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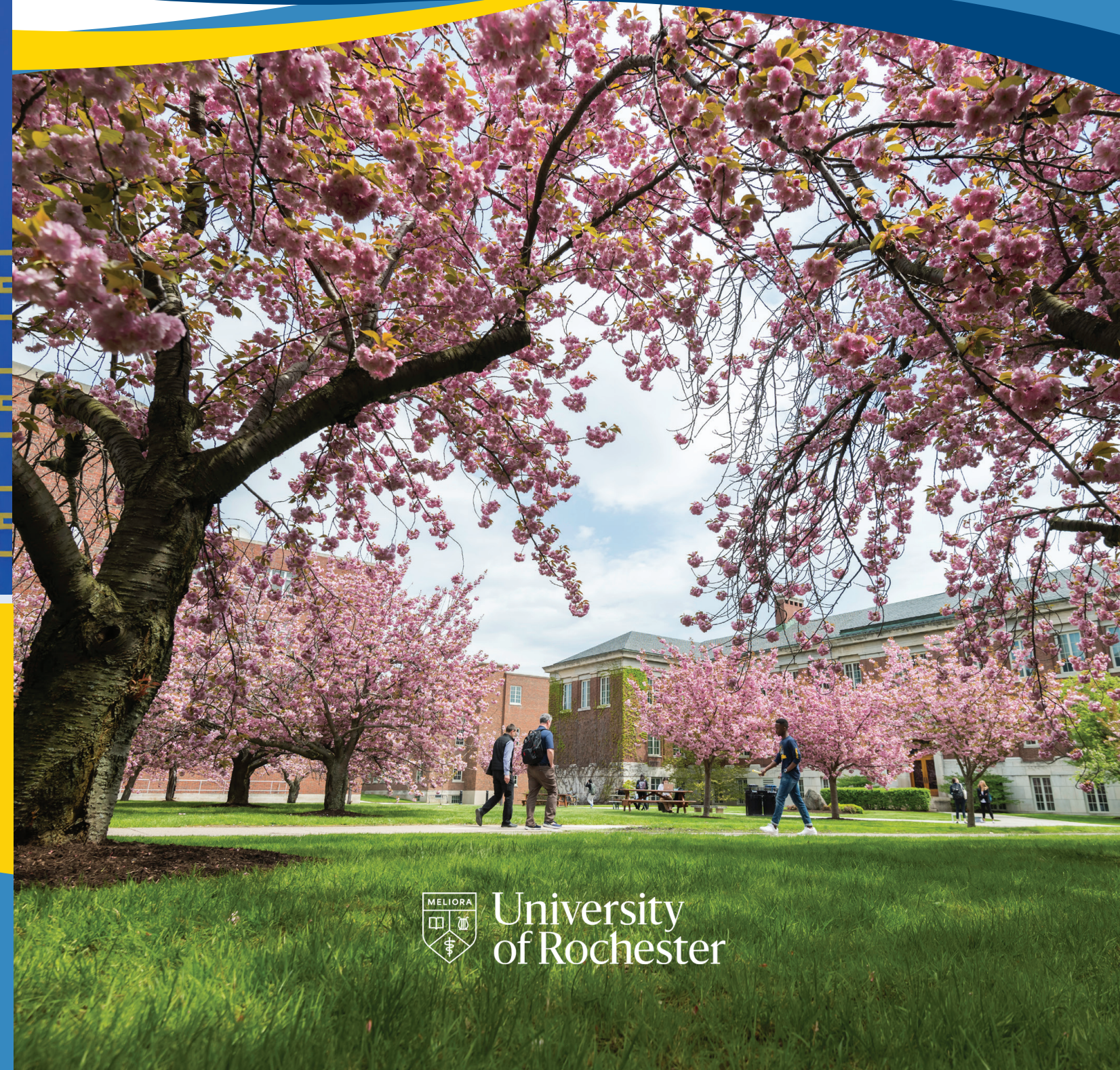
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# Newman

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER



University  
of Rochester

# Mack Center Updates

Construction of the Mack Catholic Center and Carpenter Chapel continues to make steady progress as we look forward to a Spring opening. The windows have been installed, protecting the interior from the Rochester winter while bringing light into the structure and definition to the rooms. The exterior façade wood paneling and brick is nearing completion.

The interior construction continues with walls, mechanicals and trim work being put into place. Additionally, custom liturgical furnishings that will shape the sanctuary are in progress. John Dodd, renowned local artisan, is hard at work crafting the chapel furniture which he designed specifically for this space. The pieces are an exciting mix of cement, wood, and metal work.

There will be several events commemorating of the opening of the Mack Catholic Center and Carpenter Chapel including a consecration by the Bishop and a special Ribbon cutting ceremony during Meliora weekend in the Fall. We look forward to celebrating the new Mack Catholic Center with everyone!



