

DUKE CATHOLIC

THE DUKE CATHOLIC CENTER NEWSLETTER

The logo for the Duke Catholic Center, featuring a stylized figure with arms raised, holding a chalice, set within a circular frame.

Duke Awakening retreatants Salvador Chavero '21, Emile Riachi '19, Kaela Basmajian '22, Andréa Ball '20, and Sarah Xu '22 spend a weekend away from campus growing in their faith.

A MESSAGE FROM FR. MIKE



In the final days of Lent, we walk with Christ during some of the most unique moments of all of human history. God subjects himself to the chains of death only to burst forth in freedom and bring us along! As our Lenten practices have shown us (if they were worth their salt), we are slaves to any weakness

that can capture our imagination and breaking free of them is hard work. We all need a powerful Savior who is willing to confront our chains and break them by taking them on first hand. We are humbled by our weakness and excited by Christ's glory! And yet, we too walk out the door from the tomb with Christ and often still hold on to what has enslaved us. Lent's transition to Easter requires our understanding of true freedom and our willingness to let go.

This calendar year has brought Lent to us rather late and as a consequence, will bring Easter to us with just one week of classes afterward to celebrate true freedom with our students while still on campus. We have tried during this Lenten season to focus on the theme of "Forgiveness" to help us all to appreciate that we are destined to celebrate a love in Christ that has no conditions. It is this type of forgiving love that we are then meant to pass on to a world that needs it so, and like us, merits it so little. But how can we do that while still holding on to our bitterness and the chains that keep us loving as conditional slaves?

Our students often show tremendous resilience in their abilities to overcome their weakness and work hard to embrace a greater freedom. It is edifying to listen to them humbly confess their sins and desire to live in the love of true freedom. But they need better living examples in the classroom, in their homes, in their labs and in their workplaces to see that others have and will continue to leave the prison of fear and sin behind and walk with only one thing in hand toward true freedom - the hand of Christ. May we, the parents, the alumni, the staff, the professors and even the fellow students commit to a communal responsibility to witness true freedom this Easter season by leaving our sins behind. 

**“As I
walked
out the
door...
to my
freedom,
I knew if
I didn't
leave my
bitterness
and hatred
behind,
I'd still be
in prison.”**

- NELSON MANDELA



NYT COLUMNIST

Ross Douthat gives lecture at DCC



Inside Goodson Chapel, Ross Douthat engaged key questions concerning the place of Catholicism in our contemporary culture.

What haven does our faith offer to a society that seems to prefer self-aggrandizement in place of self-sacrificial love?

American author and New York Times columnist Ross Douthat recently addressed these questions and trends at the Duke Catholic Center Lecture series this Spring. He responded to these “signs of the times” in a talk and discussion titled, “Secularism is Weak”. Over 100 attended the lecture held in the Duke Divinity school.

“I was enthusiastic about this talk for weeks leading up to it,” said Cesar Azrak '20. “I’ll always crave stimulating events and speakers like this one whenever they come around.”

At first glance, it seems bleak to wonder how the Catholic Church could hope to offer an attractive witness; under the strain and crisis of the sex abuse scandal, many consider that the Church’s credibility is compromised. These are the questions and doubts on the minds of many Catholic students today. Ross was able to address these topics head on.

“I’m spiritual, not religious.”

This is a trending and increasingly popular approach to religion and amongst many Americans and young adults. Increasingly, in a hyper-individualized and deeply wired, “techy” world, this disposition often reflects hostility and skepticism towards forms of institutional or traditional religion. How might the Church offer an alternative witness to the “spiritual seekers” of this era?

“The Church is in a period of interior conflict and internal transition,” said Ross. But he argued that there is hope for the Church and it could be found by looking back at the early Church’s history. The inviolable roots and tradition from which the Church not only draws its strength, but from which it must also derive its continued direction. He argued hope ought to be found in the witness of the early Christian communities in Rome. Ross described that the “cruelty of Pagan Rome” was invigorated and transfigured by the “obvious self-sacrificial community” of the Church.

“Cutting to the heart of Christianity,” said Ross, draws us to this key witness present and alive in Catholicism: Christ-like, Christ-centered community. “Catholicism is well positioned to address the weakness of individualism. The picture of the universe that the Church has to offer is much more likely to be true, than the picture of the world that predominates among most of the most intelligent and academically accomplished people in the US. And as long as that situation holds, there has to be hope for Catholicism to reconquer the intelligentsia.”

As Duke Students recognize and seek out the intellectual rigor of the Catholic faith in the face of changing religious culture and negative press, Ross was able to provide a different perspective.

“I liked how Ross was able to cut through to what Christianity should look like by contrasting it with what it has become,” said Alex Lowell, '20. 



