Aridity

By Gregory Comiskey

Doubt is a common enough feeling, even among the most ardent of believers. A close study of our saints reveals that as one moves closer and closer to perfection—closer to God—He will unleash His most difficult test of Faith. Saints such as John of the Cross and Therese of the Child Jesus refer to this often torturous condition as "aridity."

Accounts reveal saints walking the halls of their monasteries, abbey or hermitage at night in deeply intense physical and emotional pain. They express almost sensing a physical wall separating themselves, their soul, from God.

It is in this dark of the deep night, in which the soul cannot go forward except by leaning upon pure, naked faith, clinging with all its strength to the belief that God is infinitely good, that He loves it and listens to its cries, that He knows its torment, and allows it to suffer only to purify it.

Continued on p. 2
Explore The Marriage Feast at Cana—The Second Decade of the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary

John 2:3; 2:9-11
When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”
And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

Meditation from Benedict XVI

Jesus . . . gives a sign, in which he proclaims his hour, the hour of the wedding-feast, the hour of union between God and man. He does not merely “make” wine, but transforms the human wedding-feast into an image of the divine wedding-feast, to which the Father invites us through the Son and in which he gives us every good thing, represented by the abundance of wine. The wedding-feast becomes an image of that moment when Jesus pushed love to the utmost, let his body be rent and thus gave himself to us for ever, having become completely one with us—a marriage between God and man. . . . Jesus’ hour has not yet arrived, but in the sign of the water changed into wine, in the sign of the festive gift, he even now anticipates that hour.

—Homily of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI at the Celebration of the Eucharist
Kapellplatz Altötting
September 11, 2006

Aridity, continued

St. Therese of the Child Jesus in the last period of her life wrote, "Our Lord allowed my soul to be plunged in thickest gloom, and the thought of heaven, so sweet from my earliest years, to become for me a subject of torture." She adds, however: "God knows how I try to live by faith, even though it affords me no consolation. I have made more acts of faith during the past year than in all the rest of my life." Alluding to her poems on the happiness of heaven, she confesses: "When I sing . . . of the happiness of heaven and of the eternal possession of God, I feel no joy; I sing only of what I WILL TO BELIEVE.

This is exactly how the soul must conduct itself: BELIEVING BECAUSE IT WILLS TO BELIEVE, not relying on what it feels or experiences, but relying solely upon the Word of God. These acts of pure faith, stripped of all consolation, independent of any feeling whatsoever, are truly heroic acts; they honor God more purely, the more they are based only on divine revelation; and they unite the soul to God, the more stripped they are of all human support. The darkness of the night of the spirit has precisely this end: to accustom the soul to walk by pure Faith, by heroic Faith.

JM

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
Member Updates

Let’s congratulate our members on their recent accomplishments!

- Michael Majerczyk has been accepted to the University of Chicago Graham School’s editing program and has recently had a AA military history certificate conferral from APUS
- Hannah Emmett, Stephanie King, and Steve McDonald made the Q3 Dean’s List

Feature Member—Julie Marie Rieder

Hi. My name is Julie Marie Rieder. My academic journey with American Public University is great. I’m a member of Alpha Phi Sigma, Pi Gamma Mu, Epsilon Phi Phi, and Omicron Honour societies. I love my family. I am a published poet with Poetry.com. I am an aspiring actress and model. I worked for Supermodel Tyra Banks for a little over a year. I sold makeup and skincare at TyraBeauty.com. I thank God my creator. With his blessing all of my dreams will come true.