To scale models of the liturgical pieces to be installed in the Carpenter Chapel — offering an early look at the care and craftsmanship of the sanctuary furnishings.



John Dodd and Arnold Vandenburg taking measurements for fabrication of the wooden cross. John and Arnold will prepare the wood and mount the corpus before it's installation above the altar.

## HOLY WEEK @NEWMAN

**PALM SUNDAY MASS**  
MARCH 29, 10:30AM\* & 7:00PM

**HOLY THURSDAY**  
APRIL 2, 8:00PM

**GOOD FRIDAY**  
APRIL 3, 3:00PM

**STATIONS OF CROSS**  
APRIL 3, 7:00PM

**HOLY SATURDAY VIGIL MASS**  
APRIL 4, 8:00PM

**EASTER SUNDAY**  
APRIL 5, 10:30AM\* & 7:00PM

\*MASS WILL BE LIVESTREAMED:  
[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/URNEWMANMASS](https://tinyurl.com/urnewmanmass)

## WEEKLY EVENTS

|            |                                                                                                |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SUN</b> | <b>MASS</b> 10:30 am<br><b>MASS</b> 7:00 pm                                                    |
| <b>MON</b> | <b>DAILY MASS</b> 12:30 pm<br><b>WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY</b> 6:30 pm                               |
| <b>TUE</b> | <b>DAILY MASS</b> 12:30 pm<br><b>MEN'S BIBLE STUDY</b> 6:30 pm                                 |
| <b>WED</b> | <b>INSTAMASS</b> 9:00 pm                                                                       |
| <b>THU</b> | <b>DAILY MASS</b> 5:30 pm<br><b>NEWMAN NIGHT DINNER</b> 6:00 pm<br><b>ROSARY GROUP</b> 7:00 pm |
| <b>FRI</b> | <b>ADORATION</b> 6:00 pm                                                                       |

# In Memoriam: Kevin Parker

On January 9, 2026, St. Louis Church in Pittsford, New York, was filled to capacity as family, friends, University colleagues, students, and members of the wider community gathered to give thanks for the life of Kevin James Parker, PhD, who passed away on December 31, 2025. The Funeral Mass was marked by both deep grief and profound gratitude and was shaped by a homily offered by Fr. Brian Cool, who spoke with affection and faith about a man who lived his entire life at the intersection of faith and reason.

Beginning with the words of Scripture, Fr. Cool proclaimed Jesus' promise: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me." He reminded the congregation that these words were spoken just hours before Jesus' death and were addressed to real human sorrow. "They do not deny grief," Fr. Cool reflected. "They answer it with trust."

Acknowledging the deep loss experienced by Kevin's wife, Jean, of more than forty-four years, and their children, Jordan and Asha, David, Aaron, and Joanna, Fr. Cool emphasized that Kevin's greatest joy was not found in honors or accolades, of which there were many, including more than thirty-five patents worldwide, but in the love he shared with family and friends. This love, rooted in humility, grounded his life.

"Heaven is not a vague place. It is communion. It is relationship. It is being with the Lord. And Kevin believed that. Kevin lived that," Fr. Cool shared. These words resonated deeply with those who knew Kevin as a man whose Catholic faith quietly shaped his daily life.

Reflecting on a friendship that spanned more than twenty-six years, Fr. Cool described Kevin as a remarkable intellect, a gentle mentor, and a man who understood that faith and reason do not compete but belong together. Quoting Saint John Paul II, who said, "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth," Fr. Cool noted that Kevin did not merely admire this idea—he embodied it, moving with ease between the laboratory and the chapel, the lecture hall and moments of prayer.

**"Wouldn't it be great if one of those could be a Newman Center one day?"**  
— Kevin Parker

Engineering Wendi Heinzelman reflected that Kevin "devoted his career to innovation that has changed the world," while also helping shape the academic and physical future of the University. Diane Dalecki, who holds an academic chair named for Kevin, described him as "a brilliant scientist, inventor, teacher, and, importantly, a wonderfully kind and generous person."

On a more personal note, Fr. Cool spoke of Kevin's lasting impact on the Catholic Newman Community, where he served as a trusted friend and advisor. He recalled a conversation years ago when Kevin gestured toward two modest houses along Wilson Boulevard and said, "Wouldn't it be great if one of those could be a Newman Center one day?" Today, the Mack Catholic Center stands as a visible sign of that vision, just as Goergen Hall, which he helped establish, stands as a testament to Kevin's leadership in engineering. Together, they proclaim across the University that faith and reason remain united and alive.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord.



