



UNIVERSITY
CATHOLIC

Proposing Jesus Christ and Forming His Disciples



SUMMER 2024

UCAT ALUMNI ENTER RELIGIOUS LIFE

Faithfully answering God's call

Sophie Denney (VU '19) entered the "Servidoras" in Washington D.C. in April 2023 and received her habit and name, Sr. Mary Mother of Fair Love, on December 6th as a part of her canonical novitiate year with the Sisters Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara

She will profess her first vows in the Fall of 2024.

Extremely active in UCat while at Vanderbilt, Sr. Mary Mother of Fair Love says, "I am so grateful for the formation I received in college, which so strengthened my faith and planted the seed of my own missionary vocation while I was a student trying to share the faith on campus. I'm especially grateful for the paternity of Fr. Michael Fye and how the availability of the Sacraments transformed the community, filling it with students seeking holiness above all else."

Br. Bernard, formerly Pat McMahon (Aquinas College '21) is a monk of Silverstream Priory in Stamullen, Ireland. Praying and working according to the Rule of Saint Benedict, the monks dedicate themselves to Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Divine Office in reparation for offenses against the Holy Eucharist and spiritual support of the clergy.



SOPHIE DENNEY (VU '19), NOW SR. MARY MOTHER OF FAIR LOVE, IS PICTURED WITH BROTHER THADDEUS MARIA PISTRANG, OP (VU '20) AND UCAT FRIENDS ERIN MONTGOMERY (VU '20), MARIA AGUILERA (VU '21) AND ELIZABETH LANSDEN (VU '21).



Brother Bernard, was involved in UCat during all 3 years of his studies at Aquinas College. He served on leadership for Awakening, sacristans, and Intellectual Dimension and participated in UCat's Knights of Columbus and Melchizedek Project. Describing his experience in the ministry, Br Bernard recounts, "It was my first personal exposure to people wearing themselves out for God. Whether it was a priest willing to listen despite the late hour and his work, a missionary ready to encourage me despite their own temptations to discouragement, or a student giving to the community a bit more of their efforts despite their many obligations, the ministry was filled with souls zealous to give themselves to God and His Church, for love of Christ, crucified for them."



EXCITING TIMES

A message from our Diocesan Director

What an amazing year! Looking back this year, we can see God working through University Catholic. Our mission has expanded to more campuses around the Diocese of Nashville. For me, as Diocesan Director, it is fantastic to see the new chapters of University Catholic flourishing. The same ministry that has been happening in Nashville since UCat's beginning now is being taken to different campuses across the Middle Tennessee area. From Welcome Week events to Eucharistic Processions, from daily Masses and Adoration to the Awakening retreats, from pilgrimages to Bible studies we can see our mission to Propose Jesus Christ and Forming His Disciples incarnated in the lives of so many students.

This year finishes with the exciting

news of Fr. Seth Reed becoming the first Chaplain for UCat at MTSU. Fr. Reed was ordained this May and is already working hard to make sure the St. Martin de Porres house will be ready to receive the students this coming August.

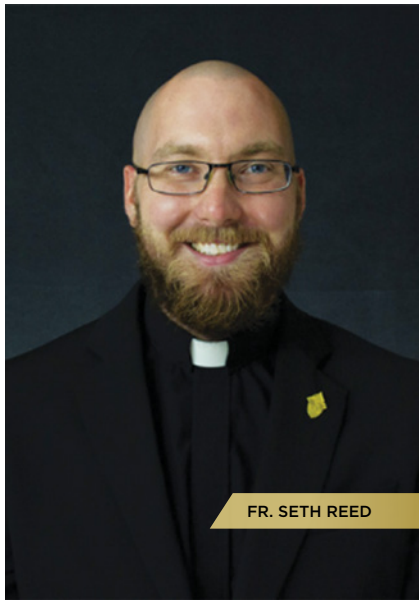
As part of our planning for the next school year, we were able to develop and reorganize the structures for University Catholic in Nashville, now working with Vanderbilt and Belmont students and the other chapters of University Catholic. We have also divided the various chapters into five phases of development. Another piece of exciting news is that we will now work directly with the Diocese of Nashville's Development Office to improve our fundraising and development opportunities. We will share more about these structural

changes in our next newsletters. Our main goal is to better serve the students and further our mission.

