

Cool Thoughts: **Brick by Brick**



If I have learned anything in the last 30 years as a priest, and as someone who has worked with college students for many of these years, it is the very fact that young people have not given up on Jesus Christ.

I am reminded of this each day by the hundreds of students who enter RIT and the Catholic Newman Community. Students gather for Catholic Mass, confession, retreats, Pastoral Counseling, or even some social event to get to know other students. The young adults I have the privilege – and it is a privilege! – of meeting want to meet Jesus Christ. Even more surprising, they want to share Him with others on campus! Therefore, RIT Newman does not struggle to develop student leadership. As a matter

of fact, right now we have over 50 student leaders trying to build-up the Church brick by brick, person by person, and prayer by prayer. This is why I will do everything I can to support them!

Just the other day I met a young man, a graduating senior. He spoke with me about his passion for his Catholic faith and the real yearning he had for evangelizing other young adults. This young man was just baptized Catholic and already spent a summer working in a Catholic mission. He has even started a prayer group on campus using the Church's Divine Office (Liturgy of the Office). He challenged me to rethink how I can make certain the Newman Community has all it can to support his efforts with a structure that guides and supports all who seek to grow in Christ.

I can tell you this remarkable young man is not alone! For every one of him, there are 10 others waiting to grow as leaders, who seek to take full responsibility for their faith even in a world where there are MANY competing values, conflicting views, and disruptive ways of living as a Christian.

"A vibrant Catholic faith community on campus is critical, and our students demand it...Brick by brick, we are building a community founded on Christ and the Church."

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And our students know this. The world will change, and even universities will change. However, our faith, the Sacraments of the Church, and our need for community is met with the Sacred Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ who is always the source of our hope and our aspirations.

Not everything is rosy. It's not new that we have our own challenges. The Church always has them in every generation. But in every age and with every challenge the Church, founded on Jesus Christ, becomes even stronger. The pandemic has been tough. Students are dealing with a significant amount of mental health issues and greater need of socialization and engagement with others. That's what young people demand. It is what they need the most. When that engagement is founded on Jesus Christ, they will have a lifetime of joy and hope despite the challenges.

Newman too has its challenges: a high level of staff turnover and developing a growing budget and providing for students in great need test our limited resources. To be completely honest with you, the need for greater resources keeps me up at night.

A vibrant Catholic faith community on campus is critical, and our students demand it. Research shows us that many young people are walking away from their faith. Better put, they are being pulled from it. And our Newman ministry grounds them in it. It is critical that we are successful in building and maintaining that faith.

Brick by brick, we are building a community founded on Christ and the Church. I am so happy and grateful you, like our students, want to know Christ. He is, after all, our strength and our hope.

Blessings upon you and your family,

Rev. Brian C. Cool, Director of the Catholic Newman Community at RIT

Student Spotlight: **Taode Ogden '24**

*Staunton, Virginia
Game Design & Development*



"Taode is a welcoming, generous face of the Catholic Newman Community here at RIT – he is always willing to lend a hand and a smile to those in need."

**– Sr. Leandra Kosmoski, SSJ,
Pastoral Associate**

Taode Ogden is a 3rd year student, majoring in Game Design & Development. He has been deeply involved with the RIT Catholic Community since his first year, a decision he'd happily make again!

Originally from a small, somewhat isolated town, Taode has been able to meet so many fascinating and inspiring individuals from all walks of life. He also credits his decision to become involved with Newman with cementing his beliefs into something more genuine and meaningful for him.

Newman has helped keep Taode centered and true to himself, with his Catholic beliefs at his core, through the excitement of beginning a new era and finding himself over and over again. Taode lives his faith through stewardship, proudly serving as the Service & Outreach Chair of the Newman Student Board. He organizes volunteers to tutor at a local middle school in Rochester, enriching the lives of the students served and opening up the perspectives of the volunteers to the needs of the community and world at large. Taode's faith provides a springboard into action, through which he is driving force for good, setting an incredible example for his peers. His generous spirit and faith nurtured by Newman shine through!