Scan to read Dr. Parker's Obituary

## A Sweet Vision: Students Build a Mack Center Gingerbread Chapel

Creativity and anticipation came together this Advent season as students at the Newman Community created a truly special project: a gingerbread chapel modeled after the new Carpenter Chapel at the Mack Catholic Center. More than a seasonal craft, the project became a joyful expression of excitement for what the new chapel will mean for the life of the community.

Built carefully to scale, the gingerbread chapel reflected both imagination and attention to detail. A sturdy cardboard base supported gingerbread walls and a gingerbread roof, all assembled with care and creativity. One of the most striking features was the “stained glass” windows, made from sugar glass that caught the light and echoed the beauty of the future chapel’s design. Through this hands-on project, students were able to envision the sacred space that will soon become a place of prayer, worship, and gathering for generations to come.

The completed gingerbread chapel was proudly displayed at the Christmas on Campus event held in Wilson Commons, where it quickly became a point of interest and conversation for the over 200 students in attendance. As students, faculty, and staff passed by, the chapel served as both a festive centerpiece and a symbol of hope and anticipation for the future of the Mack Catholic Center.



Christmas on Campus also featured a gingerbread person cookie-decorating station next to the chapel, inviting participants to join in the fun. Some students enjoyed their creations as a sweet treat, while others chose to place their decorated gingerbread people around the chapel, giving the display a lively, communal feel. Together, the chapel and its tiny companions reflected the warmth, creativity, and shared joy of the Newman Community during the Christmas season.

Through flour, spices, and imagination, students transformed simple ingredients into a meaningful expression of faith, creativity, and excitement that offered a sweet glimpse of what is to come.



## Cool Thoughts

### A Revival Happening on Campus

Not long ago, the story about young adults and religion seemed settled: belief was fading, churches were emptying, and parishes seemed to be growing grayer. Yet a different story is beginning to surface, and soon it will reach parishes as students graduate and begin families. A major national newspaper recently reported on a “...fervent group of college students” returning to traditional religious practice, describing crowded chapels and full Bible studies on several campuses. Similar reports are appearing around the world.

We see these same inspiring trends at the University of Rochester. This year, more than 85 students have sought the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Thirteen students are currently in OCIA, preparing to enter or be received into the Catholic Church. Attendance at daily and Sunday Mass has grown noticeably. The old narrative, that college inevitably pulls young people away from God, simply does not match what we are witnessing.

Why is this happening? Sociologists point to rising anxiety, loneliness, and instability in the broader culture. After years of digital saturation, constant comparison, fragmented community, and broken relationships, many students are hungry for something solid, beautiful, and true. Peer-reviewed research consistently shows that regular participation in religious services is associated with lower rates of depression and substance abuse, and with higher levels of purpose and well-being among young adults. One major review in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* concluded that frequent religious service attendance is linked with “substantially better health and well-being outcomes” for adolescents and young adults.

Others suggest that students are drawn to the clarity and sacramental life of the Catholic Church: a place where confession offers real forgiveness, where the Eucharist is not a symbol but a Person, and where worship is reverent rather than performative. Some come carrying deep wounds and discover healing and truth. Some come because a friend invited them. Others simply wander in with questions and find themselves unexpectedly moved by grace.

Each of these explanations contains part of the truth. But in the end, the deepest explanation remains the mystery of God’s initiative, and it is what God has always done and continues to do. Christ still calls, and now we are listening more deeply. The Holy Spirit still stirs restlessness into desire. The Father still draws His children home. In this light, the “why” matters less than the response. This is why Newman is so important on campus today. This journey home often begins here, where students discover a “home away from home.” And it matters deeply.

The Catholic Newman Community staff and I, along with our student leaders, have been given the gift and responsibility of walking with students at this decisive time in their lives. We accompany them as they discern vocations, heal from past hurts, and encounter Christ in the sacraments for the first time or again. This is work we do with you. Your prayer, witness, generosity, and encouragement create a culture of hospitality, care, welcome, and joy. With our students, I am profoundly grateful for you.

We are not done. There is still much to do, and the future is bright. This revival is grace-filled and exciting, but it also brings new challenges. As more students seek Confession, spiritual direction, retreats, OCIA, authentic community, and the Eucharist, the strain is real. Yet, we trust that God always provides for His call. The soon-to-be-completed Mack Catholic Center will be a tremendous blessing in meeting these growing needs, providing a true spiritual home for generations of students to come.

College years are brief, but they are decisive. In four short years, students form habits and hopes that shape a lifetime. It is a great gift that, in this window, they are encountering the living Christ and His Church.

Here, everything begins to change.

Newman is ready.

Peace,

*Fr. Brian C. Cool*

**Rev. Brian C. Cool**, '06W (MS), '21W (EdD)

*J. Nelson Hoffman '55 and Joan Dutcher Hoffman '55  
Director of Catholic Newman Community Pastoral Care*

# Our Catholic Community is Growing!

We are excited to welcome 13 Candidates this spring at our Easter Vigil mass as full members of the Catholic Church.

