



CALVERT NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHOLIC CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Winter 2023

Our first retreat, one of three offered to the students during the academic year, was held on November 15th. The fall and winter retreats comprise about a half day of recollection on a particular topic and the spring retreat offers students an overnight experience. The past few years we have been holding the spring retreat at Mundelein Seminary conference center. Some of the published articles from students in this newsletter are reflections from the overnight retreats.

The November retreat theme was integrating leisure into our spiritual lives. Leisure is one of the spiritual goods we ought to pursue in order that we grow in holiness. Perhaps this statement may seem counterintuitive, but if we do not take time out from our labors, it is difficult to develop in knowledge and we can find ourselves unfit to live the Christian moral life. Sloth on the other hand is different than leisure. Sloth is a vice that infects our soul, making us indifferent to pursuing the spiritual goods that enable us to grow in holiness.

Particularly during the Advent season, which becomes so filled with labors in anticipation of Christmas (getting gifts, decorating, maybe hosting parties, writing cards, etc.), we need to take time away from all these activities so that we can contemplate the birth of Christ. Apart from Jesus' death and resurrection, what other historical event is more significant than his birth? Jesus was born precisely so that he could save us from sin and death. You see, contemplating the nativity and incarnation makes us grow in spiritual knowledge and moral strength. (Jesus was born for me to be saved and I should desire to act as Jesus acted in giving of himself and taking on a mortal existence). These kinds of reflections are the product of leisure. Prayer is a type of leisure whereby we contemplate the good, the true and the beautiful of creation and God's design. Aristotle says the best activities in life are the most useless. St. Thomas Aquinas picked up on Aristotle's idea and showed that things like prayer, or attendance at mass, while seemingly useless, because they do not pursue an end that is practical as the world measures, enable us to ponder the things that bring us joy, namely, Jesus' love for us (shown in being born and dying) that gives us the grace to be holy.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew M. Wawrzyn".

Fr. Andrew



Fr. Andrew Wawrzyn
Chaplain / Director



Noel Moore - Supporting Calvert's Mission

When Father Andrew approached me to assist in establishing a Calvert House Advisory Committee, I eagerly embraced the opportunity, sensing the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in my decision to serve. My connection with the College, coupled with my longstanding involvement in the Lumen Christi Institute, a venerable organization devoted to promoting the Catholic intellectual tradition on campus for the past 25 years, has allowed me to witness the inspiring ministry unfolding at Calvert.

The vibrant spirit of Calvert House is palpable, evident in the robust attendance at both daily and Sunday Masses. Students actively participate in an array of ministries, ranging from engagement in RCIA and retreats to charitable endeavors and vocational discernment for the priesthood. The Advisory Committee, consisting of remarkable individuals like Joseph Starshak, a Chicago-based investment banker and Booth School of Business graduate; David Skelding, a corporate lawyer and College alumnus; Noel Francisco, a Washington D.C. based corporate lawyer with degrees from the College and Law School; Dr. Chris Clardy, an esteemed member of the Medical School Faculty; and Dr. Aletia Caughron, head of risk and credit at TIAA- CREF, is committed to serving the students, Father Andrew and the broader Church community.

Our strategic initiatives include expanding grant applications to potential nonprofit partners, engaging concerned alumni and friends, enhancing campus events such as the Red and White Masses, and strengthening our relationship with Catholics at Booth. Additionally, we are exploring opportunities for software and database upgrades to bolster Calvert House's presence within the University of Chicago community.



At its core, Calvert is a sanctuary where students not only attend Mass and receive sacraments but also deepen their faith, forge enduring friendships, and find a sense of belonging within one of the world's premier secular universities. As these young minds prepare to venture into the world as leaders in education, law, business, medicine, and various other fields, their faith formation becomes pivotal for the future of our Church.

In closing, we humbly request your prayers for the Calvert House mission, particularly for the students whose spiritual growth is integral to the Church's enduring legacy. Together, we embark on this journey, mindful of the profound impact it holds for our remarkable students and the broader community we serve.

Thank you to all friends and supporters of Calvert House for helping us carry out our mission! We appreciate your generosity.

You can also make a gift on our website: www.uofccatholic.com/giving



Emily Barnum - Reflection on the RCIA Team

It is a gift to be part of Calvert's RCIA team.

First, I am inspired by the example of those in RCIA who courageously seek to draw closer to God in the sacraments, a pursuit that concretely changes our life, on the level of our fundamental beliefs to the tangible habits inseparable from these. Some come to RCIA from environments that are overtly hostile to the Catholic faith, others come with a desire to complete their initiation into the life of the Church in simple fidelity to her direction. All live within a culture that can at times thwart a life-giving relationship with God in his Church in subtle but pervasive ways. To be open to encountering truth in its fullness requires vulnerability and trust – a humility to surrender certain intellectual and material attachments, especially the idol of one's own perspective so that it may be corrected, broadened and deepened. Being part of RCIA reminds me of this fact, that an authentic encounter with truth is transformative; to enter more deeply into the Church's sacramental life is to permit oneself be changed through engaging the personal and living Truth, Jesus Christ, who always invites us to offer a deeper gift of ourselves in return to his inexhaustible gift. It is a privilege not just to witness, but join, others who are willing to submit themselves to this gift of ever deepening conversion offered to the entire Church.

