Fishing

I sat there in the Newman Center as still as the building itself. Every time I visit that place, I feel as though I am no longer in the city—no longer do I hear the continuous sound of traffic, nor do I smell it, feel it seep into my skin, or breathe it into my lungs. No longer do I hear the non-stop yapping of the human voice and other headache-causing clamorousness and no longer do I myself have to talk. Nor do I see the buildings that flood this area we call “town” and other visual reminders that I am, in fact, in the city. Rather, by simply sitting in the Newman Center, I experience a much more pleasant kind of noise, feel a different sort of atmosphere, breathe in a fresher type of air, and see a more preferred kind of sight. All this, still in town and yet away from it.

The Newman center sits quietly in upper campus nestled between the Korean Studies and the Auxiliary Sciences buildings. Naturally, one would never venture to this building as there are no apparent signs explaining what this area may be used for. Yet, with its rolling hills as its backdrop and green lawn extending open arms, this place just seems to invite you in.

And so did I find myself inside, seated and waiting. At that point, there were many empty chairs that also seemed to be waiting with me. Although empty, those chairs were eager and more than ready to welcome guests, such as myself, for the ritual five o'clock Sunday mass. But there was still some time until others would join with me and the loyal chairs—humble chairs that provide the comfort and support we normally take for granted every Sunday mass.

Although I sat within a building, its screen panels that covered the entire front section of the building enabled me to hear the leaves on the trees brush against one another in the wind, and the wind then brushing against my skin. As the other guests came, I was able to hear them approach once they set foot on the grass. In spite of the fact that I sat there in “silence,” as one might say, there were many sounds that entered my ear, which really didn't make those moments seem silent at all.

I heard the wind sing, using the leaves of the trees and the grass as its instruments. As the wind sang, it carried with it a soothing breeze that also soaked into my skin, creating a balance between the warm sun and the cool wind. Then did I hear the cricket accompany the wind in its song and at that moment, I was taken away from the city, back into the rice fields of Japan and my home in Saipan. At that moment, I realized that the wind with its song has a power to have such an effect, that is, to bring one somewhere else, although still physically seated in one chair.

I watched the light from the sun turn from a bright shine into a silky golden glow that illuminated every single object that it hit. It made an object as simple as the chair I sat on look like a piece of art. The way the shadow of the arms and legs of the chair fell onto the floor as this silky glow wrapped itself on such a simple piece of furniture made it seem elegant and tasteful. I was then reminded of such power the setting sun has.

I found that this setting sun also has the ability to reveal hidden truths you never would notice in normal light. When I looked down at my own arm, I was able to see every follicle on my skin and the strands of tiny hairs that seemed countless and really, I was surprised to discover how hairy I actually am. And when I turned to look at the grass outside, I noticed it looked different from when I was just walking over it before I sat in such an elegant chair. Not only did the power of the setting sun
make it look more artistic, but it also seemed transparent. When I was walking over that same grass just a few moments ago, it seemed to be a darker color and more opaque. But now the grass had turned into a rich green, and I could also see its countless strands being exposed, just as the hair on my arm.

Gradually, the patient and loyal chairs united with their guests. As others gathered with me in this “silence,” so did this silence become louder. Without saying any words, smiles greeted other smiles, gestures accompanied the wind's song with dance and the sun continued to paint within this room not just of objects, but of life. Life that is, without the cars and talkative peoples, but instead, of people gathering in such a loud silence, for one purpose.

Each person that walked individually through the opened doors of the Newman Center and sat together in the chairs that awaited them. One seated guest differed significantly from the other. In one row, a surfer-looking type of male was seated waiting in “silence,” and behind him an African male had the same posture. In front of me, a grandmother with her daughter and granddaughter waited as well and beside them a brother and sister were also seated. Although we all arrived at the Newman Center separately, we sat in those chairs together.

