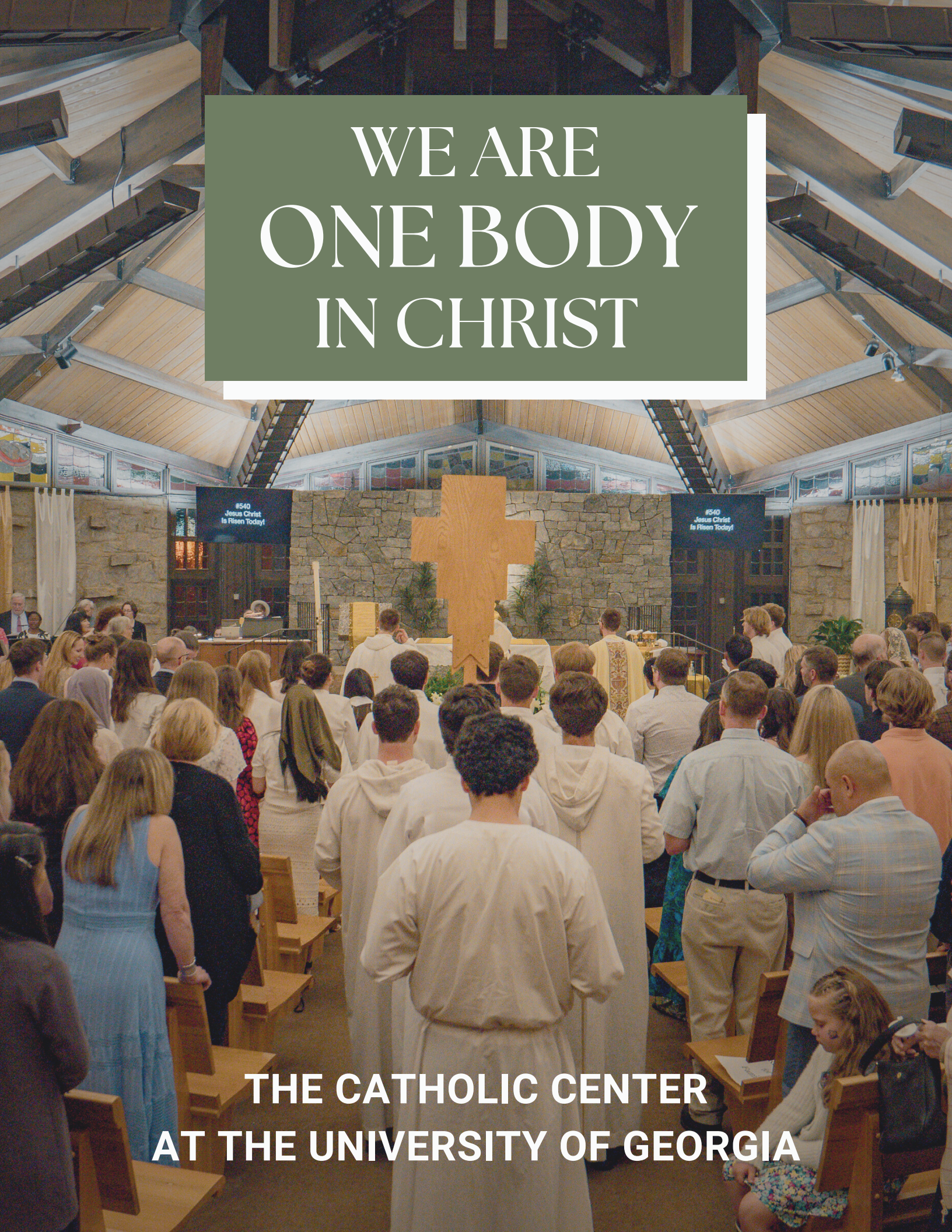




WE ARE
ONE BODY
IN CHRIST

THE CATHOLIC CENTER
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Behold, how good and
pleasant it is when
brothers dwell in unity!