Once again, I must thank you, our faithful partners in mission, for your continuous support to our ministry. We could not do all we do without you. Please know of my personal appreciation for you and your generosity. As I look back on my personal conversion story, I can thank a campus ministry like University Catholic for inviting me to become part of the Church and having my life transformed forever.

In Christ,

Fr. Gervan Menezes, M.Div.
Diocesan Director of Campus
Ministry



WELCOME FR. REED

University Catholic is excited to have a new Chaplain at Middle Tennessee State University! Fr. Seth Reed was recently ordained a priest in the Diocese of Nashville on May 25th of this year at the Cathedral of the Incarnation. Born and raised in Nashville, He attended Pearl-Cohn High School and worked in the film industry for ten years. In 2016, he entered formation for the Diocese of Nashville and attended St. Joseph Seminary College for his undergraduate degree and St. Meinrad Seminary for his graduate degrees. Currently, he is taking classes at St. Meinrad to earn a Certificate in Spiritual Direction. In addition to his assignment as Chaplain for UCat MTSU, he also serves as the associate pastor for St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Murfreesboro. When asked about his assignments, Fr. Reed expressed both excitement and zeal to serve the people of God in both of these ministries. If you see Fr. Reed, make sure to give him a warm welcome to the University Catholic family, and please pray for him as he begins his work with our ministry!

THE KNIGHTS OF TENNESSEE TECH

A new college council begins in Cookeville

For many years, students and Campus Ministry Staff at Tennessee Technological University have been trying to form a Knights of Columbus College Council; however, this semester, twenty young men made this dream a reality with the founding of the St. Thomas Aquinas College Council #18467. This is the fourth college council to be established in Tennessee, and it is the second to be formed by University Catholic

members (following their UCat Nashville brothers in Council #15020). Although they are just getting started, the men of this council are eager to grow in fraternity and make a positive impact on University Catholic, the Knights of Columbus, and the local community through their faithful service. Jacob Dean serves as the Grand Knight with Joey Borrelli (Deputy Grand Knight), M.K. Mamolo (Chancellor), and Cole LeSar (Recorder).



22 REASONS TO CELEBRATE UCAT

University Catholic in Nashville brought seventeen college students who joined the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil, four of whom were baptized, at the Cathedral of the Incarnation. They had participated in UCat's OCIA Program, which has met weekly with Deacon Craig Thomas since September.

Starting with a 7-part Alpha Series, their weekly sessions covered the basics of the Christian faith through a series of talks and discussions over dinner. From there, the sessions specifically covered what Catholics believe and why.

In addition to these students in Nashville, University Catholic also celebrates with the students at our other campuses. At Austin Peay State University, two students were received into the Church and one other was confirmed at Easter. A few weeks after Easter, two students were received into the Church at Middle Tennessee State University.

Congratulations





UCAT ALUMS TIE THE KNOT

Introducing Pierce and Elizabeth Creighton

University Catholic has been an abundant blessing and an integral part of the faith of Elizabeth (Lansden) Creighton (VU '21, VU School of Nursing '23) and Pierce Creighton (MTSU '22, Meharry Medical College '26).

Christ teaches, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” (John 15:12-13, RSV). Students in college explore these themes as they desire to grow in self-knowledge, search for community, prepare to receive others, and hope to make a full gift of themselves. This desire can be falsely attempted by succumbing to selfishness and vice or it can be fully actualized by living the Gospel.

