

On Mission

March 2024

A NEWSLETTER FOR FOCUS SUPPORTERS



Premier Hospitality



SEEK24



FOCUS Mission Trips

HOW YOUR CARE PREPARES OTHERS FOR THE "WORLD TO COME"

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THE BOSCO PROJECT

Join FOCUS for a live-broadcast event, "The Bosco Project Impact." One missionary will share how participating in The Bosco Project within FOCUS opened his heart to the mercy of God, paving the way for him to be a witness of freedom to students.

Register here: focus.org/greatness

MAKING AN ESTATE GIFT

Join us in an upcoming webinar series to discover creative ways to bring the Gospel to more young people. More information coming soon!





Have you ever experienced something profound?

— A moment of awe when your heart is full, throat constricting and eyes watering, as you behold something so beautiful that it points to a deeper reality.

At times, we can experience something in our relationship with Christ that gives us a profound feeling — one that gives us a sense of “the world to come.”

As a generous partner with FOCUS, during this past year of mission, you’ve given many people profound experiences with God.

You’ve led their hearts to

experience the Father’s love and desire for them as His beloved sons and daughters. You’ve helped them learn what is most important — being with Him for all eternity.

Students and parishioners are having life-altering, formative encounters with Christ each year at SEEK, FOCUS’ annual conference, as well as on mission trips with FOCUS Missions. This quarter’s *On Mission* newsletter shares with you just some of these experiences — the fruits of your prayer and generosity!

Your thoughtful giving means that students and parishioners have life-altering, formative encounters with Christ each year.



Making an Estate Gift

Did you know there are creative ways to bring the Gospel to more young people? We would love to discuss with you gifts that:

- **COST YOU NOTHING NOW**
- **PAY YOU INCOME**
- **REDUCE YOUR TAXES**
- **MAKE AN IMPACT NOW**

Contact us at
plannedgiving@focus.org

seek²⁴

St. Louis, MO | Jan 1-5



YOU'RE BRINGING LIGHT TO THE CHURCH.

At the start of the new year, more than 23,000 people gathered for SEEK24: a transformative gathering where they encountered Jesus Christ through Mass, prayer, talks and fun.

23,000+

Attendees

441

College Campuses

1,114

Parishes

7,000+

Confessions Heard

720

Priests

45

Bishops

85

Speakers



"Whatever cross you're facing in life, don't ever waste that cross. Know there is a spiritual gem waiting for you, and God will use all things for good."

—Dr. Edward Sri



"Deep down in the chasms of our baptized soul is a home for God."

—Msgr. James Shea



"God is using every circumstance of your life right now, yes, even your sins, to save you, free you, and give you more."

—Sr. Mary Grace, S.V.

"I've been given so much to bring back to my prayer and my campus in the weeks to come."

—Maggie Gann, *Senior at Kansas State University*

"This has been an incredibly life-changing experience for me because it has allowed me to dive deeper into the faith. I just cannot believe how much it has impacted me."

—Brock Dooling, *Parishioner at Sacred Heart in Sabetha, KS*

SEEK REPLAY: RELIVE THE EXPERIENCE

Discover SEEK Replay, FOCUS' dynamic video platform! Enjoy **free** access to captivating talks from SEEK24 by visiting **seekreplay.com** now!

JOIN US NEXT YEAR!

In 2025, SEEK will be hosted in Salt Lake City, UT and Washington, D.C.! Join thousands of Catholics from around the country for a life-changing event. Register now by scanning or visiting **seek.focus.org**!





