

Support the Oratory



2022 Spring Appeal



THE ORATORY TIMES

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Campus Ministry Flourishing at the Oratory

By Fr. Peter Gruber, C.O.

The Newman Center is bursting at the seams with activity. Our weekly fellowship events are packed, our retreats are filled to overflowing, and our Student Center is constantly buzzing with activity.

Last year, when so much of life was put on hold, campus ministry continued. Adoration, Confessions, spiritual direction, daily Mass, Bible Studies, discipleship, friendships – we sustained all this in continuing to serve the students. This year, however, is markedly different. More than a return to normalcy, campus ministry is expanding.

After last year, many students came to appreciate the importance of their Catholic faith and community. Having been deprived of opportunities to meet and invite others into a deeper fellowship due to the pandemic restrictions, when the opportunities returned, they came in large numbers.

For us as Oratorians, it's a blessing to see that influence play out. Students socialize by talking about their Catholic faith, their prayer life, and their vocation. Sometimes the Oratorians get



(Top) All the students and FOCUS missionaries from Pitt, CMU, Edinboro University, and St. Francis University who gathered at Epiphany Church, Pittsburgh, for Seek2022.

(Bottom Left) Fr. Stephen and Fr. Peter with several of our students who were just received into the Catholic Church in January.

(Bottom Right) Students at a packed undergraduate Barn Dance on October 23.

pulled into these conversations – it's a great blessing to be able to see their joyful engagement of the faith while they ask questions. More students involved means no shortage of work

for the university chaplains. Both Fr. Stephen and I are saturated with one-on-one meetings for spiritual counsel, while Fr. Reed is staying very busy as

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CMU Newman Club Rolls On

By Max Hirsch
CMU Newman Club President

This year, the CMU Newman Club has seen many changes and new faces with Fr. Reed as our new chaplain, three new FOCUS missionaries, and three new board members. Despite some difficulties due to the pandemic and restrictions at the beginning of the school year, we have a good group of attendees at our club meetings, with membership steadily growing. The group meets regularly for a few different events: Chit Chats, Mass on Campus, Friday Night Dinners, and Newman Nights; the latter two being a joint effort with the Pitt Newman Club.

Chit Chats and Mass on Campus are the two main events advertised to CMU students. Chit Chats is a weekly discussion group, led by Fr. Reed who is guiding us through topics in theology and philosophy. We started the group



Fr. Reed with a group of CMU students and FOCUS missionaries at Seek.

with a bang, reading an essay by Elizabeth Anscombe on the morality of nuclear weapons. Other topics we've discussed include the Trinity and, more recently, anthropology. The group is anxious to learn about our faith, even if some of the philosophy can be difficult to understand. I thought that almost nothing could be harder to understand

than my math courses, but it didn't take long until Chit Chats made me realize that metaphysics is more difficult (and quite fun).

Starting this semester with Candlemas, we are fortunate to have Mass on CMU's campus each week with confessions heard before Mass.

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Seek2022 Reactions



Seek2022 was a three day conference of talks, discussion, and prayer that invited students to encounter Christ in a deeper way. In Pittsburgh, we were blessed by the generosity of Epiphany Church and Divine Mercy Parish to host the talks in their social hall and the Masses and Adoration in Epiphany Church. Some of the speakers included Fr. Josh Johnson, Sr. Miriam James Heidland, Monsignor James Shea, Sr. Bethany Madonna, and Fr. Mike Schmitz. With 140 Pitt and CMU students and FOCUS Missionaries in attendance, with another 60 from Edinboro University and St. Francis University, they were "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) as they sought the Lord and let themselves be found by Him. Here are some reactions to Seek from some of our students:

Manny B. (Freshman, Pitt)

"Attending Seek has motivated me to start thinking about what special plan God has for me, and how I am able to execute that plan in my life. The deep discussions I had with others reminded me that I am not alone, and inspired me to become a better man."

James L. (Junior, Pitt)

"At Seek2022, I more profoundly encountered Christ's abundant love and mercy in the Eucharistic Adoration. Run often to our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament and receive the tender fire of His love into the depths of your heart."

