OUR CATHOLIC MISSION

TRUTH AND FIDELITY IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

SUMMER 2025



BUILDING THE NEWMAN GUIDE PIPELINE

- Connecting Catholic Education
- A Family's Journey with The Newman Guide
- A Youth Minister's Plea to the Church

Education Rooted in the Pursuit of TRUTH

As educators, the Abbey offers a classical education for undergraduate students through our Honors College, as well as a graduate-level program for you!

Our Honors College

Our Honors College located near beautiful Charlotte, North Carolina is more than just a four-year curriculum; it is an all-encompassing journey to discover the world through a critical eye, to study the Great Books and their impact on the world, and to prepare for a future that focuses on goodness and beauty.

Our Classical Masters

For educators, **our Master of Arts in Classical and Liberal Education** offers an unparalleled opportunity to impact future generations. In our program you'll find a transformative learning experience that will prepare you to form students in the moral, intellectual, and theological virtues.

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE

Dear friend in Catholic education,

Yes, the Pope is an American! But what really excites me is that he understands, by his own experience, the crisis of American education.

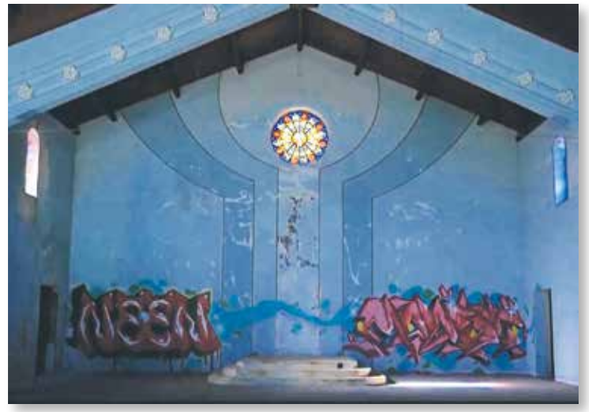
Did you know that Pope Leo's Catholic grade school and parish in Chicago are CLOSED? They're being converted to a community center.

His Catholic high school: CLOSED.

His college seminary: CLOSED.

The Catholic school where his father was principal: CLOSED.

Two Catholic schools where his mother was librarian: CLOSED.



Now as Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV faces the same crisis of Catholic education that so vexed his predecessors. The closure of Catholic schools is just a symptom of this crisis. More importantly, generations of children who later became parents and grandparents of children have been poorly catechized and have fallen away from the Truth, who is God.

Imagine, the schools that formed a Pope for Christ have already disappeared!

It's a call to action. Money and marketing can't solve this crisis alone. Catholic education needs a new vision—through the mind and heart of the Savior.

The continuum of Newman Guide Recommended elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and graduate programs is the answer to many Catholic families' prayers. It is a sign that true reform and renewal are underway, and Catholic education is turning once again to its mission above all else.

Our new Holy Father offers a wonderful—and increasingly rare—witness to the value of a lifelong formation in Catholic education. His whole family was engaged in the great task of forming saints.

But when a Catholic school closes—or when it dies metaphorically, having lost its "flavor" in pursuit of bland conformity to the culture—we lose another center of evangelization.

May God continue to bless the growth of faithful Newman Guide education across every level and every stage of life, and may Catholics of all ages find grace in this education that begins and ends with Truth.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Patrick



Patrick Reilly
President and Founder
The Cardinal Newman Society

SCAN TO DONATE

CONNECTING CATHOLIC EDUCATION

by Patrick Reilly

NO ONE TRULY DESERVES TO BE CALLED "EDUCATED."

What I mean is, no human ever completes their education. It's never accomplished, except in small part. Education is a lifelong journey that probably continues into eternity!

Nevertheless, we talk of high school graduation as a conclusion, college as the pinnacle of education, and doctorates as "terminal degrees." We carve up education into a multi-step progression—from primary to secondary to higher education—and treat each level like a distinct program. Both students and teachers at each level are regarded as entirely different, and in most schools and colleges, there is minimal interaction across levels.

While there are reasons for this, The Cardinal Newman Society thinks Catholic education needs to unify. Next June, we'll shatter convention with our Newman Guide Leaders Summit for administrators from all levels and types of Newman Guide Recommended education. And through our Newman Guide Network, we're encouraging collaboration among peer groups but also across all Newman Guide Recommended institutions.

While Catholic schools, colleges, and other programs—and the grades and levels within them—are beautifully diverse in particular aspects, The Cardinal Newman Society strives to restore the common foundation and mission of all Catholic education. Our Newman Guide standards draw attention to the end toward which all Catholic education should stive: the full communion of every person with the Father, through Jesus Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit.



This is the meaning of the high red bar in the Cardinal Newman Society logo, typically running across the page. It symbolizes the high standards of faithful Catholic education, to which all Newman Guide Recommended institutions are committed. But it also is meant to remind us of the lifelong continuum of Catholic education, which begins with the parents' baptismal promise to raise a child in the Faith and continues through the Christian life.

We think the practical divisions of Catholic education should not get in the way of ensuring faithful formation for every Catholic of every age. The divisions also need not prevent collaboration for the good of all. It's time to unite and hold the center against the confusion, legal threats, and ideological distortions of our age, for the good of Catholic families.

LIFELONG CONTINUUM

After nearly two decades of celebrating Catholic colleges in The Newman Guide, with rapidly growing numbers of recommended grade schools and graduate programs and soon also homeschooling, online, and hybrid options, we're emphasizing the lifelong continuum of Catholic education for people of all ages.

Formation in faith and virtue isn't just for children. And college isn't the moment when young adults no longer need guidance—far from it! In fact, we need Catholic education throughout our lifetimes.

Of course, it's a great blessing that educators today know so much more about the psychological development of their students and can ensure that curricula and pedagogy are age-appropriate. It helps to classify education by grade level, stage of formation (primary, secondary, and higher education), and educational approach. Some classical educators are embracing developmental stages called grammar, logic, and rhetoric, although others regard these as liberal arts that should not be strictly age-limited.

