cardinal Pell

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the Economy of the Holy See and the Vatican City State. In all of these works Cardinal Pell demonstrated himself to be an indefatigable worker on behalf of sound governance and reform in the Church.

More impressive still is the fact that the Cardinal endured a terrible persecution that can only be regarded as an attack on the Church. In 2018 he was subject to allegations of sexual abuse, allegations that even Cardinal Pell’s critics readily admitted were spurious. Even so, the legal system of Australia and the Australian press seemed to unite in their effort to condemn him. This resulted in a criminal trial, and in 2019 the Cardinal was found guilty and sentenced to prison for six years. He served 404 days of the sentence before finally being completely exonerated by the highest court in Australia. The Cardinal reflects on his experience of accusation and incarceration in his three volume Prison Journal, which is published by Ignatius Press. Cardinal Pell gave us an inscribed copy of the first of the three volumes as a gift.

As for his visit, the evening of the 24th proceeded more or less as usual for us. We thought that after a busy travel schedule the Cardinal would appreciate a low-key evening of prayer and fellowship. He celebrated with us the 5:15pm Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart. Mr. Nick Will, the Oratory’s Director of Liturgical Music, played the organ and conducted a magnificent choir. The Cardinal delivered a wonderful homily in which he referenced the overturning of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision that was announced only that morning. He noted the importance of the decision in his homily, and at dinner remarked to us that given the great world-wide prestige of the American legal system, the decision was likely to have a profound effect on

the understanding of the dignity of the human person around the globe.

After Mass we invited the Cardinal upstairs to pray Vespers with us in the simple style that is our usual practice. After prayer we proceeded to our refectory for dinner, after which we retired to our living room for community recreation. The Cardinal seemed very relaxed and at home, which was wonderful to see, and he shared with us anecdotes and commentary on the state of the Church around the world. I learned in an interview I read on-line that in Rome the Cardinal discovered a drink called the “Aperol Spritz,” that he enjoys very much, so I bought the ingredients and had them at the ready. I felt a certain thrill when he smiled at my offer and said, “I would love to have one.”

As the evening drew to its conclusion the Cardinal gave his goodbyes and one last blessing. His priest secretary indicated that the Cardinal’s next destination was Nashville, TN, where he was to visit with the Sisters of St. Dominic, a group often referred to as the Nashville Dominicans. They are a prospering community of religious sisters who are doing great things in the Church.

And finally, Br. Leo may have seen to it that this visit of Cardinal Pell’s will not be his last. As the Cardinal was making his way out, Br. Leo made bold to ask if he would consider returning to Pittsburgh in 2024 to perform his priestly ordination (Br. Leo’s ordination to the Diaconate will be performed next year, God willing, by Bishop Robert Byrne, an Oratorian Bishop from England). Mirabile dictu, the Cardinal gave at least a tentative “yes” to Br. Leo. As of this writing we are still working out the details, but there now seems to be a very real possibility that providence will provide another occasion for us to welcome the good Cardinal to the Oratory. Deo gratias!



Many people excitedly meet and welcome Cardinal Pell after Mass at the Oratory

Students Journey Deeper with *Catholicism Unpacked*

By Fr. Reed Frey, C.O.

Beginning in July, students and young adults looking for a way to deepen their understanding of their Catholic faith have joined together for our *Catholicism Unpacked* group each Saturday morning.

Catholicism Unpacked is a reading and discussion group centering around the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, called by St. John Paul II the “sure norm for teaching the faith.” Using this text, our group aims to help participants understand the faith much more deeply than they have before, and to articulate it with theological acuity. Much like a university course, the group is a fruitful combination of independent study and group discussion.

At the end of each meeting, I provide a brief overview of the assigned reading for the week so that the participants understand the broad contours of the reading to come. This weekly reading, about 115 paragraphs, will then occupy the bulk of our discussion together the following week.

The group is designed so that in the course of approximately six months, the participants have a comprehensive overview of the faith of the Church.