Elizabeth hoped for this gift of community and virtuous living as she began to navigate her first semester at Vanderbilt. While at move-in Mass with her family, her mother leaned over and providentially whispered that the woman serving as a lector, Erin Montgomery (VU '20, VUSN '22), would become her best friend. The Holy Spirit's inspiration was true and Erin became her “discipler” through FOCUS, her Bible study leader, later her roommate, and eventually her maid of honor. At this same move-in Mass, Elizabeth was captivated by reverent liturgy and a homily that

was intellectual, loving, and mission-oriented. These words were a preview into how thoroughly University Catholic (UCat) forms its students, particularly in the human, apostolic, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions.

Pierce also searched for community, leading him to MTSU Catholic, which later became UCat

he was brought back into the fold by Granville Hinton (MTSU '23) and Zoe Haub (MTSU/UTK '24). During the following school year, they made a joyful effort to revitalize the Catholic center.

UCat has offered countless opportunities for laying down one's life for neighbors and growing in leadership. Elizabeth served as the apostolic pillar head in 2018 to plan and facilitate service opportunities. She served as the University Catholic at Vanderbilt president in 2020. Pierce served as the University Catholic at MTSU President from 2020 to 2022. The two also served in various capacities at the Awakening retreats, with Pierce serving as coordinator and subsequently as rector.

Some of Elizabeth's favorite UCat memories include spending two weeks in Peru on pilgrimage, sharing friendship with Maria Aguilera (VU '21, ND '23), and journeying with a graduate student Bible study where she got to soak in the holy and unique perspectives of those studying law, medicine,

nursing, education, business, and engineering. Some of Pierce's favorite UCat memories include bonfires in the freezing cold at MTSU, Awakening retreats, and cooking for Sunday Supper.

In July of 2022, Elizabeth was



at MTSU. He quickly became involved but as the pandemic moved class and gatherings to virtual spaces, the physical connection to community was less tangible. However, the desire for faithful friendships burned stronger, and

enjoying a reunion with Grace Gallo (VU '22) and Kelly Lloveras (VU '22) and they suggested a visit to the men's FOCUS missionary house where Pierce was living. Elizabeth and Pierce met there for the first time and connected about a shared love for the field of medicine. Pierce was starting medical school that fall and Elizabeth was balancing working as a nurse with finishing graduate school to be a nurse practitioner. A few weeks after this encounter, while she prayed in Frassati Chapel, she heard the Lord's call for her to begin a dating fast. Although unsure of why, she had never been led astray following the Lord's voice spoken to her gently and consistently in that Chapel so she gladly obliged. The start perfectly coincided with her trip to Europe to visit UCat alumni Bernarda Tarre (Loyola '19, VU Peabody '22) in Spain and Brother Bernard Marie McMahon (Aquinas '21) in Ireland. Two days after the completion of the dating fast in December 2022, she went to pray at Frassati Chapel to give thanks and found Pierce sitting on the front porch. He asked her on a date and they began a beautiful relationship.

Eight months later, he asked her to marry him on that same spot on Frassati's front porch. The gift of UCat community was strongly present at their marriage feast on February 10, 2024, at the Cathedral of the Incarnation. All previous and current UCat chaplains celebrated the mass: Fr. John Sims Baker, Fr. Michael Fye, Fr. Gervan Menezes, and Fr. Rhodes Bolster. Both current and former UCat students altar served the Mass, led the music of the Mass, and served as both the band and servers at the reception. University Catholic will continue to be a gift to Elizabeth and Pierce's marriage, spirituality, and service of neighbor.



EUCCHARISTIC PROCESSIONS

A revival in the making

Christ is risen, alleluia alleluia! Not only is He risen, but He is also on the move! As we approach the end of the USCCB's three-year National Eucharistic Revival, University Catholic has contributed to this mission by hosting Eucharistic Processions around its various campuses in the weeks following Easter.

On Thursday, April 4th, students and parishioners of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church gathered at Tennessee Technological University's Quadrangle for Mass followed by a Procession. Despite the bitterly cold winds and light rain, over 40 students attended the event including members of other non-Catholic campus ministries.