**ARLYN CHAVEZ**  
Business, Pre-Dental  
Bronx, NY  
**CLASS OF 2029**

**KAMILA POSADA**  
Neuroscience, Pre-Med  
Houston, Texas  
**CLASS OF 2027**

**ALEJANDRO SIERRA**  
Optics  
Uniondale, NY  
**CLASS OF 2029**

**HANNAH SMITH**  
English & Voice Performance  
Alexandria, VA  
**CLASS OF 2027**

**NEIVELY TLAPALE LARA**  
Chemistry, PhD  
Tlaxcala, Mexico  
**CLASS OF 2028**

**MARY MARTINEZ GUTIERREZ**  
Neuroscience  
Uniondale, NY  
**CLASS OF 2028**

**YESICA GARCIA-MARTINEZ**  
Clinical & Translational Science  
Houston, TX  
**CLASS OF 2028**

**ANALEE CARLEY LANPHEAR**  
Neuroscience  
Watertown, NY  
**CLASS OF 2025**

**AN ZAINETDINOVA**  
Biology, PhD  
Rochester, NY  
**CLASS OF 2030**

**GINA RUBIANO**  
Biological Sciences, Pre-med  
Hudson, OH  
**CLASS OF 2029**

**ALEXANDER SHEN**  
Business  
Manhasset, NY  
**CLASS OF 2029**

**AMY CABRAL**  
Local Parishioner  
Rochester, NY

**JAMES TULLIS**  
Political Science  
South Miami, FL  
**CLASS OF 2028**

# Mardi Gras Dinner and Talk Begins the Lenten Journey

This year, the Newman Community marked the beginning of the Lenten season with meaningful fellowship, thoughtful reflection, and a shared commitment to growing in faith.

Our observance began the night before the beginning of Lent with a festive Mardi Gras dinner that brought students together for food, conversation, and celebration



Angela O'Donnell, PhD

before the penitential season. Following the dinner, we were honored to host Dr. Angela Alaimo O'Donnell as she spoke on the life and spiritual journey of Flannery O'Connor, a southern, Catholic author. Dr. O'Donnell explored how O'Connor's writings, especially those she wrote as a young writer, revealed both her struggle to reconcile her artistic vocation with her Catholic faith and her deepening interior life. Stories, prayers, and correspondences helped O'Connor grow simultaneously as a writer and as a person of faith in a challenging world, illustrating how prayer can open us more fully to God even amid doubt and desire for purpose.

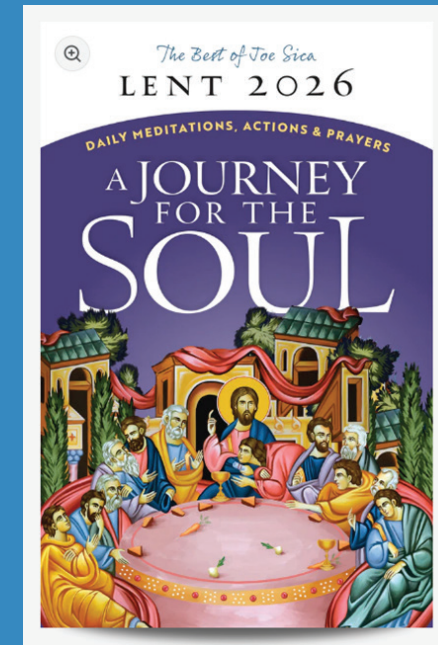
On Ash Wednesday, we gathered to enter the Lenten season with reverence and hope. Mass at 12:30 p.m. was celebrated, with many faculty and staff in attendance, creating a strong sense of community through shared worship. Our regular *InstaMass* that evening offered students a familiar space to receive ashes and begin this season of penance and renewal. In addition, a Mass was offered at the Eastman Campus, allowing our music-focused students and faculty to join in the Lenten beginning and reinforcing the connection between our various campuses. For those unable to attend Mass, we provided *Drive-By Ashes*. Members of our Student Executive Board were present to distribute ashes and to invite participants to spend time in prayer both before

and after receiving them. Even though they were unable to attend Mass, students were able to experience a moment of stillness and introspection amid the busy rhythm of campus life at the beginning of Lent.

**"...a time of transformation, prayerful reflection, and grace..."**

On Ash Wednesday, we gathered to enter the Lenten season with reverence and hope. Mass was celebrated at 12:30 p.m. with many faculty and staff in attendance, creating a strong sense of community through shared worship.

We pray that Lent may be a time of transformation, prayerful reflection, and grace for all who walk with us as part of the Catholic Newman Community.



To support meaningful Lenten practices, these booklets were given to students on campus and mailed to alumni to nurture prayer and reflection throughout the season.