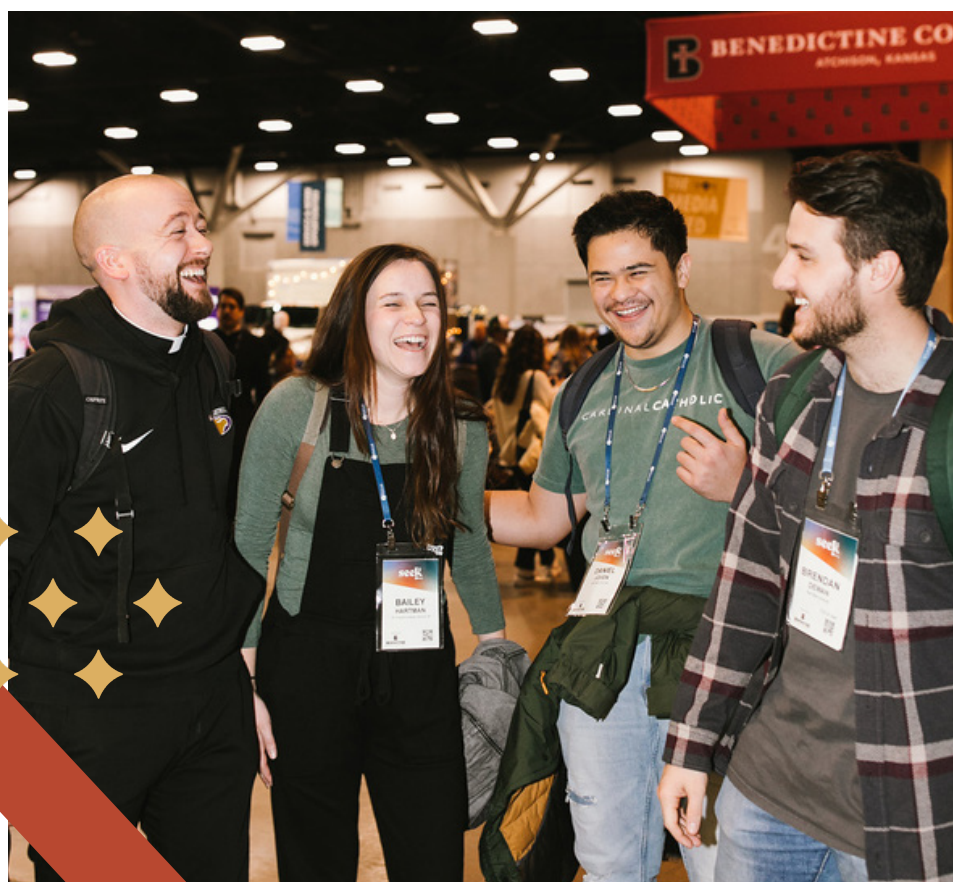
Countless stories are emerging from SEEK24 of people who encountered Christ in a deep, personal way and grew in their desire to share Him with the world.

In recent years, SEEK has welcomed more post-collegiate Catholics than ever before. The Making Missionary Disciples (MMD) track hosts talks centered on creating vibrant parishes.

The MMD track is designed for lay and Church leaders, FOCUS alumni, parishioners and benefactors, all of whom long to see others experience deep transformation in Jesus Christ

and who desire to be a part of the solution.

At SEEK24, the Making Missionary Disciples track was SOLD OUT with a waitlist. With more than 2,000 participants, the MMD track now represents one of the largest practical evangelization training events in the Catholic world for lay catechists, parish leaders and volunteers.



Whole dioceses are encouraging parishioners just like you to attend.

In the Archdiocese of Kansas City, the number of parishioners who experienced SEEK doubled from last year alone.

JACK FIGGE*

“We really want . . . our parishioners, especially those in charge of catechesis and passing on the faith to others, to have themselves a deeper encounter with the Lord so that they have a deeper relationship to give from when teaching others,” says Father Haug, a pastor of one of Archdiocese’s parishes.



Parishioners have not only learned extensively but have also had life-changing experiences.

One parishioner, Brock Dooling, became Catholic last Easter and attended SEEK24. He reflects, “This has been an incredibly life-changing experience for me because it has allowed me to dive deeper into the faith. I just cannot believe how much it has impacted me. I feel like every single speaker has spoken directly to me, and there have been innumerable awesome experiences. It’s hard to explain it.”

It’s hearing the stories of parishioners like Dooling that makes Emily Lopez, the director of adult evangelization for the diocese, so grateful that SEEK has opened its doors to older Catholics. She sees it is a great gift that parish leaders can attend and encounter the Lord in a new way:

“Bringing parish leaders to SEEK is a great gift for a couple of reasons. **First of all, it’s extremely hopeful and inspiring to see the future generation of the church in this kind of way — to just see the joy and the presence of the Holy Spirit and the passion for Christ and his church.** But then, in my mind, it’s more of a fullness of what

our parishes can look like.” Archbishop Naumann [expects] that for the 40 parish leaders that attended SEEK from his archdiocese, the conference will change the way they approach evangelization. Across the archdiocese, he [desires] to see leaders focusing more on helping people encounter Christ than merely teaching the faith.

“I hope that our participants take back to the parishes the knowledge that we can’t just be content with the faith. I hope they begin asking: ‘How do we make disciples in our family and our friendships within the parish? How do we bring people to a deeper encounter with Jesus?’ I’m hopeful this conference will have a deep impact on our parish communities” says Archbishop Naumann.

The otherworldly experiences that the post-collegiate attendees had at SEEK24 have pointed them toward Christ — and evangelization. They want to share the foretaste of heaven they have received!
Will you join them?