And yet, while broad age-related divisions are helpful, we must remember that they are conceptual and can be too rigidly enforced. We risk shackling students and preventing them from exploring the unity of all knowledge and ascending above it toward God. If we don't serve every Catholic at every age, we risk excluding people who would benefit from Catholic education. If we don't keep focus on the enduring mission of Catholic education across all levels, then we narrow our expectations to particulars and lose sight of the goal that lies beyond this life.

It doesn't help that modern society is preoccupied with the diploma—a piece of paper signaling preparation for employment—instead of delighting in the daily encounter with truth. That encounter is no less fulfilling for the elderly as it is for children.



MUTUAL SUCCESS

Moreover, just as Catholic education serves the good of the individual student as well as the good of the Church and society, so should every Catholic school, college, or other educational program be individually excellent yet also collaborate in its mission of evangelization with other educators.

We are excited to see leaders from the Newman Guide Recommended colleges already working in many ways to strengthen personnel policies, share costs, recruit students, etc.—always united in their shared mission. Now, as the number of recommended schools and other programs increases, our Newman Guide Network is forging ties among those faithful Catholic educators for mutual support.

The big task that remains is to build ties across levels. Our leaders summit in June will be a big step, with two cohorts—higher education leaders and leaders of grade-school, homeschool, and other programs—meeting separately for some time but then also gathering together for fellowship and attention to their shared mission. In addition, we are encouraging elementary and secondary education leaders to promote attendance at Newman Guide Recommended colleges, and we are encouraging colleges to forge relationships with Newman Guide Recommended schools and homeschool programs.

One key area of collaboration that is urgently needed is in the defense of faithful education from threats to religious freedom and from ideological activism. The Cardinal Newman Society has long been a vital conduit of information and advice from legal experts to educators. We also recommend actions to stand up and protect these precious institutions.

EVERY STAGE

I'll end with a brief reflection: At what stage of life do we become perfect?

It seems a ludicrous question, and yet I have heard it pronounced with great conviction by various Catholics that catechesis and formation in virtue is for the young, and it does not belong in college. Education in general is something that ends with high school or college graduation. The rest of life is just career and tending to families, perhaps with some private reading along the way.

So is it graduation, then, when we become perfect?

I ask this, because at the moment a Catholic decides education is no longer relevant to his or her life, that must be the moment when the intellect is without error, and the will and passions are perfectly aligned with reason. Only at that moment of perfection does the human have no need of learning and growing.

Until then, all our activity should still be striving for God, by growing in understanding and wisdom without ceasing.

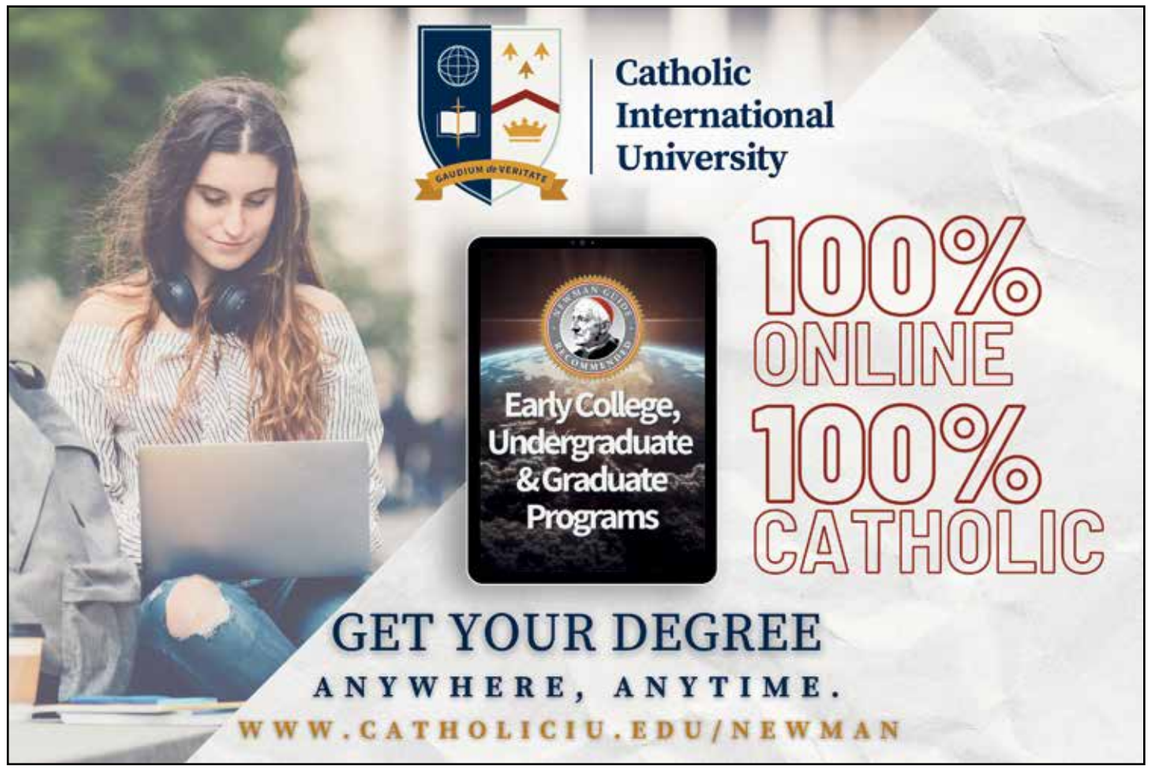
Or maybe there's an alternative. Perhaps, instead of perfection, we are on the opposite side of holiness when we lose our desire to learn. Perhaps we have lost our desire to know God.

Catholic education belongs in every stage of life. If we move from the liberal arts to specialized studies and skills needed for a particular career, all the more important is the Catholic worldview that situates the particular within the whole. The alternative to striving for knowledge of God and His wisdom is to fall away from the very purpose for which man was created—and that doesn't end well.