PSALM 133:1



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from Fr. Brian

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Community
Through Prayer
and Play

communio

Hey friends,

I wanted to share a glimpse of the community forming here at The Catholic Center. These students are building something real and deep, something that Pope Benedict XVI would call *communio* — a unity rooted in Christ Himself.

What is remarkable is how they are not just attending events or socializing. They are showing up for each other in ways that go beyond the surface, placing Christ at the center of their lives and relationships. As Pope Benedict once said, “Communion with the Lord is always also communion with one another.”

Their commitment is simple yet powerful — serving, praying, and lifting each other up when it matters. This community is more than just a group; it is a place where Christ is at work, bringing people together in a way that transforms.

And at the heart of this *communio* is the Eucharist. Every time we gather around the altar, we are drawn deeper into that unity — not just with Christ, but with each other. This bond calls us to a self-giving love, the kind that stays steady and strong even through life’s challenges.

In Christ, we become a family — a brotherhood and sisterhood that lasts. Together, we’re sent out to carry His love into the world, knowing we are not walking alone.

Thank you for your prayers and support. You’re a vital part of what is happening here, and I am deeply grateful.

In Christ,

**FR. BRIAN
MCNAVISH**
DIRECTOR



SERVING OUR STUDENTS

WORSHIP

MASS

Sunday

8am, 10:30am, 12:30pm, 5pm

Monday–Thursday

5:30pm

Friday

8am

Saturday

5pm

ADORATION

Monday

9am–5pm

Tuesday–Wednesday

9–10am

Thursday

9am–5pm

Friday

8:30–9:30am

CONFESSION

Wednesday

4–5pm

Saturday

3:30–4:30pm

FORMATION

IGNITE

On Wednesdays at 8pm, freshmen are invited to Ignite. Dinner is provided, and after a talk, freshmen break out into small groups led by upperclassmen.

ABLAZE

Every other Tuesday at 8pm, upperclassmen gather for Ablaze, which consists of dinner, a talk, and small groups.

SEEKING WATER

On alternate Tuesdays at 8pm, all are welcome to the chapel to hear a talk followed by praise and worship before the Blessed Sacrament. The student band, Wellspring Music Collective, leads the congregation in song.

FOCUS

*Fellowship of
Catholic University
Students*

Through Bible studies, discipleship, and mission trips, our FOCUS missionaries inspire and build up students in faith, sending them out to spread the Good News and “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

A YEAR IN REVIEW

NUMBERS FROM THE 2023–2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

448

SUNDAY AND
DAILY MASSES



320

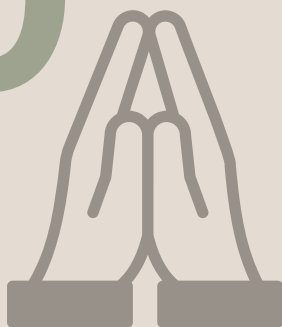
AVERAGE ATTENDANCE AT
SUNDAY STUDENT MASS

75

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
AT DAILY MASS

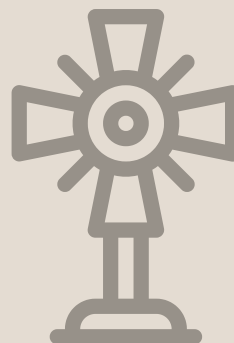
200

HOURS OF
CONFESSION



450

HOURS OF
EUCCHARISTIC
ADORATION





220

STUDENTS FED WEEKLY AT
SUNDAY NIGHT DINNER

FOCUS

213 STUDENTS IN
BIBLE STUDIES

64 STUDENTS IN
DISCIPLESHIP



125

STUDENT
LEADERS

150

SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, AND
SERVICE STUDENT EVENTS

27

CONVERTS

9

STUDENT
SPONSORS

14

CONFIRMED
ADULTS

INSPIRING



FR. ARTURO MERRIMAN
UGA CLASS OF 2015

Have you ever been truly stunned by the beauty and goodness of our humanity?

