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Inside this Issue:  
Generosity and Warmth in the  
White Mountains  
Returning to the Faith Through  
the BRCC

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Fall 2018 BRCC retreat

# BROWN-RISD CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

## MISSION & PURPOSE:

The Brown-RISD Catholic Chaplaincy provides opportunities for the students, staff, faculty, and alumni of Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design to celebrate their faith. Our goal is to help others deepen their spiritual lives within the context of community. Through worship, education, and community outreach, we hope to enable the members of the BRCC to bring their faith to bear on their pursuits within the Brown and RISD communities and beyond.

## THE *BROWN TOGETHER* CAMPAIGN:

Brown University is in the midst of an ambitious campaign to raise \$3 billion for various initiatives of the University. If you are considering a gift to Brown, all or part your donation can be earmarked for the University's Catholic endowment. While this does not aid the Becket Association's annual appeal, we do depend on the interest from this endowment to fund more than half of the student programming in the Brown-RISD Catholic Community. Email catholic@brown.edu to learn how to designate your gift!

## LETTER FROM THE CAMPUS MINISTER



I remember, as a college student, feeling a sense of excitement and awe upon returning to campus each fall. Even though I was leaving my family home, I felt that, in some way, I was coming back to another kind of home that I had developed at school, a place where I felt welcomed, loved, and challenged. Being reunited with the friends that I grew to love brought to me a sense of peace and joy, and being back in the physical space where memories were built brought those memories back to light and made them present once again.

Pope Francis writes in his encyclical *On Care for our Common Home*, "The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good...going back to these places is a chance to recover something of [our] true selves."

It has been beautiful to see how students here have discovered this sense of place, even though the BRCC does not have a physical center or a space to call its own. The strength of the community has created a quasi-physical space where students feel at peace and at home, and where they can connect with God while discovering and sharing "something of their true selves." This has been evidenced by the tremendous growth that we have seen this semester: we had almost twice the number of students participate in our fall retreat compared to last year, we have an average of 10 additional students attend Munderground each week, and a group of students has committed to weekly tutoring at a local parish. This year has brought a renewed sense of cohesiveness and contagious joy as the BRCC increasingly becomes a place where students' true selves can flourish and shine.

Megan O'Brien Crayne

## LETTER FROM THE CHAPLAIN



Dear Friends,

Those familiar with Brown's Open Curriculum might be familiar with the Group Independent Study Project (GISP). If Brown doesn't offer a course on a topic that's of interest to students, they can research and develop their own credit-bearing course, which is overseen by a faculty sponsor. Last spring, a group of students expressed an interest in designing a course to explore Catholic theology (something Brown hasn't offered in many years!).

I lent them a hand in developing a course on the Fathers of the Church and Thomas Aquinas, and they invited Professor of Religious Studies Susan Ashbrook Harvey to be their faculty sponsor. Every Monday afternoon the five students



Fr. Albert Duggan, O.P. and Megan O'Brien Crayne, with BRCC students on pastoral council retreat

enrolled in the GISP get together, and I join them as we discuss the readings assigned for the week. We've read Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, Leo the Great and others, and as I write this we're moving into the second half of the course to look at how Thomas Aquinas engages their thought in his own writings.

To some, this might all seem pretty obscure and antiquated. And yet, the students have been deeply engaged and eager to learn about their faith in a new, intellectually serious way.

There's already talk about designing another GISP for the spring semester. It has been a reminder to me of the value of creating a space for students to explore and embrace their identity as Catholics.

This happens in so many different ways in the Brown-RISD Catholic Community. Whether it's graduate students getting together weekly in the Graduate Center Bar, or Latino

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students venturing over to Smith Hill to attend the Spanish Mass at St. Patrick's, or athletes getting together for a Bible study led by one of our FOCUS missionaries, one of my greatest joys is to see students befriend one another as they journey in their faith.

At the most recent meeting of the Thomas Becket Association, César, one of our student trustees observed that the Catholic Community has grown and become stronger during his time here, and yet he said that the lack of a dedicated space for Catholics to gather presents a barrier. Certainly, there is Manning Chapel, and the meeting spaces of Brown's Office of the Chaplains & Religious Life, but there is no space that we can really call our home on College Hill.

There are certainly benefits to not having such a “home.” On some campuses, Catholic centers become more like fortresses that isolate and separate, rather than spaces that help students connect with one another. In essence, the quality of the space hinges on the nature of the community that inhabits it.

