

For family, friends, & alumni of
Cistercian Preparatory School

CCISTERCIAN IRVING TEXASONTINUUM

Spring 2026



Bought In

*The Class of 2026 went all in—
and it paid out*

A COMMUNION OF COMMUNITIES

*Cistercian communities are bound
together by a common history and a
shared fabric of charity, joy, and trust*



Michael Kurilecz, Jr. '71

The Cistercian classes of 1970-1974 were always on the leading edge of the School's development. We were, for example, the guinea pigs upon whom the School tested new classes and educational theories. We were tossed into athletic contests to see which sports might provide us with a level of success. We applied to colleges that had never even heard of Cistercian. As the years passed, we helped start alumni associations, led fundraising efforts, and did what we could to aid those who followed us get a leg up into the business world.

Our classmates have now reached another leading edge: retirement, which raises new questions. What to do in retirement? How best to use our lifetime of savings? It's also worth noting that parents of younger alumni face these same issues.

An important part of retirement planning involves decisions about Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) and Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) from IRAs, 401(k)s, and 403(b)s. Under current IRS rules, RMDs are mandatory at age 73 or 75, depending on birth year. If you do not need the distribution from your retirement account and do not want to take the distribution as taxable income, you may direct all or part of your required RMD (up to \$111,000 annually) to a registered charity as a QCD. This satisfies the IRS distribution requirement, reduces taxable income, and provides meaningful support to a charitable organization. For those who do not rely on their RMD for living expenses, this can be a highly effective and generous way to manage the tax consequences of retirement distributions.

As I face retirement, I come back to the thought that no educational institution can continue to exist without long-term support from student families, alumni, and friends who believe in its mission.

So, as you plan your retirement, consider using your RMDs and QCDs to support Cistercian Preparatory School. Also consider a legacy gift through the Memorare Society.

If you need more information about RMDs, QCDs, or Legacy gifts, please contact Erin Hart.
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CONTINUUM

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Cistercian Preparatory School was founded with the aim of preparing talented boys for the colleges of their choice by challenging their minds with excellent academic programs, molding their character through the values of Catholic education, and offering them guidance with both understanding and discipline. Cistercian Preparatory School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, nationality, or ethnic origin in the administration of its admission and education policies, financial aid programs, athletic programs, and other activities.

Headmaster's Greeting

"Because we are all servants unprofitable indeed, of the one true King, Lord and Master,... there may be no discord in our daily actions, but that we may all live together in the bond of charity under one rule, and in the practice of the same observances." Carta Caritatis, c. 1119

Taken from the founding document of the Cistercian Order, this passage reflects the vision and determination



Fr. Paul McCormick

of the earliest Cistercians to remain united, both within and among monastic communities, in a shared brotherhood of mutual charity. More than 900

years later, this same charism continues to serve as a guiding principle for all Cistercians here at home and throughout the world, a reality beautifully reflected in this issue of the *Continuum*.

In our feature article, you will enjoy the unique journey of Cistercian's most recent graduating class, told through the eyes of a senior. He recounts their journey of studying, working, and "playing hard" as a time of growth that has challenged them to "strive together towards God and virtuous manhood."

This spirit of "harmonious diversity" is also evident in recent efforts to deepen the bonds of charity between the Monastery of Dallas and Cistercians, both men and women, throughout the world. Our second feature article highlights the "life-giving joy" that has accompanied these initiatives, including collaboration with the Sisters of Boulaur in southern France as well as the authentically missionary effort to renew Cistercian life in Hungary.

In "Afterthoughts," **Patrick Spence '08**, inspired by his grandmother's old desk pen, reflects on the enduring value when writing of relying on a "good friend, or a good teacher," rather than the mere "flattery" of AI.

Finally, on our back cover, Fr. Thomas, recounting his recent pilgrimage to Calcutta, challenges all of us to discover our own "Calcutta" in the bonds of charity that bind us.

Fr. Paul

In this issue

Volume 53, Number 1



Bought In

Brett Sharp '26

10

*The Class of 2026 went all in—
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A COMMUNION OF COMMUNITIES

16

Cistercian communities are bound together by a common history and a shared fabric of charity, joy, and trust.

Bob Greenfield



Cover photo by Jim Reisch

Departments

News & Notes	4
Class Notes	22
In Memoriam	28
Winter and Spring Sports	29
Afterthoughts Patrick Spence '08	31
Finding your own Calcutta Fr. Thomas Esposito	32

While every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of the 2024-2025 Annual Report, the following corrections to the Formation Beyond the Classroom Capital Campaign listings are necessary:

Dallas Southwest Osteopathic Physicians, Inc. — Silver Benefactors Circle
Danny & Kate O'Connell — Benefactors Society
Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Devlin — Benefactors Society

News & Notes

2026 Hillary Award

Dean Nevitt '26 is this year's recipient of the prestigious Tom Hillary Award. A four-sport letterman his senior year (football, soccer, tennis, golf), Dean was named MVP in both football and soccer as well as Newcomer of the Year in tennis. "He is a baby-faced assassin, never hesitating to put his body on the line for his teammates. He is all heart, a fabulous champion, and an absolute pleasure to coach," said J.P. Walsh, head soccer coach. "He's confident while possessing the vulnerability and humility to impact those around him," added André Bruce, head football coach. Dean is truly deserving of Cistercian's highest athletic award.



Work of Heart Award

Cistercian faculty and staff continue to be honored for their dedication to our community. Given by The Catholic Foundation, the award recognizes outstanding Catholic school educators nominated by students, parents, and colleagues for their "tenure and leadership, acts of kindness

or charity, Christian example, and for simply going the extra mile for an individual student, family or the community." In December, Dr. Renee Phillips, our school counselor, received the award, along with \$1,000. "Renee is respectful to everyone she encounters. She stands firm in her hope that solutions will be found, all while keeping her peace, no matter the situation. Renee is a pillar of faith in our Cistercian community," said a colleague.



Double accolades for *Exodus*

For the first time in Fr. Raphael's nine years as *Exodus* advisor, the staff received recognition for the current yearbook rather than a previous edition. The 2026 *Exodus* earned GOLD from the National Yearbook Program of Excellence for its design, photography, and meeting deadlines. In another first, the cover designed by **Ben Brittian '26, Patrick Spori '26, Arthur Moran '26**, and Fr. Raphael was selected for Jostens' nationally distributed "Look Book."

"I had a very dedicated staff, especially a strong core of freshmen," said Fr. Raphael. "When I became less available to oversee details, the editors stepped up with heroic diligence."

The honor followed the UIL's Award of Achievement for *Along These Lines*, Cistercian's 2025 yearbook. "I am so proud of the boys' work, especially editors-in-chief **Carter Kenny '25** and **Cash Lechler '25**," Fr. Raphael said.



Alumni College Panel

The annual alumni college panel provided a reflective afternoon filled with practical wisdom. **Leo Ontiveros '22** (Lafayette), **Cole Boyd '22** (Harvard), **Masaki Fraccaroli '22** (SMU), **Tarun Senthil Kumar '23** (Creighton), and **John Stigall '23** (UT Austin) shared advice with upperclassmen on expanding personal and professional networks, building a strong friend group, engaging confidently with professors, and remaining true to themselves amid new challenges.



BraveArt

The tradition of BraveArt continued with the return of many of our favorite local artists and sessions—culinary, collage, creative writing, stage combat, songwriting, and more. New this year, the Faculty Talent Show featured poetry, music, and our novice folk trio band, *Old Habits*. The seniors created their legacy metal sculpture, "Prometheus Bringing Fire to Mankind," in honor of the School's motto.



Junior World Affairs Council sends four teams to Academic WorldQuest

In February, four teams from Cistercian's Junior World Affairs Council (JWAC) participated in the Academic WorldQuest competition at UTA. This year marked the School's fifth time competing. Sponsored by the World Affairs Council of Dallas, 89 teams from various DFW schools attended the event.