May faithful Newman Guide education thrive and grow at every level, and by every productive means, for the good of the student and the good of the Church. OCM



PATRICK REILLY
is president and founder of
The Cardinal Newman Society.



NEWMAN'S IDEA OF K-20 EDUCATION

BY DAN GUERNSEY, ED.D



St. John Henry Newman is best known for thinking deeply about the role of the Catholic university, as part of his founding of The Catholic University of Ireland in 1854. Fewer are aware that he also later founded a prep school in 1859. He sought to bring a Catholic vision and voice to a field dominated by well-funded but compromised and compromising English prep schools like Eton and St. Paul's and universities like Oxford and Cambridge.

That a man of Newman's stature and intellect should devote himself to Catholic primary and secondary schools, as well as to Catholic higher education, speaks to his view of all stages of Catholic education as an organic and unified whole.

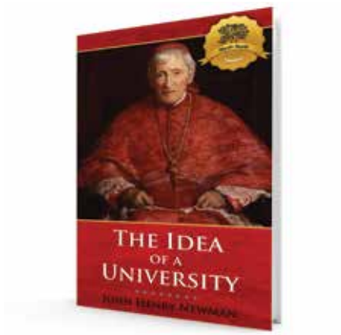
The Cardinal Newman Society continues under the inspiration of this vision and work by supporting authentically Catholic educational institutions as they challenge the hegemony of secularized American schools and universities, which have rejected their patrimonies and joined league with atheistic, pragmatic, and relativistic ideologies.

The Newman Guide response

Just as St. John Henry Newman naturally expanded his focus to include both Catholic schools and colleges, so has The Cardinal Newman Society. Its network of Newman Guide Recommended colleges has been around since 2007 and now comprises 27 undergraduate colleges and 55 graduate programs. In 2023 faithful Catholic elementary and secondary schools were added to The Newman Guide. This growing group of schools—now 22 with dozens in the application process—are carefully vetted for vision and excellence and supported with research, policy, and resources developed by The Cardinal Newman Society.

These bold and growing schools, inspired by a Catholic understanding of reality and dedicated to applying faith and reason, offer a dramatic contrast to the pall hanging over so much of modern education today.

They are inspired by Cardinal Newman's seminal insights that authentic education demands effort, process, abstraction, and unity. He observes in *Idea of a University* that, "all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator."



This idea that knowledge is in itself united and connected to God affects the vocation of the student, who is called to engage in the "building up of ideas" with "an acquired faculty of judgment, of clear-sightedness, of sagacity, of wisdom, of philosophical reach of mind, and of intellectual self-possession and repose," which is "the work of discipline and habit." The result is the "power of discriminating between truth and falsehood, of sifting out the grains of truth from the mass, of arranging things according to their real value."

> "THESE BOLD AND GROWING SCHOOLS… OFFER A DRAMATIC CONTRAST TO THE PALL HANGING OVER SO MUCH OF MODERN EDUCATION TODAY."

Education demands such effort, process, abstraction, and unity, but it also happens in and to a unique individual human person, who is unified in mind, body, and spirit, and in personal history. The target, an adult who can "give a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them" as well as " master any subject with facility," was once in third grade, was once a middle schooler, and was once a high school sophomore. Education is a continuum from kindergarten through higher learning and not just disaggregated stages.

Unchanging Truth, the proper object of the intellect, is one. The changing student, the subject of the educational process is also "one."

Experiencing Newman's vision

As an educator with experience in Catholic elementary, secondary, undergraduate, and graduate education, it has been my great privilege and honor to see this process work its way out and work its way through my students. But I am especially grateful for the experiences of my own six children.

All graduated from a school recognized by The Cardinal Newman Society. All benefited from a Catholic school dedicated to the vision and principles of St. John Henry Newman: dedicated to Christ, His Church, and the love and pursuit of truth in all its glorious unity. My children were blessed with dedicated teachers who guided them through academic and religious formation in a stable, cohesive, and resonant spiritual and academic environment.

Preparation in a Newman Guide Recommended school made their choice of a Newman Guide Recommended college all the more exciting for them. Having been exposed to the best humanity had written, thought, and discovered while they were in their teens, they knew there was much more to learn, or to learn more deeply. The horizon had been set, and they were hungry to journey on their own for more—not subject to the siren song and shallowness that passes for much of higher education today, with its glitter, ideologies, disintegrations, and distractions.

> "EDUCATION IS A CONTINUUM FROM KINDERGARTEN THROUGH HIGHER LEARNING AND NOT JUST DISAGGREGATED STAGES."

With intellects and appetites still under development but oriented towards true freedom and truth, they made their way to four different Newman Guide Recommended colleges, while one went to a top-15 secular college. Fortunately, the latter was prepared enough to survive the despair and progressivism animating that institution, but he simply did not have the same quality of college life and relationships as his Newman Guide siblings. For them, now that they are adults fondly reminiscing, each is fierce in defending their recommended college as definitely the best!

St. John Henry Newman saw a continuum in preparation and formation for youth as persons growing into adulthood in mind, body, and spirit in the unity of truth. The K-20 institutions recommended in The Newman Guide stand ready to further that vision and support Catholic families longing to see both their children and the Kingdom of God flourish! **OCM**

DAN GUERNSEY, ED.D.
is a senior fellow at The Cardinal Newman Society and program director for Ave Maria University's Master in Catholic Educational Leadership.
dguernsey@cardinalnewmansociety.org



Newman Guide Pipeline from School to College



BY KELLY SALOMON

With the expansion of Newman Guide recognition into Catholic elementary and secondary education, and the exposure of radical ideology and toxic campus culture across most of American higher education, a natural pipeline is forming between faithful Catholic schools and colleges.

Consider the example of one Catholic school principal in Michigan.

Greg Reichert has served at Everest Collegiate High School and Academy in Clarkston, Mich., a PK-12th grade school recommended in The Newman Guide, for 29 years—first as a teacher and now as headmaster.