The way our students have built up community in the absence of a dedicated space has convinced me and others of the potential value of a Catholic center near campus. That leaves much to figure out, not least of which, how we would afford it. We'll be exploring the feasibility of such an undertaking in the months ahead, encouraged by Jesus' words: “With God, all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26)!

Fr. Albert Duggan, O.P. '03



## GENEROSITY AND WARMTH IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS

Over the past few years, the BRCC has had a profound impact on my growing faith as an individual while in college.

Just being part of this community on campus has helped me feel at home at Brown. Sharing a smile and wave from friends in the BRCC always brings such a positive surprise to my day, whether I'm walking down Thayer Street from the gym or in the quiet halls of the library. I love getting coffee with the FOCUS missionaries because I always return to my day inspired and reminded why being young and Catholic is so powerful.

As a senior, I have seen the BRCC grow more and more each year. When I was a freshman, I attended Mass but did not participate in other ways. However, as the community grew and programming increased, I found myself naturally getting more and more involved beyond attending Mass. From Mundergrounds (weekly dinner and conversation about a weekly topic), women's groups, Bible studies, tutoring at a local Catholic school, days of service, and weekend retreats to seasonal activities

***“Generosity is the underlying spirit of the BRCC, and I know that this community will be there for me even after I leave campus in May.”***

like apple picking—just to name a few—there are so many opportunities to engage with my faith with the BRCC every single day. From these diverse events, I have learned that faith can be strengthened and take shape in countless ways.

This semester, I am so grateful I made the last-minute decision to go on a hiking trip to the White Mountains in

New Hampshire with the BRCC. I had very little hiking experience, but I knew the BRCC would be a safe and fun group to enjoy the outdoors with while trying something new. But being from sunny California, I underestimated how cold it was—I only brought a flimsy baseball cap and just a few layers instead of the warm gear that was necessary



BRCC students hiking in the White Mountains, New Hampshire.

for the trip. Without even having to ask, several members of the BRCC immediately offered me extra jackets and gloves to borrow. I hadn't even met most of them before the weekend! Needless to say, the extra layers were crucial for getting through the 30-degree hike.

Generosity is the underlying spirit of the BRCC, and I know that this community will be there for me even after I leave campus in May. I will take this spirit of giving and fellowship that I have cultivated with the BRCC to my next adventure in Cincinnati, Ohio, where I will be working at General Mills. I plan on joining a young adult group at a local parish where I can grow further in my faith with a new community and bring the enthusiasm and passion for faith that the BRCC has so graciously given me.

Maya Omori '19

# RETURNING TO THE FAITH THROUGH THE BRCC



I'd like to thank you for donating to the BRCC. I have had a wonderful time being part of the BRCC over the last year—I had been a lapsed Catholic for a long time (around 8 or so years) but God told me, in many subtle yet significant ways, to return to the Church last semester.

When I attended my first on-campus Mass early last March, I was surprised to see so many students at Mass. At that point I knew of no other Catholic Brown students, and so I figured that Catholicism must not be all that popular at Brown. I sat in the back right corner of Manning because I didn't want anyone to see me, a historically non-religious person, actually going to Church.

After attending Mass for a few weeks, I began getting involved in BRCC events. I started by attending Mundergrounds where we would eat dinner and discuss topics through Catholic lenses. Halfway through Mundergrounds, a BRCC'er would talk about why they were Catholic. Hearing their testimonies gave me motivation as I ventured on my spiritual path, which recently had a sharp change in direction, as I was still asking myself the same question. I enjoyed getting to know people

my age who shared the same core beliefs as me. As I attended more Masses and BRCC events, I started to feel more comfortable in my faith and as a Catholic at Brown.

The BRCC has shown me what it means to be a Catholic college student. In the midst of our college student lives, the BRCC reminds me that I am not alone in my pursuit of God, and reminds me, through seeing its dedicated members,

to put God above all other things. Especially in college, in an environment where students hold academics and social life in high regard, it's easy to forget our need for God.

***“In the midst of our college student lives, the BRCC reminds me that I am not alone in my pursuit of God.”***

I'm thankful that the BRCC continues to remind me of the importance of God in my life.

After graduation I will move to the Boston area, and I plan on joining a Catholic community similar to the BRCC!

Alex Sekula '19



Eucharistic Adoration in Manning Chapel

On October 1, Brown was visited by Christ in the Wild Ministries, an evangelical Christian group that tours college campuses every fall to spread their somewhat narrow version of the Gospel. In an event they have dubbed “Sin Awareness Day,” this band of street preachers sets up on the sidewalk across from Faunce Arch, handing out tracts and announcing all that is wrong with the modern university—everything from a decline in religious practice to the teaching of evolution.