Christopher Bergin '27, Devin DeSilva '27, Rishi Gopal '27, and Ryan Kattady '27 finished in a three-way tie for third place. **George Birdsong '26, Matthew George '26, James Marlowe '26, and Christian Oh '26**



finished 14th with **Adrian Macher '29, Kouki Fraccaroli '27, Aneesh Kuruvalli '27, and Alberto Macher '27** right behind in 15th. **Josh Albano '28, Canon Blackwell '28, Henry Butler '28, and Roman Jeffery '28** tied for 26th.

In addition to strong team placement, DeSilva, next year's vice president, was honored as part of the World Affairs Council of DFW's "20 Under 20" Class of 2026.

Year two of the Mini Arts Fest

With temporary space constraints as a result of construction on campus, the second annual Mini Arts Fest looked to be in jeopardy. The fine arts department, however, relocated this



year's event to the Irving Arts Center. It was a huge success! The new venue provided a professional atmosphere for artwork in the galleries, and the recital hall came equipped with a nine-foot Steinway for upper and lower school concerts. Concessions were staged in the courtyard, and craft workshops and activities for all ages went on in a separate

room made for messes. Several families came out to celebrate Cistercian arts. "It means so much to connect with our community through the arts, to provide accessibility to the arts at every age and allow every artistic talent here to be seen and celebrated," said Tasia Magill, head of fine arts.

Cistercian retakes the gold at Diocesan Middle School Religion Bowl

Cistercian's middle school returned to the annual Diocesan Religion Bowl this spring and reclaimed its first-place title after surrendering it last year to St. Joseph's in Richardson. Competing against 30 schools from across North Texas, our top four religion scholars (one from each middle school grade) shared an impressive knowledge of Catholic faith and tradition as well as tremendous teamwork. Reflecting on the dramatic conclusion, one team member shared: "When they were announcing placements after the playoff round, we thought we might have tied for second. The [moderator] was looking straight at St. Joseph's as he was about to declare the winner. Then we heard OUR name called for first place!" Congratulations to the team for representing Cistercian with humility, excellence, and enthusiasm.



Alumni conduct mock interviews

In March, **Dylan Tracy '11, Juan Muldoon '05, Barry McCain '02, and Michael Massad '08** generously volunteered their time and expertise to conduct mock interviews for nine juniors. These sessions provided valuable preparation for students applying for our school-specific internship programs and an opportunity to build confidence and gain a clearer understanding of the process.

Students practiced answering common interview questions, refined their storytelling skills, and received constructive and personalized guidance from alumni who have experience navigating similar paths and who currently conduct interviews for their employers.

All agreed it was an impactful introduction that will benefit the students in future academic, career, and college pursuits.



News & Notes

Lejeune Luau

Thanks to an incredible group of students, parent volunteers, and faculty, the February Lejeune Luau (rescheduled due to an unexpected ice storm) was still packed with games, music, dancing, and fun, even featuring ice cream from Howdy Homemade, which employs men and women with special needs. With over 150 student volunteers and 45 guests, the luau continues to grow, connecting more and more students to the gifts that those with special needs bring to our lives.



Confirmation service project

A highlight of spring is always Form IV Confirmation and their service project. With help from Form Master Fr. Anthony, their dads, and a handful of brothers from the Abbey, the boys



enthusiastically re-mulched significant tracts of the cross-country trail. Complete with Texas bluebonnets, the trail is magnificent!

Model United Nations Conference

Cistercian's Model United Nations Conference (MUNC) experienced a landmark year. The program recently concluded MUNC II, welcoming over 80 students from 11 schools—the first event of its kind hosted by Cistercian. Following a fall introductory mini-conference, student leadership transformed the program into a premier competitive platform by spring. These efforts offered North Texas delegates a rigorous environment to refine their diplomacy and debate skills.



Stem Cell Drive

In April, **Caedmon Hendricks '28** and **Grant Birdsong '27** organized a Stem Cell Swab Drive for Earl Young's Team, an organization that works to raise awareness for blood cancers. For just 10 minutes of their time, 17 students and faculty registered as part of an online database where their DNA could potentially be matched to help cure a patient suffering from leukemia, lymphoma, sickle cell disease, or over 60 other diseases. Hendricks was especially grateful for our support for a cause close to his heart: "The turnout was amazing, and the faculty and staff were incredibly encouraging and supportive. As Christians we believe in the sanctity of life, and the ability to give a person a new chance at life is a beautiful gift. Having had a friend diagnosed with leukemia, I have seen first-hand the struggle and know that a small commitment by a donor has the power to change another person's life."



New in College Counseling

The college counseling office hosted its first Admissions Case Study event in May, welcoming approximately 100 students and parents from the upper school for an engaging, behind-the-scenes



look at the college admissions process. Designed as a hands-on experience, the program invited families to step into the role of admissions officers,

working in small groups to review redacted applications and decide which students to admit, waitlist, or deny.

The evening featured admissions leaders and representatives from Austin College, Carnegie Mellon University, College of the Holy Cross, George Washington University, Johns Hopkins University, Trinity University, University of Michigan, and Washington University in St. Louis. Several of these schools made the trip to campus specifically for this event, marking their first visit in five years and creating a special opportunity for our community to connect directly with them.

This new program reflects Cistercian's ongoing commitment to helping students and families better understand the admissions process and approach it with clarity and confidence.

Form I Field Study

It was a wet day in the wetlands! Fortunately, while the weather did not cooperate, the Form I science class was still able to conduct field tests on water samples collected from the wetlands. From those samples, the students analyzed pH, nitrogen, and phosphorus levels and determined the health of the system from their calculations. Then, each group collected indicator species macroinvertebrates to determine the quality of water flowing through the wetlands. "All in all, the boys enjoyed their time getting their hands dirty, and we look forward to our next adventure!" said Jim Taylor, Form I science teacher.



Finance Club celebrates achievement

Cistercian's Finance Club advanced to the semifinal round in this year's Wharton Global High School Investment Competition, a free, experiential investment challenge for high school students (grades 9-12). With winners selected on the strength and articulation of their team strategies, not on the growth of their portfolios, our team, out of 5500 teams from across the world, was one of only 28 semifinalists in the United States!

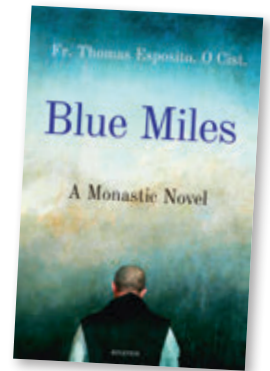
Inspiring success one student at a time

In December, Cistercian students and faculty received a special invitation from the World Affairs Council of Dallas/Ft. Worth to attend the first installment of *Inspiring Success Stories: An American Journey*. The evening presentation, titled *Refugee to Aviation Pioneer: The Leadership Journey of Steven F. Udvar-Házy*, featured Udvar-Házy, the Hungarian-American founder of International Lease Finance Corporation and the Executive Chairman of Air Lease Corporation. He shared how from a single plane he built one of the world's largest aircraft leasing companies with a \$16B global fleet.



Blue Miles: A Monastic Novel

Fr. Thomas has published his first novel! *Blue Miles* is a fictional memoir of an old monk who weaves his life story together with anecdotes and meditations drawn from his monastic life. The chapters follow the daily schedule of Padre Samuel's monastery. He ponders his orphaned childhood, his battle with alcoholism, his strange and often hilarious brothers, and the demands and mercies of his monastic vocation. This book has been five years in the making, and it is available through Ignatius Press and Amazon.



