



Case for Support

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN 2023-2027

To Grow the Ministry of Fr. Mike Schmitz and bulldogCatholic
University of Minnesota Duluth Newman Center

bulldog**Catholic** 



Fr. Mike recording the Mass with students
in the current Newman Center chapel.

Seeds of Faith

bulldogCatholic brings people into a personal encounter with Jesus to live as His disciples, and equips them to become apostles in the world.

“

He told them another parable: **‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.** Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.’”

— Matthew 13:31-32

The bulldogCatholic Story

Long before 2005—the year a dynamic young priest named Fr. Mike Schmitz was assigned to Duluth Newman—the Holy Spirit was already moving. **And He was far from done.**

Duluth Newman (bulldogCatholic) has a long history of bringing souls to Christ. **As far back as 1951**, Catholic students were going to Mass together and hosting dinners and dances. In 1964, Bishop Schenk purchased the first Newman Center, a small house on College Street, opening up new ministry possibilities for Bulldog students for decades to come.

During the 1970s, Fr. George Schroeder passionately preached from the Kirby Ballroom, where hundreds, if not thousands, of students received their first taste of Catholicism.

In the late 1990s, Fr. Dale Nau served as director of the Newman Center and joyfully prayed the rosary with students, offered

Sunday Mass, and hosted the first “Mass and a Meal” (for six students).

In the fall of 2000, one UMD freshman started literally knocking on doors, inviting all interested to join Fr. Dale Nau for “Mass and a Meal,” retreats, and mission trips. Building a small ministry team, they witnessed a steady growth in participation until 2005, the year Fr. Mike Schmitz arrived.

When Fr. Mike moved his gear into the 1950s split-level center, he was ready to build on the momentum he inherited.

Fr. Mike was ready,
and the Holy Spirit was
able to do something
no one saw coming.



Mass at UMD in the Newman chapel, a tiny, 400-square-foot converted garage.



The current Duluth Newman Center.



People don't realize that Fr. Mike's videos—they're made in the garage, which is acting as a chapel. He leads marriage prep in the kitchen. Dozens of students will jam the basement for morning prayer. The Newman Center is a little, old house.”

— Lydia Franco, UMD Student

Supported by passionate FOCUS missionaries and enthusiastic student leaders, Fr. Mike began seeing even more students drawn to the Lord through the sacraments, retreats, and formation—resulting in conversion. His personal approach with the students and all who come to the Newman Center inseparably influences his preaching and the growing ministry and outreach happening both locally and far beyond the campus. His worldwide ministry has become the powerhouse it is today because of his dedication to the foundational ministry happening on campus.

BulldogCatholic was born to bring focus to the dynamic ministry efforts that were already stretching beyond the capacity of the small center and random facilities around campus. Even with this great success, the Holy Spirit wasn't

done. In the corner of the converted two-car garage that serves as the Duluth Newman chapel, Fr. Mike and his team set up a camera on a tripod to film and stream the Mass. It wouldn't be long before the Holy Spirit used his distinctly personal approach to reach hundreds of millions, opening up the world to what was already happening at Duluth Newman.

**The rest isn't history.
It's happening now.**

Today, this vibrant community is bursting at the seams, drawing students from surrounding area colleges and even from across the country. But the limits of the Duluth Newman facilities are also inhibiting opportunities to welcome and reach souls with the love of Jesus.



The Newman Center's Impact on the Future of the Catholic Church

The Newman Center has burst at the seams, but we must not let even a single soul turn away because of limited space!



Large things always begin from the small seed, and the mass movements are always ephemeral.”

Pope Benedict XVI



500-600

students routinely attend Sunday Mass on the UMD campus



60+ students participate in daily Mass in the chapel



62 students currently committed to a daily holy hour at Duluth Newman

17 years of FOCUS missionary service and leadership



60 Bible studies currently underway and **2,000+** students have participated since 2014



16+ Duluth Newman men have entered seminary, **7** of whom are priests or religious brothers, including Cardinal Stephen Chow Sau-yan



8 Duluth Newman women have entered religious life



802 million downloads/plays of *The Bible in a Year*

300 students experience retreats each year



400 couples have prepared for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony at Duluth Newman (many of whom also met their spouses here!)

In the 2023-2024 academic year, Duluth Newman served hundreds of students, fully initiating **15** into the Catholic Faith, and baptizing **3** of them!



78 students have entered the Catholic Church since 2018 through our OCIA programming



Masses streamed on YouTube have over **15 million** total views since 2020



106 million+ views of Fr. Mike's Ascension Presents videos



39 million downloads of Fr. Mike's homily podcast



112 million downloads/plays of *The Catechism in a Year*



A student hangs up his jacket before Mass at the entrance to the current chapel.



Fr. Mike helps a young couple prepare for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony at his kitchen table, the only space available in the center for this important sacramental preparation.

