



DULUTH NEWMAN

For Immediate Release

Sowing ‘Seeds of Faith,’ harvesting a bounty of souls

Fr. Mike Schmitz, Catholic priest and internationally-known religious podcaster, announces a capital campaign to build a center for evangelization in Duluth, Minnesota.

Duluth, Minnesota, August 8, 2025 | Fr. Mike Schmitz, Chaplain of the Newman Center at the University of Minnesota Duluth, today announced the launch of the ‘Seeds of Faith’ capital campaign. The campaign seeks to raise \$30 million to build Duluth Newman’s first church, an expanded student center, rectory, meeting spaces, and media production studio, as well as an endowment to maintain the ministry and building for years to come.

The current Newman Center is located on a residential city block bordering the University of Minnesota Duluth. It consists entirely of a small, 1950s-era, split-level house and a 400-square-foot garage that has been converted to a chapel that accommodates only 60 people.

“I hate to say it, but the building is dilapidated, small, and unwelcoming,” said Fr. Mike. “We want a space that matches the ministry. One that welcomes students and invites them to become who God created them to be, whether it’s through sacred liturgy, Bible study, or having a cup of coffee and conversation with a friend.”

The Newman Center has grown exponentially over the past decade. Sunday Masses are typically attended by 800 people, which requires the Center to rent space on campus or travel off-campus to Holy Rosary Cathedral, which is often a barrier to students without transportation.

“We hear so often from students, ‘There isn’t room for me,’” said Fr. Mike. “So many students want to participate but are unable to because of lack of space. It’s heartbreaking. We want to invite everyone.”

“When this land became available, it was an opportunity presenting itself, a revelation of the Holy Spirit, and an affirmation,” said Most Rev. Daniel J. Felton, Bishop of Duluth. “It was an affirmation not only of the renewal of the Newman Center but of the whole Diocese of Duluth. We need to trust that, and we didn’t hesitate to support this campaign going forward.”

Fr. Mike has become one of the world's most recognized and popular religious figures. In the past four years, he has had two worldwide #1 Podcast Series, achieving more than 802 million downloads of *Bible in a Year* and 112 million downloads of *Catechism in a Year*. Fr. Mike has been interviewed on numerous local, national and international media outlets, and appears before thousands as a prominent national speaker. Additionally, he reaches multitudes through other recordings, including:

- 15 million+ views from 78 countries of Holy Mass on YouTube;
- 39 million+ downloads of his homily podcast; and
- 106 million+ views of Ascension Presents videos.

All this was accomplished in cramped corners of the Newman Center. It was difficult, if not nearly impossible, to do. The new facilities will provide unlimited opportunities to evangelize through the church built to seat 500 and the professional recording studio.

"A church is where heaven meets earth. A beautiful space is what God deserves," Fr. Mike said. "Walking into the church, students will know that God deserves our best, not just brick and mortar and stained glass, but the best of our hearts and our lives."

"The Holy Spirit has begun extraordinary work through what we've been doing," said Fr. Mike. "We need a lot of help. It costs money to build today. This can't fall to someone else."

The estimated building costs are \$30 million, and an additional \$20 million is being raised to establish an endowment for facility maintenance, staffing, and future needs.

"A \$20 million endowment isn't just fiscally prudent—it's a commitment to ministry integrity," added Todd Johnson, a 'Seeds of Faith' campaign committee member and financial expert. "Generating roughly \$1 million annually, it prevents costly deferred maintenance and protects our donors' capital investment. Most importantly, it's living out what Paul calls us to do in 2 Corinthians 8, to excel in the grace of giving. Simply put, an endowment is a legacy of responsibility."

"Few of those who encounter our work online have visited Duluth Newman. But Duluth Newman has visited them," said Fr. Mike. "All of our content flows out of the ministry we do with students on campus. If you've seen blessings from our ministry, I invite you to go to bulldogcatholic.org/seeds-of-faith/ and prayerfully consider giving. I would be grateful for your help!"

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