Fr. Arturo Merriman was when he attended the University of Georgia, and that began his gradual acceptance of God's invitation to the priesthood.

As a student at UGA, Fr. Arturo socialized in the Catholic circle; he went to Mass often, was involved in a small group of fellow faithful men, and simply hung out around The Catholic Center.

But loving God "opened my heart to humanity instead of just thinking about my little Catholic group. I just started to see how beautiful God works in all people," he said.

Little by little, the Lord gave Fr. Arturo the courage to say yes to the priesthood. He was close to the priest

at the local parish, St. Joseph's, and saw how genuine and down-to-earth he was. When Fr. Michael Bremer graduated from UGA, Fr. Arturo saw first-hand a man who followed God to the seminary. Fr. Arturo joined the workforce for a few years after graduation, but he wasn't feeling called to his career, which was further confirmation of his vocation.

Finally, he answered with assurance, "Who is God calling you to love, and how does He want you to love them?" he said. He responded with a yes to seminary. He attended St. Vincent de Paul Seminary in Boynton Beach, FL and was ordained on June 1, 2024. Fr. Arturo is now a parochial vicar at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Dalton.

His best discernment advice is to "speak to God honestly, and focus on that relationship above all else," he said, because that relationship gives us our identity, which gives us our vocation. Living presently and encountering each moment with Christ is important, too, because vocation happens through our daily experiences. "We have to live into our vocations, through our feelings, through our desires, through our repulsion from people or things. We get the content for what to talk to God about," Fr. Arturo said.

Fr. Arturo said that recently, the Lord has been teaching him once again to be confident in His Truth and be bold in living out and sharing the salvific message. "When we become one with Him, we can do anything! We can do impossible things with the Gospel," he said.

VOCATIONS

When Sr. Josephine Mary Ceci entered the University of Georgia as a freshman, “I had never met a religious sister. I had never met a nun. I didn’t even know that that was still a thing, that people still did that,” she said. What a journey God had in store for her.

Sr. Josephine Mary grew up in a family that was Catholic by name but not by practice. In her teen years, however, through the witness and companionship of one of her friends who was Catholic, she decided to get confirmed, although Sunday Mass became the extent of her faith.

Things changed in college, thanks to a good community who kept inviting her into prayer and faithful fellowship. She joined a Bible study and a *Lectio Divina* group, she began attending daily Mass and adoration, and she returned to the sacrament of confession for the first time in over a decade.

“I started to grow in love of my faith and in love with Christ, which is something I never experienced before,” she said.

Her deep love of prayer sparked a curiosity: “What if I just feel called to pray?” Although other girls around her were discerning religious life, she never considered the possibility for herself. With her broken past, especially, she felt like she did not meet the “qualifications” to become a sister.

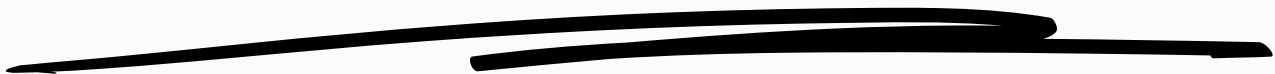
After much discernment, Sr. Josephine Mary graduated UGA committed to joining the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne, Congregation of St. Rose of Lima, and in 2019, she entered as a postulant. She is currently in her temporary vows and lives at the motherhouse in Hawthorne, NY.

The Dominicans of Hawthorne balance their lives of prayer with caring for people who are terminally ill from cancer. Sr. Josephine Mary said she never expected to focus on healthcare, but it has been a blessing. “It’s not a life that I would’ve chosen for me, but it’s a life that I am grateful was chosen for me. Yes, we take care of those who are dying from cancer, but our home — it’s not a gloomy place. It’s so full of joy and happiness, and I get to sing and dance with the patients and be silly and make them laugh and smile and enjoy the time that they have left before they enter into eternity with the Lord, and that is just a huge gift,” she said.



