



The Father McKenna

C E N T E R • I N C

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July 2026 Newsletter

Service, Stewardship and Solidarity - Summer at the Father McKenna Center



Dear Friends,

It has been a busy summer so far at the Father McKenna Center! Since our Spring newsletter, we have welcomed immersion groups from multiple Catholic high schools (more on these trips on page 4), onboarded our slate of Summer interns and regular volunteers, and kicked off partnerships with local businesses to keep our Food Pantry shelves fully stocked. In addition, we have continued to offer over 150 meals a day, clothing, and case management services to men struggling with homelessness and provide groceries to well over 100 families a week through our Food Pantry.

As we endure the Summer heat, the steady hum of activity at the Center brings joy and comfort to our guests. As always, we are deeply grateful for our regular volunteers and donors that help us keep our programs staffed as our student volunteers enjoy their summer break.

Thank you for your continued support, and we hope to see you at the Center soon.

– The Father McKenna Center Staff

Save the Date:
10th Annual Walk for McKenna
Saturday, Sept. 26th

The Walk for McKenna, our annual fundraising 5k, is back for it's 10th year this September!

Last year was our best-attended walk yet, with almost 450 people joining us to raise more than \$180,000 for our programs and services supporting men struggling with homelessness and families experiencing food insecurity.

Visit our website today to register and help us break the \$200,000 mark this year!

[Register Here](#)



A Reflection on Pope Leo's "Magnifica Humanitas" from Spiritual Director Jimmy Beh

So I put Pope Leo's new encyclical into ChatGPT and this is what it.... Kidding, Kidding... As you may know, Pope Leo XIV released his first encyclical on May 15th - entitled Magnifica Humanitas (Magnificent Humanity) - in which he primarily focuses on how we are called to safeguard the human person in this revolutionary time of Artificial Intelligence (AI). In addition to his lengthy reflection on the Catholic response to AI, Pope Leo also discusses human dignity, subsidiarity, solidarity, war, slavery, truth and democracy, the dignity of work, and building a civilization of love in the digital age (to name a few!).



It is no coincidence that this encyclical was released 135 years to the day following Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, Rerum Novarum, which was written in response to the Industrial Revolution. In that span of 135 years, the Church has produced many encyclicals to respond to the varying contemporary needs of a particular time. As a result, we today have compiled these teachings into what is commonly referred to as Catholic Social Teaching (CST).

CST is a great gift to the Church and all people of goodwill because it helps guide our actions in a world that often seems chaotic and without any discernible moral arc. Rather than becoming apathetic toward the messiness and suffering of our world, CST challenges us to see that living out a faith that does justice is our small, vital contribution to "rebuilding Jerusalem, a city where both God and humanity dwell together."

Now, while I would love to share with you a longer reflection on all the aspects of this great encyclical, we do not have the space for that here. Instead, I would simply invite you to thoughtfully read this document and discuss it with someone you know and trust. Yes, it is long, and yes it can seem dense at times, and absolutely you might start to notice more storm clouds gathering around our uncertain future, but I also believe that in reading this encyclical you will discover a sense of hope and a renewed invitation to what Pope Francis referred to as fraternity (or brotherhood and sisterhood).

This invitation to have hope in the future through living in human fraternity demands that we do not ignore the bleak and harsh realities of our time, and Pope Leo XIV does not shy away from naming them. Moreover, we are called to look at them soberly, and respond to them through faith, hope and love – as co-laborers working together.

So in that spirit, I will leave you with my favorite excerpt from this encyclical that seems to hold these elements of fraternity, hope, and serious danger in a creative tension:

(213.) *“The twentieth-century Catholic author J.R.R. Tolkien, in the words of a protagonist in one of his novels, described our responsibility in this way: ‘It is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till.’ The civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization.”*

Welcoming Corey Jackson, Jesuit Scholastic

This summer, we are happy to be joined by Corey Jackson, a Jesuit Scholastic currently studying at St. Louis University. Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Corey entered the Jesuits in 2023 and has been an immediate positive presence in our Day Shelter Program.

While studying in St. Louis, Corey has also spent time working at Loyola Academy, a boys-only middle school, working with under-privileged students to help prepare them for High School and College. During his time with the Jesuits, Corey has worked at five schools supporting and uplifting students experiencing homelessness and food insecurity, as well as serving as a chaplain at St. Francis Medical Center in Los Angeles.



Corey continues a long tradition of Jesuit Scholastics joining us for summer service while staying with the Gonzaga Jesuit Community. We are deeply grateful for this relationship, which allows us to better continue Fr. McKenna’s work and exposes new Jesuits to his legacy within the District. When asked about his time at the Center so far, Corey shared: **“I feel it is my personal mission to accompany the men who come into the Center, to give them the support they need and help them recognize their dignity. It has been a joy working at the McKenna Center and I am excited to continue my work with the homeless and hungry in DC through the summer”**

Upcoming Event - July 31st St. Ignatius Day of Prayer at Loyola on the Potomac

Over the past months, many of our staff have participated in Day of Prayer retreats at the Loyola on the Potomac retreat house. The retreats include mass, reflections, personal prayer time, and two meals - all with an incredible view of the Potomac River.

We hope you'll consider joining some of our staff on St. Ignatius Day, July 31st, for the next Day of Prayer. Get more info and sign up using the link!

[Register Here](#)



Catholic High Schools Perform Service Education at the Father McKenna Center

Through the month of June, we welcomed four High School groups for summer service learning trips - two from Gonzaga, one from St. Joe's Prep in Philly, and one from the Connelly School of the Holy Child in Potomac, MD.

During their time at the Center, these groups support our core programs, participate in reflections, and visit other organizations that provide services to DC's hungry and homeless.

Immersion service learning trips provide a unique perspective of both the day-to-day experiences of our guests and opportunities for non-profit work after they finish High School / College. For our local students, these trips often mark the start of a multi-year relationship with community service.



For Gonzaga students, McKenna Immersion is one of only a few summer service opportunities available to rising Sophomores, offering an early exposure to immersive service education.



The faculty and student leaders on these trips help to set the tone and encourage students to remain open to growth and new experiences. We were lucky to have stellar leaders across all four groups, including some returning faculty from previous years. The passion these leaders bring to their time with us is vital, and we look forward to catching up with them each summer. As we say goodbye to our summer immersion visitors, we hope you will join us to continue their work and staff our programs while we wait for school to resume this fall!

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