Veronica D. (Freshman, Pitt)

"Seek gave me the amazing opportunity to be vulnerable and open my heart to God's love. In the small space I created for Him, in the midst of all my worries and fears, God filled my heart with love and peace, and demonstrated how He is always near me, waiting for me to reach out and allow Him to love me unconditionally."

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Perpetual Adoration Hits Major Milestone

By Fr. Peter Gruber, C.O.

On June 29, 2008, the Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul, and with the permission of Bishop Zubik, the Oratory began Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Since then, our Lord has been adored on our altar nearly continuously, returning to the tabernacle only for Mass, weekly cleaning of the chapel, occasional inclement weather, and a global pandemic. As of February 2022, there have been over 100,000 hours of nearly continuous adoration.

The quantity of hours can mask the massive impact of Adoration. In a single holy hour, a student discerns a vocation to the religious life, a widow grieves the loss of her husband, a new father gives thanks for the gift of his first child. Each hour, Christ takes this opportunity to encounter a soul, speaking to them with that “still small voice.” (1 Kings 19:12)

For me personally, Adoration has made a huge impact. During the early years of Perpetual Adoration thirteen years ago, while I was yet still a college student, I was so thankful for



the prayers offered in Adoration for my brother-in-law Anthony and his family after he suffered a terrible accident. During that same time of pronounced suffering, I also gave my vocation over to Our Lord in Adoration. I have become profoundly convinced of His closeness, especially in times of suffering and loss, while in Adoration.

Our plan moving forward with Perpetual Adoration is to be unwavering in having at least two adorers per hour for every hour. Not

only does having two people present in the chapel help ensure that our Lord will never be left alone, it is also strongly recommended by the Church. The Congregation for Divine Worship instructs that “Every effort should be made to ensure that there should be at least two people present.” Just as one log in the fire burns out when by itself, we’ll need two or more adorers per hour to see this ministry continue to thrive. At the time of this publication, we are well on our way to having every

hour covered by at least two adorers. If you feel called to sign up for Perpetual Adoration, visit pghco.org/adoration.

We are so thankful to everyone who comes to our chapel to pray in Adoration. Perpetual Adoration has been a fountain of blessings for everyone here at the Oratory, and for the whole of Pittsburgh. The heart of our campus ministry is the Eucharistic Presence of Our Lord. Many from the surrounding region find solace and peace in the Eucharistic gaze of our Lord. We Oratorians have been doubly blessed by our time in Adoration and by our first-hand experience of the effect of Adoration on those under our spiritual care.

In the year Perpetual Adoration started, Malcolm Gladwell published his book *Outliers*, wherein he put forth his “10,000-Hour Rule.” To become an expert in anything, he asserts that you have to put in ten thousand hours of practice. Having hosted 100,000 hours of Adoration since Perpetual Adoration began at the Oratory, I think we can very confidently say that the Oratory is an expert at being what it is by name – a “house of prayer.”

St. Philip’s Translated Work and Legacy

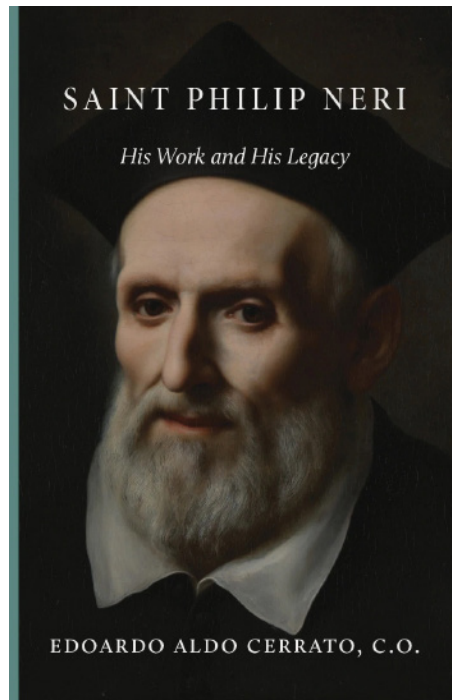
By Fr. Michael Darcy, C.O.

