

Casper St. Francis Newman 1980-1990

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Campus ministry at Casper College in the past, has been short-lived due to the lack of organization and leadership. Prior to 1983, it was revived periodically by enthusiastic students or temporarily by one of the Holy Cross Brothers.

In 1983, Mary Thomas applied for the position of part-time director and was hired by Fr. Gianola, who was to oversee the activities from Laramie. Mary arranged to meet in rooms at the College and started with one student. Laura Burbach helped Mary occasionally with ministry for the first year and then became her co-director for the next two. Since there were no priests assigned to the ministry, the priests were asked to fit the ministry into their busy schedules for monthly Masses and semester retreats.

Monsignor James O'Neill played an important role in helping to create the Newman Center. It was his "yes" that allowed the process of establishing the Center to begin. The growth continued through the generous contributions of the other two parishes and their pastors.

When the house was purchased July 3, 1986, it was totally uninhabitable. The roof leaked, the electrical wiring was below code, the water heater was red-tagged, the plumbing could not be shut off, the bathroom floor was sunk several inches along one wall, the carpet throughout the house was stained and mildewed and the walls were covered with a cigarette smoke haze. Through the efforts of Mary and Laura, their families, friends, students, Knights of Columbus and many generous contributions, the house was renovated and the ministry began to flourish. The remodeling process took close to three years to complete. Monsignor James O'Neill dedicated the Grotto to Our Lady in the spring of 1989.

From July 1989 to May 1990, Brother Quinten Dronet was Campus Minister of the St. Francis Newman Center. In September of 1990, Sr. Denise Novitzke was hired as Campus Minister and Fr. Carl Gallinger, Associate Priest at St. Anthony's, was part-time Chaplain. In July of 1991, Fr. Ray Moss became Chaplain when Fr. Carl was transferred to Cheyenne. We also have priests from the parishes celebrate Eucharist with us, and once a month the student's minister at one of the parishes in town.

The students take part in the National Catholic Student Coalition (NCSC), a leadership conference held once a year after Christmas for five days. They are also involved in the

Rocky Mountain Catholic Student Coalition (RMCSC) which is student led and meets monthly. This group support and builds community in the Spirit of Jesus for students involved in ministry and outreach to other students.

The continued existence of the St. Francis Newman Center today, depends on the students, their family and friends, the faculty and administration of the College, and the spiritual and financial support the Casper Catholic community. Submitted 2/92