PTSD: One Veteran’s Perspective from the Fulda Gap to GWOT

The Newman Center proudly presented our advisor Dr. Robert Smith (Smitty) and “PTSD: One Veteran’s Perspective from the Fulda Gap to GWOT” on December 5. Dr. Smith provided a riveting, personal look at Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) throughout military history, including his personal experience from early in his military career to his most recent deployment in Iraq. Dr. Smith shared that PTSD does not only effect military service men and women, but is also common to police officers, emergency medical technicians, fire fighters, emergency room personnel and those in the FBI, ATF, and other dangerous professions. He reviewed the criteria for PTSD, as well as triggers that are likely to affect AMU and APU students and faculty. Importantly, Dr. Smith shared tips to help those who experience PTSD. The presentation is available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/12fjeSptAfHjjc3q_H_TAHiiaaRKF8Q5v/view?usp=sharing

Understanding the difference between Simple and Complex PTSD

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<th>2 Days</th>
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<tr>
<td>Combat Stress</td>
<td>Acute Stress Disorder</td>
<td>Acute PTSD</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Chronic PTSD</td>
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Acute Stress Disorder: symptoms develop after a few days or weeks after traumatic event
Acute PTSD: Symptoms have been present for less than 3 months
PTSD: symptoms persist for a period of time or occurs at least 6 months after event occurred (delayed onset)
Chronic PTSD: Symptoms have lasted longer than 6 months
Book Review


Review by Robert Smith, PhD

*The Fisherman’s Tomb* centers on the search for Saint Peter’s tomb in Rome. Although that sounds interesting in an archaeological sense, author John O’Neill makes it clear early on how much more was involved in all of this.

What is hard to conceptualize today is that early Christianity was viewed as a dangerous cult by the Roman Empire and as such, it found any and all methods acceptable to root out this latent evil. It is unknown how many early Christians the Romans martyred, but the number cannot be inconsiderable. Yet despite its best efforts and draconian policy, Christianity continued to grow and spread across the Roman Empire.

The focus of the story, though, is the search for the tomb of the Fisherman, Saint Peter. There was considerable theological debate if Peter had even gone to Rome. As such, it cast doubts on his subsequent martyrdom by upside down crucifixion. In fact, there were those who argued that Peter’s death was early church propaganda, for unlike Paul who was also martyred in Rome and whose tomb lay outside Rome, there was no trace of one for Peter. The church was under pressure from both Fascism and Communism. In a sense, it needed to assure the faithful by examples of sacrifice if the gathering storm clouds unleashed war across Europe.

The book does have its shortcomings. The author has a tendency to wander at times, usually exploring the labyrinth of Vatican internal politics. He also provides some cover for the accusations that the Vatican did little in World War Two to act against the Holocaust and the war in general. Historically, the charge is that the Vatican cozied up to Fascism as an alternative to Communism. There were also lingering suspicions that the Vatican was pro-Central Powers in the First World War, partially due to the Austro-Hungarian Empire being a protector of the faith while France’s anti-clerical reputation dated back to the French Revolution. The book has no references, an odd thing, but many notes and a series of good appendices. There was one factual error—the author listed Hitler’s Beer Hall Putsch as 1924, and not the correct year of 1923.

The death of Pius XI energized the search for the tomb of Peter. His wish to be buried under St. Peter’s Basilica led to the discovery of ancient tombs under St. Peter’s. What the author does, and does well, is make the quest for the discovery of Peter’s tomb into a detective tale. Pius XII saw it as an opportunity to reinvigorate the search for the first Pope. The author relates how the early archeological attempts done by untrained personnel perhaps did more damage than good. In fact, the author implies their efforts and that of those who later became in charge of the Vatican Antiquities, nearly made the discovery impossible. The Apostle Project was conducted in a manner to maintain internal secrecy—hence employed no outside professional help for fear of leaks that could discredit the Vatican if the Apostle Peter’s grave was not found.

Here Margherita Guarducci joins the story. She was a strong woman with impeccable archeological credentials who steadfastly maintained Peter was in the catacombs under the Vatican. She had little time for the destruction and vandalism practiced by the earlier teams, ruffling males in a sexist Italian and church society alike. Despite the church’s claim that Peter’s bones had been found, Guarducci—with her background in epigraphy—soon cast doubts on all the work done before. Her readings of the inscriptions on the walls led to the discovery of the real grave of St. Peter. Her study of what was known to the early diggers as the graffiti wall led her to conclude one description stated, “Peter is Here.” In addition, she came across words relating to Constantine’s victory at the Milivan Bridge, showing more church history was not an utter fabrication to serve political or church ends.