SR. JOSEPHINE MARY CECI, O.P.
UGA CLASS OF 2017

INSPIRING MISSIONARIES



*Here I am,
Lord, send me!*

ISAIAH 6:8

Eleven Catholic Center alumni from the UGA 2024 graduating class have committed to one or two years of full-time missionary work. We praise God for their heart for the Gospel!

FOCUS

Rachel Brock
Naomi Chernowski
Jackson Coulter
Ethan Dawidowicz

LIFE TEEN

Nick Anderson
Margaret Mary Boyle
Johnny Ede

DAMASCUS

Julia Gibson
Mary Katherine Powell
Rafe Rynne
Claire Walker



MARGARET MARY BOYLE

UGA CLASS OF 2024

LIFE TEEN MISSIONARY

When Margaret Mary (Meg) Boyle was in seventh grade, she came to Life Teen's Covecrest campus in Tiger, GA for a team-building retreat with her scouting troop, American Heritage Girls. In the brief interactions she had with the missionaries there, the Lord moved her heart.

"I was so captivated by them," Meg said, "and I was like, 'I want to do this for the rest of my life. I don't want to go to college.'"

But years later, Meg found herself at Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville and then graduated with a degree in fashion merchandising from the University of Georgia in May 2024.

Yet during her academic career, Life Teen remained a part of her story. In the summer of 2022, she served as a missionary at Covecrest, accompanying campers during meals, recreation, worship, and small group discussion.

She went on the student spring retreats in 2023 and 2024 at Hidden Lake (in Dahlonega) and Covecrest, respectively; she even co-planned and directed the latter with fellow student Mary Elizabeth Crissy.

After her senior year, Meg's plan was to move to New York City immediately, but God had something else in store. He invited her to apply to full-time mission with Life Teen. "The more and more that I filled out and completed the application, the more I was realizing how strong this desire was of my own," Meg said.

Now, she lives and works at Covecrest where her day-to-day looks like prayer and formation and preparing for, helping with, and hosting weekend retreats for middle and high school students.

As a missionary, Meg pours her time and energy into serving others, but she is learning what it is like to let the Lord serve her. "He's teaching me what it looks like to receive," she said, by breaking down the walls of her independence and leaning on His care and providence.

Meg said that in her year of mission, she hopes "for the Lord to soften my heart even more" and for "a desire to love more greatly and more deeply."



RAFE RYNNE

UGA CLASS OF 2024

DAMASCUS MISSIONARY

When Rafe Rynne came to the University of Georgia as a freshman, he was seeking a home he was already a part of — the Catholic Church.

“I was raised Catholic, but I didn’t understand why,” Rafe said.

He was involved with a Protestant ministry on campus; it was very welcoming, and the people were kind and loving, but something was missing.

That “something” was Jesus in the Eucharist.

He started coming to The Catholic Center, and at Mass and Seeking Water, he would be brought to tears. There was a peace present there that he never experienced in other Christian denominations. Still, Rafe wrestled with confusion and uncertainty about the Catholic faith, especially regarding the Eucharist.

Yet, God was patient and was moving in Rafe’s heart. The summer after his sophomore year, Rafe was accepted to be a counselor at Damascus Mission, a camp and retreat center, in Centerburg, OH.

He thought, “I’m about to work a summer at a Catholic camp, and I feel like I don’t know anything,” he said.

So much fruit was born. He received formational training and learned to pray and hear God’s voice. And, through witnessing a young girl’s encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist in personal benediction — seeing her profound joy and awe — Rafe’s doubt was dispelled.

Rafe spent his final two years as a student very involved at The Catholic Center and returned to Damascus in summer 2023 and 2024. He is now committed to two years of full-time mission with Damascus. Week to week, he could be anything from a counselor, to program staff, to a tech/AV operator to help execute three retreats a week, primarily for middle and high schoolers. “Some of them are troublemakers, but they’re awesome; they’re world-changers at the same time. That’s who they’re gonna grow up to be, especially with the encounters with Christ that they’re having,” he said.