Right: Fr. Mike records a video from his living room.



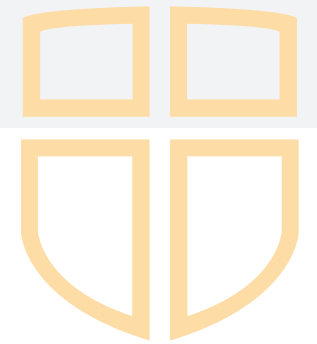
Below: Students crowd into the living room of the Newman Center for fellowship with one another.



Fr. Mike speaks to millions on a deep, personal level. It's just the Gospel message of faith, hope, and love that people are so thirsty for."

– Lauren Hopke, Chief of Staff and Strategy at Duluth Newman

Our Challenge



God will not be outdone in generosity. It's up to us to respond!

The Holy Spirit has begun extraordinary work through the bulldogCatholic ministry, drawing students and visitors both locally and from around the country. This ministry's current center is an old, dilapidated, split-level home that is often overcrowded with students and visitors.

The transformative working of the Holy Spirit is most evident through the online ministry of Fr. Mike Schmitz. But what isn't obvious is the ministry's lack of capacity on campus, which significantly inhibits us from growing beyond our current capacity. Young people are being prevented from experiencing the healing love of God and the joy and truth of the Gospel.

Catholic students of the Duluth area's colleges and universities, as well as visitors, deserve a space that reflects beauty and sacredness, to worship the Lord and celebrate the sacraments. A space like this will deeply affect the hearts of the faithful and curious visitors alike. Those drawn to bulldogCatholic's dynamic ministry and outreach deserve to be welcomed with a space that can comfortably accommodate all who come to gather. A new space will welcome the millions of people who are searching for faith, dedicated Catholics, and those who hunger for an experience of the Catholic Church at its best—authentic, enlivened, and intentionally addressing their quest for the truth in word and deed.

If you're familiar with Fr. Mike's videos and podcasts, such as *The Bible in a Year* and *The Catechism in a Year*, or his videos through Ascension Presents, you've been directly affected by the fruit of the work of bulldogCatholic with college students, especially the pastoral care provided for a generation overwhelmed with an array of seductive and false solutions to real problems, like the rise in suicide, drug overdoses, gender ideology, and more. Fr. Mike's online ministry is inseparable from his campus ministry, which fuels the digital outreach that goes far beyond the campus. Outgrowing your facilities can be a "good problem." Until it isn't. Until you miss that student who's at the end of his rope and wants to meet Jesus. Until you lose yet another opportunity to speak compassion and truth to millions online because your "studio" isn't available because another event is in need of the space.

The time has come to seize this tremendous opportunity for continued growth and embrace where the Holy Spirit will lead. What can the bulldogCatholic team do with a Newman Center built to more fully respond to the Holy Spirit's outpouring of grace through this most important and fruitful ministry?

Let's find out.

Sowing the Seeds of Faith

WELCOME

Adequate gathering **spaces** for meetings and events to welcome, form, and accompany

WORSHIP

A beautiful **church** where students and visitors can worship and celebrate the sacraments

WORD

A recording **studio** to share the truth and joy of the Gospel and to form Catholic leaders and evangelists



With a new Newman Center, the campus will be transformed. There is no monument that says Christ is here. But a church and new center would open the door for so many more students and opportunities.”

– Ben Foster, UMD Alumnus



Seeds of Faith Campaign Goal:

\$30 million
to increase our capacity for **welcome, worship, and word.**

\$20 million
to establish an endowment for building maintenance.

The Seeds of Faith campaign to construct a proper home for the bulldogCatholic ministry is built upon

Three Primary Pillars



Fr. Mike talking with students at a bulldogCatholic event.

WELCOME

We are interested in creating a culture that will change the culture. The new Newman Center will provide students with a “home-away-from-home.”

But even more, we will create a space for students to encounter one another, pursue excellence in their academic work, host Bible studies, foster discipleship, and learn how to share life well. In doing this, we will be meeting one of the human heart’s greatest needs: powerful and genuine relationships.

This center will give us the ability to host large group events with ample kitchen space, host medium sized groups for productive Bible studies, and provide us with smaller areas for one-on-one discipleship.



New evangelization means: never being satisfied with the fact that from the grain of mustard seed, the great tree of the Universal Church grew . . . it means to dare, once again and with the humility of the small grain, to leave up to God the when and how it will grow (Mark 4:26-29)."

– Pope Benedict XVI

WORSHIP

Worship is the greatest thing we do. We strive to give God what He deserves in every aspect of our lives, but especially when it comes to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Quoting Fyodor Dostoevsky, Pope John Paul II stated that “beauty will save the world.” We dream of a church—dedicated to Our Lady of Victory and Our Lady of Sorrows—that will not only engage the minds, hearts, and souls of our students, but will above all give God the glory He deserves.