The author ties in Peter’s humanity, fragility, and uncertainty by relating the famous tale of Christ and Peter meeting on the Appian Way. Peter was fleeing to save his life from Nero. Christ told Peter he was going to go to Rome to be crucified again, as Peter asked him “Quo vadis” (Where are you going). Perhaps shamed—or strengthened by this—Peter as the tale goes, turned back to Rome to meet his ordeal by crucifixion. It is both a book full of surprises and ultimately one of the triumphs of faith unto death that in spite of fire, dungeon, and death, faith won. For the story of *The Fisherman’s Tomb* affirms that he was true unto death to the faith of our fathers.
Looking back at 2018

The Newman Center is wrapping up its second year of service to its members and our communities and this presents a perfect time to look back on the organization’s activities and accomplishments for the year.

January-March: As the Newman Center achieved Chapter Standards Gold status in 2017, APUS Student Affairs provided the organization with an operating budget of $1,000, which enabled us to offer each member a Catholic Study Bible. Nine members opted to receive the Bible and begin independent study. The Newman Center collaborated with Saber and Scroll and the Historical Studies Honor Society to host an on-going Virtual Red Cross Blood Drive. As of November 2018, we have thirty members who have donated a combined 138 units of blood. The Newman Center hosted a chapter meeting to review its 2017 accomplishments and share the 2018 Annual Plan. We keep members updated throughout the year by email and Facebook as well as host several chapter meetings. In preparation for the annual Commencement service event, the Newman Center committed to co-sponsor the Stop Hunger Now! event. The Newman Center launched its Virtual Baby Shower in March, which ran through spring and summer to benefit Abundant Hope Pregnancy Resource Center and Seneca Choices for Life. We publish four quarterly newsletters, in March, June, September, and December each year.

April-June: Student Affairs notified us that APUS named the Newman Center the Outstanding New Student Organization for 2017. As only a few members plan to attend Commencement weekend, we hosted drawing for a St. Benedict medal Rosary, which will be one of our giveaways for the Alumni Rally. In May, we launched a weekly series to share and discuss Pope Saint John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. John Paul II delivered the Theology of the Body in a series of weekly Wednesday audiences that began on 5 September 1979 and ended on 28 November 1984. We share Theology of the Body updates regularly on both Facebook and through email to our members. In June, the Newman Center participated in Commencement, including the Alumni Rally, Awards Luncheon, and Welcome reception. At the Alumni Rally we featured our Virtual Baby Shower, together with our 2017 key accomplishments, Catholic giveaways, and a drawing. We had seventeen people—graduates and faculty—either sign up to join the Newman Center or participate in our drawing for a Catholic Study Bible and St. Benedict Rosary. Also in June, Dr. Cynthia Nolan presented “The Edward Snowden Case and the Morality of Secrecy” to our members. We added an honorary member category and welcomed Dr. John Dolan and Dr. Kelli Frakes to our organization. We also welcomed associate members Barry Schoedel, the associate director of the Diocese of Baton Rouge and Bobby Morris, a youth/young adult minister and attorney, who specializes in religious freedom cases. Additionally, we created and published Rosary brochures to provide members with a scriptural-based aid to praying the Rosary. The Newman Center reached Gold status for 2018 in June.