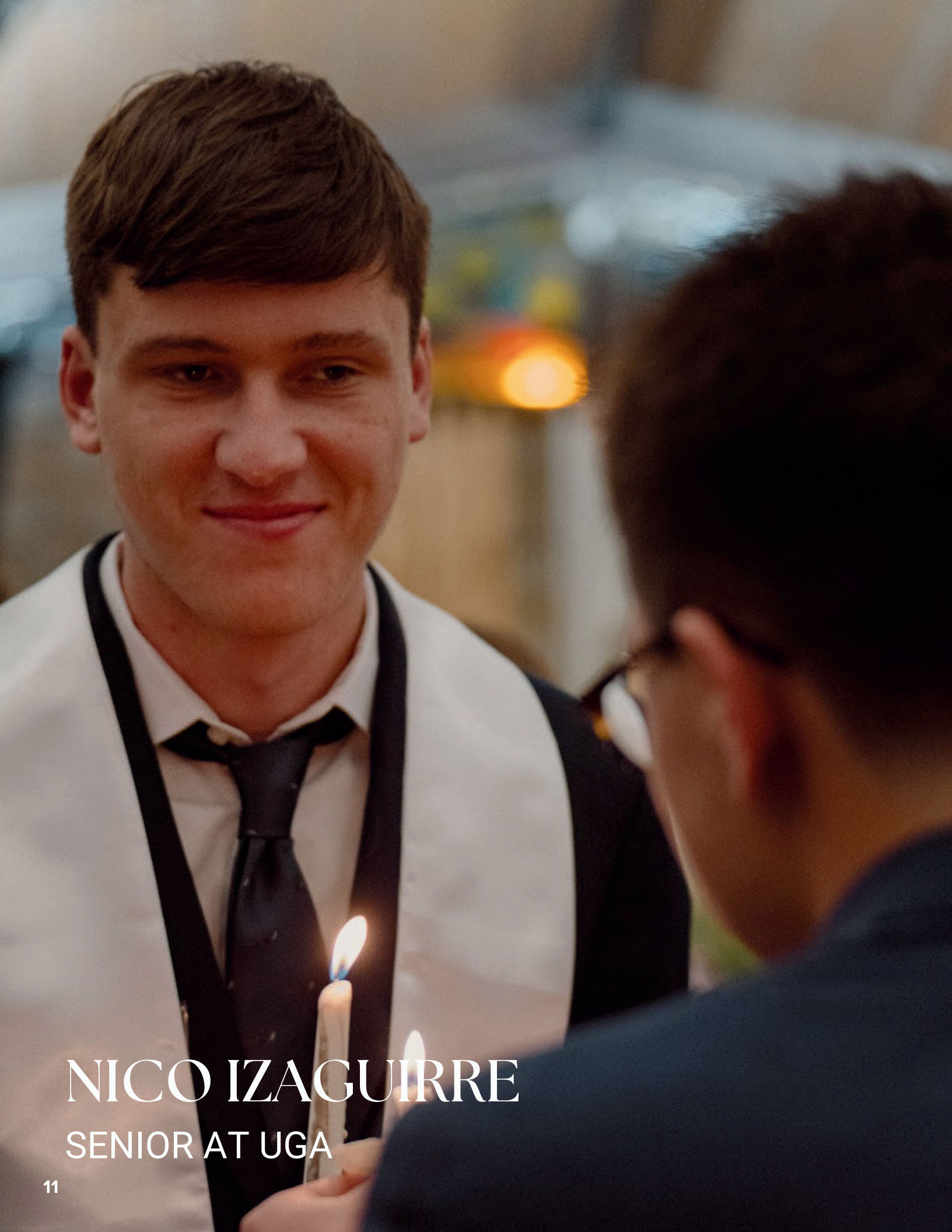
Rafe said the Lord is teaching him about his belovedness through unexpected friendships and an invitation to new trust, particularly in interacting with the campers. “It’s really humbling to see what the Lord allows to happen through me ministering to these kids and see how much He’s able to move through my yes to Him,” he said.

