



The Father McKenna

C E N T E R • I N C

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Spring 2026 Newsletter

A Season of Celebration at the Center



Dear Friends,

He is risen! It has been an eventful Lenten and Easter season as we have welcomed hundreds of men and families through our doors alongside immersion and volunteer groups from around the country.

Thanks to your support we have served more than 7,500 meals so far this year and provided food to our neighbors across over 1,200 visits to our food pantry. These visitors have been welcomed by immersion groups from St. Norbert's, Scranton, John Carroll, and DePaul Universities as well as our all-star group of regular volunteers.

Our returning volunteers—alongside members of our community like you—help to create the community and atmosphere that makes spending time at the Center so meaningful to our guests and immersion participants. You have our deepest thanks for all you do to facilitate our continued work and to make these meaningful experiences possible.

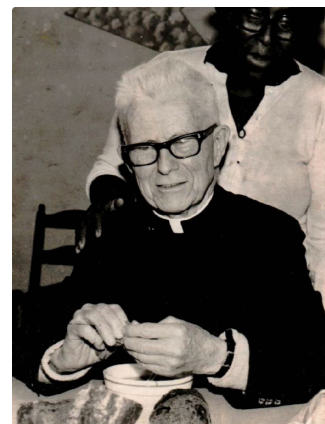
With gratitude,
The Father McKenna Center Staff

Fr. McKenna Memorial Mass May 11th, 7:45 am, Our Lady's Chapel

Join us in Our Lady's Chapel in Gonzaga's Dooley Hall on Monday, May 11th, for a mass celebrating Fr. Horace McKenna, SJ on the anniversary of his death.

Limited parking will be available in the Gonzaga garage.

If you are unable to join us, we ask that you include Fr. McKenna in your prayers on the 11th!



Hypothermia Program Finishes '25-'26 Season

On Sunday, March 15th, we shared our last dinner with this year's Hypothermia Transition Housing Program participants before saying goodbye to them on the morning of March 16th. This year's program saw 16 men call the Center home for at least one night with 13 men spending longer than five days with us.



This year's group formed deep bonds and we're happy to share their success. Of the 13 men our team was able to help seven men secure housing and seven secure employment. Here are some of their stories:

Greg is still on the job hunt with plans to relocate back to North Carolina to be with his family.

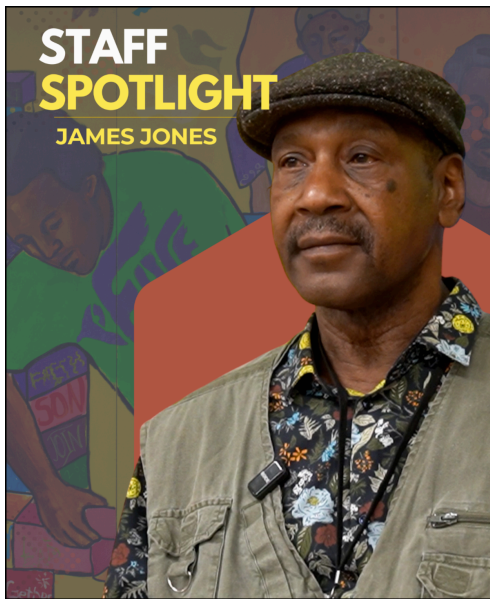
Enrico started work, and Ibin secured a full-time job at DCA. Both are searching for apartments.

Mo graduated, completed an HVAC certification, and secured work as an HVAC technician.

Hector (pictured above) is working part time at the Center while searching for a full-time role.

We could not be happier for our program participants as they move on from the program to find their own success. They are all part of our community now, and we'll be sure to share updates with you as they come by the Center to say hello and share their stories!

Staff Spotlight Series



James Jones serves as the McKenna Center’s Facilities / Maintenance Manager, a role he has held for the past 5 years. James successfully completed the 2019-2020 Hypothermia Transition Housing Program and spent 6 months working as a Janitor at a nearby housing complex before joining the staff at the Center.

James is a vital member of the McKenna Center team, helping to ensure all of our programs run smoothly. When asked what he likes about the work, he had this to say: “I like working here because the team helps me stay focused, and I get to help others who come to the Center in need”

A Lenten Reflection from Spiritual Director Jimmy Beh

At the beginning of Lent, I was in New York City visiting with the Jesuits of the USA East Province. On the first night, a group of us went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to do a prayer exercise called *Visio Divina* – which invites the participant to prayerfully gaze at a piece of art and pay attention to what is noticed, and then reflect on how God might be speaking through the work.



We were given three paintings to choose from and about 40 minutes for the exercise. Despite my excitement, I was fidgety and distracted. At first, I could not settle on a painting. Once I settled on Bruegel’s ‘The Harvesters’ (left), I was distracted by other people in the museum. Finally, after 20 minutes, I tuned out the crowd and settled in – allowing my eyes to search the painting’s contours and becoming more aware of its subtleties. What resulted was a prayer experience that was both novel and encouraging.

Distractions are a normal part of any prayer practice, and often a normal part of our liturgical seasons. For some, Lent can begin with passionate aspirations and a sense of readiness, but then quickly fades through distraction and busyness. Lent can also arrive too abruptly and only at the halfway point do we feel like we finally got our game plan for our Lenten observances. Regardless of where you find yourself when faced with these distractions, I would encourage you to (re)settle and **Keep Going!**

If you failed to stick with the observances you chose at the beginning, recommit yourself. If you are just deciding on your observances, fully commit to them for the remainder. If you keep stumbling, remember that the nature of all progress is passing through some stages of instability and failure, and that no one succeeds without reliance on God and community.

If you truly feel stuck and unsure of how to settle into your observances, perhaps start by sharing that with Jesus in prayer. While it is incredibly important that our faith does justice, sometimes, like Jesus when he retreated to the desert, we need time in silence with Him in order to center ourselves and allow the love in that relationship to overflow into our fasting and service to others.

There is a temptation during Lent that our observances stray toward the practice of self improvement and personal holiness, which on some level is unavoidable. But, if our observances are truly going to prepare us to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus, we must challenge ourselves to move beyond self-centeredness and strive for communal transformation - to participate more fully in the Kingdom of God.

I hope these thoughts help guide your reflection on how your observances brought you closer to Jesus. As we celebrate his resurrection, may we all pray for those suffering from violence and war around the world.

Forming the Future: College Immersion Trips

Every year, the Father McKenna Center welcomes more than a dozen groups from high schools and universities around the country for immersion service learning trips. These trips, typically between five and seven days long, have students spend their nights at the center and participate in each of our programs. Winter immersion trips are special, as the students get to spend valuable time with our hypothermia program guests.



Over the past months we've welcomed groups from St. Norbert's University in Wisconsin, The University of Scranton in Pennsylvania, John Carroll University in Ohio, and DePaul University in Chicago. While with us these groups also got the opportunity to serve at other organizations such as SOME and DC Central Kitchen.

Additionally many groups visited Capitol Hill to participate in conversations with their congressional representatives about the issues of homelessness and food insecurity.

The multi-day exposure provided by immersion trips allows for participants to gain unique perspectives and learn through their service. By the third or fourth day students have established an understanding of the Center's services and have built budding relationships with clients and staff. By day seven these relationships have continued to grow—leading to heartfelt goodbyes and promises to keep in touch. For most the people they meet and experiences they have on a trip to the Center stay with them long after they return home.



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