Fusion Corps at state competition

While not *quite* making it back to Worlds this season, Fusion Corps enjoyed an excellent showing at this year's FIRST Robotics State Championship in Houston. After finishing tenth in their initial matches, the team was first choice of the fourth alliance heading into the playoffs, before losing in the second round. Statistically, Fusion Corps ended their season 336/3724 (world), 278/2944 (U.S.), and 17/167 (Texas), and picked up a special award for Team Imagery and Quality along the way.



ISAS Arts Festival

Cistercian artists returned to the ISAS Arts Festival this spring for the first time in several years. The festival was held at St. Mark's and hosted arts students from 36 schools across the southwest. Fifteen Cistercian students showcased a variety of talents: 2D art, 3D art, photography, vocal solos, vocal ensemble, one-act play, monologues, and coffeehouse.



Tasia Magill, head of fine arts at Cistercian, was surprised to see her work at the festival when The Polyphonic Spree screened *Resolution: A Symphonic Rhapsody for the Soul* in which Magill is a featured actor. The students are already planning their return to next year's festival!

News & Notes

Spring theater production

The upper school's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opened in April to sold-out crowds. Set in a neon forest full of electronic dance music, black light, and magic, the show featured an impressive 22 actors, including 13 freshmen, making the future oh so bright for the department. In her opening night curtain speech, director Tasia Magill said, "Tonight we will all be a part of the first curtain call for several actors. This is a gift like no other for them. And what they walk away with tonight is why I am a drama teacher."



Jim Reisch

MLK Jr. Day of Service

In January, upper school students and faculty members engaged in various forms of service on campus and across the Metroplex in honor of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., including Project Finding Calcutta, Gospel of Life Disciples and Dwellings, Owenwood Farms, Dallas Ramps, Puede Network, Feed My Starving Children, and Vera Aqua Vera Vita (added this year). Our yearly service days continue to be a wonderful way to conform our lives to a pattern of service in imitation of Christ.



Jim Reisch

Success for Quiz Bowl teams

Cistercian's upper school Quiz Bowl team recently placed 7th in the nation at Chicago's Small School National Championship. The all-underclassmen team of **Andrew Kosel '28, Roman Jeffery '28, Dhruv Gohel '28 and Enrique Mosothoane '29** averaged an impressive 74.24 points per game, with sophomore Kosel ranked seventh individually in the country. They will travel to Atlanta in late May for a second national tournament! Our top middle school team, currently ranked 24th in the nation, will also travel to Chicago for a shot at a national title.



Alumnus honored in January

It was a lovely evening at the **2026 Jim & Lynn Moroney Award Dinner** honoring **Mike Wang '93**. Introduced by classmate **John Henrich '93**, Mike humbly accepted the award



recognizing all he has done and continues to do for the School. A parent of three current Cistercian students, Mike was touched to see so many current parents in attendance too. Speeches from the evening may be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eh9A8dmwmWw>.

Ag Elective creating buzz!

Students in Fr. Raphael's ag elective suited up and inspected one of the Abbey's hives. The boys found a good amount of honey and brood. Spotting the queen was a definite highlight of their day. Perhaps best of all: no stings! For his Eagle Scout project, a current junior is planning to landscape the area around the bees and install a few more hives.



Jim Reisch

Formation Beyond the Classroom: Capital campaign enters final phase

Cistercian's capital campaign, Formation Beyond the Classroom, has entered its final and most exciting phase with the construction of a new multipurpose Performing Arts Center and Theater now underway! This milestone reflects the community's commitment to the remarkable growth of our fine arts program!

Student interest in the arts continues to surge with middle and upper school students participating in record numbers as performers and crew. Recent productions, including *Seussical, Jr.* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, played to sold-out audiences.

The new two-story, 23,000-square-foot arts facility, with completion anticipated in fall 2027, will feature a 4,000-square-foot theater (twice the size of our current space), equipped



with modern lighting and technology, dressing rooms, backstage areas, a set design shop, and dedicated visual arts classrooms. The second floor will include a music room, lecture hall, and technology labs for publications, film, and podcasting. Construction of this building will coincide with an improved and larger parking lot as well as the installation of a new *turfed* upper athletic field.

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity

of our benefactors, the campaign has surpassed its \$15 million goal, raising more than \$22 million.

One remaining element is an outdoor pavilion and gathering space in what will become the new heart of campus, between the new theater and science building. This space is envisioned not only as a place for community connection but also as a fitting tribute to all the courageous and dedicated monks, lay faculty, coaches, staff, families, and students who originally, and over the decades since, have built and shaped our Cistercian community. Planning is still underway, and fundraising efforts will continue to ensure this space is as meaningful and distinctive as the community it honors.



Spelling bee champ!

Cistercian middle school students continue to impress with their spelling skills! After winning first place in Cistercian's in-house spelling bee, **Markus Uong '30** went on to earn first in the Catholic Diocese of Dallas Spelling Bee in January, followed by a third-place finish at the Dallas County Private Schools Spelling Bee.



Cistercian Law/Finance Professional Group

Cistercian's alumni law/finance group enjoyed a happy hour in February. Hosted by **Kevin Spencer '85** at the Dallas Petroleum Club, the evening offered a valuable opportunity to strengthen professional relationships, welcome new members, and deepen connections within the Cistercian community. This particularly close-knit group of alum professionals also donates considerable time each year to teach a very popular Law/Finance Elective in the upper school.



Bought In

Brett Sharp '26



Few playlists dare to unite John Denver's "Country Roads," Travis Scott's "Sicko Mode," and George Michael's "Careless Whisper." But on the way home from our last outing, the back half of the bus deemed it a perfect combination to end the night. Voices grew loud together, phone flashlights appeared out of pockets, and a certain revelry filled the air until we arrived back at school. With only a few months left at Cistercian, we knew we had to make the most of our remaining moments.

Not every passenger on that bus, however, surrendered himself to the tempting fiesta taking place in the back. Many quietly carried on the conversations they had begun while fishing, playing volleyball, or sitting around the campfire. Others kept mostly to themselves, understandably winding down after a packed day. But what of Fr. Augustine, our stalwart Form Master? Seated at the very front, no one could tell

exactly if his eyes were open.

Our last outing had been a much-needed and deserved day of rest after the previous fall. Every senior had war stories of what first semester had been like: brutal college applications, all-important standardized tests, growing club leadership, difficult academics, ambitious homecoming builds, tiring athletic seasons (six seniors joined the football team to bolster the team's waning numbers), and, above all, the constant effort to live in the moment and enjoy the time we had left.

To the uninformed observer, it might appear that Fr. Augustine was not exactly overseeing that bus ride but was recovering instead from guiding his class through a draining semester. Yet his influence, although sometimes subtle, is never absent.





Form I

From the start of our time at Cistercian and our humble beginnings as “firsties,” Fr. Augustine worked to bring us together. A- and B-side rosters were mixed quarterly and seating charts morphed even more often. During Form Master periods, he often mixed us into Crazy Pairs™, giving topics of conversation to unlikely pairings, driving us together. We were challenged to become members of a Form, not just our own small groups of friends.

But that is not to say that tight bonds did not form. A soccer team quickly arose and began playing games (all that built-up chemistry on the pitch would come in handy later). Those who rode the buses found ways to entertain themselves: doing homework together, throwing things at each other, or begging a particularly fortunate classmate to give them the password to his WiFi hotspot (thank you, Mateo). Something as simple as being seated next to someone for a quarter was enough to create a friendship.

Fr. Augustine’s bonding agenda was no secret. During our third-ever Form Master period, he sent us to the music room, each armed with a piece of loose-leaf and a pen. Although this set of supplies would soon become a staple used whenever Fr. Augustine deemed a moment of reflection appropriate, we were new and nervous First Formers. Our voices softly rumbled in the room, trying to figure out what this mysterious set of tools could possibly mean. “Pop quiz,” Fr. Augustine announced to start the period. He then strode toward a random member of the Form, asked him to stand up, and turned to the rest of us: “What is his name? Write it down, first and last.” It was a valuable period; we left with a better understanding of what being part of a Form meant.