“The more and more I say yes to Him, the more I’m like, the things of UGA that I was concerned with, I get to partner with God in helping to save souls, and it’s the most beautiful thing,” Rafe said.



***"I'M ALIVE WITH JESUS,
AND IT'S AMAZING."***

***"IF IT IS NOT OF
THE LORD, IT IS
NOT LIFE-GIVING."***



NICO IZAGUIRRE
SENIOR AT UGA

COMING HOME TO CHRIST

On January 10, 2022, then-freshman Nico Izaguirre accompanied his friend Ethan Dawidowicz to The Catholic Center to watch the Dawgs take on Alabama in the College Football Playoff National Championship.

He walked away with a celebratory win and pride in UGA but also a newfound curiosity about The Catholic Center. Particularly, he was touched by how warm, kind, and welcoming people were.

“There are so many things to do on campus, but this place is kind of separate from that in that everyone tries to be inclusive, tries to bring you in to this really fulfilling community we have here. That really sparked an interest in my heart to become Catholic. I wanted to be part of this family,” Nico said.

Discernment and further getting to know the student community at The Catholic Center led him to enroll in RCIA in the 2023–2024 school year. For the first time, he started to pray and learned how to hear God’s voice. He was exposed to the foundations and truths of the Catholic faith.

While RCIA was a beautiful process, in that the Lord was drawing Nico closer to His heart, the experience was not without difficulty. “I would compare myself to other people that I knew were more faithful, that I knew who grew up Catholic,” Nico said. He felt a pressure to reach some perfect standard.

Since then, though, “I have learned to give myself more grace and to always try to put a relationship with Jesus as my priority, rather than doing all these things that are right in theory, but I know that Jesus wants to know me more than He wants to know what I do,” he said.

To accompany him on his journey to Catholicism, Nico chose Ethan as his sponsor, then-senior Rafe Rynne and fifth-year student Riley Mitchell as his godparents, and St. Francis of Assisi as his patron saint. As per St. Francis, “I always knew that my love for animals and nature was God’s way of communicating with me,” Nico said.

Easter Vigil was a beautiful night. Nico was surprised by the support he received from friends and family, even some who are not Catholic. He received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion.