One meeting this fall we studied the mystery of the union of divine and human natures in the person of Christ. As another member of the RCIA team led us through a presentation followed by a period of questions, I was personally led to reflect upon the simple question: why does any of this *matter*? That is, what is the tangible takeaway of all this technical language shaped over hundreds of years through the careful work of theologians and councils, and the list of propositions that we, as Catholics, must at least affirm to be true even as we continue to struggle to understand the mystery that lies beyond articulation? I found myself touched by the raw and immediate nature of this sort of question – this question about why what could be dismissed by some as pedantic intellectual rationalizing really does impact how we know, live, and love Jesus in our concrete day-to-day existence. As a graduate student, in the Divinity School no less, I feel the absence of this kind of question in classrooms and in scholarship. In RCIA, “brought back down to earth” if it were, I find myself refreshed and in wonder at the ultimate *simplicity* of what this sort of question requires.

In short, it is a blessing to return over and over to the foundations of our Catholic faith in the context of RCIA. Through the questions and reflections raised in our meetings, I am encouraged to remain sensitive to the fact that our faith remains ever a mystery, and to not take its inexhaustible depth for granted. At the same time, I am challenged to grow in my capacity to try to put this mystery into language that is meaningful, receiving such language from our tradition made comprehensible through personal experience of Christ in his Church. While the Church proves ever abundant in her articulation of the personal Truth that draws near yet remains beyond all articulation, I find living from her resources a humbling and faith-building endeavor. In the community of RCIA, it is a gift to face the various stumbling blocks encountered in a life of faith. Together, we grow in the trust that the Lord himself is our light and guide into all truth.



Alejandro Morles - Our Lady of the Angels

*If you can't feed 100 people,
just feed one.*

~Mother Teresa



*I used to pray that God would feed
the hungry, or do this or that, but
now I pray that he will guide me to
do whatever I'm supposed to do,
what I can do. I used to pray for
answers, but now I'm praying for
strength. I used to believe that
prayer changes things, but now
I know that prayer changes us
and we change things.*

~Mother Teresa

My first year as an undergraduate was during the 2020-21 school year, and it was very difficult to make friends due to the pandemic lockdowns and social distancing protocols. While Calvert House did all they could to host COVID-conscious events, those limited interactions could not compare to what I experienced the years after.

As a second year, we began going to the Mission of Our Lady of the Angels like we had pre-pandemic. Every month they host a food pantry for homeless and needy of West Humboldt Park. It originally started with just five of us taking CTA at the crack of dawn just to make it in time. Now, over twenty students make it out in carpools and public transit every month to serve and build fellowship. During these drives and CTA trips, I got much closer to other people in Calvert House.

What I most enjoy about our monthly service trips to Our Lady of the Angels are the interactions we get to have. We're not just sorting food in some back room—disconnected from the end-product of our work. Instead, we are stocking tables full of food and speaking with the people receiving the food. I struggle to capture into words the experience of seeing families with babies and young children, young adults my age, and the elderly waiting in the cold just for a chance to get a portion of food. It truly cultivates the desire to do more for the least fortunate in our community, and it serves as a reminder to the many blessings we already have in our lives that we may not notice, like a reliable source of food.

Something that is also nice about our OLA trips is the time we spend afterwards. We have ended the trip by celebrating Mass together or by going to Adoration with the Franciscans of the Eucharist of Chicago sisters who organize the food pantry. Other times, we've gone to Jibaritos Y Mas and debated over who was the most important Catholic theologian or who has the best fantasy football team. Regardless of what we do, I always look forward to the first Saturday of the month, when I can go with some of my closest friends to serve the least fortunate among us.

Our monthly trips to Our Lady of the Angels are extremely important to me, as it helps cultivate virtue and fellowship alike. Being able to practice this important corporal work of mercy with my friends at Calvert House is one of my favorite ways to deepen our friendship and share the Catholic message outside of the church building.



*Those who shut
their ears to the cry
of the poor will
themselves call out
and not be answered.*

Proverbs 21:13



*The land will never lack for needy
persons; that is why I command you:
“Open your hand freely to your poor
and to your needy in your land.”*

Deuteronomy 15:11



Francis Devaney - Having Faith on Campus

1) Where are you from, and what brought you to UChicago?