Form II Dot Race

Everything came to an abrupt stop right before spring break in Form II when the global pandemic shut down school. And while there was some momentary jubilation, our Form was just like the rest of the world. We had no clue what this meant for us, for Cistercian, or for the future.

It took time to adjust. Online school, first through Google Classroom and then the dreaded Microsoft Teams, was simply very different than anything we had experienced before. But Cistercian

did its best to retain some normalcy. We still had to wear our uniforms or at least put a Cistercian hoodie over pajamas. We still had to check into the homeroom Zoom call at 8:25 to say the prayer and the Pledge. And of course, we still had homework, quizzes, and tests, even if teachers had to get creative sometimes. Looking back, Cistercian was able to adjust without major hiccups, and our class certainly benefited.

It is safe to say that the Class of 2026 has fond memories of the COVID days. Quarantining and social distancing were as boring to us as they were to everyone, but we were still middle schoolers. We could have fun if we tried, so we did. Because of all that unity we had been building, we had no problem finding ways to pass the time together. The obvious solution was video games. Fortnite, Minecraft, and Roblox were the most popular, with perhaps a little chess.com sprinkled in during a class or two. But other remedies were deployed as well. Classroom hijinks remained without a classroom. Some classmates checked into class from exotic locations, siblings made appearances, and one or two certain people had to be reminded of the importance of wearing a shirt (“Oh, you can see me?”).

Even Fr. Augustine joined the fun, offering a communal viewing of *The Muppets* every morning at 8:00.

Our return to campus as third formers felt long overdue. We were amped to be back. Even masked and reporting our temperature daily via the Ascend app, it was right back to business. But Form III and IV felt different than the first two middle school years. There was more competition and more challenge. It felt as if we were beginning to become who we would be in upper school.

To meet these new and higher standards, we went back to the bonds we had created and deepened in our first two years at Cistercian. Whenever a classmate wanted to do something new, anything from quiz bowl to football, he had friends with him. But difficulties arose. Dr. Krumins's chemistry class was comparable to most classes we would take in high school (a noble 10 of us are still taking his senior biology class). Mr. Spence's Latin class made us realize how little we understood the basics of language, not to mention the Ablative Absolute. And although some in the Form were comfortably in their element, the Junior Assembly mixers had many nervous folks pulling up the weather app. Famously, iron sharpens iron. These lessons would pay off in the coming years.

Upper school would mark our halfway point at Cistercian, but the transition from middle to upper school was only a temporal marker. Readers of this article may notice that it is not halfway complete. Neither was our Form. The tales of middle school proved both foundational and fun, but when we each travel on our separate roads at the end of this year, they will not be the first stories recanted. There were both darker and brighter days to come, where friendships and challenges would yield purpose and fulfillment.



Middle school outing

We had always been a “play hard” group, seizing every opportunity to escape the structured Cistercian life. But the difference between “playing hard” and “just playing” is, as Coach Walsh would say, “passion and purpose.” The golden moments of fun in middle school were not organized by Cistercian but by us. We had our own ideas, and we executed. Coppell Park, our favorite outing spot, is a prime example.

On our first visit, something called our 13-year-old minds into the forest. But behind what first appeared to be heavy brush, there was a clearing. Not just a clearing, but a wide, oddly warm, flowing creek, hidden from the public eye. *Lord of the Flies* may have been removed from Cistercian's required reading list a year prior, but its spirit was with us. Quickly, an industrious river society was created, and it developed each year. As juniors, we stepped off the bus knowing it was our last hoorah. We had to make it count. One group built a dam to divert water into a sand bank, attempting to create their own pool. But as much as they piled up sticks, logs, and rocks, the water passed through. Many tireless hours were spent just to temporarily alter the water flow of our little creek. Eventually the grumble of stomachs proved too loud to ignore, but as we walked back to eat lunch, we met other groups of noble savages. There were architects fashioning tents and homes from sticks and mud and adventurers questing to find interesting trash littered across the muddy banks of the creek. As a Form, we had accomplished what Rousseau only dreamt. When we returned to the dam after lunch, the troops of savages bound together. We agreed that the dam was a frivolous and fruitless endeavor, so we turned our attention to a large tree sticking out of the bank. Easily scalable and 15 feet above the water, it had only one use. We were going to go out with a bang, or rather, a splash.



While our woodland construction project did not yield the desired results, it was but a small hiccup in our Form's history of builds. What started in Form I—building popsicle stick bridges with Coach Taylor and homemade trebuchets with Fr. Anthony—would become a matter of pride in high school. For the engineering elite, robotics was an obvious choice. But for the common man to fulfill his creative tendencies at Cistercian, all he must do is turn to the Homecoming Build, which may be the greatest annual creative feat carried out by any high school. Every fall, the old gym is transformed into a dance floor complete with multiple lounges and a casino. The walkway elevates into an inviting entryway, anything from Hollywood Boulevard to the Bridge of Asgard. Even the courtyard is decorated, perfect for taking a break from the action indoors.

Historically, all homecoming construction has been completed over the course of three Saturdays, but our Form did things a little differently. We wanted to go big, and we made it happen. When Jack Landis, longtime student council member and current president, first pitched our class his ideas for the dance floor's centerpiece, he presented two options. The theme of the floor would be *Star Wars*, much to Fr. Augustine's delight, and the first of Landis's proposals was the Death Star as its centerpiece. It was a similar size to other centerpieces that had been created before, and we felt certain that we could pull it off. But perhaps that certainty is what we wanted to avoid. When Landis proposed a second, more difficult idea, a Star Destroyer at a never-before-seen scale, we jumped on it immediately. We would not simply need more wood,



Bridge build in Form I

more paint, more lights, and a better pulley system; we needed more time. More time to plan. More time to discuss. More time to make sure every little detail was just right. Three Saturdays, no matter how many able and willing hands were available, would not suffice.

Three whole weeks, however, was enough time, even if those three weeks happened to be in the middle of the fall semester. Schematics appeared in notebooks and on whiteboards. Supply orders were placed and picked up. It was not uncommon to see some of us working on the Star Destroyer until 8:00 p.m. before going home to do our homework. Fr. Augustine offered Form Master periods as construction periods. With so much work, we were united and motivated as a Form in a different way than usual.

The average Cistercian student is motivated to succeed, whether for personal reasons, college admissions, or to appease parents. And the School supports that. Small classes by nature mean that there is more opportunity to go around. But the unique greatness of Cistercian is not as a path to a high GPA, good test scores, or whatever else is recognized every year at Closing Ceremonies. For every individual achievement our classmates have had during upper school—starting charities with franchises nationwide, developing cancer identification techniques, or setting record track times—there have been just as many communal achievements.

Community: exactly what we were chasing with our Homecoming Build. No one saw the 33-foot-long Star Destroyer above the dance floor and thought to themselves, "I should congratulate the builder." It was a showpiece designed to bring people together, to get them dancing, to get them talking. When we were freshmen, upperclassmen put in similar hours and instructed us during homecoming workdays. Junior year's dance floor was our turn to put in the work. Then, as seniors, we picked up right where we left off, albeit no longer responsible for decorating the dance floor. Instead, we oversaw basically everything else, making sure to give as many learning opportunities to underclassmen as we could. We were probably biased, but we truly felt that the more effort we put in as a class, the better homecomings, present and future, would be.



