

Highlights from Seek 2023 by David Baranowski

St. Louis hosted the SEEK23 Conference at the Convention Center the week of January 2, 2023. The conference was sponsored by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS). Over 17,000 people from around the world were in attendance! The conference was attended by thousands and thousands of college students; hundreds of priests, seminarians, and religious ordered men and women; dozens of bishops; and hundreds of Catholic men and women. The days were filled with morning Mass, workshops, dynamic speakers, sacramental and worship opportunities, and entertainment - all to encourage an encounter with Jesus. It was a week packed with fun, fellowship and faith. Here are some of the workshop highlights:

Making Missionary Disciples (www.focus.org/missionarydisciples) Jesus invested in twelve men and asked them to share their faith with others. In making disciples, our focus should not be on the total number of disciples but on the intensity of the flame within them. The hotter the flame, the deeper the relationship with God and others. Our standard of success should not be based on how many people came to be fed, but on how many people are going to help feed others. This is from 2 Timothy 2:2 – “entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.” The model is based on Jesus’ teaching. WIN – lead souls to encounter Jesus. BUILD - personally invest in people and accompany them on their faith journey. SEND - “go and make disciples.”

Marriage – **Dr. Edward Sri** (www.edwardsri.com) retold the following story by Pope Benedict regarding the Wedding at Cana. The first wine served at the wedding was great. This is similar to marriage, when our initial love is great but, after some time, may fade. The second wine, the wine made by Jesus, is far superior to the first. Similar to marriage, when Jesus is part of a marriage, the union is strong and deep. Jesus transforms our love and makes it grow, just as He transformed water into wine. Dr. Sri added that, in marriage, one of the best things we can do is to be grateful for our spouse and always assume a positive intent from our spouse. When our spouse stumbles, how do we respond? Do we love more or

do we withdraw our love? God brings our imperfections to the surface so that they can be healed.

Parenting – **Mike and Alicia Hernon** (messyfamilyproject.org) talked about building a path of holiness for our families. The breakdown of the family over the decades has helped lead to the decline of the Church. To rebuild the Church, we need to rebuild the family. Parents need God’s mercy to help raise their kids. Parenting exposes our weaknesses and shows our need for God. If we want to be great parents, we have to be great spouses first. Let’s make sure marriages are right for the sake of children, because every child needs to be loved individually and passionately. Let’s create a family culture that will positively impact our children.

Spiritual Warfare – Jessica Navin gave insights into spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is an everyday occurrence; however, it usually goes unnoticed because this is a battle primarily for the mind. Evil spirits can’t directly affect our actions but they can tempt us through imagination, memories, emotions, and reasoning. The devil does not want us united to God and will give us subtle obstacles to prayer. One of the devil’s major tools is discouragement – making people feel powerless and hopeless. How do we fight back? Let’s live holy lives – know our weaknesses and ask God for help, go to Confession regularly, and conform our minds to the mind of Jesus by reading the Bible.

If you missed this year’s conference, there is good news! FOCUS will sponsor SEEK24 in St. Louis again next year from January 1 – 5. Put it on your calendar and invite some of your friends to join you.



FR. JOHN'S DIGITAL QUILL FOR SPIRITUAL MUSINGS AND PARISH NEWS

January Offerings

Prayer Groups

Our parish prayer groups will meet this week! Deacon Bob will meet with his group at 6:00pm on Sunday evening. The prayer group that I facilitate will meet on Monday, January 30, at 2:00pm in the cry room. Pam Hager will meet with her group on Tuesday, January 31, at 9:30am.

Please know that while these groups were formed in Advent, they are still open and available to everyone!

"Bother Father"

"Bother Father" for February will be on Friday, February 17, from 9:00-11:00 and on Tuesday, February 21, from 3:00-5:00pm. A Signup Genius was sent out on Wednesday with the midweek update or you can contact the parish office for a time to meet with me.

Parish Rosary Program

This is a very simple offering...each week people commit to praying a decade or more of the Rosary. We will unite in praying for the intentions of our parish, but in particular each week, I will propose an intention for that particular week.

Last week, we received additional intention cards. There are now 17 people offering 55 Rosaries and 21 Decades each week to be prayed for the intention listed in the bulletin.

This week, our prayer intention will be for Catholic education. This is an appropriate intention as this is Catholic Schools Week!

Would you like to pray with us and see that number of Rosaries increase? If so, please fill out this intention card and return it in the Offertory.

I will see you online or in church! - Fr. John
#SRAstrong

P.S. Join us today (Sunday, January 29) from 11:00-2:00 at school for our Open House. We are thrilled after the last couple of years to go back to our traditional format of allowing people to tour the school. If it has been a while since you have been in the school, we encourage you to stop by and see the great things happening there!

We also welcome all those who are discerning where to send their children for school. We hope that you will enjoy your visit to our school's campus. Know that we are grateful for your visit and praying for you during this time of discernment for your family.



**SAINT RAPHAEL
THE ARCHANGEL**
CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PRE K - 8TH GRADE

Open House
Sunday, January 29 | 11am-2pm

Formed in faith, Prepared for life

6000 Jamieson Avenue | sraschool.org
(314) 352-9474

I commit to participating in the
Parish Rosary Program

(Name Optional)

I will pray...

_____ Decade(s)

_____ Rosary(ies)

Every:

_____ Day

_____ Week