*Attribute: “Parish Leaders Discover SEEK Conference Offers More Than the Usual College Convention” by Jack Figge. The Leaven, the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, January 12, 2024. This article was used by permission. No other use of this material is authorized. Read the full article here: <https://theleaven.org/parish-leaders-discover-seek-conference-offers-more-than-the-usual-college-convention/>



“Maybe I’ll come if it doesn’t rain,” she answered.

It was our first full afternoon in Bairro do Carmo, Brazil, and Lilianna, one of the American students on our FOCUS mission trip, went with the campus chaplain from the University of Oklahoma to visit a woman who hadn’t attended church in over two years. They invited her back to Mass. She only lived one block from the church, but she was hesitant about returning.

When they arrived and began a conversation with her, they found that she had undergone a deep experience of human frailty. She explained that she was a faithful [attendee] until about three years prior, when she had a fight with her brother. Their argument was irreconcilable, and she and her brother were no longer on speaking terms. Physical and emotional distance, exacerbated by the pandemic, kept them separated in this way until one day her brother

suddenly died. That’s when she stopped going to church.

“I’m not ready,” she said softly. She explained to Lilianna and Father Buettner that she didn’t deserve to see Jesus after letting her relationship with her brother end that way. What was more painful for this woman, even more than her brother’s death, was the fact that she never had a chance to mend the relationship and forgive him. So, she thought, *“If I let my brother die without my forgiveness, how could God forgive me?”* And so, caught in despair, she remained away from the Catholic Church, and therefore, away from the salvation that God made ready for her in the sacraments.

“Salvation has come to your house today,” Father pointed out, spending a great deal of time and effort turning to Scripture verses he

believed would convince her of the wideness of God’s mercy.

“I’m not ready,” she repeated. She allowed them to pray for her. *“Can I sing for you?”* she asked. Then, she and her nephew, the guide for the group, sang an a cappella song to the Blessed Virgin in Portuguese. Soon everyone was in tears. It was truly a powerful moment of grace. The song finished, signalling the end of the visit.

As they were leaving, one of the young adults, Cesar, a Brazilian volunteer from Sao Paulo, said,

“THAT WAS THE MOST POWERFUL CATHOLIC MOMENT OF MY ENTIRE LIFE.”

Better yet, later that evening, it didn’t rain, and the woman came to Mass.



**THANK YOU FOR INSPIRING
POWERFULLY CATHOLIC
MOMENTS IN THE LIVES OF
YOUNG PEOPLE.**

The Reason for Mission

Stories like this are why we go on mission. In our everyday operations, we sometimes lose the voice of the Holy Spirit.

**BUT WHEN WE GET OUT OF
OUR NORMAL EVERYDAY
RHYTHMS, WE MAKE ROOM TO
HEAR THE FATHER'S VOICE**

— this time through a surprise home visit from international students and the beautiful song of a remorseful daughter.

On a FOCUS mission, we aim to complete the call of Matthew 25 by serving the spiritually and physically poor through sustainable trips. For each trip, FOCUS partners with a local religious order, apostolate or organization that understands the community's greatest need. Some teams serve the homeless and renovate community infrastructure, while others teach children or

provide patient care services at medical clinics. On this specific trip, we partnered with Mission Brazil and the small community of Carmo.

After a whole week of home visits like the one above, catechesis with children, coordinating parish formation nights for the community and offering the sacraments daily, it was difficult to see that God was not touching everyone involved.

It is our hope that not only will locals benefit in the communities in which we serve on mission trips, but that the experience will also transform the lives of the students and volunteers amid long days of prayer and work.

"This has been the best week of my life," said David, a student who came along after declining other fun options with his fraternity for Spring break. Since returning to

campus, David has been attending many weekday Masses and is committing himself to a nascent but fervent daily prayer life.

Since 2004, more than 14,000 college students, chaplains, FOCUS missionaries and alumni have encountered Christ and shared the Gospel while on FOCUS mission trips. Many benefactors help change the lives of students and those whom they serve by supporting them on mission.

For the students from the University of Oklahoma, and especially the woman who was reconciled to the Church, making the trip was worth more than the material cost.

**THIS OTHERWORLDLY
EXPERIENCE SANG FOR THEM
IN THEIR SOULS.**



Bosco Project
— A Steppingstone to Greatness

MAY 15

4 PM PST | 5 PM MST | 6 PM CST | 7 PM EST

Visit focus.org/greatness to join us!

IN THIS 10 - 15 MINUE EVENT, HEAR HOW PARTICIPATING
IN THE BOSCO PROJECT WITHIN FOCUS PAVES THE WAY FOR
STUDENTS TO WITNESS TRUE FREEDOM.