Star Destroyer centerpiece under construction

Admiral Ackbar (better known on non-Homecoming Dance days as Fr. Augustine) enjoying the decorations



Thankfully, we accomplished much more as a community than just a few Homecoming Builds. Our foundation as a “play hard” Form, although evolving somewhat into “work hard” in upper school, ensured that athletics would be an important part of our identity. The Lunch Basketball Association, Flag Football League, and our most recent trend, Gateball, satisfied the craving for interform competition. But for official sports, we began early. Our freshman year, every varsity sport except for golf and basketball (the coaches didn’t know how smooth Burke Landrum’s jump shot was yet) featured at least one member of our Form contributing heavily. These elite outliers became rallying points in the Form, reasons to go to varsity games. The most popular sports earned the most fame, like football for Jacob Liu or soccer for The Fab Five. But even for seasons like cross-country or swim, which typically garner less attention than others, the fact that we had members of our class contributing early was important. It inspired classmates to join, and that made a difference junior and senior year.

“Making a difference” does not necessarily mean that our increased participation as a Form directly yielded wins and championships. Sometimes it did. Soccer is the most popular sport in our Form, with 15 of us playing varsity this year. We also happen to be quite good at it. That may be an understatement; please allow me to rephrase. According to Coach Walsh, we are the greatest soccer Form in the School’s history. Five of us have been starters since freshman year (the aforementioned “Fab Five”), we have never lost a game (62-0-8 in upper school), and we have won four straight SPC Championships. That certainly says something about the program and the players, but it also says even more about our Form. With a

good batch of talent, any team can perform well for a year or two, but the key to long-lasting success is a consistent program. Talented as we were as a Form, we still needed the handfuls of guys that joined new sports each year. They made track practice less brutal and livened up a senior football season during a difficult semester for the entire school. We bought in. We made a difference.

Not every season ends with a winning record. But as Coach Bruce said, “You have to be careful how you define success.” To us, it was often a matter of community as much as competition. But why? Why did we care so much about achieving as a unit, becoming truly great and supporting Cistercian, even when we only had a year or two left before graduation? Perhaps it was the bonding Fr. Augustine promoted in First Form and continued to nudge us toward for the next seven years. Maybe it was our many teachers who guided us. The senior class had a big influence on us as freshmen. Were we trying to emulate them? Or was there some strange essence of Cistercian that seeped into each one of us over the course of our time here, even when we thought we were daydreaming through homilies or goofing off in class? Most likely, it was some combination of all those things. But one small idea would have an unexpectedly large impact on the Class of 2026.



It began during our junior retreat. Our previous six retreats were not fruitless, but this one was simply different. Something about escaping into the wild (in our case, Athens, Texas) bolsters the mind and spirit. Our two COR Expeditions, both a mix of backcountry backpacking and communal soul-



COR hike before Form VI



Junior retreat in Athens, Texas



Household *Via Dei*

searching, had similar effects. But as juniors, we had finally crossed a threshold of maturity. With maturity came trust, and during the plenary session, many classmates stepped forward to reveal struggles that few, if any, of us knew about. It is quite shocking to learn that many of our best friends had been going through real and serious problems. The Form's obvious response in the moment was one of shock and empathy, but that was not enough. It is not uncommon to walk away with a changed mindset that fades after a week or two, but some of us wanted more. If we were striving for greatness already, why not do so spiritually?

Eleven guys from the class felt particularly called to follow up on the spiritual growth kickstarted at the retreat, not just individually, but alongside their classmates. With Mr. Saliga as their advisor, they took up the gauntlet Mr. Nied had thrown down on junior retreat and formed the Household *Via Dei*, a brotherhood loosely inspired by the household system of Franciscan University (of which Saliga and Nied are alumni) whose primary purpose is for members to strive together towards God and virtuous manhood. It was a significant step, taken with an impressive amount of humility and self-awareness. Openly conversing with classmates about this newly formed Household and what membership meant to them prevented the group from being perceived as performative or "holier than thou." Anyone could join, and they even talked to younger Forms about creating their own groups.

Lasting impact has become something of a theme for our Form. What will Cistercian be after us, and what will we be after Cistercian? Taken shallowly, it is an easy question. Classes will continue, Fr. Augustine will take on his third Form, and Cistercian, one year older, will still be Cistercian. The Class of 2026 will join the ranks of alumni and head off to college with a strong education, a tight brotherhood, and many memories.

"You get out what you put in," said Mr. Saliga during our senior retreat. That is a truth of spiritual progress—and Cistercian life. Each member of our Form contributed

something unique, so he will leave behind and take away something different. Paths will vary from priest to politician to private equity analyst. But somewhere along the way, with the help of God, the School, and our Form Master, we defined ourselves. We bought in, and it paid out. •



Senior Homecoming



A COMMUNION OF COMMUNITIES



Jim Reisch

Bob Greenfield

Thousands of miles and dissimilar cultures may stand between them, but Cistercian communities are bound together by a common history and a shared fabric of charity, joy, and trust. More and more these days, students at Cistercian are getting a taste of the Order's "Harmonious Diversity."*

* "Harmonious Diversity" comes from the *Declaration of the General Chapter of the Cistercian Order on the Principal Elements of Cistercian Life Today*, first published in 1969 following Vatican II. In 2005, a revised and improved English translation was issued, largely written by the late Frs. Denis Farkasfalvy and Roch Kereszty of Our Lady of Dallas, as well as the late Abbot Polycarp Zakar, who was abbot of Zirc at the time and served as abbot general of the Cistercian order in Rome (p.15).



Sr. Élizabeth of Boular with Fr. Joseph of Dallas



Learning about life as a Cistercian in France

“LOOK!” a gaggle of First Formers exclaimed as they gazed through a window onto the courtyard between the middle and upper schools. They were amazed. “It’s a nun, but she’s dressed just like Fr. Raphael.” Giggles ensued, of course.

Sister Diane, a Cistercian nun from the Boulaur monastery in southern France and three other Cistercian nuns from Kismaros, Hungary, had been visiting the School and Abbey, observing classes, praying with the monks, and sharing their thoughts on the Cistercian Order, its theology, and how it will make its way in the world today. Sr. Diane and her superior, Mother Emmanuelle, had visited previously in 2023 when they spoke at the Abbot’s Circle Dinner.

It wasn’t the first visit by Cistercians from overseas, nor have these intercontinental encounters been one directional. For years, many of the monks and novices from Our Lady of Dallas have made the rounds of Cistercian communities in Europe and Africa, studying in Rome and spending time in monasteries like the one in Heiligenkreuz, Austria. Fr. Francis and Fr. Joseph have visited the Boulaur monastery in recent years as well. Sister Christiane from the Seligenthal Abbey in Germany traveled to Dallas and attended the Abbot’s Circle Dinner





Locations of Cistercian congregations around the world



Mother Christiane, Mother Elizabeth, and Abbot Peter walking the Via Appia



Fr. John in Hungary

in 2016. And Fr. Bernard has spent several years helping the mother abbey of Zirc and its schools in Hungary. Now, Fr. John has taken up the mantle from Fr. Bernard. He spent the 2025-2026 school year in Hungary and will return to Budapest in August for the next one. He's also learning Hungarian.

"It's a long learning curve," Fr. John admits. "But the legacy of Zirc is incredible. It has meaning in this world today, and it should be cherished. There are many aspects of our history that are not available to us because we are Americans who don't know Hungarian. For example, there are many untranslated writings from our saintly predecessors. And there are living relationships with Hungarian monasteries and schools. We don't want to lose those connections when we lose the last of our beloved Hungarians. We have to make an effort to keep them."

Before returning for the spring semester, Fr. John explained that at the heart of his mission is renewal.

"My goal is to help renew Cistercian life in Hungary," he explained. "During the fall semester, we tried to discern some possibilities and, in the spring, we were making preparations to run a discernment and formation house in Budapest. Next year we will, of course, continue the discernment. It's a creative time. As long as our community in Dallas is persuaded that what we are doing to support renewal is God's will, then I will happily take this path."