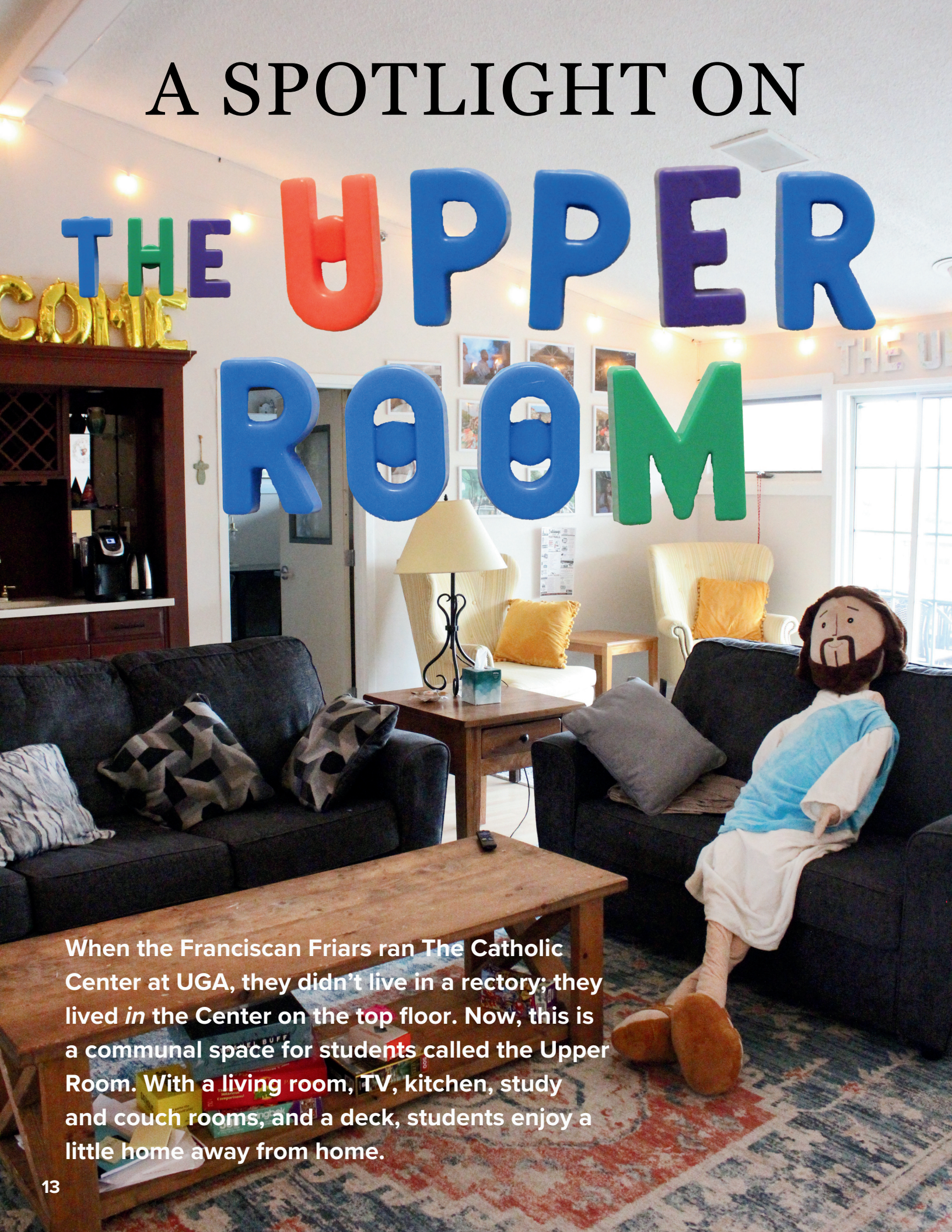
“It was an outpouring of grace and love and peace that night. It was like a taste of what I feel Heaven will be like,” he said, and “receiving the Eucharist for the first time was just really, really cool.”

Nico said that the Lord has been teaching him to be present and content with what he has, with what is in front of him. There are many things he desires that he does not have, he said, “but there’s a lot that I do have, and He wants me to appreciate the smaller things and take life slower.”

“God is all I need, and I have to keep remembering that.”

A SPOTLIGHT ON

THE WUPPER ROOM



When the Franciscan Friars ran The Catholic Center at UGA, they didn't live in a rectory; they lived *in* the Center on the **top** floor. Now, this is a communal space for students called the Upper Room. With a **living** room, TV, kitchen, study and couch rooms, and a deck, students enjoy a little home away from home.

If I had to sum up the essence of The Catholic Center in one word, I can't help but think of community. We worship and pray together. We are built up in our faith together. Thanks to Sunday night dinners and student ministries, we eat meals together.

But there is a special kind of community that happens in the Upper Room, a type of community that parents, parishioners, and supporters of The Catholic Center do not see, a type of community I do not want students or alumni to take for granted.

Between and after classes, in the humdrum of every day, the Upper Room welcomes many faces coming and going.

It is a dichotomous environment. Sometimes, it is silent. Students keep to themselves, diligently studying yet enjoying the quiet presence of others. Other times, it is loud with laughter and lively chatter. Silly conversations could be occurring in the common area while an important meeting is going on in a separate room.

The Upper Room allows students to interact with new people, build deeper relationships with acquaintances, and spend time with friends when they find themselves there.

That is the beauty in the ordinariness of the Upper Room, but shenanigans are also quite usual, from playing Mario Kart to hosting movie nights to doing karaoke after formal until 2am. These are some of my Upper Room stories, but ask any student, and they will have their own to tell.

The customary happenings around The Catholic Center, like Mass, student ministries, and scheduled social events, are great for connecting with others. But I find that it is the laid-back space of the Upper Room that joins us together in a special way.