The DCC Lecture series offers moments for students to gather and delve into critical conversations with new friends and familiar faces.

“FORGIVENESS IS NOT AN OCCASIONAL ACT, IT IS A CONSTANT ATTITUDE.”

MLK JR.

LOVING GOD, GUIDE MY HEART
TO A PLACE WHERE I MAY
MIRROR YOUR FORGIVENESS IN
ALL OF MY THOUGHTS, WORDS,
AND ACTIONS.

CATHOLIC.DUKE.EDU/LENT

STAYING IN THE LENTEN FRAME OF MIND



Mercy is on the move this Lent at Duke! These signs serve as a reminder for our community that God's love has been given.

For many of us, we start our Lenten journey strong the first couple of weeks following Ash Wednesday. But before we know it, we're three weeks into Lent and the power of the season and our commitments are fading as the busyness of life creeps in.

A college campus is certainly no different. Yet, with an opportunity for goal-setting, fresh resources, and some strategic signage on campus, the Duke Catholic Center is striving to keep students' minds and hearts on the season of Lent.

To kick things off, at each Ash Wednesday Mass Fr. Mike shared with students that goals never written down are unlikely to be accomplished. Then, for the second year in a row, the DCC liturgy team passed out blank cards to every student and encouraged them to anonymously write down their chosen Lenten penances. With over 473 filled-out penance cards now offered up at each Lenten Mass, the Duke Catholic community has taken a step forward in pressing into the Lenten journey together.

Yet beyond goal-setting and community buy-in, the DCC additionally shared a special edition handout entitled *Your Lenten Game Plan*. Designed to help students make the most of their 40-day journey, the resource included a practical guide to growing in prayer, an opportunity for weekly videos around key Catholic concepts, information on the basic pillars of Lent, and more.

Of course, knowing that students wouldn't carry the guide around in their pockets for all six weeks, the DCC made plans for periodic, strategic signage across campus and on the Duke buses. Spotted on the way to lab on Science Drive or riding the bus back to East Campus after a full day of classes, the signs are a simple reminder of the season. Focusing on this year's theme of Forgiveness, each sign is a small touch of encouragement for students in the midst of their busy lives.

We hope you'll join the DCC staff in lifting up Catholic Duke Students in prayer as we head into the final days of Lent! 🙏

STUDENTS SHARE FAITH EXPERIENCE IN POWERFUL TESTIMONIAL



Bella Arbelaez '19



Marco Gonzalez '21



Shannon Malloy '19



Small Group Leader Joseph Tan '19

“Especially on Duke’s campus, people find satisfaction in a lot of different places. But out of everywhere I’ve tried to explore... small group is the place where I feel truest to myself.” – Arthur Wu '19

“There’s no place better to hear the voice of God than in small group where you not only hear it in Scripture but from the mouths of your fellow peers.” – Joseph Tan '19



In recent years, the students impacted by the Duke Catholic Center’s small group program have spoken about their experience in front of their peers after Mass. They’ve talked about what a difference the group has made in their faith and have invited their peers to join them.

This year, on Ash Wednesday, the DCC decided to put those testimonials together in an empowering video. Screened after the homily, the video encouraged students to join a small group as part of their Lenten practice.

Now, you’re invited to watch Duke Students give powerful witness to their faith as they invite their peers to get closer to Jesus! 🕯️

DCC STAFF JOINS 17,000 YOUNG ADULTS AT SEEK CONFERENCE



Thousands of college students flock to SEEK in Indianapolis to hear powerful Catholic speakers and grow in their relationship with the Lord.

The 2019 SEEK Conference hosted by Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) is the largest gathering of Catholic young adults in the United States. Every year, 17,000 people gather for five days to hear over 60 speakers talk about key Catholic topics and pray and worship together. This year, the DCC sent two staff members to the conference to learn about the latest trends and effective programs and tools in college campus ministry.

Director of Music Andrew Witchger P'15 and Director of Communication Emma Miller '11 attended and brought many ideas back to Duke and their work.

“The speakers were phenomenal, the breakout sessions were so practical, and every detail was just so intentional,” said Emma. *“But more than that, it was just incredibly powerful to see so many college students fired up for their faith and looking to find joy and purpose in their life with Jesus. That’s what reinvigorated me the most as we headed back to Durham and mulled over new ideas for reaching our Duke Students.”* 🕯️



The DCC’s Director of Communication Emma Miller '11 and Director of Music Andrew Witchger arrive at SEEK ready to learn and be inspired.

AN INTERFAITH MOVIE NIGHT



This spring, the Duke Catholic Center collaborated with the Muslim Student Association to host a screening of *The Sultan and the Saint*, a film which depicts the missionary activity of St. Francis of Assisi.