"We have both a unique opportunity and a profound responsibility to form our students in the Catholic faith," Reichert says. "During these formative years, we walk alongside parents in supporting the spiritual, intellectual, and personal growth of their children."

"The college years often test a young person's faith—but given the proper environment, this experience can better offer the chance for that faith to become deeply personal and rooted," says Reichert. "That's why we believe it is critically important to build clear pathways toward excellent, authentic Catholic universities."

Reichert explains how, in just the last few years, it's become an "important goal" at Everest to "incentivize and create pathways" for Everest graduates to enroll at Newman Guide Recommended colleges. The school has had longstanding ties to Ave Maria University since its founding in Michigan and offers dual-enrollment options with Franciscan University of Steubenville. The type of education and formation these colleges provide continues and "builds upon" the formation students have received at Everest, he says.

This focused effort has been extremely successful: 8 percent of graduates attended Newman Guide Recommended colleges five years ago, and it has grown to more than 40 percent of graduates this year.

"My prayer is that these important connections are only the beginning for Everest, as we continue to answer God's call to prepare our students for amazing undergraduate formation in strong, faithful, Catholic institutions," Reichert says.



"At Everest, we've always relished the opportunity to stand firmly and lovingly in support of the Church and her teachings, and it is increasingly comforting to have the support of The Cardinal Newman Society and to be able to affiliate with like-minded schools across the country."

The Newman Guide advantage

Forging such ties between faithful colleges and schools is a high priority for The Cardinal Newman Society, especially with the "demographic cliff" looming over Catholic education. The term refers to a projected drop in the number of traditional college-aged students in the United States, beginning in the fall of 2025, due to fewer marriages and lower birthrates.

But with this challenge comes a new opportunity to build a reliable pipeline of Catholic families with children and grandchildren.

"There's a natural affinity between families at Newman Guide Recommended K-12 schools—who are already seeking a faithfully Catholic education—and Thomas Aquinas College, which provides that sort of education at the collegiate level," says Chris Weinkopf, executive director of college relations at the College, which has campuses in California and Massachusetts.

Expensive recruiting fads come and go, but The Newman Guide is a reliable and free recruitment tool for Newman Guide Recommended colleges. "We look forward to welcoming students from Newman Guide Recommended K-12 schools on both of our campuses for many years to come," says Weinkopf.

Students from Newman Guide Recommended schools have already experienced firsthand the blessing of faithful Catholic education. If they learn about a Newman Guide Recommended college and enroll, they are more likely to stay at the college than a student who is surprised by what Newman Guide education is all about.

The student body at Thomas Aquinas College "includes members of many large Catholic families, for whom no demographic cliff appears to be in sight," said Weinkopf. But one of the challenges of the demographic cliff is that "colleges with shrinking student bodies are going to try ever harder to woo away our prospective students," he believes.

"For that reason, we need to be all the more proactive in explaining what sets Thomas Aquinas College apart from other schools: that ours is a fully integrated program of Catholic liberal education, aimed not merely at job training,

> "A NATURAL PIPELINE IS FORMING BETWEEN FAITHFUL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES."

but at forming the whole person for any career and any vocation."

A time for bold action

Jesse Dorman, vice provost of enrollment at Belmont Abbey College in Belmont, N.C., agrees there is "one thing that transcends the demographic decline," and that is families who are "searching for a solid, orthodox, high-quality education."

"There still remains a growing percentage of families who are not comfortable with what the local vanilla university provides and want something better for their child," he says.

"The long-anticipated demographic cliff is no longer a distant concern, it's reality," admits Tim Reardon, vice president of enrollment management at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio. "With U.S. birthrates not recovering from the decline that began in 2008, this is not a temporary dip in the pipeline. It is the new normal."

"Despite Franciscan University's strong enrollment performance in recent years, this is not a moment for complacency," Reardon continues. "It is a time for clarity, conviction, and bold action rooted in our Catholic identity." That's what matters to families from Newman Guide schools.



Another Newman Guide Recommended college, this one in Bismarck, N.D., is doubling down on its mission. "While the looming demographic cliff presents significant challenges across higher education, the University of Mary remains steadfast and confident in the enduring strength of our distinctly Catholic and Benedictine mission," the University said in a statement.

"Our commitment to forming the whole person for the whole of life resonates with students and families seeking more than just a degree—those desiring a purposeful, faith-filled, values-driven education. As one of only a select few Newman Guide Recommended colleges nationwide, Mary stands as a national model of faithful Catholic higher education."

With fewer college-aged students—and with the percentage of high school graduates who are choosing to go to college dropping as well—The Newman Guide is a key distinguishing mark among colleges.

"The Cardinal Newman Society's dedicated efforts to expand awareness among faithfully Catholic audiences have been invaluable to us. Through features in e-books, news stories, blogs, and podcasts, our partnership with CNS has significantly amplified our reach and impact," says Teresa Fox, vice president of marketing and communications at Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio.

Now Walsh and other faithful colleges can also directly reach Catholic families who love Newman Guide education.