July-September: Working with Molly Fischer, then APUS ePress librarian, we have the Newman Center’s newsletters and constitution available through APUS ePress. Archbishop Timothy Broglio approved our request to establish a formal collaboration between the Newman Center and the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA to benefit the military members of our group and the university. Pope John Paul II created the Archdiocese for the Military Services to provide the Catholic Church’s full range of pastoral ministries and spiritual services to those in the United States Armed Forces. This includes more than 220 installations in 29 countries, patients in 153 V.A. Medical Centers, and federal employees serving outside the boundaries of the USA in 134 countries. Numerically, the AMS is responsible for more than 1.8 million men, women, and children. We welcomed new associate members Mark Moitoza, Vice Chancellor for Evangelization and Casey Bustamante, Associate Director of Young Adult Ministry, both of the Archdiocese, as well as Randy Pifer, Director of Operations, Newman Connection. We kicked off a project to create a Newman Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA Coat of Arms
Center Prayer book for our members and to provide to attendees of the upcoming Commencement Alumni Rally in 2019. In August, we provided “thank you” recognition for our officers and advisors, a standing cross. In addition, at the suggestion of advisor Dr. Cynthia Nolan, we asked members for Patron Saint nominations and held an election, naming St. Michael the Archangel and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton as our patrons. We contributed to West Virginia Students’ Alliance and Office of Student and Alumni Affairs national day of service. In September, we worked with Mary Sperry, Associate Director, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to obtain approval to use USCCB material in the Newman Center Prayer book and obtained from Dr. Francesca Angeletti, of the Vatican Publishing House, a non-exclusive right to use the papal writings in the book. We hosted our fall Newman Center chapter meeting.

October-December: We conducted our first annual officer election and inducted Anne Midgley as President, Greg Comiskey as Vice President, Tatum Regan as Webmaster, and Steve Thompson as Secretary. The Newman Center concluded the 2018 Chapter standards year with 146 points, the highest point earner in the professional organizations group and second highest overall. We kicked off the 2019 Chapter Standards year in November, hosting our first Officers and Advisors meeting of the new cycle. We nominated Dr. Robert Smith as Chapter Advisor of the Year, and attended the Student Affairs sponsored virtual student organization fair to share our group’s mission with potential new members. Dr. Robert Smith hosted “PTSD: One Veteran’s Perspective from the Fulda Gap to GWOT” in early December.

Coming up in December: A number of Newman Center members including Lynn McAfee, Kay O’Pry Reynolds, Nina Rivera-Nunez, and Anne Midgley will be acting as APUS community coordinators at Wreaths Across America sites. We are looking forward to a productive and rewarding year in 2019. Thank you for being part of our organization!

Anne Midgley
President

AMU & APU Newman Center Fast Facts

- The Newman Center has fifty-two student and alumni members, three chapter advisors, two honorary members, and five associate members.
- In 2018, the Newman Center website attracted over 1,100 visits from ten countries.
- In the most recent 28 day period through November 24, 2018, the Newman Center FaceBook site has had 650 posts, comments, and reactions with 39 active members out of a total FaceBook group size of 53.
- In the most recent 28 days, the AMU & APU Twitter site has had over 660 impressions and more than 306 profile visits. The site’s top tweet for the month of November is a re-tweet with comment of an American Military University tweet about accepting applications for the 2019 University Awards.
- Eight members of the Newman Center serve as ClearPath mentors, while fifteen members are ClearPath mentees.
- Fifteen members reported individual service through the most recent Newman Center planning survey.
Events and Resources

Upcoming Events

- December 15, 2018: Wreaths Across America
- May 10-11, 2019: APUS Commencement Weekend

For information about the National Wreaths Across America event, contact member Lynn McAfee.
For information about all other events, contact Anne Midgley.

Resources

Bible

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd edition
Rich Gift of Love (Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body)

Daily Mass Readings

Catholic Social Teaching

St. Thomas Aquinas The Summa Theologica
The Confessions of St. Augustine
The Fathers of the Church and their Writings

US Conference of Catholic Bishops

Vatican Radio

Vatican News Service

EWTN

Word on Fire

Documents from Vatican II:

Dei Verbum
Lumen Gentium
Sacrosanctum Concilium
Gaudium et Spes

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