While the Catechism is indeed an introductory text, it is nevertheless

rich with spiritual insights and a store of theological treasures. It provides the key teachings of the Church in each domain of her life: belief in the Blessed Trinity and the saving work of Jesus Christ, the sacraments, morality, and prayer.

The Catechism aims at “presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, in regards to both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church’s Tradition” (CCC 11). *Catholicism Unpacked* has allowed participants to receive, in a deep and systematic manner, the fruits of this synthesis, yielding insights and understanding that they have never had before.

When officially promulgating the Catechism, Pope John Paul described his hope for the Catechism: “May it serve the renewal to which the Holy Spirit ceaselessly calls the Church of God, the Body of Christ, on her pilgrimage to the undiminished light of the Kingdom!” *Catholicism Unpacked* has much the same goal: to lead participants into ever deeper union with the Church in mind and soul, and to journey ever closer to the undiminished light of the kingdom.



Become a member of the Secular Oratory

If you are involved at The Pittsburgh Oratory and would like to be kept informed of our devotional, charitable, and social events, we encourage you to join our Secular Oratory and share with the Oratorian Fathers the imitation of the life and charism of St. Philip Neri

Please visit
pghco.org/SecularOratory
or scan the QR code to the right
to become a member of
the Secular Oratory.



Br. Leo Serves at Lourdes

By Br. Leo Dornan, C.O.

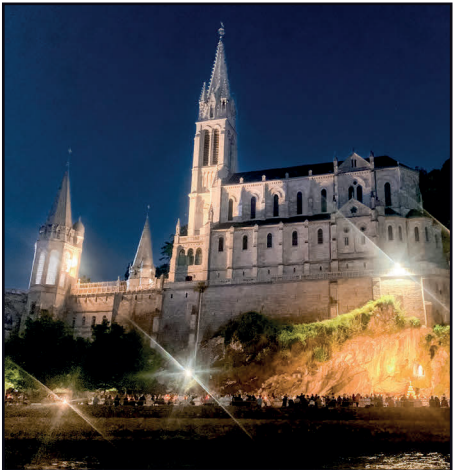
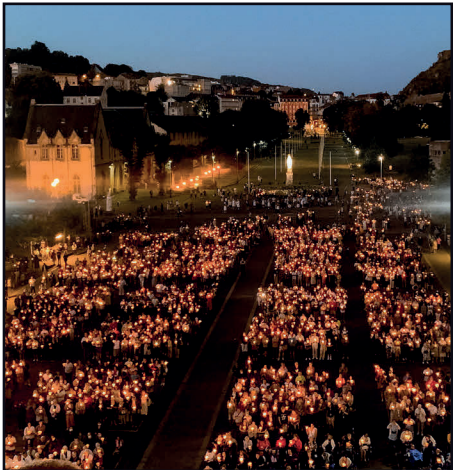
This summer I had the good fortune to spend two weeks working in Lourdes. I participated in a program for seminarians where the shrine at Lourdes agreed to provide room and board in exchange for two weeks of work as a volunteer at the shrine. It was a no-brainer to say yes to such a great program at a truly prayerful place. I would have gladly spent more than a few weeks there.

I spent each day accompanying pilgrims throughout their daily activities, serving at Mass, leading the recitation of the rosary and the stations of the cross, and giving tours of St. Bernadette's childhood homes. In addition to the grotto where Our Lady appeared to St. Bernadette in 1858, the sanctuary of Lourdes now contains three basilicas, various other chapels, medical facilities, and the baths where pilgrims can wash in the famous waters. Volunteers help throughout the sanctuary and I was one of a small army of people who come to Lourdes to help the pilgrims who are arriving each day.

What struck me the most about Lourdes is that it is entirely oriented to the pilgrims and, more specifically,

to those pilgrims who come seeking healing and peace. The sick and the dying take pride of place at Lourdes, so we were primarily there to serve them. Everyday there is a Eucharistic procession in the afternoon then a candle-lit rosary procession later in the evening. In each procession one cannot help but notice the vast group of pilgrims using wheelchairs and transports, as they generally make up the front half of the crowd.