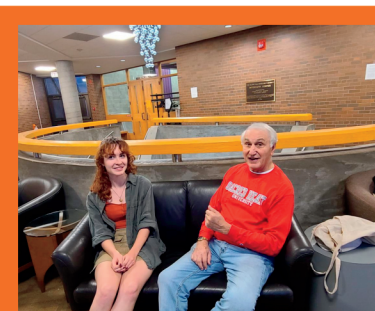
Student Spotlight: **Theresa Haas '25**

*Chester, Pennsylvania
Psychology*

Theresa Haas is no stranger to the fear many first-year students face when entering into the new world of college. The 2nd year Psychology major was nervous meeting new people and trying to find a place where she fit in. RIT was a very different environment than what she was used to – but she found great friends in the Catholic Newman Community to ease the transition. Shy at first, Theresa became very involved through her first year, attending Mass and many social events. She even began praying with friends outside of official Newman gatherings! The Newman Community became a home, a safe place for Theresa to be herself.

Theresa has become even more involved in her second year: as the Chair for Alpha and Small Groups, singing in the choir, and attending daily Mass as often as her schedule allows. She is also an advocate for Newman, representing Catholic life at orientation and using her voice to bring more students into the community. Theresa feels blessed to be part of Newman, taking her leadership role very responsibly. She is excited to be an example of faith for her fellow students and to learn from them as well. Campus Minister Mike Vernarelli says that "one of the most gratifying things about being a campus minister is watching our Newman students grow not only in their faith, but in their leadership skills as well."

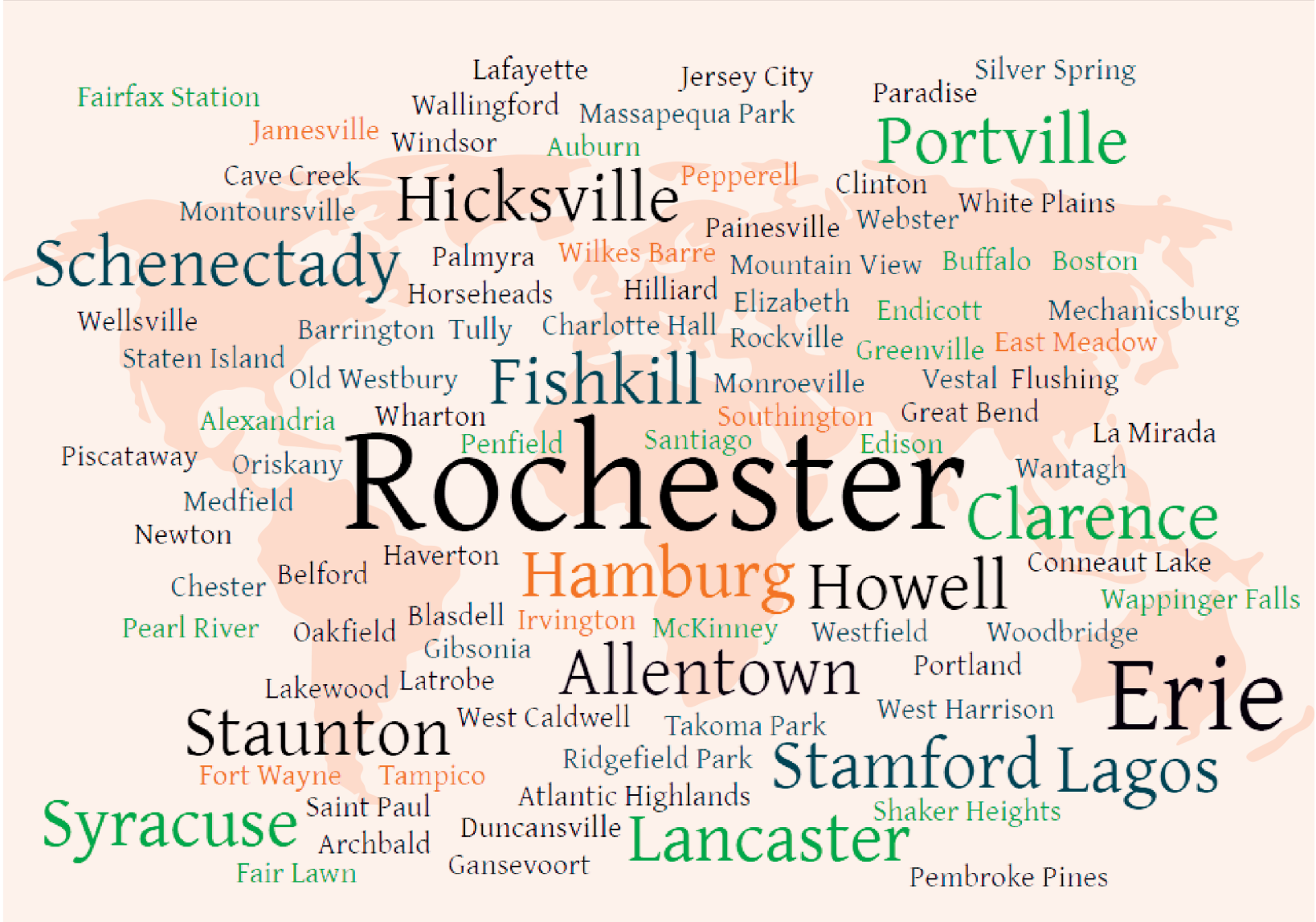
In the future, Theresa hopes that her research will help others, while she takes care of a large garden (perfect for cooking!) and many cats. When she isn't at Newman, you can find her sewing, reading, or hiking!