Just a couple of days later, the students at Austin Peay State University hosted their Eucharistic Procession which started in the chapel of Immaculate Conception

Catholic Church, went through the middle of the campus, and ended in the main sanctuary. Lasting almost 45 minutes, the Procession included numerous hymns, both traditional and modern, and the praying of the Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet.

On Wednesday of the following week, University Catholic at Cumberland University hosted their Eucharistic Procession which brought together students, faculty and staff, and parishioners of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Catholic Church. The Knights of Columbus helped with serving the Procession, and the new CU Men's Chorale provided an unforgettable musical experience that left everyone in awe and wonder. It should be noted that this is the first time that both APSU and CU have hosted a Eucharistic Procession which is a clear indication of the growing presence of our ministry on those campuses.

Finally, University Catholic

Nashville capped off the series of Processions on Monday, April 15th at Belmont University. The warm evening combined with a beautiful sunset of pastel colors made those in attendance feel like they were enjoying a little slice of heaven. As roughly 20 students processed through campus, many non-Catholic students and onlookers were greeted by student leaders, invited to join, and given informational handouts on the Eucharist and other University Catholic events. Despite the adversity that Catholic students often face in today's world, it is a consolation to see that Christ the King still reigns as He triumphantly marches through our spiritually-impooverished campuses proclaiming the Gospel of Truth to all who have ears to hear: "God is with us!"

Great crowds followed him, and He cured them there.

MATTHEW 19:2

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY



TENNESSEE TECH UNIVERSITY



AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY



BELMONT UNIVERSITY





UCAT STANDS FOR LIFE

Another successful march on our nation's capitol

UCat's March for Life Pilgrimage is a grueling trip—but one that will have a lasting impact on all who attended. Driving all night by bus, with 2 1/2 days in DC, the pilgrimage was centered on prayer and included Mass and holy hours at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land, and the Saint John Paul II Shrine.

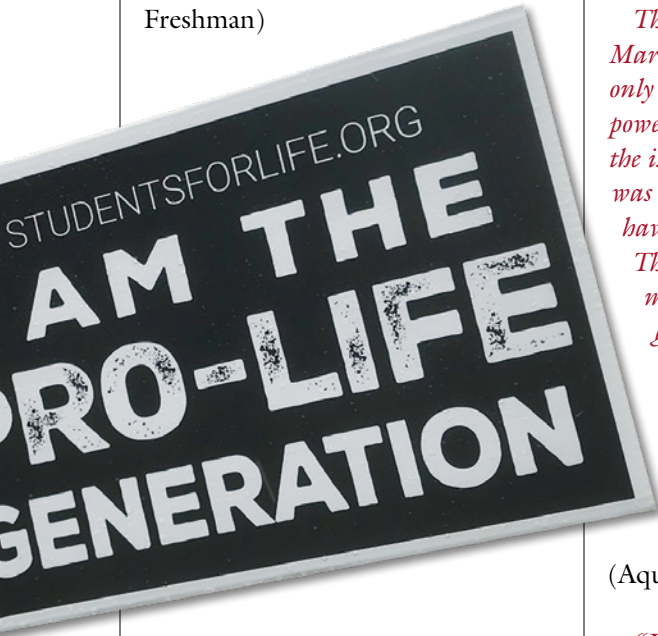
Of course, our purpose in being in DC was to attend the Rally for Life (held on the Washington Mall) and the March for Life down Constitution Avenue. Joining hundreds of thousands of pro-life Americans in the streets of our nation's capital is invigorating. The cold and snow did not dampen the spirits of our students.

The combination of prayer, action, and education allows the students to see firsthand the Church's pro-life witness; to be part of the joyful, youthful crowd at the March; and to become well-informed citizens. Truly, this is a pro-life pilgrimage—not just a trip to DC—where we are forming faithful, committed, pro-life Catholics.



“This pilgrimage helped me to become more “pro-life” rather than simply “anti-abortion.” However, the biggest impact for me was relating to the spiritual life. I have become much more inspired to live my life as wholly Catholic as possible, so as to be of one mind. It has highlighted the importance of community for effective spiritual development and re-ignited my intimacy with the love of Christ.”