The powerful daily visual clarified what Lourdes is all about. This preference for those facing unusual hardships is not surprising if we think of any of Our Lady's apparitions, including Guadalupe and Fatima. The Blessed Mother always seems to seek out those who are pushed aside and ignored, meeting her children as they are. This rang true with me during my experience at Lourdes as I learned more about Bernadette and the pilgrims that come there each year. Even now, many years after the first apparition, Our Lady of Lourdes still calls her children to follow her on the path that leads to her Son. From health and sickness, from all different nations and walks of life, Our Lady calls all to seek the waters that heal more than just the body, but the soul as well.



A candelit rosary procession outside of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes Lourdes, France



Br. Leo Dornan, C.O. to be Ordained a Deacon

May 27, 2023 at 10:00am

Saint Paul Cathedral

Please pray for Br. Leo as he makes the final preparations for ordination to the priesthood and for his ministry as a priest at the Oratory.

Commit to Christ

“In a world where there is so much noise, so much bewilderment, there is a need for silent adoration of Jesus concealed in the Host.”
- Pope Benedict XVI

Help the Oratory continue to make this powerful devotion available.

Commit to a weekly hour in Adoration

Become a substitute adorers for needed hours throughout the week.

Both committed weekly adorers and substitute adorers are vital parts of the Adoration ministry.

Visit pghco.org/adore or scan the QR code for more information and to sign-up to become a weekly or substitute adorers.



Renewing Sacred Music with Nick Will

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opportunities of creating great music in such an intimate space. While Nick has played fine organs in remarkable venues such as St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, St. Patrick Cathedral in New York, and Saint-Sulpice in Paris, he still recognizes the rich potential that exists on the Oratory’s far more modest, digital instrument: “It’s a different aesthetic...but it’s not that we can’t do beautiful things.”

Knowing that he is a great organist who has performed around the world, one might think that Nick spends all his free time listening to recordings of organ pieces or classical music. On the contrary, he actually spends his leisure time listening to music much more familiar to the average ear, especially pop and rock from the 60’s and 70’s.

He owes his affection for these “classics” to his father, who was a radio DJ that listened both to great concert music of the past and the top 40 tracks of the 20th century: “It was weird—it was like Van Halen or Bach, [but] he approached them with the same seriousness.” Nick also spends his late-night leisure time in his garage fixing his old cars. “As professional musicians, we do for a living what most people do for fun,” Nick states, suggesting that musicians need a hobby completely unrelated to music.

Among Nick’s jobs at the Oratory is the directing of the Oratory Choir, a task which he has taken in stride. Nick has deep experience in choral direction, having served as a choral conductor during both his tenure at Franciscan University of Steubenville, and as the director of Liturgical Music at the Pontifical North American College—the American seminary in Rome.

One member of the Oratory Choir, Tom Martz, commented that “Nick’s expertise and knowledge of liturgical music are second only to his kind personality and constructive directing,” expressing a sentiment widely felt by those who interact with Nick. Tom went on to describe him as “easily the most knowledgeable and the most kind music director” he has ever worked with. “His ability to push the group to its best with patience and charity has helped open wide the doors to a better sound, a better understanding of the music, and new, more complex pieces,” Tom continued.

As to how the new job is going so far, I leave you with the words of Nick himself: “It’s been a wonderful blessing; it’s hard to imagine something more perfect to be completely honest with you.” All of the Oratorians certainly agree.



(Back Row, from left to right): Fr. Joshua Kibler, Fr. Stephen Lowery, Fr. Reed Frey, Br. Kurt Kessler
(Front Row, from left to right): Fr. Peter Gruber, Fr. Thomas Skamai, Fr. Michael Darcy, Br. Leo Dornan

The Oratory Welcomes New Staff

If you have been to the Oratory in the past few months during business hours, you may have seen some new faces at the front desk and working in the office area. These are the faces of our new employees and we welcome them to the Oratory.