The Oratory Lecture Series continued on January 29 with a presentation from the Oratory’s great friend, Clare Godt. Clare introduced us to her translation of a book by Bishop Aldo Cerrato, an Oratorian from Biella, Italy and who is now bishop of Ivrea, Italy. Clare’s English rendering of the book’s title is *St. Philip Neri: His Work and His Legacy*.

We Oratorians have read the book twice as a community. We begin our dinner each night with three readings: the Gospel to be read at the next day’s Mass, a reading from a biography of St. Philip Neri, and a third work, typically pertaining to some Christian theme, either theological or historical. When Clare’s work was finished but still unpublished, we took it as our third reading and did so again more recently when it appeared in print through Cluny Press.

The book is a powerful testimony and detailed account of the impact of St. Philip’s life in his own time and in the centuries that have followed. It begins with a concise but thorough account of Philip himself: his life as a youth in Florence, his journey to Rome, and the beginning of his spontaneous ministries and apostolates by which he would come to be known as the Apostle of Rome.

The book is unique, as far I can tell, for describing the course that Philip’s legacy took through history from his time to our own. It describes the spread of the Oratory through Italy



and beyond, as well as the setbacks it endured in the 19th century as a result of Napoleon’s reordering of Europe. It also describes the great resurgence of the Oratory in the 20th century and its spread to the English speaking world as a result of St. John Henry Newman’s Oratorian vocation and his prodigious labor as a son of St. Philip.

The work also describes the 20th century developments in the life of the Oratory as a worldwide institute, and the bureaucratic mechanisms that developed to ensure that individual Oratories will have access to the help they need in dealing with governmental bodies, both civil and ecclesial.

The history of the expansion of the bureaucratic dimension of the Oratory’s life does not exactly make for page turning excitement, but it is an essential feature of the legacy of St.

Seek2022 Reactions

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Tom M. (Junior, Pitt)

“I found so much rest and encouragement I didn’t know I needed.”

Jake P. (Freshman, Pitt)

“I will let St. Augustine speak on my behalf: ‘My love for you, Lord, is not

an uncertain feeling, but a matter of conscious certainty. With your Word You pierced my heart, and I love you.’”

Matthew G. (Sophomore, CMU)

“I really enjoyed listening to the speakers at Seek and am excited to attend in person next year!”



Adoration at Seek2022 at Epiphany Church, in conjunction with “Return to the Lord.” Students had an opportunity to adore our Lord and come to confession.

Philip. It describes the development of the Oratory as a global institution capable of carrying the legacy of St. Philip forward through time. I came to regard these chapters as similar to the genealogies one comes across in the Bible: not very exciting, but essential to the comprehensive account of the Oratory that future generations will need.

The importance of these chapters impressed me even more in light of something Clare explained during the Oratory Lecture. She remarked that Bishop Cerrato did not necessarily intend the book for a wide audience. His intended audience, she explained,

were those wishing to form new Oratories and who will need a concise account of all the information relating to the Oratory and its organization. This underscores the book’s importance, I think, and underscores as well the service Clare has done in bringing this work to the English speaking world. It is wonderful to think that Clare’s work will help in the foundation of new Oratories.

Copies of Clare’s translation of Bishop Cerrato’s work are available at the Oratory for purchase. The next time you stop by the Oratory feel free to take some time to peruse its contents.

Campus Ministry Flourishing at the Oratory

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the CMU chaplain. On both campuses, our two teams of FOCUS missionaries are inundated with new student leaders excited to spread the Gospel.

What worked amazingly well this year was the outreach to Freshmen and Sophomore students in particular. In September, we had a retreat at Rednal for the underclassmen which was attended by nearly 35 students. Those same students kept coming around the Newman Center and are forming Christ-centered friendships. Many of the same students went on Fr. Stephen's packed retreat focusing on the Three Ways of the Interior Life in January. When the students returned on Sunday, they were treated to a talk by the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist. In the deepening of their spiritual lives and the discernment of their vocations, we are blessed as Oratorians to witness first-hand and await with excitement

what God will accomplish in them in the years to come.

With this retreat plus the sisters' visit, the students were immersed in the depths of Catholic spirituality, priming them for a deeper encounter with Christ at the annual FOCUS Conference, called "Seek." The colleges in the Pittsburgh area gathered at Epiphany Church for the localized Seek2022 Conference, February 4-6. We were blessed to have 130 students attend from Pitt and CMU. Here, they experienced talks from Catholic speakers and grew in love of the Eucharist through Adoration and Mass.