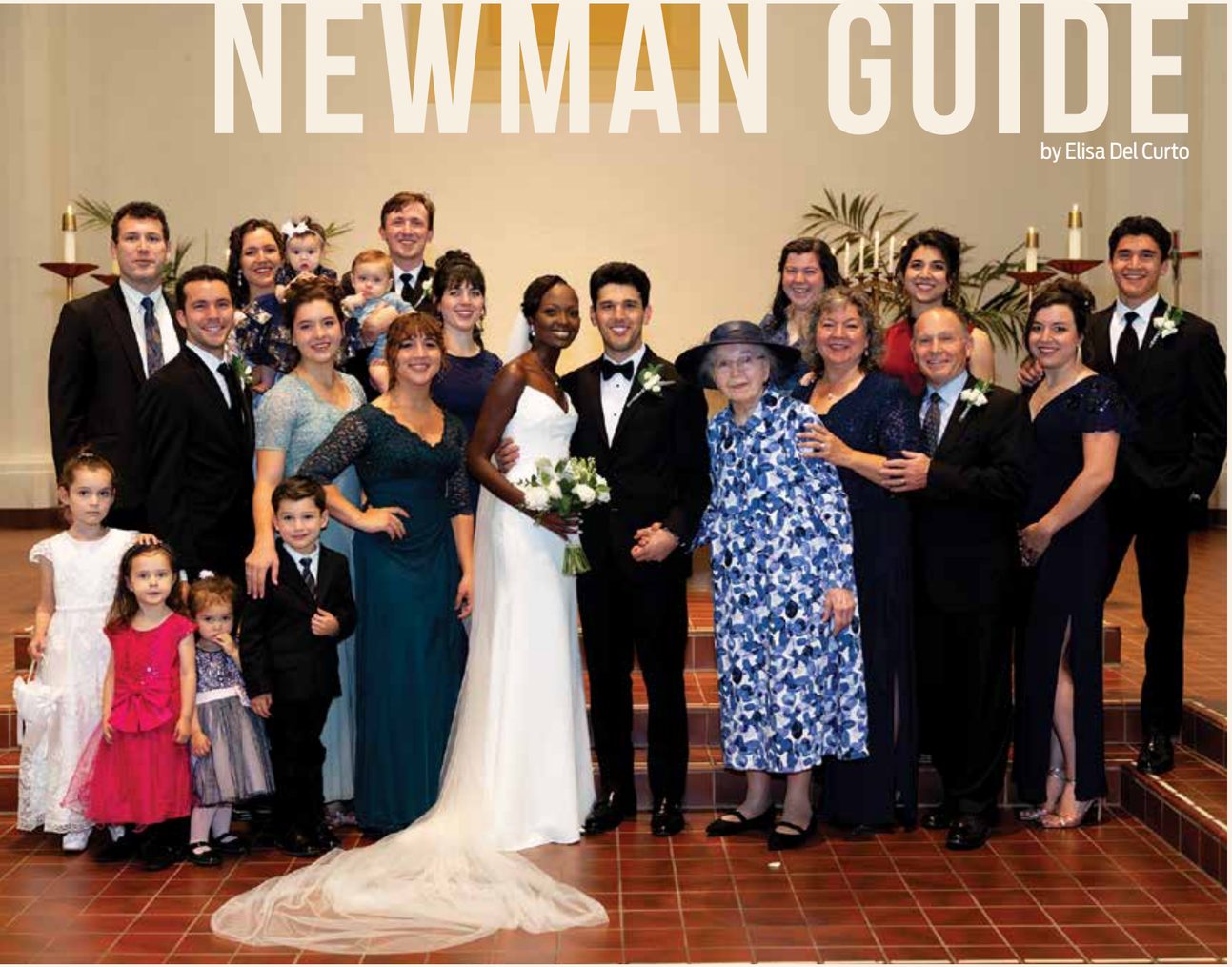
"Our relationship with the K-12 Newman Guide Recommended schools has created new opportunities to introduce Walsh University to families and communities who share our faith-focused values," Fox says, "further strengthening the enrollment pipeline and reinforcing our commitment to Catholic education at every level." **OCM**

KELLY SALOMON
is vice president of Newman Guide Programs at The Cardinal Newman Society.
ksalomon@cardinalnewmansociety.org



A FAMILY'S JOURNEY WITH THE NEWMAN GUIDE

by Elisa Del Curto



The Cardinal Newman Society has been hugely influential in my family's life. As a mother of ten children, my main concern is the salvation of their souls.

I was a public-schooled kid, and my Catholic faith was one of ritual, not true understanding. We never missed Mass as children, Confession and Holy Days being *de rigueur*. However, my understanding was sorely lacking. I knew something was missing in my life. I did not delve into my Catholic faith until my husband, Andre, and I welcomed our first child, Elizabeth.

By the time she was school-aged, we made the decision to send her to a Catholic grade school. In filling out the forms, the question of "Why do you desire your child to have a Catholic education?" appeared with a couple of empty lines on which to write. Well, the words came forth in unbelievable speed. I quickly responded with over a page of prose of why our daughter should be a recipient of a Catholic education. I spoke of my lack of formation, understanding of the faith, and desiring much more for our child.

I envisioned our daughter being immersed into our Catholic faith, with Catholicism being woven into every subject. I expected the lay teachers to be expert theologians. My husband and I were left somewhat disappointed and disillusioned to learn this was not the case. It was a wake-up call for us as parents to learn that we were the primary educators of our children, and we were responsible to transmit the faith to our growing family. It was not enough to be what I call "ritual" Catholics.

Immersed in Catholicism

We spent two years at one Catholic grade school and two-and-a-half years at another, at which point we had six children. During those early years, we began to learn about our faith, reading Catholic books, listening to Immaculate Heart Radio, and having avid discussions with our pastor. We were busy building our domestic church: praying the family Rosary, praying as a couple, and also introducing other Catholic devotions into our growing family's life. It became paramount to us parents that we must be able to explain our faith, encourage our young children's questions, and rely on God's providence in all areas of our lives. We attended Marian conferences, parish talks, read Church documents, and basically set out to school ourselves on our rich Catholic faith.

As we were immersing ourselves in Catholicism, a suggestion was made to my husband by our neighbor, who happened to be a public middle-school teacher. He suggested we try homeschooling. With much trepidation, prayer, tears, and familial support, we ultimately chose that path to educate our ten children.

We were acutely aware of what was being taught in public schools, as well as colleges and universities. We were concerned for our children's future higher education choices. I fretted over how we could possibly navigate choosing a college. I tried to calm myself by reminding myself that God had always given us what we needed when we needed it. I questioned older parents and their college-aged offspring about how they approached discerning which colleges and universities were authentically Catholic. I got mixed answers, not all to my satisfaction, until I met a lovely, intelligent, pious woman named Maria Fran.