It is comfortable. Homey. Playful. Youthful. Joyful. Authentic. And simple. The simplicity of being together, of how good it is to simply be together, is what moves me the most. The casual, natural interactions are opportunities to cherish and appreciate one another and to just be ourselves. How I love the little ways that Christ bonds our community in love!



RACHEL
LICHTENWALNER

JUNIOR AT UGA
CATHOLIC CENTER STAFF MEMBER

THERE IS
nothing
ON THIS
EARTH *more*
TO BE
prized
THAN *true*
friendship.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

ON MISSION IN THE MOUNTAINS

**FOCUS MISSION TRIP TO LIMA, PERU
MARCH 2–10, 2024**

When I reflect back upon my time in Peru, I have an immense sense of gratitude. From bonding with my fellow UGA students to meeting “los vecinos” in the mountains of Pamplona, I was surrounded by His love. When applications for the trip opened, I hastily applied without much thought since I had been going on mission trips for the past two spring breaks.

However, the Lord tested me a lot in the days leading up to the trip and the first day in Peru. I had to let go of my need for control, because we did not have our trip detail meeting until the day before our flight. Then, on the first day in Peru, as we walked up the mountain, a huge sense of doubt and dread started to fill my head.

Yet all these nerves faded away after our community Mass with “los vecinos” on the mountain — that is when I knew the Lord placed me on this trip for the purpose of immense personal and spiritual growth.



From that point forward, the Lord worked in my heart by increasing my faith and trust in Him. I was able to spend a full holy hour in silence, I engaged in more intentional conversations with those around me, and I even explained what the Eucharist was to a girl in Spanish.

Overall, this trip was a huge landmark in my faith journey, and I am forever grateful for the role it had in God’s plan for my life.

**MARY MARGARET
WOODS**

SOPHOMORE AT UGA

COMMUNITY THROUGH *prayer*



SEEK

At SEEK, the annual FOCUS conference, thousands of college students across the country gather for five days of prayer, formation, and community. From perpetual adoration to renowned Catholic speakers to meeting religious orders, there are several opportunities to grow in one's faith. In 2024, 68 UGA students attended SEEK.

HEALING SERVICES

The Catholic Center typically hosts a healing service once a semester that is open to students and the local community. The evening consists of worship and intercessory prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.



EUCCHARISTIC PROCESSION

October 31, 2023 was The Catholic Center's first Eucharistic procession around nearby campus and student housing. By walking, praying, and singing with Jesus in the monstrance, students boldly proclaimed their faith outside the walls of the CC. Making this an annual event is in the books!

SPRING RETREAT

Every spring, students make a weekend retreat to not only recharge through rest and play but to enter into intentional prayer and reception of the sacraments. It is always a memorable, fruitful experience!



COMMUNITY THROUGH *play*

MR. CATHOLIC CENTER

Mr. Catholic Center, an annual fundraising event, invites students, family, and friends of the CC to a night of entertainment and playful competition. Contestants do a group performance and showcase their talents to see who will be crowned Mr. Catholic Center for the year. Then-sophomore Paul DesPres took home the 2024 title.



MEN COOK FOR WOMEN

Men Cook for Women is a special opportunity for the men of the CC to honor and appreciate the women during the Valentine's Day season. They host an experience full of superb chivalry, fine dining, flowers, and live music.

INTERFAITH FIELD DAY

At Interfaith Field Day, CC students invite other student religious organizations to a local park for a few hours of fun and friendly competition, from soccer, volleyball, Spikeball, and more!



DANCES

For a semi-formal in the fall and a formal in the spring, students come together for a night of movin' and groovin'!





At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread into His hands and blessed it, and it became His Body; when we, His followers, gather around the table — gathered into His hands — and partake of the Lord's Supper, then we become His Body, too.

FR. MICHAEL
BREMER

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

(706) 543-2293 | 1344 S Lumpkin St, Athens, GA 30605



The Catholic Center at UGA



@catholicdawgs