"Theresa has a strong faith, and it's wonderful to see how she continues to grow in her ability to affect the faith lives of others in our community."

**– Mike Vernarelli,
Campus Minister**

Newman Around the Country and the World from *over 140 cities, 25 states, and 5 countries*



Meet the Staff!

Rev. Brian C. Cool
Director

Sr. Leandra Kosmoski, SSJ
Pastoral Associate

Mike Vernarelli
Campus Minister

Kristen Leschhorn
Campus Minister

Sr. Leandra Kosmoski, SSJ

Mike Vernarelli

Kristen Leschhorn

Advisory Commiittee

Richard DeMartino '82, '09
Quynh-Thy Do '18
Ron Dufort '15
Dimple Joseph '18
Mark Saunders '18
Kevin Sheldon '02

Trustees
Jim Gaudet
Dan Rosica

A stylized cross logo composed of thick black and orange lines. The vertical bar is black, and the horizontal bar is orange. The arms of the cross are slightly offset, creating a modern, geometric design.

Ron Dufort '15

Mark Saunders '18

Trustees

Dan Rosica



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TigerStripes

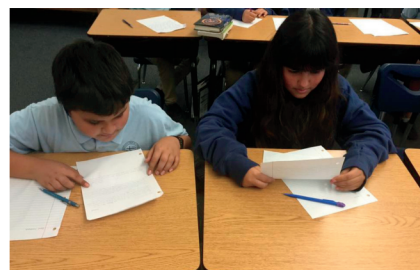
"Live the Gospel by serving others."

Thanks to the support of the **Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester Ministry Foundation**, the Tiger Stripes ministry program was developed at RIT. It is a servant leadership development program that calls students to look inward so that they can go outward to serve and love those who live on the margins of society. The program forms the whole person, inviting the student to lead by serving and to reflect on that service in a way that deepens their understanding of their relationship with God and the world around them. The leadership and service leads each student into lifelong service to and with others, beyond each person's individual academic career at RIT.

Tiger Stripes Ministry Program is partnered with **Nativity Preparatory Academy** in Rochester, NY. Tiger Stripes ministers tutor and mentor young students in need, offering support that goes beyond academics.



Nativity Preparatory Academy



Nativity Students



Year-End Giving

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are able to continue our
Christ-Center ministry.
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