St. John Henry Newman once wrote to his fellow Oratorians that "influence, whether secret or open, is the mainspring of the Oratory." After last year, when so many of the opportunities for personal influence were not present, I wondered how the ministry would recover. It has done far more than recover – it is thriving.



The Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist give a talk at our Sunday night group, recently renamed "Newman Night."

Br. Thomas Skamai, C.O. to be Ordained a Priest



*May 14, 2022 at 10:00am
Saint Paul Cathedral*

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

Treasurer's Update

By Fr. Reed Frey, C.O.

"I more profoundly encountered Christ's abundant love and mercy in the Eucharistic Adoration."

These sentiments were recently expressed by James (a Junior student at Pitt) regarding his experience at Seek2022, but you and I know that his encounter with the Lord's abundant love and mercy in Eucharistic Adoration is a common experience around the Oratory.

Your faithfulness and your generosity to the Oratory is making a difference. **Thousands of students, student alumni, and friends of the Oratory feel the abundance of grace here at the Oratory.** Perhaps it's the frequency of Holy Mass, abundant confession times, perpetual Adoration and the availability of priests for spiritual direction, pastoral counseling, and marriage preparation, that draws the many thousands of people who are touched by the Oratory's ministries. As an outpouring of the vibrancy of the Oratory and an increase in vocations, three of our priests can teach around the city during the day, sharing with younger people the fruit of long-standing ministries here at the Oratory.

The heart of the Oratorian's ministry remains concentrated at our building at Bayard Street. To maintain the core ministries of the Fathers, the Friends Campaign is essential. The goal for our Friends Campaign this year is \$500,000. As of February 28, the Friends Campaign has received approximately \$357,000, with an additional \$44,000 expected from recurring monthly donations by the conclusion of the campaign in June 2022. **We are asking you, our friends, for an additional \$98,000 by June.**

Whereas the Friends Campaign mostly supports the operational expenses for the Oratory, the Newman

Fund directly funds the campus ministry based out of the Oratory. This year, more students involved has meant more costs, but it's a very good problem to have! There are so many young people searching and hungry for the truth of the Gospel and the message of hope in Jesus Christ, that I often feel frankly overwhelmed – **overwhelmed with joy at the opportunity to reach so many young people at this time in their lives.**

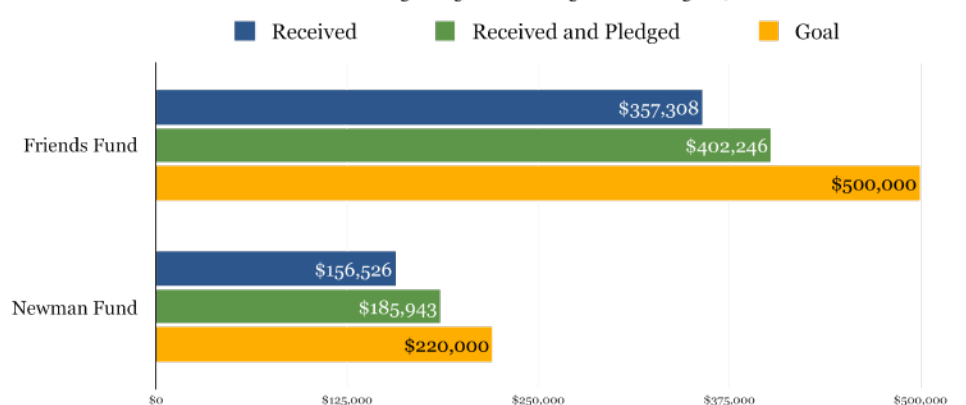
As of February 28, the Newman Fund has received approximately \$156,000, with an additional \$29,000 expected from recurring monthly donations by the conclusion of the campaign in June 2022. Thanks to the generosity of Newman Fund donors, many of whom are alumni themselves, we only have \$35,000 more to raise. Please help us to finish strong and meet our goal by the end of June!