I am from Northborough, Massachusetts, a suburb 45 minutes outside of Boston. A month before I left for college this autumn, however, my family moved to Portsmouth, Rhode Island. UChicago's academic culture and commitment to thoughtful inquiry make it the best possible fit for me. I am interested in and have studied Classics in the past and UChicago has one of the best Classics Departments in the world. I also run on the Track and Field team at the University.

2) What got you interested in participating in Catholic life at Calvert House?

I had heard about many great Catholic resources at the University, and a quick search on Google yielded promising results like Calvert House. At an O-Week activity fair, I came upon the Calvert House table and immediately placed my name on the email list. Soon after, I was able to attend the Mass of the Holy Spirit and a subsequent dinner. I found that the people of Calvert House are welcoming and gracious; I felt immediately at home. The student and adult leaders of Calvert House and the Catholic Student Association always have an eye out for me and have guided me not just through Catholic life but academic and athletic as well.

3) How have you gotten involved at Calvert House so far?

At Calvert House, I attend Mass on Sundays, Holy Days, and weekdays when I am available. Every Monday night, the Calvert House Undergraduate Dinner occurs. It is a great place to meet people, eat good food, and have good discussions. I joined the Lector Team and was able to assist at Mass by reading recently. Calvert House's Evangelization Team also appeals to me as I believe we have a duty to spread the Word of God to the University community and the world. I have also been to OLA in Humboldt Park to assist at a food pantry with members of the Catholic Student Association.



4) Are there ways you hope to get involved or make an impact in the future?

I hope to be able to attend Small Group discussions of readings as well as Bible Studies. Events such as these will become, surely, a great way to enhance my spiritual life and come to a fuller understanding of Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Finally, I want to be of service to the Catholic community here in Chicago in any way possible and to eventually help new-comers to the community in a way that so many helped me.

5) How would you describe the role of Calvert House in your life or in the lives of students?

Calvert House is an integral part of the life of Catholic students on campus. They host a great depth and breadth of sorts of events for students both Catholic and non-Catholic, as well as providing resources and access to Sacraments. Students spend a great deal of time at Calvert House attending Mass, praying, reading, doing work, and socializing.

Spencer Brown - Integrating Leisure into our Spiritual Lives

October 20th: After around 6 hours of sleep, I woke up at 5:58am to a text asking me to write a talk for the Fall retreat on November 15th, the theme of which would be leisure. Now, I'm an average UChicago student: I make very poor decisions and overcommit myself. So, I really did wonder if I could talk about the importance of leisure in any way. I've spent entire weekends doing nothing but work so that I could keep up with my schedule; conversely, I've spent entire weekends doing nothing but playing games with my friends, doing Jiu Jitsu, and staying up till 2am even if it'll destroy me when I need to wake up 4 or 5 hours from then. However, I'm not alone in this feast or famine mindset: our campus environment is full of this. I can think of my lab partner and friend who spends all day working on p-sets, studying, and watching seminars, but spends all night partying; or my former roommate who would spend 3 days nonstop working on p-sets in his room, and then switch to partying all weekend and coming back at 4am. Some activities are indeed enjoyable and relaxing, but they won't always be that way, and often some types of relaxation can create or increase the same conditions one is running from. For example, my former roommate's partying almost certainly screwed up his schedule so that he had to stress himself out. My sleepless (and sometimes only semi-sober) lab partner is undeniably less prepared and awake for his p-sets, so it takes him longer to complete. And when I've stressed myself out with work, all I want is to rest, so why not play games all day, even if I put off some work? My friends' and my own versions of this rest-stress cycle is not new or interesting; it's just another maladaptive response. Getting too caught up in this cycle of "I need more rest; now I have more work" has burnt out a lot of people I know, and sometimes threatens even my own work-leisure balance.

I'll wrap up with a story, just as I started. November 13th, the night of Thanksgiving CHUD, two days before the night I'm supposed to give this talk at the retreat: I walk out of my physics discussion section and over to Calvert House. The plan: to get tons of turkey, mac'n'cheese, and pie, then immediately leave because I had to run to Walgreens, a p-set to finish, and I had to prepare to give this talk. I had a million little stressors to ruminate over. Instead, I accidentally stayed until the end of clean up because somebody asked if I could dry dishes, and I'm very peer-pressure-able for stuff like this. But in spite of my plans of going home and writing this talk, I chose to take a kind of rest by helping instead; as I walked to Walgreens later, I felt content; I had had my apple pie; I had a nice restful time; I had done something good for other people. I realized that that experience was the best piece of knowledge I could give in this talk - to do your work well, you have to take a rest, but this doesn't mean you're doing nothing; you're doing something - something good - for God's sake and your own.



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“Just as we have to dig for gold in the earth, so in Holy Scripture we have to dig deep for its divine meaning.”

~ Saint Jerome