Finally, mass began and we started to add to the noise of life, but in unison—singing together one song and praying together one prayer. As the piano, drums, violin, and singers made their noise, I looked to the guitarist and I am reminded of close friends who play the guitar and ukulele. I looked back at the grandmother and her family as she grasped the hands of her daughter and granddaughter and at that moment I was reminded of the same kinds of people in my personal life and how I miss them. The power of nostalgia, too, is great.

A white Caucasian older woman then stood up and walked to the podium, which held the book of the scriptures, to give the first reading. When she finished, she returned to her seat. For the second reading, a darker-skinned Palauan younger female walked to the same podium and as the first reader, returned back to her seat as well. I thought to myself that soon, the priest will stand at that same podium to give the gospel reading. I realized how, again, such a simple object had unified people of different races and backgrounds in this one place. Could that podium have a power too?

The priest then gave his homily, a speech that a Catholic priest gives during a mass. He reflected on the gospel for that day, which is a story about one of Jesus' apostles who had gone fishing. As the reading goes, the apostle had been fishing for a while, and after not catching anything, he decided to give up. But then Jesus appeared and told him to wait a little longer and to lower the nets a little lower. Slightly reluctant, the apostle followed the instructions and within moments, the nets were filled with fish that were heavy enough to flood the boat. The priest then explained that in life, with a little perseverance and faith, we are able to see and experience the potential benefits that come out of waiting and believing. He concluded that as we sat together in mass, that we, too, are fishing and expressed his hopes that we make good out of our catch.

Thus, as I sat there, I reflected on the fishing trip that I was on, and all the other fishermen, fisher-women and fisher-children that surrounded me. I looked once again to my neighbors in their chairs for boats and I wondered what kind of fishing the grandmother and her family members were doing, and what the African man and the surfer boy might be fishing for as well. We all came from different places, yet together in that one place. It then occurred to me, because we were all seated at that moment in the Newman Center, we probably were fishing for similar reasons.

Outside the Newman Center, I suppose that many of us fisher-people that gathered that Sunday
act entirely different than we do while in mass. I know that for myself, although I expressed the importance of silence, I can also be quite noisy myself. I like to talk story, laugh, sing, and just add to the everyday “noise” of life. Regardless, while seated together in our boats, we all took the time to be silent in that one place. We were silent in order to listen to the songs, prayers, readings, gospel and homily. I believe that we also utilize this time to be silent in order to listen to ourselves, as it is so hard to hear oneself while life’s noise drowns the sound of our own voices. As I sat there in the Newman Center, rejoicing in the power of the wind, sun and nostalgia, I realized that the power of “fishing” is also awesome, as it invites noisy people to sit in silence, waiting for their catch together.

Meta-commentary

With this extended version, I hope that Professor understands my reasoning for initially making the title “fishing” and I also hope that I expressed this concept well within my paper. I acknowledge that my paper is just two pages, but I feel confident that I was able to add information that needed to be added and make the corrections that needed correcting. I also feel confident that the ending paragraph addresses the suggested that Professor made about concluding on a topic involving myself uniting with the other people in the group that I was observing.

In my first meta-commentary, I wrote about how I wanted to make an observation paper in a different tone, that is, not simply observing with eyes, but with the other four senses as much as I could. Therefore I tried to use words such as “hearing,” “seeing,” and “feeling” and elaborated on those topics.

Another voice that I wanted to present in this paper was that of the things around me. In a way, I wanted to personify the chairs, podium, leaves and trees that I talked about in my paper. I wanted to do this because I feel that as humans, these simple and yet somewhat important things are downgraded and go unappreciated. I think I sound like a hippie right now, but my point is, I wanted the reader to open his or her mind to viewing these objects in a different way. I attempted to do this by explaining how the chairs “waited” for their guests and how the lawn extended “open arms.”

Because of the importance that I'm placing on these objects and elements of nature on my paper, I guess I have to say that my observation paper is more about observing how people interact with these things and how it ultimately joins them, without their knowledge.

Additionally, I wish I had the time to meet with Emily for more suggestions for this paper, but due to a busy schedule, I could not find the time to do so. Also, I uploaded my effort chart separately, as it had some formatting issues the last time I attempted to put it within the same document.