So many of you have asked, "How was the Rednal Benefit? Are we able to fix that septic system?" The Benefit was successful! Thanks to so many joy-filled benefactors buying tickets, sponsorships, one time donations and raffles, **we exceeded our goal!** I cannot wait for you to read in future editions of this newsletter the stories of lives changed at Rednal thanks to the generosity of our friends.

While the Oratory and its expanding ministries are partially sustained through Mass collections, salaries from the Fathers who teach in schools, contributions from the Diocese of Pittsburgh, and income generated by the Oratory's investments, **it's you, our friends, who make everything possible.**

Without you, we will not be able to continue our ministry of leading souls to a profound relationship with Jesus Christ. Thank you for your consideration of a sacrificial gift to sustain and expand the Oratory and Newman Center's vital ministries.

Fundraising Progress through February 28, 2022



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. Also consider including the Oratory in your wills and estate planning, which can help you to leave a lasting legacy.

Non-cash gifts are easier to make than one might think. Contact Fr. Reed for more information at 412.681.3181 or at reedfrey.co@gmail.com.

Interview: FOCUS Missionary Will Ives

Will Ives is a fourth-year missionary with FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students). He has served as a missionary at the University of Pittsburgh since 2018. He is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio and attended University of Miami (Ohio) before his conversion to Catholicism. Next year, Will is applying to be a seminarian with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

What does a FOCUS Missionary do on a college campus? How does that work here at the Oratory?

A FOCUS Missionary is on a college campus primarily to help form students in their faith and teach them to respond to the Christian call for evangelization. Through seeking Truth and abiding in the Love of God, our team puts forth all effort to create an atmosphere of faith, joy and charity worthy of imitation, wanting to inspire our students to become saints and spiritual leaders. We strive to invite as many college students as possible into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church, inspiring and equipping them for a lifetime of Christ-centered evangelization, discipleship, and friendship in which they lead others to do the same.

This works here at the Oratory primarily through leading Bible Studies and walking together with students as we pursue a discipleship relationship with Jesus. We accompany students on mission trips and weekly service activities at Red Door homeless ministry and help host conferences and lead retreats as well. We are also trained to go out on campus and do whatever it takes to encounter students on their own turf, through sports and campus outreach.

Tell me about your accomplishments during your time at Pitt and your involvement in the Newman Center.

I have very much enjoyed working alongside the priests of the Pittsburgh Oratory and I am incredibly grateful for all the kindness and wisdom they have shown me over the years. In my time here, I have led over a dozen Bible studies and have walked with so many students along the way. Three of the students I have walked very closely with have gone on to pursue religious vocations and a fourth is



Will Ives (center) engaged in evangelization on Pitt's campus.

on his way to entering seminary this summer. I have led four mission trips and have brought dozens of students from Pittsburgh to Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. Through my years, we have brought hundreds of students to the annual FOCUS conferences and we typically bring at least 3-5 students with us every week to make lunch bags for the poor and the homeless on the streets of downtown Pittsburgh.

Can you describe an experience with a student that encapsulates your time here?

My first year – in fact, my first week on campus as a missionary – I joined a billiards club in an effort to meet some students. I met a freshman named Donte. As the games went on, I got to talk to Donte and asked him about the crucifix necklace he was wearing, wondering if he was raised Catholic. His response was shocking. He went on and on about how he hated the Catholic Church and found it to be oppressive, patriarchal, predatory, etc. He then asked me what I thought and I said, “Well, hey actually I’d love to talk about it.. err uhmm after this next shot.” So I hit my shot and approached him again once I was able to gather my thoughts. We sat down and I asked him what he thought about the Person of Jesus Christ. He thought that Jesus had never existed so I explained to him the historical evidence we have in support of Christ’s life, pointing to Jewish and Roman references in addition to the Gospels. Once he agreed that Jesus was a real person we talked about the claims Christ made and the dilemma that puts us in to either recognize Him as Lord, or we would have to see Him

as a very evil figure, either morally or intellectually. He was very curious about this and so we exchanged numbers and started meeting regularly for lunch or coffee. Since then, Donte has probably asked me hundreds of questions over the years and has frequently attended my Bible Study. He has come to two of our conferences and even went on a mission trip with me to Ecuador. Donte returned to the Sacrament of Confession for the first time in about 10 years this last summer. I consider him a dear, dear friend.

