

# College students ‘a huge blessing’ for St. Peter’s in Greeley



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The Sunday evening Mass at St. Peter Catholic Church in Greeley looks a little different than most parishes in the archdiocese — it’s filled with college students.

“They are very active,” said Father Jim Crisman, pastor of St. Peter’s. “It certainly adds a level of enthusiasm and life to the parish.”

Located just a mile down the road from the University of Northern Colorado, St. Peter’s welcomes and reaches out to students through its largest ministry — Bear Catholic.

Bear Catholic serves students at UNC in a variety of ways with two part-time campus ministers and FOCUS missionaries who act as the “evangelistic arm” of the ministry, explained Michael Lynch, Campus Development Director at St. Peter’s.

Lynch, who attended UNC and later served as a FOCUS missionary there, has seen first-hand the fruits of the campus ministry.

The priests who served during his time in Bear Catholic offered adoration, confession and daily Mass on a regular basis, as well as opportunities for retreats.

“The opportunities to grow and take it to the next step wherever you are in your faith journey [are there],” he said. “There was always something available if you were hungry enough for it.”

St. Peter’s works hard to make the college students feel included, particularly through a new program called “Adopt a Bear,” which allows parishioners to open their homes and share a meal with one or two college students.

“It was created to bridge the distance in ages because so often in parishes, the age group that’s not well-represented is college-aged students because they’re of at college,” said Father Crisman.

“We wanted to integrate them into the life of the parish in a positive way so that they could have a positive influence on the families and the families could have a positive influence on them,” he added.

The program is also a way to help kids who might feel homesick.

“We have parishioners who are acting as a way to give the students a home away from home,” said Lynch, “which is what St. Peter’s strives to do for their college students.”

Bear Catholic itself has made an incredible impact on students who participate in it during their college years. Several have even joined the Church or received certain sacraments for the first time during their time at UNC.

“It’s very encouraging,” said Father Crisman. “They’ve got great intellectual curiosity. They raise excellent questions. They give youthful enthusiasm that’s infectious.”



The Bear Catholic ministry at St. Peter Catholic Parish in Greeley has seen the great fruits of reaching out to college students at UNC. (File photo)

Parishioners like Aileen Kato, who has been a member of St. Peter's for 34 years, enjoy the gifts the young adults bring to the Church community.

"I love that vibrancy that they bring to the parish," said Kato. "The newness of life and the questions — it's wonderful for me."

Kato is grateful for the presence of college students and her parish's work to minister to them.

"I support whole-heartedly the mission of our church and the outreach that we have with campus ministry because it's so important," she said. "It's the future of our church and of our faith. If we don't nurture it and foster it and be a part of it, it's going to fade away."

Father Crisman continues to welcome the opportunity to change the course of a young person's faith life through Bear Catholic.

"We're making disciples that will be able to live the fruits of the gospel," he said, "and then share those fruits with everyone in their field of expertise."