This dear woman told me about The Cardinal Newman Society and a book they had recently published that listed authentically Catholic colleges and universities. Immediately, I ordered and received a paperback book that listed all the authentically Catholic colleges and universities that existed in the U.S. My prayer had been answered. Soon, we began seeing some of these colleges being profiled in the *National Catholic Register*. We were thrilled to learn what each school offered and that they were true to Church teaching.

> "IT WAS VITALLY IMPORTANT TO US THAT OUR CHILDREN LEARN IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WAS NOT OPPOSED TO WHAT THEY HAD BEEN TAUGHT AND BELIEVED."

It was vitally important to us that our children learn in an environment that was not opposed to what they had been taught and believed. In August of 2009, our eldest daughter Elizabeth began her classics study at Ave Maria University, in part because of The Cardinal Newman Society. We then encouraged our other children to read through The Newman Guide and choose a college from the list. We have had children attend many authentically Catholic schools: Thomas More College of Liberal Arts, Benedictine College, University of Dallas, University of Mary, and Catholic International University. While there is no longer a paperback book being published, the online information is exceptionally thorough and up to date. I appreciate knowing schools are constantly being monitored and, if they can no longer check off the boxes of being authentically Catholic, they are removed from the list. This resource is incredibly helpful to parents who are committed to helping their children navigate higher education institutions.

Prepared for life

Personally, I could not be happier with the results of our children's college educations. They have a deep and clear understanding of their Catholic faith and have made it their own. Most of the colleges on the Cardinal Newman list have a required core of classes. In addition, to their respective major courses, our kids were exposed to great literature, philosophy, and theology. This has prepared them for life. It is not enough to be successful at their chosen profession if they do not know how to live a Christian life. It has been a blessing for our children to learn in environments that do not attack Christianity, but bolster the one true Church that Christ established.

I was so pleased to learn the Cardinal Newman list now includes elementary, secondary, and graduate programs. It will make clear for parents exactly which schools are in line with Church teaching and which will not undermine their domestic church. Looking back, it would have been so helpful to know about the Catholicity of local elementary and high schools. My prayer is that all levels of Catholic education will strive to be on this coveted list. **OCM**

ELISA DEL CURTO,
wife and mother of ten.





YES, EVEN GRADUATE EDUCATION SHOULD BE FAITHFULLY CATHOLIC

WHAT DO THE NEWMAN GUIDE RECOMMENDED GRADUATE PROGRAMS HAVE IN COMMON?

Because they specialize in a wide variety of skills and knowledge, graduate programs can seem far removed from the integrated curricula of Catholic liberal arts colleges and disconnected from the mission of deepening students' relationships with God. But the graduate programs recommended by The Cardinal Newman Society pursue the same integral Catholic formation that characterizes all of Newman Guide education.

In addition, these graduate programs collaborate in exciting ways with other faithful institutions. Recently the University of Dallas in Irving, Tex., and the University of Mary in Bismarck, N.D., announced a mutual 20 percent scholarship for graduates pursuing master's degrees. Ave Maria School of Law in Naples, Fla., Divine Mercy University in Sterling, Va., and the M.B.A. program at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan., all offer thousands of dollars in financial aid to graduates of any Newman Guide Recommended college. These are just a few examples of agreements forged between faithful institutions.

There are many reasons leaders of Newman Guide colleges should be guiding their graduates to recommended Catholic graduate programs, and students should be choosing these programs. Although our secular society holds secular programs in esteem, these are superior options for Catholic students.

In addition, Catholics schools and colleges seeking the best-qualified hires in teaching and administration should be eager to hire students from Newman Guide Recommended graduate programs. They understand the unique nature of Catholic education and will be its strongest supporters.

Dangers of specialization

In his *Idea of a University*, St. John Henry Newman advocated an integrated education that emphasizes the unity of all knowledge in God. He warned of the dangers of specialization. When a person views all things through the particular lens of a single branch of knowledge, the view is distorted and can lead to strange conclusions.

Newman did not, however, shun professional careers and other specialties. He allowed that the mind can be formed within any discipline, if the student strives for higher knowledge and universal themes and is not limited to particular facts and skills.

In addition, students in each discipline must keep the right perspective on the whole of knowledge and explore relationships with other disciplines. Most important is theology. The truths of divine revelation lie at the foundation of every study, informing it and guiding the weakened human mind to truth.

> "ONLY A CATHOLIC EDUCATION CAN PROVIDE THE RIGHT MORAL FOUNDATION, COMMUNION IN PRAYER, AND GRACE FROM THE SACRAMENTS THAT SUSTAIN A TRUE EDUCATION."

Finally, academic study can greatly distort the human person, if the student is enamored of his own powers and knowledge but lacks humility before God. Only a Catholic education can provide the right moral foundation, communion in prayer, and grace from the Sacraments that sustain a true education. Without these, students are certain to go astray—and in today's universities captured by false ideology and radical agendas, a student can be misled and spiritually harmed.

All these are reasons why graduate education—no less than grade school and undergraduate education—should meet the high Newman Guide standards of truth and fidelity. Especially in such a specialized study, grounding in the Catholic faith and practice is vital to a sound education.

Newman Guide standards

Denise Donohue, Ed.D., vice president of educator resources and evaluation for The Cardinal Newman Society, leads our reviews of Catholic graduate programs for The Newman Guide. She examines not only the particular programs but also the institutions within which the programs reside, because a university's personnel and student policies are important to ensuring a faithful Catholic program.

Most recommended graduate programs, then, are part of Newman Guide Recommended colleges—although others are standalone institutions, like Ave Maria School of Law and Divine Mercy University. The others include programs in education, human rights, philosophy, and of course theology, in addition to the subjects mentioned above and others.

We review the institutions to ensure ethical operations, especially in areas such as hiring, merit-based admissions, and who they hold out as worthy of receiving honorary degrees and a public platform.

