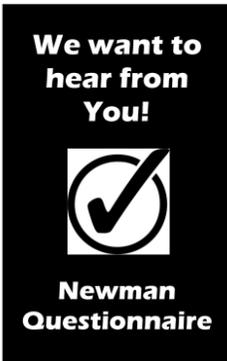


Newman Strategic Planning Study – Questionnaire Results (Part 2)



We are pleased to share the second of four articles reporting on the results of the Newman Questionnaire held last November. What marks this study as being quite exceptional is that many of the results, particularly the grouped responses to the open ended questions, are what people have said in their own words. We begin by presenting what the community thinks of itself and of the mission entrusted to it.

Why Newman Centre?

In 1912, a group of catholic students at the secular University of Toronto formed the Newman Club. Its purpose, as expounded in an article in the Torch newspaper in 1931, was as follows:

"(its purpose)...is to make its members intelligent and courageous Catholics, to guide them in the pursuit of knowledge and truth, to protect them from intellectual pride that sometimes comes with new learning, and to help them to attain a balanced knowledge of the sciences they approach."

Over the past 100 years this club, now known as the Newman Centre, has become a spiritual home on campus, providing a welcoming and warm environment for all who come, renowned for its social conscience and helping people to encounter Jesus. In the context of our recent study, how closely do these elements define and bind the Newman community today?

The following most frequently cited reasons for coming to Sunday Mass and for wanting want to be part of Newman were shared by all age groups:

Reasons for attending Sunday Mass	Reasons for coming to Newman Centre
74% -- for spiritual growth	61% -- welcoming community
65% -- to receive holy communion	53% -- presence of young people/students
60% -- sense of community	45% -- engaging homilies and lectures/speakers
57% -- Sunday obligation	43% -- convenient location (especially students)

That's not to say all groups were identical in sharing these opinions about their reasons for coming to Newman Centre. "Welcoming community" was more often cited by non-student parishioners than students (62% versus 56% respectively); "presence of young people and students" was more often cited by students (61% versus 49%).

Among former members, the most highly cited reason was "welcoming community" with 67%, followed by "engaging homilies and lectures/speakers" with 61%. Also highly cited was "intellectual stimulation". In general, their comments were as positive if not more than current students and non-students.

Notable differences between students and non-students on why they came to NC were found for:

- "Engaging homilies and lectures/speakers" -- 48% for non-student parishioners versus 31% for students.

April 2015

- "Convenient location" was cited by 58% of students versus 35% of non-students.
- "A place to drop-in and pray" was cited by 45% of students and only 19% of non-students.

"Presence of young people" and "music" are also highly cited reasons among those attending the 7 PM Sunday Mass



Unique Qualities

When asked to describe in their own words what made Newman Centre a unique community, the three most cited categories were:

- its welcoming, caring and intimate quality -- 43%
- the student focus -- 22%
- social diversity -- 17%

Another unique attribute noted was Newman Centre's sanctuary-like quality, a "peaceful oasis in a large secular campus" and a safe place to share beliefs and opinions with other Catholics. This was particularly popular among students (21% vs. 8% for non-students).

Volunteering and Program Participation

The second last question of the survey showed that there was no lack of enthusiasm on the part of Newman Centre parishioners to go out and do good work. 41% showed a willingness to contribute by volunteering for programs and events. Also, a willingness to attend events was expressed by 44%. Less frequently cited was donating (28%), mentoring (16%), and taking on facilitator/teaching roles (15%).

The survey also found that students expressed significantly more enthusiasm than non-students. For example, contributing by volunteering was cited by 67% of students versus 38% of non-students; attending events was cited by 66% of students versus 42% of non-students.

That enthusiasm was very much in evidence in the participation rates of students in some of the programs. For example, Soup and Bagel Lunch had a 37% participation rate among students versus only 10% for non-students; Pray and Play had 37% among students versus only 9% among non-students.

On the other hand, the Annual Cardinal Newman Lecture was more balanced--29% for students versus 24% for non-students (and 35% for those 50 and older); Sacramental Preparations was 8% for students versus 19% for non-students (and 25% amongst the 30-49 group).

Since a small sample size among some individual programs and volunteer activities makes it difficult to draw reliable conclusions, it was decided to look at the response for all program types as a group, and similarly for volunteer activities. This analysis revealed that students participated more than non-students in one or more of the seven program activities listed -- 62% versus 47%. Similar results were found for the volunteer activities queried -- 40% for students versus 30% for non-students. Clearly, the enthusiasm to contribute to Newman Centre was reflected in higher participation rates among students for both programs and volunteer activities.

Generally, participation in program activities produced significantly higher levels of respondent engagement than volunteer opportunities. Volunteering for Liturgical Ministries was the only volunteer opportunity with a significant participation rate--25%.

It should be noted that job responsibilities likely may have prevented older members of Newman Centre from dedicating more time to volunteering. On the other hand, many older members were in a better position to contribute financially to Newman Centre's programs and activities. The important point is that both younger and older member contributions were needed to successfully realize projects.



The impact of Cardinal Newman's philosophy

While only about half of respondents were aware of Cardinal Newman's philosophy in which spiritual growth and human growth combine with intellectual growth to foster a holistic development of each person, their insights were impressive. The questionnaire results show that:

- The most frequently cited aspect, with 27%, had to do with the interconnectedness and interdependence of the human spirit and the intellect. To produce a fully human being you cannot have one without the other.
- The second most frequently cited interpretation, with 15%, had to do with the need to find a balance between faith and intellect.

Ultimately faith and reason together better informs our understanding of God.

- Many also lauded the philosophy not only as a good guiding principle for Newman Centre but more broadly for all of U of T. It was seen as a way to bridge the world of faith and the secular world.
- Many felt it still had current relevance and was a good model for all Catholics.
- A fair number felt his message was a call to action for Catholics in outreach and community work, not just attending Mass.

The survey also found a positive correlation between awareness and age. Awareness between those less than 30 was 39%, rising to 44% among the 30-49 and to 64% among the 50 and over.

With Cardinal Newman's message working so well among those who had some awareness of it, its potential missionary appeal seems undeniable. While our survey found that many were comfortable with sharing their Catholic faith with others, other respondents were less comfortable. In that context, our survey suggests the universality and undogmatic reasonableness of Cardinal Newman's message would provide a comfort level even for those somewhat reticent to take on the missionary challenge. Of course, a good starting point would be that half of Newman Centre parishioners who either were not aware or were uncertain of Cardinal Newman's ideas.

Cardinal Newman's philosophy of religious and intellectual growth finds its home in the university, the place where ideas are exchanged, debated and built upon. It is a place of diversity in the characteristics of its people which forms its strength. These forces are naturally at play at our Newman Centre. In the next couple of editions of the bulletin, we will share more of the results of our study regarding the demographic composition of the community and areas to explore and grow in our journey of faith together.