That path currently includes the continued formation of a junior monk and supporting others who are thinking about entering the monastery. Fr. John will serve as a vocation director. In his spare time, he'll teach at a Catholic university and offer a Cistercian presence at the five Cistercian schools in Hungary where monks no longer teach. Concretely, he'll visit the schools to give talks, celebrate the sacraments, and spend time with students and teachers. His presence will be strongest at the school close to his residence in Budapest, where he will celebrate Mass twice weekly.

"I'm very excited about supporting Cistercian life in Hungary. The evangelical effect of this project could be very powerful," he said. "Zirc's roots

are deep, and its schools are widely connected in Hungary. If God wants it, this could be a real turning point that could inspire tens of thousands to deepen their sense of vocation wherever God calls them. And, of course, if young men are attracted to renewing Cistercian life, that would be such a beautiful story of resurrection."

Exchanging students

The give-and-take among students, teachers, and families between Europe and Dallas has blossomed in recent years. The student exchange program started around 18 years ago with Fr. Bernard as coordinator and Fr. Augustine as co-coordinator. Now, as sole coordinator for the program, Fr. Augustine makes the arrangements for two Hungarian students to spend a month in Dallas and two seniors from the School to visit the Cistercian schools in and around Budapest.

"The Hungarian boys we hosted this year were two of the best we've had visit," Fr. Augustine said. "They were interested. They knew things about us that even some of our students didn't know. They had a living faith and a deep concern in their hearts for the future of the exchange program, the future of our abbey and school community, and the future of their abbey and school communities."

Gary Nied has had Hungarian students in his English classes for the last three years.

"It's been wonderful," he said. "They seem very excited to be here. They've participated in class discussions, and some have even done all of the assignments. In Senior English last

semester, I asked my two Hungarian students to present a Hungarian poem to the class. One of them didn't just recite the poem, a rousing patriotic ballad, but sang the song beautifully while playing the piano in Founders Hall. Quite inspirational!"

Fr. Augustine explained how the student exchange program, which began as something of an experiment, has now become integral to the School and Abbey.

"At first, the program seemed to be in search of a fuller sense of identity, but now it's become part of a growing sense of our shared effort to preserve our common foundations. For the last eight years, it's been part of the slow but ever-growing impetus that's behind what Fr. John is doing in Hungary now."

Fr. Augustine typically asks the Hungarian students to share a slide presentation about their home country with the seniors during a Form Master period. "They tell us about their culture, their way of life, their music, history, food. They even gave us recipes for their food. Just everything," he said.

Of course, sharing a classroom with several Hungarian students reminds the American students of the School's roots and heritage, according to Nied, but it also shows them that they are part of a world larger than the confines of its Irving campus.

"There's also the collaboration with the greater Cistercian world that has grown in our understanding over the last few years," he said. "We've been gaining the sense that we're not just this isolated school in Texas. We're



Hungarian exchange students (in blue)

part of something bigger, and that realization can be very fruitful, very stimulating, and—quite frankly—pretty exciting. We can learn from them and they can learn from us. This helps our students realize they are part of something bigger, something “catholic,” meaning universal.”

And as far as those Cistercian nuns go, even seniors in high school can be impressed by them.

“It was great for the boys to see Cistercian nuns and understand the Order in a new way,” Nied said. “And they, the nuns, are so cool! They are joyful, smart, personable people. You could say that the joy of the Lord is their charism. We can all learn from that, and it can help evangelize the boys.”

Life-Giving Joy, Renewal

That kind of joy, which Fr. Abbot Peter describes as “life-giving,” has also been ascribed to the monks of Our Lady of Dallas.

“The nuns who have visited us would say that we are a happy community,” Fr. Peter said. “The Abbot General of the Cistercian Order in Rome would say that there are very few monasteries where the brothers are more united than Dallas. The nuns saw this in us. And we see in them a very joyful community.”

The joy, emanating from the Holy Spirit, is contagious, reaching out and

touching the hearts of those around it.

“Like us, the Boulaur Monastery is thriving with vocations. They are offering to help reanimate other monasteries that may be dying,” Fr. Peter explained. “For example, they’ve sent three or four of their nuns to a monastery in Spain to provide the nun power they need. They will suggest that the Spanish nuns post flyers at a university saying: ‘Come work with us for a day.’ The kids and adults who show up will clean the church or the grounds or do whatever. The important part is that they will work, pray, and eat with the monks and nuns. This is exciting for us. It is life-giving. They’ve embarked on these initiatives in Germany, Spain, Hungary, and here in Dallas with us.”

This impulse to reach out to other monasteries isn’t something new for Cistercians. It’s an essential element of the founding documents of the Order.

“One of the distinctive qualities of the Cistercian Order described in our Charter of Charity** is that our monasteries are founded to support one another. How do we live that today?” Fr. Peter asked. “How do we hold each other up? How do we support one another? This is very much a topic of today. What does this look like? It may look something like what Dallas and Boulaur are developing. They are helping us with affirmation, ideas, projects we can do on our own or together with them, sharing theology, and others. It’s tentative at this stage, but this support for one another is going to be very life-giving. Renewal of the Order is going to come from the Holy Spirit working through individuals and monasteries as opposed to the structure of the Order.”

** Charter of Charity, written by St. Stephen Harding, one of the founders of the Cistercian Order and third abbot of the monastery of Citeaux, France. The Charter was approved by Pope Calixtus II in 1119.



Fr. John and Sr. Diane presenting at Seek 2026

And the relationship between the monks of Our Lady of Dallas and the nuns of Boulaur affirms a tenet of their theology.

“The nuns of Boulaur are interested in promoting friendship between monks and nuns,” Fr. Peter said. “The Boulaur nuns say they can’t be fully mature and healthy women if they don’t have relationships with men. The challenge, of course, is to do this in Christ, as religious women and men. We are trying to cultivate this among our monks as they visit these places. And the nuns are invited to visit us. This is something new. Because monasteries in general can be so fragile, we need one another. And members of religious orders who live celibate lives like us and the nuns are coming to an understanding of ourselves that we need relationships properly understood to thrive. That’s something relatively new.”

Fr. John pointed out that the Cistercian Order differs somewhat from some of the other religious orders that have a more hierarchical structure of authority. “Our Charter of Charity says that abbots (and abbesses) should relate to each other as equals, as brothers and sisters, not as independents and dependents,” he said. “We are trying to raise up a communion of communities.” •

Bob Greenfield is the father of Rob '92 and Michael '99, grandfather of Joseph Hess '22, and spouse for the last 53 years of Jackie Greenfield, Cistercian teacher who retired in 2017 after 24 years in the English Department.



Screen printing



Swag shopping

Class Reunions & Gatherings



Class of 2000 (Christmas)



West Point proud



Class of 2011



Class of 2025 (Christmas)



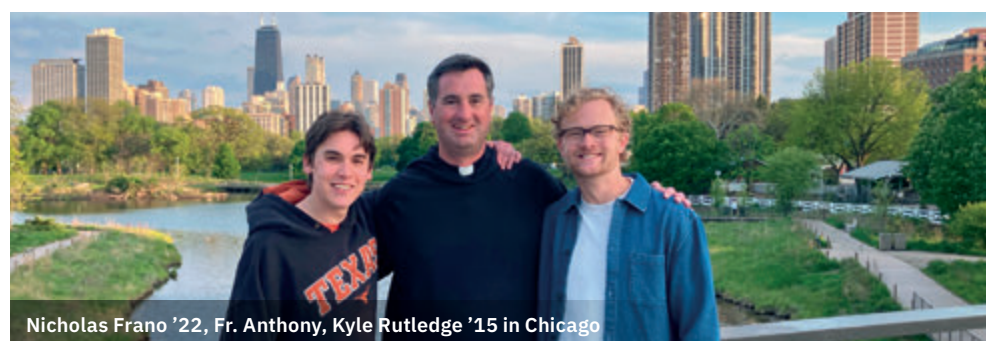
Maxwell Vaughan '21 and alums at Time Out Tavern



Past, present and future Hawks with Fr. Anthony at A&M



Fr. Christopher and Br. Barnabus at Texas A&M



Nicholas Frano '22, Fr. Anthony, Kyle Rutledge '15 in Chicago

In Memoriam

Bruce Cummings '75

April 9, 1957–March 9, 2026

Remembered by Mike McGee '75

Bruce Cummings was born on April 9, 1957. He had a great sense of humor and love of music, sports and learning.