- Is the president Catholic, and does the president make the Oath of Fidelity to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church?
- Does the governing board protect the Catholic mission and religious freedom of the institution? Do they collaborate with the local bishop to ensure Catholic identity?
- Do they require a majority or more of their faculty to be Catholic? Must all employees respect and advance the Catholic mission of the institution?
- Do they hire faithful professors who practice and model the Catholic faith, so as to guide students into a deeper relationship with the Catholic Church and to avoid scandal or confusion about errant ideologies?
- Are the sacraments abundantly present and available for students? Is there spiritual direction for both students and faculty?
- Is there Catholic counseling for students, and do health care services abide by the teachings of the Catholic Church, especially in areas of human sexuality?
- Do they abide by Church directives for social and moral investing?

Beyond the institutional policies, it's important to scrutinize a graduate program's professors, the texts they choose, and the integration of Catholic teachings and a Catholic worldview into the courses. When looking at required textbooks, we review the authors and look for alignment with the Catholic faith.

Many Catholic colleges only require secular coursework in their graduate programs, believing that student formation belongs in undergraduate and K-12 education. But students who continue immediately on to graduate school after four years of college are still considered in their formation stage, and every adult benefits from moral and ethical formation. The U.S. bishops' *Application for Ex Corde Ecclesiae for the United States* requires that all graduate programs include a moral and ethical component.

> "...STUDENTS WHO CONTINUE IMMEDIATELY ON TO GRADUATE SCHOOL...ARE STILL CONSIDERED IN THEIR FORMATION STAGE, AND EVERY ADULT BENEFITS FROM MORAL AND ETHICAL FORMATION."

Make it truly special

A growing number of adults take some sort of post-college coursework, whether in graduate programs or career training. Still, it is a minority of adults who get the opportunity of a graduate-level education. And for them, it is the capstone to formal learning and ought to be an especially valuable experience.

Specializing in secular education, however, often means losing sight of the vast unity of all knowledge and of God, the fount of all knowledge. While Catholic education is important to the formation of children and young adults, the integration of our Catholic faith into specialized graduate studies is no less important to an authentic human formation. **OCM**

A YOUTH MINISTER'S PLEA TO THE CHURCH

by Rich Olon & Matthew Uzdavinis

WHAT ROLE DOES A TEENAGER'S COLLEGE DECISION PLAY IN THE SALVATION OF THEIR SOUL?

Recent studies have revealed that the Catholic Church is losing approximately 85 percent of its members who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation by the time they turn 23-24 years old. While 10 to 15 percent eventually return, this means that almost seven out of 10 fully initiated Catholics are abandoning their Faith by the time they finish college.

There should be no surprise at these dreary statistics, however. Today's secular colleges and even many Catholic colleges, while somehow still prestigious in the eyes of the world, are completely devoid of authentic education. The academic depravity in college classrooms should already be enough for us to re-evaluate our trust in these institutions, but the culture of vice and ensuing moral degeneracy on college campuses seals the coffin. Thousands of Catholic families are sending their teenagers away to these decadent campuses each year, with the oftentimes misled hope that, in the end, their child will still be practicing their Catholic faith. We willingly throw our young people into the fire and then lament the fact that they're burned.

Thanks be to God, families and their teenagers do have a choice today. The Cardinal Newman Society evaluates and promotes colleges that stand as beacons of Catholic life, academic integrity, and moral virtue in the face of the disorder rampant in our society. Graduates of such colleges leave having received a degree, but, even more importantly, having come face to face with Jesus Christ. Thus, it is not hyperbole to suggest that, in choosing a college, a young person is making a choice that will quite literally affect their eternal salvation.

In order to see the gravity of the situation more clearly, it's helpful to look at a few examples. In 2022, a professor at the purportedly most prestigious Catholic university in the country made news, because she bragged about assisting and helping students acquire abortifacient contraception as well as abortion services. Although this professor never redacted and renounced her obviously anti-Catholic behavior, she still remains employed and in good standing at the university. This same institution has also hosted pro-abortion politicians as commencement speakers and dignified guests.



> “IT IS NOT HYPERBOLE TO SUGGEST THAT, IN CHOOSING A COLLEGE, A YOUNG PERSON IS MAKING A CHOICE THAT WILL QUITE LITERALLY AFFECT THEIR ETERNAL SALVATION.”



Moreover, on the secular side, our nation’s most “prestigious” universities have become bulwarks of gender ideology, transgenderism, LGBT activism, and atheism. If the institutions themselves are blatantly promoting anti-Catholic values, what else would we expect the culture among the student body to look like? Students are being force-fed ideology that is altogether divorced from reality and truth. Should anyone speak out against such disordered ideology, they face punishment by grade depreciation, so-called cancellation by peers, or even expulsion from the institution. Additionally, it is evident that fraternity and sorority houses, rather than being places to cultivate authentic fraternity and sorority, have become nothing more than more private locations for excessive drinking, destructive drug use, and loathsome fornication. Parents might have the temptation to think back on their own days in a fraternity or sorority and say something along the lines of, “It can’t be all that bad. I had some crazy times in my own day, and I turned out fine.” One simply has to realize that the culture among young people in the 1970s or the 1980s was very different from youth culture in our day—in many ways, our young people are being formed in a culture more vicious than any we’ve seen before.

Parents and teenagers must collectively do the work of evaluating colleges and universities not simply for their seeming prestige in mainstream culture but also for their ability to draw young people to the Heart of Christ, and thus, to discover the great gift that it is to live an authentically human life. We must change the framework within which we understand college and its role in the life of the human person. It is not naïve to believe that a young person can go to a college where they will truly encounter Christ, come to know and love Him deeply, and have their hearts and minds transformed in the process. Even further, it is not naïve to believe that such a young person, having been formed by Christ in college, will also receive a useful degree by which they can find meaningful employment and an adequate salary. We know that this is happening every year at faithful Catholic colleges, specifically those recommended on The Newman Guide.

> “...OUR NATION’S MOST “PRESTIGIOUS” UNIVERSITIES HAVE BECOME BULWARKS OF GENDER IDEOLOGY, TRANSGENDERISM, LGBTQ ACTIVISM, AND ATHEISM.”