St. Francis, longing for both martyrdom and a total commitment to gospel life and proclamation, intended to sow the seeds of Christian faith in Egypt. However, despite his zealous intentions, St. Francis' encounter with Sultan Malik al-Kamil did not result in conversion or conquest. Rather, the sultan and his court, with Francis and his fellow friars, witnessed to the Christians' and Muslims' mutual desire for peace and praise of God.

Associate director of the DCC, Fr. Brad Heckathorne, OFM Conv., helped organize this event with the chaplain of the Muslim Student Association, Joshua Salaam. Fr. Brad reflected: "The Christians at the discussion began to reflect more upon their Muslim brothers and sisters, seeing that they are peaceful people, which we sometimes tend to forget through media prejudice or polarization. This is what Francis may have found out too: that we have much more in common than it seems, especially in regards to trust in God."

Throughout his time at Duke, Fr. Brad has coordinated the lecture series, alongside other interfaith events. These opportunities have proved valuable for students in their own understanding of the Church and its relationship to men and women of other faiths.

Senior Dylan Peters remarked that this event and film reminded him "that all of the Abrahamic religions share the same root and that, as our traditions have developed in parallel, they have been mixed together as well."

Dylan also noted a striking moment from the film. While Francis was observing Muslims at prayer, the character said: "It seemed to me that to exist as a human is to pray."

For Dylan, this speaks towards how "prayer is something fundamental to our nature, and that no matter how you pray we all have this innate need to pray to something greater than us."

United through prayer and fellowship, the Duke Catholic Center hopes to serve as a witness to the power of the prophetic priority of proclaiming peace—in the spirit of St. Francis, in the footsteps of Christ.



At the Falcone-Arena House, students and staff dive into the radical and relevant witness of St. Francis of Assisi after a screening of *The Sultan and the Saint*.



STUDENTS
'ROUND
CAMPUS

AWAKENING 32 RETREAT



- 1.** Madison Cullinan '20 (second from left) and her Awakening small group gather in prayer. **2.** Students have the chance to begin and develop a life of prayer here at Duke. **3.** Students pose with their Awakening t-shirts featuring the retreat's theme: "God's power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9. **4.** Joshua Chin '21, Gregory Blazek '19, Quinton Tran '20, and Arthur Wu '19 witness to the joy of faith-filled friendship. **5.** Dylan Tamayo, a graduating senior, delivers a reflection during Awakening. **6.** Students have the opportunity to share their testimony and the experience of living their faith on campus. **7.** Catholic students spend time growing closer to one another and Jesus through their Awakening small groups.

SUPER BOWL PARTY



- 8.** Laura Naslund '19, Gregory Blazek '19, Kyla Brezitski '21, Minji Lee MMS'19, and Sr. Mary Peter Ryan. **9.** Graduate students like Min Jin Lee PhD'24, Theresa Rizk MD'22, and Fr. Adam Booth PhD'23 enjoy the celebration and each others company. **10.** In the kitchen at the Falcone-Arena house, Laura Naslund '19 and Lucas Rocha-Melogno PhD'24 make the most of half-time.

ASH WEDNESDAY



- 11.** Carolina Cassidy '22, Rafaela Rivero '22, and Kyla Brezitski '21 remind us that our Lenten journey must be walked in joy! **12.** Seniors John Madden and Anna Lee celebrate their last experience of DCC Ash Wednesday in Goodson Chapel. **13.** Duke alumna and second-year Duke Law student Ana Maria Maganto Ramirez snags a selfie with seniors Anna Lee, Joseph Tan, and Garrett Jones.

DUKE CATHOLIC STUDENTS AT WORK IN JAMAICA



Rafaela Rivero '22 enjoyed meeting and working with some of the most marginalized communities in Kingston.

Most college students spend their Spring Break traveling back home or on a beach somewhere vacationing with their friends. But every year, a group of DCC students sign up to spend their time off serving those in need in Jamaica.

This year Associate Director Fr. Brad Heckathorne, OFM Conv. and Director of Music Andrew Witchger, P'15 took a group of students to Jamaica to serve at different ministry sites around the island. 

DCC CHOIR LEADS DUKE BASKETBALL TO VICTORY!



Duke Catholic undergraduate and graduate students join together to sing the national anthem in Cameron Indoor Stadium.

Every year, Duke Athletics invites the Duke Catholic Center choir to sing at two basketball games in Cameron – a men's game and a women's game. The best part is the invitation is often to sing at games where the opponent is a Catholic school! This year, the choir sang before the men's basketball game against St. John's. The beautiful anthem sung by the Catholic students inspired the Blue Devils to beat St. John's by 30 points! 

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