—Henry Bitzer (Belmont Freshman)



“Going on March for Life with University Catholic was impactful for me because it showed me how overwhelmingly Catholic the Pro-Life movement is. I have been three years in a row now, and I have always been so moved by how the vast majority of people marching are Catholic. Are there many people who support the cause from every denomination or different walks of life? Of course. But to see how those who are actually willing to take action, traveling very far and braving the cold, to make their voices heard are mostly Catholic—that gives me renewed hope and gratitude for God’s One True Church and how she will triumph gloriously throughout the darkest of ages.”

—Chris Lee (FOCUS Missionary and Catholic convert)

“I have been pro-life my whole life, but this trip has impacted me to be more open to life in the context of my own vocation. Today, we simply don’t see many big families in the world. Now, I know life in abundance is a gift. I learned that having a large family is possible, sanctifying, and beautiful in the eyes of God.”

—Grace Greenwood (Belmont Sophomore)

This was my first time going to the March for Life, and I was able to go only by Divine Providence. After this powerful pilgrimage, I realized that the issue of saving lives in the womb was actually not bigger than myself (I have the power to make a difference). This pilgrimage has also changed my mind about what I need to do going forward. I can no longer be the Catholic who believes in the Pro-Life position but doesn’t do anything about it. I need to actually get involved (somehow, someday).

—Giovanni Greer (Aquinas Junior)

“I thoroughly enjoyed the trip as it invigorated my passion for life. I am a graduate student doing suicide prevention research, so much

of what I do is engaging with others in difficult pro-life conversations. Oftentimes, I find I am the only one who is pro-life in these conversations, and it can feel incredibly lonely. Through this trip, I had the chance to see many others who are actively pro-life and want to be the change they want to see in the world. It was absolutely beautiful. Thank you for gifting me the opportunity to witness such beauty.”

—Hannah Slater, VU Graduate Student

“The pilgrimage to Washington, DC, and the March for Life were transformative in reinforcing my commitment to the principles of my faith. It deepened my understanding of the Catholic teachings on the sanctity of life and inspired a renewed sense of purpose in actively promoting a culture that values and protects every human being. The journey left me with cherished memories, spiritual insights, and a strengthened resolve to continue advocating for life with compassion and conviction. I am in awe and humbled that I was able to partake in such an exhilarating pilgrimage.”

—Aditya Paul, UCat Wilco and MTSU Senior





“COME AND SEE!”

A three day immersion in Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

These are the words St. Philip spoke to St. Nathaniel encouraging him to visit and witness the newly revealed Messiah. In heeding the words of his friend, St. Nathaniel received his call to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ and travel to the ends of the world proclaiming the Gospel. Similarly, we are all called to our particular vocation by God through the circumstances of our lives. With the courage and sincerity of St. Nathaniel, 11 men from University Catholic responded to this initial invitation by traveling to Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in late April to see what life as a seminarian is like.

During the three-day excursion to St. Louis, MO, these men got to pray, learn, and enjoy recreational time with seminarians from the Diocese of Nashville and other dioceses across the country. The days started with communal Morning Prayer followed by Mass, and they always

ended with a Holy Hour to allow the men an opportunity to talk with Our Lord about the many thoughts and inspirations that occurred to them throughout the day. Activities included attending classes in theology and philosophy, touring the Seminary and the greater St. Louis area, and hearing talks from seminarians and

formators. Here are a couple of reactions from the experience:

“The trip really opened my eyes to see what a seminarian’s life actually consists of! It clarified my perception of what seminary is and is not. More importantly, it helped me to deeply consider Holy Orders as a vocation.”

—Stephen Davis (Tennessee Technological University)

“The Seminary Trip was very moving! I felt touched knowing how well the seminarians are cared for. Everyone is invested in helping a man grow closer to God and discover his vocation, regardless of whether he becomes a priest or not.”