A new position at the Oratory is that of the Assistant Director of Development and Events held by Grace Hoehl, who started this past June, 2022. We are excited to have Grace working in this capacity and she has definitely hit the ground running. We asked Grace some questions about her and her work here at The Oratory, which we share with you here:

Grace’s History:

I grew up outside of Philadelphia, not too far from Kiera (who you will meet next). Until just before my sixteenth birthday, my family and I lived in a small but beautiful town named Douglassville. We later moved to the West Chester area, about 30 minutes from center-city Philly, where my parents still reside. Though each in its own way, I still consider both home. My father grew up in Pittsburgh and we visited family here frequently, making the University of Pittsburgh my home away from home when it came time to choose a college.

At Pitt, I underwent a split curriculum of English narrative-related courses and computer science-related courses. These seemingly opposing fields of study came together in several intriguing areas (at least to me), including online media design, data

analyzation, user-interface creation and web-building. I was able to explore the creative side of the STEM field and the analytical side of the liberal arts field.

Grace’s Interests:

My family and friends like to remind me that growing up I was known as “the one with all the hobbies,” which holds true into my adult life. I tend to spend my free time expressing some form of creativity. I enjoy baking of all sorts, in particular cake decorating, and have made many cakes for events held by family and friends over the years. I also love music and have played piano and sang for many years. Currently I am attempting to teach myself how to play guitar - key word “attempting.”

Most importantly I enjoy spending my free time with those I love, finding any excuse we can to laugh and find the joy in reality.

Fun Fact about Grace:

Along with Becca, I am left-handed, making 50% of the Oratory’s lay employees lefties. (Some of the Priests and Brothers, too!)

Grace’s Work:

My biggest goal in my job is to do everything I can to help create the opportunity for others to experience the life-changing community rooted in Christ here at the Oratory that I was incredibly blessed to experience as a college student. It has been an honor and a blessing to have a job where my work and my Catholic faith are so

beautifully intertwined, and I greatly look forward to all that is to come!

Filling the position of Front Desk Manager is Kiera Segan, who came to work at The Oratory in August of 2022. Kiera will be with us through the end of 2022 and we are very happy to have her working at the front desk and helping us get through this semester. Here is a brief introduction to Kiera:

Kiera’s History:

I grew up in Allentown, PA and have a younger brother, Brody, who attends Penn State. Although I am a lifelong Catholic, it was not until high school that I began to take my faith seriously. I first came to Pitt in 2018, where I studied English Literature.

Kiera’s Interests:

In my free time I enjoy running, reading (especially the writings of the Carmelite Saints), and spending time with friends. I’m also trying to learn how to play the banjo-ukulele!

Fun Fact about Kiera:

I am an Aspirant for the Carmel of St. Thérèse in Loretto, PA where, God willing, I hope to enter Postulancy in early 2023. Please pray for me!

Kiera’s Work:

I hope to be a friendly face behind the Oratory front desk and offer assistance in any way I can. Campus ministry and the Oratory at large has had an immeasurable impact on my life, and it is a joy to serve the faith community that has given me so much!

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The Oratory also wants to recognize Hayden Stec who served as the Front Desk Manager from mid-June to mid-August of 2022. Hayden was a great help to us (on very short notice) while we transitioned to a new database. His computer and technology skills were invaluable in getting us through the summer and this significant change in our processes. Hayden is now working at CMU, so you may still see him at the Oratory from time to time. Thank you, Hayden.

Please stop by and say hi to Kiera and Grace next time you are in the area. They will be happy to meet you, answer questions, and learn more about you.



Grace Hoehl (left) and Kiera Segan (center) with their good friend Michaela at last year’s Barn Dance

The Financial Times

By Fr. Reed Frey, C.O.

