

***Sophia Kaganda***  
*Tanzania*



In Sophia's home town, a busy, densely populated city half a world away from sedate, snowy Rochester, Catholic Mass is very close to our celebration here at Newman. But Sophia says our common Church still looks very different from what many of us are used to. Outside the city, Sophia says, the biggest difference at Mass is the collection. The basket does not go to the people - the people go to the basket. The community rises and brings money and crops up to the altar as their weekly donation. "The symbolism is beautiful;" Sophia says, "we rise and offer ourselves and what we have to God and to one another."

Near the Indian Ocean, Sophia's hometown of Dar es Salaam is a gorgeous coastal city populated by friendly and family-oriented people. On the street, you greet everyone you pass. At home, devotional prayer is popular. Sophia's family prays the rosary and reads a scripture passage together every night. Novenas - nine days of intercessory prayer - are a staple of spiritual life. Life in Tanzania has provided Sophia these wise words of wisdom to share: "Be a person of service, and be genuine about it. It's not an obligation; it's something you do for the love of it."

***Kara Rubio***  
*Guam*



From one of the smallest towns on the island of Guam comes Kara Rubio. Kara's home town, Piti, is perhaps one of the few places in the U.S. where people pass out mangos from their back yards to the neighborhood kids. It's an everybody-knows-everybody-sized town that provides the perfect setting to foster the importance of community worship, which is important in the predominantly Catholic Guam. Kara says that, as is common across America, people in Guam often lapse from church attendance. However, she loves the warm welcome she has witnessed in the congregation when people return. "Finding your way back to God is communal," she says. This is a beautiful lesson for all, for our God who is love delights in welcoming back lost sheep and prodigal children. Kara finds the same sense of welcome here at Newman, but notes one major difference in our Mass. English is spoken in the Mass in Guam, but the Church preserves the island language, Chamorro, in prayers at Mass.

***Lucas Avelar-Pereira***  
*Brazil*



Many freshmen who attend Mass at Newman are initially surprised by the informality of the service here: we stand during the consecration, we do not genuflect (because the tabernacle is kept in the sacristy), and families decked out in their Sunday finest give way to students in casual dress. But Lucas Avelar of Brazil is perhaps the first student ever to describe Mass here as more formal than Mass at home! He is accustomed to flyers rather than hymnals, more hugging during the sign of peace, and applause after the homily.

Brazilian culture has been heavily influenced by the Catholic Church. The Christ the Redeemer statue is an iconic example of Catholic symbolism that adorns the country, but in daily life, people are more likely to see rosaries on cabs and crucifixes “everywhere,” according to Lucas. While in America, Mary is honored with a holy day of obligation – the Feast of the Immaculate Conception – Our Appeared Lady is a public holiday in Brazil on which children, especially loved by the Virgin Mary, receive gifts from family.

Lucas describes his fellow Brazilians as “loud, outgoing, humorous, and very excitable,” and finds that he feels at home among his fellow Catholics at Newman because of their similarities. He challenges us all to be even more like his countrymen and women in the best ways, hoping that we can all find a bit more cheer in our days and share it with those around us.

*Loic Kadze*  
*Burundi*



If you visit Burundi, the outgoing and welcoming people there would be excited to see a traveler and thrilled to tell you all about their country. Here, Loic is the traveler, but was still happy to share tales of his home town, Bujumbura.

Mass is central to community life in Burundi. Loic describes a typical Mass on Sunday as "super crowded," and a time to see everyone in the neighborhood, as each neighborhood has its own church. On Palm Sunday in tropical Burundi, people will pick palms from their own back yards and bring them to Mass. The palms will be blessed at the church, displayed at home, and returned to church to be burned in the Easter Vigil fire.

While the Rosary Group at Newman meets for about 20 minutes after Newman Night every week, Loic recalls young people in Burundi gathering for a whole hour for the exact same prayers! We could all learn from our brothers and sisters across the globe to slow down a little, and seek out friends to share that time of prayer.

*Salvatore Morello*  
*Peru*

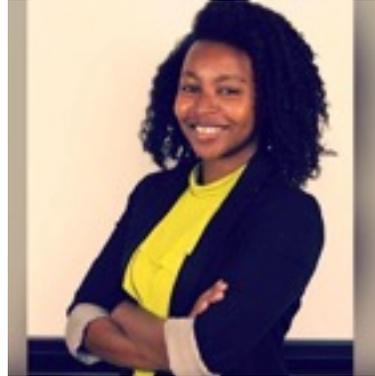


Sal Morello, one of the few Peruvians at UR, talks about his home country with pride and love. He describes Lima, his home town, as a dusty town on the Pacific coast of South America with the kind of large, puffy clouds we never see in Rochester. Mass in Lima is different from what you will often find here in America. Whereas a formal organ may set the tone for an early morning Mass here, he describes Mass in Lima as "jovial and serious at the same time," communicating both a sense of the weight and importance of God's role in our lives, and also the joy that stems from celebrating the gift of God's love.

Here at Newman, we celebrate the Day of the Dead the Mexican way, with a festive altar decked out with photos of our deceased loved ones surrounded by vibrantly colored handmade decorations and favorite foods. Sal also celebrated the Day of the Dead (a holiday tied to All Souls' and All Saints' days) in Peru, but food is brought directly to loved ones' graves instead, and the tone of the holiday reflects the somber feeling of loss.

Sal has a wonderful lesson to share that does not come from his first home in Lima, but from his second home in New York City. There, he attended a parish made mostly of people from the Dominican Republic. Rather than being treating him like an outsider, his church warmly welcomed him and others from richly diverse Hispanic backgrounds. We all have a place at the Lord's table.

*Cleo Saira*  
*Zimbabwe*



Cleo's hometown, Harare, is the capital of Zimbabwe and sits nestled in grasslands. In Harare, Catholics have the choice between attending Mass in English or Shoma. Even at English Mass, many hymns will be sung in Shoma, and Cleo describes the music as joyful and uplifting. Many of our gestures at Mass are universal: the sign of the cross, and the stand, sit, kneel "Catholic aerobics." Others, like holding hands during the Our Father, are regional. In Zimbabwe, before receiving the Eucharist, the people half genuflect and make a gesture that usually accompanies a "thank you." This tradition beautifully underscores the gratitude we feel to be participants at the Lord's table. St. Jared, Cleo's home parish, is a cluster of three churches (very much like what we have in Rochester!). A favorite traditional celebration happens every year on St. Jared's Day. All three churches gather together for the confirmation of the young people who have been preparing to receive the sacrament. The celebration is an all-day party, including Mass, music, and a big lunch.