Bruce Cummings

Bruce started Cistercian in Form I. He played tennis his freshman and sophomore years and soccer his junior and senior years. He was active in student government, drama, the school

newspaper, and yearbook. Bruce loved soul music and had great rhythm, which enabled him to teach his classmates all the dance moves of the 70s. His insatiable desire to learn new things made Bruce a true font of information. He was an honor roll student all four years in upper school as well as a NMSQT Semifinalist. Bruce graduated Texas A&M University earning two degrees in five years.

He was Regional Manager Asia/Pacific for Recognition Equipment and General Manager Asia/Pacific for Sandia Imaging Systems.

Bruce's love for travel continued after he retired, and he made a number of trips to Europe in search of model train sets to add to his collection. He resided in Cathedral City, CA.

May he rest in peace. •

Sims Slaton '70

October 3, 1951–December 14, 2025

Remembered by Charlie Williams '70

Sims Slaton, a pioneer at Cistercian and a member of its first graduating class in 1970, passed away peacefully



Sims Slaton

on December 14, 2025. Sims was a special person and a leader at Cistercian in many ways. He was an easy friend—the kind of person everyone felt comfortable around. He got

along well with the Hungarian priests (a must at Cistercian), and he was simply a good man to work with. Even as a young man, his character stood out.

A gifted athlete, Sims earned all-tournament honors in the first eighth-grade basketball tournament Cistercian ever played in—a sign early on of the excellence he would continue to show. With the School's first high school football team, Sims was a captain and named all-conference linebacker, running back, or both. Ask Bob Haaser who, believe it or not, was one of his first coaches.

Sims went on to a successful business career and family life. He will be missed deeply by all of the Class of 1970, as well as his family (especially brother Dwight '72) and many other friends. •

Zachary (Zack) Tomaso '11

June 2, 1993–February 18, 2026

Remembered by Peter Saliga

When Zack Tomaso was admitted to Cistercian, his father, Bruce, got a handwritten note from Jim Moroney '74,



Zack Tomaso

Bruce's boss at *The Dallas Morning News*: "Welcome to the Cistercian family!" Before long, the Tomasos knew Jim had chosen his few words well.

From the moment he first

stepped onto these sacred grounds, Zack felt at home at Cistercian. He genuinely cherished his eight years with the Class of 2011. Though soft-spoken, he was universally loved and often the wit behind the expression of the Form's humor. And he was always up for an adventure, like the time he helped lead his classmates in their dauntless charge into a pitch-black Longhorn Cavern on the Texas History Trip after the guide tried to frighten them with "gentlemen, go as far as you *dare*." (Hearing that, how were we to know it was against Park rules?!) And he loved challenges. When Coach Lee told Zack he'd be playing power forward against Trinity Valley, weighing 153 lbs. soaking wet, Zack trotted onto the court laser focused for battle. He knew bony elbows had their merits.

In the years following graduation, Zack came to appreciate how much he was nurtured, valued, encouraged, guided, inspired, and made to work his tail off at Cistercian. The formation he got prepared him for so many successes: undergrad at Notre Dame, grad school at UT Austin, accounting and analyst posts with PWC and Sixth Street.

A devoted fan of the Cowboys and the Mavs—until they traded Luka—Zack loved to golf, play guitar, and travel. We're going to miss his gentle smile and generous, listening ear.... *Requiescat in pace.* •



Jim Reisch

In December, members of the Class of 2001 gathered to open a time capsule that was buried after their classmate Brian Price passed away in 1998. Items inside included Coach Tom Hillary's eulogy along with letters and remembrances from Fr. Roch and classmates.

Winter Sports

UNBEATABLE! Soccer Wins Fourth Consecutive SPC Title

For the fifth time in six years, the varsity soccer team finished as undefeated champions! This year, Coach J.P. Walsh's squad went 17-0-3, scoring 100 goals. A 3-0 win over Houston Kinkaid and impressive road victories over Greenhill and St.



Mark's set a strong tone. As top seed in the playoffs, Cistercian destroyed Oakridge 6-0 in the first round before taking on Awty International from Houston in the semifinal. Midway through the second half, **Andrew Novoa '26** was fouled in the box, and **Raad Nino '26** scored from the penalty spot for the 1-0 victory. The championship game was at and against Fort Worth Country Day. With 15 minutes left in the first half, **Dean Nevitt '26** blasted a 25-yard shot that hit the crossbar and bounced back into play. **Charlie Kane '27** knocked in the loose ball to put Cistercian up 1-0. Early in the second half, **Fernando Peña '26** played the ball wide to Novoa, who beat his defender and slotted the ball past the goalkeeper. Final score: Hawks 2, Falcons 0!

Five seniors were awarded All-SPC Honors: **Jacob Liu '26**, **Nevitt**, **Novoa**, **Nino**, and **Patrick Spori '26**. All five have been varsity starters for four years and graduate having NEVER lost a game... 62-0-8. Coach Walsh will continue to run Cistercian's soccer program but will step back as head coach next season. In 19 years as varsity head coach, he has 10 trophies and a record of 267-47-33.

Basketball plays through adversity

"Next man up" is the best way to describe the 2025-2026 varsity basketball season after several injuries sustained in nonconference games left Hawks with six healthy players for most of SPC play. Despite the injuries, and some close losses early in the season, team captains **Burke Landrum '26** and **Sebastian Soriano '27** pushed their teammates to assume new roles and not make excuses. **Gerardo Pozo '26**, **Matthew McCarthy '27**, and **Hayden Lake '27** heard this message loud and clear, with all three playing nearly twenty-five minutes per game by the end of the season after little playing time in the 2024-2025 campaign. **Grayson Turley '27** stepped up as well, finishing the season with a nineteen-point outburst in the final game—a 73-65 win over



Awty International School. Because of injuries, several players that began the season on JV gained valuable varsity experience in the "next man up" role, including **Bradford Wang '29**, **Kolbe Heidemann '29**, **Henry Butler '28**, **Landon Borum '28** and **Paul Ellison '27**. The Hawks return ten players from this past season, and each is hungry to build off of the adversity they overcame this season.

AquaHawks compete in every event

The Cistercian AquaHawks entered the 2025-2026 season looking for their first championship since 2022-2023. At meet's end, the AquaHawks fell just short of that goal, securing their third straight second-place finish in the SPC 3A Swimming and Diving Championship. Fourteen swimmers achieved SPC-qualifying times, and 11 swimmers scored in the Championship. For the first time in Cistercian's swimming history, at least one swimmer made the finals in every swimming event.

The AquaHawks were led by captain **Drew Durgin '26**, who won the 50 and 100 freestyles with personal records in each. Durgin also anchored two second-place relays, scoring a team-high 25 points. Three other seniors contributed to the scoring: co-captain **Mateo Rey '26** (14.5 points), **Major Beasley '26** (6.5 points), and **Daniel O'Connell '26** (6 points). The senior leadership was tremendous.