How did the Oratory impact your formation in your spiritual life?

Being present at the Oratory in Adoration almost every day has done immeasurable good for my soul. That, along with the great homilies and personal investment from many of the Oratorians, has allowed me to experience true healing. I am not the same man I was when I walked in three and a half years ago. Fr. Stephen, Fr. Peter, and Fr. Mike have all been very influential in helping me navigate personal, familial, and teammate relationships and have spoken much truth into my life in ways that have helped me in the discernment of a vocation.

What are you most grateful for from your time serving as a FOCUS Missionary at Pitt?

Getting to know Jesus here at the University of Pittsburgh has been the greatest gift I have ever received and the many opportunities I have had to make Him known through my words and my deeds has been my greatest joy.

CMU Newman Club Rolls On

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The students at CMU have always enjoyed having the sacraments on campus during the week, and it has been a blessing to have Mass, Confession and Adoration back on campus after a two-year hiatus due to COVID. It’s an additional perk to be able to hang out for snacks and conversations again following Mass.

The Newman Club, the Oratory, and all of the Oratorians have been a great blessing to me personally this year. Fr. Reed has been especially helpful and informative for me as I continue to

grow in my faith. I think many students, including myself, feel that we are lacking in our theological knowledge. Chit Chats has been a fun way to learn more about God and our faith. Other formative experiences include retreats at Rednal, leading and attending Bible studies, attending Thomistic Institute talks by Dominican friars at the Oratory, and receiving book recommendations from other club members. It’s really great having a good group of Catholic friends in the Newman Club who help me live out my faith.

Reflecting on what I anticipated the

Newman Club was going to provide for me going into the school year, I recall being a bit worried because we had so many new FOCUS missionaries and a new chaplain. Nobody in the club knew these new people and we certainly did not know what to expect. My worry was clearly for nothing because the CMU Newman Club and all of the new people involved with the club have been a delight to be around. I ask that you pray for our club as our members grow in faith so that we may bring Christ to more souls on the CMU campus.

Candlemas at the Oratory

By Fr. Michael Darcy, C.O.

A friend recently mentioned to me that the time between Christmas and Easter can seem a little desolate. He cited two reasons: the gloom of winter and the absence of any festivity in the long period of time between Christmas and Easter. I recommended he keep his eye out for the Oratory’s celebration of the Presentation of the Lord, which the Church observes on February 2.

We must have done a good job of advertising our get together for our celebration of the Presentation. The assembled congregation was the largest we have had in a long time, possibly the largest since the beginning of COVID – a welcome sign that things are getting back to normal. The celebration began with a festival of light. Everyone gathered for the celebration was given a small candle to hold, a feature of the liturgy that is the source of its traditional name, “Candlemas.” The candles were lit and blessed, and the introductory rites of the Mass were sung.

After the singing of the Gloria the candles were extinguished, and we read the Church’s selections of the Word of God. The main feature was St. Luke’s account of the infant Christ being taken to the Temple by Mary and Joseph in order to fulfill the Law of the old covenant and to consecrate Jesus to the service of God. Upon Jesus’ arrival, Simeon the priest proclaims Jesus to be “the glory of Israel and a light of revelation to the Gentiles,” a light for all people.

Simeon’s words continue and he predicts Jesus’ Passion and the Blessed Virgin’s share in that Passion – *and you yourself a sword will pierce* – recalling the lesson of Christmas that the light of Christ is always a light that shines in the darkness. Arriving at the light of Easter requires the courage to endure the darkness of life with faith and trust in Christ.

After Mass the assembled multitude gathered in the basement of the Oratory for a delicious meal of Mexican food prepared by the Oratory’s secretary, Ren Witter (although on events such as the Feast of the Presentation we are reminded that Ren is much more than just a secretary – thank you, Ren!).

After dinner people lingered for a while enjoying their time together. Adults conversed with each other, and the children broke away to run around and play. The fun and fellowship burned as bright and steadily as the candles at Mass.

The night’s celebration, the Mass and the get together that followed, seemed itself to be a kind of candle, one giving warmth and light to the midwinter’s darkness.