Initial concept drawing of the church’s interior.

WORD

The Word has gone out to the ends of the earth...

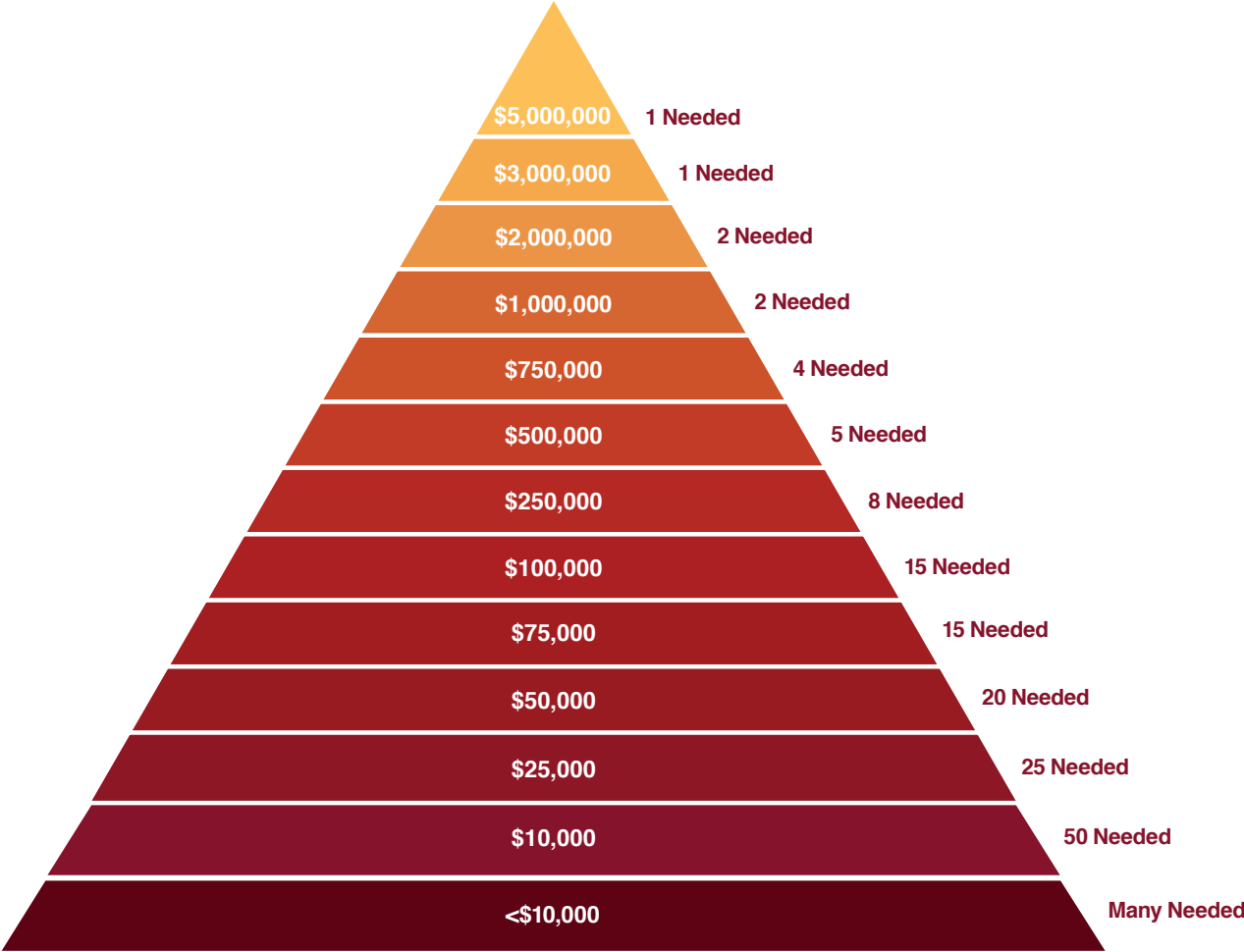
From a tiny living room and a small office in the current Newman house, Fr. Mike has created thousands of videos and podcasts. In building an official studio, Fr. Mike and others will be able to collaborate with each other and create more content that parishes and other ministries will be able to use throughout the country—and world.



Fr. Mike reads from the Bible while recording a podcast.



Campaign Gift Pyramid:



YOUR GIFT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR ETERNITY!