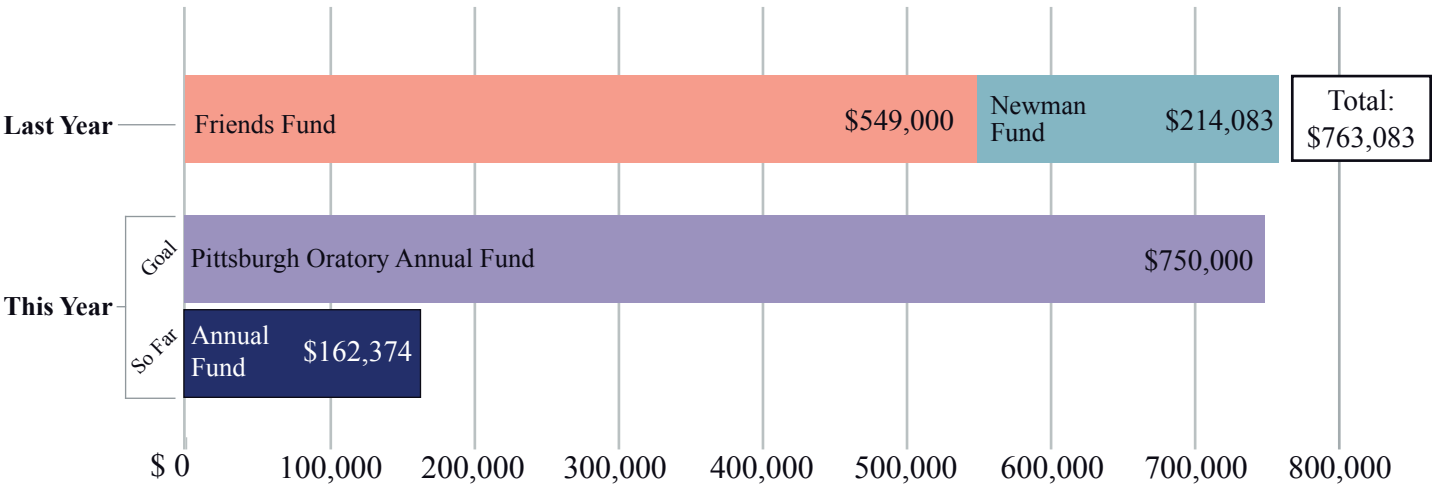
'22-'23 Fundraising In Review

Introducing the New Pittsburgh Oratory Annual Fund

Thanks to the faithful giving of benefactors like you, we have been able to support our ministries financially in a way that makes our dynamic growth possible. We are excited about the ever expanding opportunities for ministry here at the Oratory, and with increased growth comes increased expenses.

Ten years ago, the Diocese of Pittsburgh began pulling back from funding campus ministry at Pitt, CMU, and Chatham. To sustain and grow ministry on our campuses, the Oratory began the Newman Fund to make up for the diocesan budget cuts while inviting more people to directly support our evangelization of college students.

In recent years, we have approached our goal of the Newman fund, and your support helped overcome the budgeting short falls and enabled campus ministry to thrive. As many have noticed, campus ministry is not separate from the Oratory as a whole. Our priestly presence among the students, the work of our staff, and the expenses of our building are as much for campus ministry as they are for the Oratory.



To better reflect this reality going forward, the Friends of the Oratory Fund and the Newman Fund are coming together into one Pittsburgh Oratory Annual Fund.

Our Annual Fund's goal for this year is \$750,000, which will help ensure that all of our ministries continue to flourish. This increase in our overall fundraising goal helps to pay for the expenses associated with the newly ordained Fr. Thomas, who is already touching hearts in his role as a campus minister.

As our ministries continue to expand, know that the kindness and support of people like you make the many wonderful things here at the Oratory continue to happen.

Legacy and Non-Cash Giving

The Oratory is able to accept legacy and non-cash gifts, which can be liquidated to assist with immediate needs, or invested to support future ministry. Donating gifts of stocks, mutual funds, ETF's, and other equities or non-cash assets can offer substantial tax savings. Appreciated investments can be donated directly to the Oratory without paying any capital gains tax, increasing the impact of your gift by up to 20%, while still receiving a deduction for the fair-market value of the asset from your federally taxable income. We are also able to receive Qualified Charitable Distributions from a Traditional IRA, which can be especially helpful if you do not need all of the funds for your required minimum distribution. Non-cash gifts are easier to make than one might think.

