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Dear Faithful;

Fr. Jeff is off on a weekend adventure - I am sure he will tell us about it next week! So, I get to fill in for the Friday email.

At the end of March 2023, I celebrated a milestone- my one-year anniversary at the Newman Catholic Student Center. As with many milestones, it gave me a chance to reflect on my first year in Iowa City. It truly has been an amazing year full of meeting new people, learning to drive around a new city (I get super excited when I can get somewhere and back without my GPS!), and taking on new job responsibilities. Not to mention trying to learn where all the other towns and cities in Iowa are located!

A good friend of mine from Ohio keeps in touch and often tells me how brave I am for making a big move like this at my age. I guess I never looked at it as being brave, but through prayer, I felt in my heart that God was moving in my life in this instance.

My Thursday morning Bible study group is reading *Who Does He Say You Are?* by Colleen C. Mitchell. Using Gospel stories of the women of the Bible and her own experiences, Mitchell asks some deep and personal questions. Last week the chapter was about the woman of Samaria (the woman at the well) and this week's studied the hemorrhaging woman who touched Jesus' cloak having faith that little touch would bring healing. Each chapter of the book includes reflection questions. For both chapters, the questions were personal and hard hitting, touching on our relationship with Jesus and how we need to be fully open to Him and what keeps us from a deeper and more intimate relationship with Him.

It is easy to talk about how we can help others who feel that way- isolated, invisible, not worthy. It is another thing to realize how we isolate ourselves from community, how we hold ourselves back from an intimate relationship with the Lord, and what we need to do to let ourselves be fully seen, known, and loved. It made me realize that fear holds me back from that intimate relationship with Jesus- fear of what specifically? I don't know- I am working on figuring that out. What I do know is that I am a beloved child of God, and I need not be fearful because He already knows all there is to know about me- past, present, and future. Overcoming that fear is sometimes difficult.

So, maybe my friend from Ohio was right - maybe it was brave to make this move to Iowa. Maybe it didn't feel like I was being brave because I had given all my fears to Him.

This Sunday, we celebrate the Ascension. I have always thought that the disciples were fearful to have Jesus leave them again. As I began reading more about them, I realized they trusted in His promises and began to prepare for the Holy Spirit to come at Pentecost rather than cowering in fear that He was gone. The last line of this Sunday's Gospel reads; "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

If we can hold on to that one promise of Jesus, how can we be fearful to give Him the wounds that make us feel unseen, unloved, and unworthy when He can make us feel loved, chosen and empowered?

Blessings!



Kristie Wert  
Director of Development

**P.S. Join Fr. Jeff and I in March 2024 for an exciting pilgrimage! The full itinerary is available on our website at [www.iowacatholic.org](http://www.iowacatholic.org). Additional costs of \$200-300 per person to cover travel to and from Iowa City/Chicago. Please contact the Development Office for the tour packet which includes the reservation form.**

**PILGRIMAGE TO FATIMA & LOURDES**  
**FEATURING SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA**  
**11 DAYS: MARCH 8 - 18, 2024**  
**LISBON \* FATIMA \* SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA**  
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Hosted by  
The Newman Catholic Student Center at The University of Iowa

**Fr. Jeff Belger** & **Kristie Wert**  
Priest Director Director of Development

**\$3779 PER PERSON FROM CHICAGO\***  
\*Air/land tour price is \$3239 plus \$540 gov't taxes/airline surcharges  
 \*Travel to Chicago additional, contact the Newman Center for details

**For More Information, Please Contact Kristie Wert:**  
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**SPACE IS LIMITED! SIGN UP TODAY!!!**




**Graciously hear our supplications, O Lord,  
so that we, who believe that the Savior of the human race  
is with you in your glory, may experience, as he promised,  
until the end of the world, his abiding presence among us.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