Not wanting to be outdone, Fr. Albert and Megan set up a table on the other side of the street, and together with students and FOCUS missionaries, handed out free coffee and tea while engaging in conversation with students as they passed by. Most were very happy to see a counterpoint to the harsh version of the Gospel that was being proclaimed.

As the afternoon continued, we happened to see Professor of Biology Ken Miller, a trustee of the Becket Association and author of Finding Darwin’s God, who paused for a photo op next to our sign!



## HOW DOES YOUR CONTRIBUTION MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

While the Diocese of Providence pays the stipend for the Brown-RISD Catholic Community’s priest chaplain, the livelihood of the BRCC and its many programs also depends heavily on the presence of a lay campus minister. The first priority of the Thomas Becket Association’s annual appeal is to fund the full-time campus minister’s salary and benefits package. As our community grows and develops and we work to reach out to more students, opportunities abound for your donation to go even further. Consider the possibilities...

**\$50,000**

could make it possible to lease a building near campus as a potential Catholic Center.

**\$15,000**

will help us continue to have a team of FOCUS missionaries on campus.

**\$5,000**

will fund our mission trip during spring break.

**\$500**

covers the cost of books and materials for our RCIA program for a year

**\$300**

pays for dinner at our weekly gathering: Mondays at the Underground.

**\$250**

supports a student attending our spring retreat next February.

**\$10**

buys a Bible for a student in one of our FOCUS Bible study groups.

# 2016-2017 THOMAS BECKET ASSOCIATION DONOR LIST

The Thomas Becket Association is a private corporation made up of Catholic alumni and other supporters whose mission is to provide funding for the Catholic ministry at Brown and RISD. Contributions to the annual fund are crucial as they are the only source of support for important ministry resources including the campus minister's position, an annual lecture by a Catholic intellectual, Becket Association operational costs, and material needs not covered by the chaplaincy's programming budget.

This list includes donations received from July 2017 through September 2018. We apologize for any omissions or errors and would appreciate their being brought to our attention.

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The Catholic Chaplaincy, a ministry of the Diocese of Providence, is served by the Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph and supported by the Thomas Becket Association.

**YOUR DONATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR MISSION!**



## ABOUT THE THOMAS BECKET ASSOCIATION



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Contributions to the annual fund are crucial, as they are the only source of support for important ministry resources including the campus minister's position, an annual Catholic lecture, Becket operational costs, and material needs not covered by the chaplaincy's programming budget.

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## NEWS AND EVENTS

For the third year, the BRCC has a team of four missionaries from the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS). Kevin Donkor and Mark Mallari returned from last year and were joined by Angela Bacaling and Cecilia Menendez. They have been leading Bible studies, meeting new students on campus, and helping them to connect with the Catholic community. They're excited to bring a delegation of students to the SEEK 2019 conference in Indianapolis in January.

Just a few weeks into the new semester, students planned an overnight hiking retreat in the White Mountains. About 15 of us drove up to New Hampshire on September 21, where we enjoyed a night of burgers, s'mores, and sleeping in tents. The next morning we split into four groups to do four different hikes, all the while praying the Psalms and reflecting on the beauty of God in nature.

On the weekend of October 26-27, twenty-eight students participated in the BRCC's Fall Retreat at Camp Woodstock in Connecticut. This was by far our largest retreat in recent memory! The theme of the student-led retreat was "The Presence of God." Students enjoyed ample opportunity for reflection and prayer (including Eucharistic Adoration through the night). A spring retreat in February is already in the planning stages!

Last year many students expressed interest in Catholic service opportunities, so this year we got three different recurring service opportunities off the ground at nearby St. Patrick's parish! Students have been tutoring high school students every week in a variety of subjects, and are hoping to begin tutoring their parents in English as well; volunteering twice a month at a meal kitchen; and participating in a monthly work day. Students have been enthusiastic about these opportunities to put their faith into action, and we are excited to see these ministries grow!

## ANNUAL MEETING

The next Annual Meeting of the Thomas Becket Association will take place on Sunday, October 20, 2019 at 12:00pm at Brown University (location TBD). Since this will be Brown's Family Weekend, we'll have a special lunch reception for visiting families to share about the amazing things going on in our community. The annual meeting is open to all donors to the Becket Association who have contributed \$200 or more during this year or last year. If you plan to attend, or for more information, please call us at 401-863-7438 or email [catholic@brown.edu](mailto:catholic@brown.edu).