Leave a lasting legacy and support the ministry for years to come.

Contact Fr. Reed, Oratory Treasurer, for more information at 412.681.3181 or at reedfrey.co@gmail.com.

Please consider including the Oratory in your will.

Rednal's Sewage Solution in Sight



Rednal Retreat House, Ligonier, PA

By Fr. Peter Gruber, C.O.

The most unflattering of projects began last February as we set out to raise \$40,000 for the upgrade of Rednal's septic system. To our great astonishment, we raised \$57,945. Never did we expect such an enthusiastic response! Thank you to all our donors.

Your support will not be wasted, but every dollar raised will definitely go to waste. We were initially hopeful that the cost would be closer to \$40,000 but unfortunately the more simple solution to Rednal's septic woes can't be pursued. The slope of the property and the clay content of the soil mean that we can't do a classic septic drain field.

Instead, we're looking at the more complicated system of a filtered stream discharge system. Everything has to pass through government permits and engineered designs before

we can begin digging. If all goes well, we're hopeful that next summer we will be installing the new system.

Until then, Rednal still enjoys frequent use. After every retreat, every Barn Dance (we now do two every Fall), and every picnic, the septic tank has to be pumped. Of course, sewage is not all that is produced at Rednal. Hearts converted, friendships formed, God encountered – that's what has been produced at Rednal.

Last year, the student retreats were catalysts for a revitalized ministry. This year already, there's been a new student retreat, a grad student retreat, an alumni/young adult Barn Dance, and the undergraduate Barn Dance, and we are looking forward to a packed weekend schedule for the rest of the academic year.

Look out for another evening of Rednal fundraising festivities on Saturday, February 18, 2023, at the annual Rednal Benefit!

See What's Happening at Rednal



(left) New Student Retreat, Fall 2022 with guest speakers Joseph & Crystal Gruber
(above) Students prepare for a rosary walk around Rednal while on retreat
(right) Fall 2021 Barn Dance, with 2022 Barn Dance right around the corner!



Your Support At Work for the Kingdom



On Saturday, May 14, 2022, Fr. Thomas Skamai, C.O. was ordained a priest at St. Paul Cathedral by Bishop Zubik. Fr. Thomas graduated from the University of Pittsburgh, where he grew in his relationship with Christ and found his vocation to the Oratory. He now serves as a Newman Center chaplain and as a hospital chaplain at UPMC St. Margaret's, pouring himself out in imitation of Christ. Shown here is Fr. Thomas's ordination, and standing with his immediate family after celebrating his first Mass.

On Thursday, April 28, 2022, the graduating seniors came together for the **Baccalaureate Mass and Dinner**. This year's graduates from the Newman Center will go into the next phase of their lives spreading the fire of God's love that you helped fan into flames here. At this event, we were blessed to honor Pitt alumni John and Meg Hinterlang with the John Henry Newman Award for Excellence in Service and Christian Witness.



On the last Saturday of each month, the Oratorians take turns presenting the **Oratory Lecture Series**. Here they engage the entire Oratory community of students and adults, drawing from subjects that the Oratorians are knowledgeable and passionate about. Recent topics have included How to Go to Confession, the Inquisition, Newman and the Three Ways, Evangelization by Personal Influence, and Newman on the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

One immensely fruitful aspect of the ministry you support – in addition to Bible Studies, outreach, and social events – is the hosting of regular **Men's and Women's Nights**. On the left, FOCUS Missionary Ben Gustafson shares his own testimony and calls the men to discipleship while at a cookout at the Oratory's residence at 4040 Bigelow Blvd. On the right, Sr. Elfie of the Salesian Sisters talks to our women about holiness and discernment.