—Cristian Dunn (Cumberland University)



Representing University Catholic Schools from all over the Diocese of Nashville, this group included students from Belmont, Cumberland, Tennessee Technological, Austin Peay State, and Middle Tennessee State Universities. In addition to these, there were other college-aged men who joined the trip as well.

University Catholic would like to extend its appreciation to Fr. Luke Wilgenbusch and the entire team at NashVocations for their help in organizing the trip. We would also like to thank Kenrick-Glennon Seminary for generously allowing us to use their facilities and share life with them for a few days.



SERVING IN UCAT AND THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

by Deacon Craig Thomas

When Bishop Spalding called in the Spring of 2023 to inform me that I would be assigned to serve in UCat, I was shocked. I thought for sure I would be assigned to a parish, like most deacons, but this has turned out to be a tremendous joy for me. One of the highlights has been leading our OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation for Adults) program for the students at Vanderbilt, Belmont, Trevecca, and Lipscomb. At our first meeting, we had 7 students, but we steadily grew during the year until we reached 22 students desiring to learn more about the Catholic faith and enter into full communion with us at Easter!

Each week we gathered in the Frassati house kitchen for a “home” cooked meal followed by a teaching and personal faith sharing. The individual conversion and reconversion stories could not have been more diverse, and yet the unity and sense of family connection just kept growing. It felt as if we were all being invited to a great homecoming, to discover our place in the Father’s house. Allow me to share just one story.

At my first UCat event, a Sunday supper, I noticed a

young man sitting off on his own, so I sat down next to him and introduced myself. I wondered what a 60-year-old, gray-haired deacon could possibly have in common with an 18-year-old freshman. It turns out that Andrew, born in China, had no prior formation or exposure to Christianity, but had just started reading *Mere Christianity* out of curiosity. We had a great conversation, and I invited him to our ALPHA course which is an introduction to Christianity that we use as the starting point for the OCIA program. He came sporadically but then asked to meet with me privately. He had so many questions, and we worked through them all one by one. Then he started coming more regularly and by the Spring had decided to become a Christian and a Catholic. I will never forget holding the Easter Candle, standing by the baptismal font, as Bishop Spalding poured the waters of Baptism over Andrew. The look of Joy on Andrew’s face was priceless. After the Vigil, the UCat community joined together in a celebration and we sang, danced, and rejoiced in the resurrection and over-receiving these new members into our family. They now share in our joy and in the Joy of the Gospel.



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FAREWELL DEAR FRIENDS

Longtime UCat staff members say goodbye

This semester, we had to say a couple of bittersweet “goodbyes” to some of our long-term University Catholic staff members.

Kathleen Cordell started working for University Catholic in the Spring of 2011 under the chaplaincy of Fr. John Sims Baker. Although her role was as a part-time Administrative Assistant, she quickly became a beloved and indispensable part of the ministry. In addition to taking care of the bookkeeping, Kathleen regularly cooked food for Sunday Suppers and provided a warm motherly love to the students of University Catholic. After 13 years of serving our ministry, she will be

transitioning into retirement and enjoying some well-deserved respite.

Nick Aguirre (VU '14) was hired as the Director of Campus Ministry of University Catholic in the Fall of 2019 under the chaplaincy of Fr. Gervan Menezes. Right away, Nick became an integral part of the emerging University Catholic Diocesan Office. As new campuses across the Diocese of Nashville were being incorporated into the ministry, Nick was always an advocate and advisor for the student leaders in those places while still tending to his responsibilities in Nashville. From setting up for Sunday Supper to making the reservations for March for Life, Nick humbly worked to

ensure that nothing would get in the way of students having an authentic encounter with Jesus Christ. Having been a member of University Catholic himself at Vanderbilt University, Nick knew how to balance relatability with maturity as he showed students what it meant to seek the Kingdom above all things while being in college. While we are sad to see Nick leave our ministry, we are excited that he has been promoted in the Diocese of Nashville as the Assistant Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

For all that both of you have done and continue to do, know that your family at University Catholic is overwhelmingly thankful!