PLEDGE	ANNUAL GIFT 5 YEARS	MONTHLY GIFT	PLEDGE	ANNUAL GIFT 5 YEARS	MONTHLY GIFT
\$5,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$83,333	\$100,000	\$20,000	\$1,667
\$3,000,000	\$600,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$15,000	\$1,250
\$2,000,000	\$400,000	\$33,333	\$50,000	\$10,000	\$833
\$1,000,000	\$200,000	\$16,667	\$25,000	\$5,000	\$417
\$750,000	\$150,000	\$12,500	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$167
\$500,000	\$100,000	\$8,333	<\$10,000	---	---
\$250,000	\$50,000	\$4,167			



Timeline

- ✓ Winter/Spring 2023
 - Feasibility study
- ✓ Fall 2023
 - Campaign planning/major gift solicitations
 - Building Committee begins work
- ✓ 2024-2025
 - Major gift solicitations continue
 - Campaign Committee begins work
- ✓ Summer/Fall 2025
 - 50% Reached
- 2026
 - 75% Reached
 - Begin construction
- 2027
 - 100% reached
 - All pledges fulfilled
 - Construction completed



Resounding Impact



Cardinal Chow

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH ALUMNUS

University of Minnesota Duluth alumnus Cardinal Stephen Chow Sau-yan has been appointed to the College of Cardinals by Pope Francis. Chow is currently the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong. Born in Hong Kong, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Philosophy (double majors) from UMD in 1982 and a Master of Arts in Educational Psychology in 1984.



Fr. Elias Gieske

PRIEST OF THE DIOCESE OF DULUTH

“The time I spent at UMD was the time when I became more confident and intentional in living my Catholic Faith. It was a time when I found myself surprisingly open to the possibility of a priestly vocation. I wouldn’t say I was at all certain. Rather, I felt compelled to take a look at that and spend some time discerning a priestly vocation by attending the seminary. I found, to my surprise, that I was open to the call. After three years of seminary, I felt I was really being called to the priesthood. From that point, it was up to the Church to confirm that call.”



Sophia Pawlowski

UMD STUDENT

“I grew up in a family that understood the importance of going to Mass every Sunday, but for me, it was just a tradition. Throughout high school, I went through many battles that made me question God and his reasonings. When I went to college, I did not expect myself to attend church until I attended an outreach event where Father Mike Schmitz invited me to Mass; he even asked a missionary to drive me. It was at Mass that Father Mike began to talk about our brokenness, and how God longs for us to give this to him. I looked around and saw my peers experiencing the same wave of emotions that I was experiencing. Over time, I recognized I wanted to lay down the brokenness in my heart, and through bulldogCatholic, I was able to do this and started to understand God’s goodness. I now know the God who longs to love and enter the broken parts of my life, and I have a new understanding that Mass wasn’t an ordinary thing my parents attended, but a grace.”



Kelly Pauline

THE BIBLE IN A YEAR LISTENER

“My whole life I struggled to read the Bible and the Catechism. I always feared the day I died, having to face God saying to me, ‘I gave you X number of years on earth and you never once read through the Bible!?’ Now, thanks to Fr. Mike, I’ve been through the Bible twice, and I’m loving his *Catechism in a Year* podcast. I am so grateful for Fr. Mike. I never would’ve gotten through all this without him!”



Bill Higgins

DONOR

“Nothing impresses me more than seeing hundreds of young college guys attending Sunday evening Mass. My wife Sue and I are supporters of the Duluth Newman Center because of the positive difference it is making in the lives of students at a crossroad moment in their lives. If you want to see something truly good, come to the Sunday evening Newman Center Mass in Duluth, Minnesota. See it with your own eyes.”



bulldogCatholic is such a warm and welcoming community that as soon as I went to my first event, I felt like I belonged.”

— Keegan Jones, UMD student



Will You Join Us?

When I arrived, the Holy Spirit was already moving at the Duluth Newman Center. Folks here knew that saying “Yes” to God starts with prayer, then asking, “*What if we...*”, and then showing up.

What if we went out and invited students to come to “Mass and a Meal” . . . brought FOCUS in to help evangelize students . . . broadcast daily Mass online . . . hosted a Bible in a Year podcast?

Everything the Holy Spirit has done through these last several years began with small, inspired ideas that God has blessed because we showed up.

With the ***Seeds of Faith*** campaign, we’re answering the biggest question yet: **What if we built the center to do more of what God is already doing here?**

You see, I’m not okay with missing chances to introduce people to Jesus. I don’t want to miss welcoming a single curious neighbor looking for answers. I don’t want to miss a chance to bring everyone possible to meet Jesus, whether they’re here in Duluth or if they’re in Boise or São Paulo or rural Canada.

We worship God and beg Him to transform our hearts, so we can transform others’ hearts. This is the goal. So, I hope you’ll join me and bulldogCatholic today in responding to the abundant harvest that we’re already seeing—and help us do more of what God is already doing through us.

in Christ,
Fr. Mike Schmitz



Scan the QR code to watch the
Seeds of Faith campaign video!

bulldogCatholic

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www.bulldogcatholic.org/seeds-of-faith
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Photos courtesy of bulldogCatholic