If parents and students have not had the opportunity to visit these campuses, I cannot recommend this enough. I can only address to them the words of Jesus Himself, “Come and see.” Notice a few important attributes on these campuses:

- Poke your head into a daily Mass on an ordinary Tuesday, you will find many devout young people kneeling before the altar.
- Go visit one of the Adoration chapels on campus (they’re oftentimes located steps away from where your child’s dorm room will be), you will find students worshiping the Eucharistic Lord throughout the day and even through all hours of the night.
- Sit in on classes—from theology, to business, to biology, to politics—and notice the dedicated attention the professors give to each student as well as the respect the students have for their professors as teachers of the Truth.
- Lastly, look around the campus itself. Notice what the students are doing. They sit together. They engage in meaningful conversations together. They play games together. They purposely put away their phones together. They study together. They pray together. They worship together. They live lives of joy and the abundance only Christ can give.

At this point in the conversation, many parents will interject with a rebuttal along the lines of, “But, what about the Catholic centers on secular campuses? Many of those are flourishing and provide great community for the students. Going to an entirely Catholic school isn’t necessary for my child to keep their Faith. Besides, [insert prestigious secular school here] will help them get [insert job here] or [insert sport scholarship here].”

Without demeaning the good work that some Catholic centers and groups on secular college campuses are doing, we must still recognize the fact that Catholicism is entirely compartmentalized at secular institutions—regardless of how good the Catholic center is. The practice of the Faith will always just be one “extracurricular” to choose from, simply due to the fact that the Faith is completely divorced from their academic curriculum and ordinary campus life altogether. Not to mention, the potential peer pressure from hundreds or thousands of fellow students can oftentimes completely outweigh the good influence of the Catholic center.

Aside from this, shouldn’t we want the very best education and formation for our young people? Why are we not desiring that the Faith be an integral part of every course, club, extracurricular, and student life event? Do we think this is altogether extreme? If we are not desiring that our young people be formed by a curriculum that presents to them a holistic picture of the Truth, then we are doing them a great disservice. We cannot fail to remember that Truth has a face and a name: Jesus Christ.

The advantages of attending an authentically Catholic school rather than a mere student center at a secular college should be rather obvious. We cannot plant seeds in unhealthy soil and a polluted environment and then become perplexed or frustrated when they do not grow. In fact, we’d be wise to expect the opposite. We must seek to plant seeds in greenhouses—the authentically Catholic universities—places where our young people will live in an environment in which they have the opportunity to grow and flourish into everything God has created them to be.

Message to youth ministers

At the forefront of the charge leading our young people to these authentically Catholic colleges ought to be our youth ministers, priests, and parishes. If young people never see these colleges for themselves, they’ll always succumb to the purported prestige and greater opportunity promised to them by secular schools. In my own experience as a youth minister in rural Maryland, I have personally witnessed the invaluable impact of taking high school students on visits to authentically Catholic universities. I have personally witnessed students who were not Catholic or who perhaps chose to attend these college visits simply to have the chance to take a trip with friends have

> “WE CANNOT PLANT SEEDS IN UNHEALTHY SOIL AND A POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT AND THEN BECOME PERPLEXED OR FRUSTRATED WHEN THEY DO NOT GROW.”



a complete change of heart and decide to attend one of the colleges. I have had the great privilege to watch many of our youth attend these most worthy institutions and experience a conversion to the Catholic faith, find their Vocations in the Church, and grow exponentially in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

None of this happens, however, if there are not parishes, priests, and youth ministers who are actively working together to organize these opportunities for the youth to see these campuses in-person. Because we've invested so much of our efforts into bringing the young people from our area to these colleges, we've experienced upwards of 50 students from our small county at Newman Guide schools at one time. This fall, our small parish will have nine seminarians. Two of them attended Ave Maria University and readily admit that, without visiting AMU on our college tours, they likely would not be in seminary or even practicing their faith. This is a clear testament to the fact that our youth desire a place where they can grow in relationship with Christ and true friendships that lead them toward heaven. They simply must be taken there and shown what the world and mainstream media don't have to offer.

I cannot exhort youth ministers and parishes enough in this. Be the reason why the youth in your town are graduating in droves from colleges where they fall in love with Christ and choose Him above all else!

Message to youth

Dear young people, consider your worth in the eyes of Almighty God. Consider the great adventure that Jesus calls you to take with Him. As a youth minister, I have personally witnessed the shriveled fruits of sending young people to secular campuses alongside the abundant harvest that takes place when we send our youth to authentically Catholic schools. I know that you desire deep friendships, meaningful learning, and the fulfillment that only Jesus offers you. Do not be afraid to be different from your peers in answering the call of Jesus to cast your nets deeply for an abundant catch.

I promise you that you'll never regret having immersed yourself into everything that an authentically Catholic college has to offer. Many of you will find your vocations there—perhaps as married people, priests, or religious. You will also find friends who call you to the heights of heaven rather than to the drudgery of sin and vice. The Cardinal Newman Society has presented us with an invaluable resource. They have given you and I the list of the top faithful Catholic colleges in our country. Take it seriously and choose wisely.

You are called to be with Almighty God for all eternity in the paradise of heaven, and the world is against you in this. Go where you will be helped along this journey. Be not afraid! **OCM**



RICH OLON
Minister of Religious Education
and Youth Ministry
St. John Francis Regis Parish
Hollywood, MD



MATTHEW UZDAVINIS
Office Manager
St. John Francis Regis Parish
Hollywood, MD

BACKGROUND PHOTO BY ANNIE SPRATT ON UNSPLASH

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We have told our kids they can choose from the list of faithful colleges for undergraduate studies. We have never expected these faithful colleges on the list to be perfect, nothing can be.

But what we have found in The Newman Guide has been beyond helpful in aiding our children in their quest for Truth.

Their lives are much richer, relationships deeper, and they seem more spiritual than we could have imagined.

Elisa Del Curto
Wife and mother of 10 children
Oakdale, CA



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