Juniors **Landon Osterberger '27** (18 points), **Carter Ivory '27** (16 points), **Addison Sloan '27** (10.5 points) and **Devin DeSilva '27** (6 points) stepped into leadership roles and formed a strong nucleus for next season, along with classmates **Maddux Ly '27** and **William Thomas '27**. **Patrick Denholm '28** (5 points) scored in the 200 free and freshmen **Benjamin Adashek '29** (15 points) and **Alexander Lo '29** (9.5 points) broke ground for the AquaHawks teams of the future. •



Spring Sports

Tennis posts impressive record

During the past three seasons, Hawks tennis compiled an impressive 30–2 record in 3A SPC team counter matches, with both losses coming in the Championship finals. What made this team truly special was not just the victories, but the way they competed with determination while remaining humble throughout the journey.

One of the season's biggest highlights came in May when **Jacob Liu '26** (#1 singles), **Kouki Fraccaroli '27** (#2 singles), **James Marlowe '26** (#3 singles), **Peter Bui '26** and **Liam O'Neill '26** (#1 doubles), and **Garrett O'Neill '26**

and **Dean Nevitt '26** (#2 doubles) defeated 4–0 a strong John Cooper team to secure the Hawks' third consecutive SPC Finals Championship appearance.

The team was led by six seniors, all of whom served as captains for the 2026 squad: Liu (All-SPC), Bui (All-SPC), the O'Neills (both MVPs and All-SPC North Zone), Nevitt (Newcomer of the Year and All-SPC North Zone), and Marlowe (Most Improved and All-SPC North Zone), alongside junior Fraccaroli.

In addition to Fraccaroli, next season will see the return of **James Hays '27** (Flying Hawk Award), **Ian Tran '27**, **Rishi Gopal '27**, **Christopher Bergin '27**, **Ethan Bui '28**, and **Kishen DeSilva '28**.

Track finishes third at SPC

The Hawks season started at the Greenhill Relays with a fifth-place finish. **Brady Quinn '28** won the team's first individual gold of the year in the 400m.

The team was back in action at Trinity Valley just before spring break. **Arthur Moran '27** and **Garrett O'Neill '26** picked up victories in discus and triple jump, respectively, as the Hawks finished second overall.

Next up, the Hawks won their home meet for the third year in a row led by gold medalists **Will Oliver '27** (1600M and 3200M) and **Paul Ellison '27** (110m and 300m hurdles).

In their final meet before SPC, the Hawks had a slew of stellar performances at Fort Worth Country Day. The team's 4x100 relay (Quinn, Ellison, **Vin**

McColm '29, and **Matthew Brown '26**), placed first with a time of 43.33, third fastest in the School's history. Oliver (3200m), Ellison (110m and 300m hurdles), and Brown (long jump), all won gold as well in their individual events.

The Hawks ended the season with a third-place finish at the

SPC Championship in Houston. The 4x800 relay kicked off the event with a fourth-place finish for the Hawks. The success continued on day two with Oliver winning bronze in the 3200m, setting a school record at 10:00.87. The hurdling trio of Ellison, **Patrick Spori '26**, and **Fernando Peña '26** combined for five medals, and Ellison's time of 14.55 in the 110h was the fastest in all of SPC, regardless of division, at the meet.

Golfers brave the elements

The golf team recorded the lowest team score at SPC in at least a decade. Despite heavy rains and many delays, the golfers stayed focused and performed their best in the most important tournament of the

year. The team featured seniors **Dean Nevitt '26**, **Dillon Pitts '26**, **Jules Tyler '26**, **Garrett O'Neill '26**, and freshman

Esteban Gutierrez '29. There is ample opportunity for growth in the program next season.



Hawks baseball rebuilds

After graduating a talented senior class in 2025, the baseball program entered a rebuilding season filled with both challenges and promising moments. The growing pains were evident and, at times, humbling, but the Hawks consistently showed flashes of a bright future.

The program was led by captains **Brett Sharp '26**, **Major Beasley '26** (All-North Zone), and **Alex Wang '27** (All-SPC), all of whom played vital leadership roles throughout the season. The year began against stiff competition at the

Texas Private School Showdown, where the Hawks finished 1–3 while facing three TAPPS top-10 opponents. **Dillon Pitts '26** and **Jack Landis '26** turned in standout defensive performances during the tournament.



Despite a demanding nonconference schedule, the team displayed

resilience, toughness, and an unwavering work ethic all season long. "We knew it was going to be a grind this season. I can't say enough about the way this team worked and bought into the culture we have been building over the last two seasons. We are excited to have a group of talented young players coming up," said Coach Ricky Barrett, head baseball coach.

That young core of players includes three freshmen—**Caleb Garza '29**, **Davidson Wang '29**, and **Bradford Wang '29** (All-North Zone)—who started in every game.

The Hawks closed the season with a fifth-place finish at the Spring SPC Championship, highlighted by a rain-shortened 8–3 victory over Oakridge. The team was fueled by timely hitting from **Aidan Lemieux '26**, Beasley, and **Charlie Kane '27**.

The Hawks' rebuild is well underway. The foundation has been established, and the program now sets its sights on a competitive 2027 campaign with another young and talented roster. •

Chewing it Over

What fixing an old pen taught me about AI

In the days before ballpoints, fountain pens were tipped with gold to prevent the acids in waterproof inks from rusting them.

If you didn't want somebody walking off with the gold in your pen, you held onto the cap when you lent it out.



Patrick Spence '08

"Desk pens" were made with very long tails, eight or ten inches, which was another good way of keeping people from leaving with them.

My mother, whose planner is as colorful as an illuminated Book of Hours, achieves the same thing by Scotch-taping plastic forks and knives onto her hard-to-source purple and

green pens. Sometimes when I visit I set the table with them, and then act confused and hurt when I'm made to put them back.

At my grandmother's house, not long ago, I found an old desk pen whose rubber internals had fossilized. I was able to have its now-obscure filling system refitted at very modest expense by mailing it to Arizona.

It came back after a few weeks with a note in elegant cursive describing the pen's make and history, and pointing out something I hadn't noticed before—the barely visible dents in its elongated tail, which certainly does invite chewing. These are the marks of my grandmother's baby teeth.

If you want a physical symbol for the difficulty of finding the right words, there it is.

I keep the pen on my desk and use it to plan my dissertation. Whether I have more or less trouble with that than my grandmother had as a child writing thank-you notes for Christmas socks or whatever caused the bite marks, only the pen knows.

Young people in the act of writing are a popular subject in art, because if you want a child to sit motionless for a while, you can hand him a pen and tell him to write a thank-you note for the objectively delightful and thoughtfully chosen Confirmation present he has just opened.

Even a brief note usually demands a period of frustrated stillness which the sculptor's marble does not exaggerate.

There are tooth marks in most of the pens and pencils at

this School. After a boy has turned his list of thoughts on scratch paper into an orderly and plausible argument, the bitten pens are the only remaining evidence of the terrible strain of thought.

You hear a lot of things these days about AI writing, good and bad. What's undisputed is that nobody chews on his phone now for lack of words, the way my students still chew on their pens, the way my grandmother chewed on hers as a child.

In an essay about how to tell friends apart from flatterers, which AI will summarize for you, Plutarch warns us that a flatterer is "usually sober, always busy, and must have a hand in everything: he has a mind to be in all secrets, and in general plays the part of a friend."

I thought of this recently when Microsoft installed a permanent floating Copilot button in the corner of Word, which spontaneously offers to summarize my own work for me. We used to call this "writing an introduction."

If the document is blank, the floating button offers to "generate an outline." Of what? God knows. It just wants to be involved.

No AI, if I asked it to summarize Plutarch, would be self-defeating enough to suggest that I'd miss something by relying on its summary alone.

No AI will gain market share by telling me that I might find time to read Plutarch firsthand if I got off my phone now and then.

These are things a good friend, or a good teacher, might tell me. But AI is not a good friend, it is a flatterer.

Its business is to tell me what I want to hear, beginning with "You're absolutely right."

I have never heard it say, "You don't need me to summarize Hobbes. Go and attempt a difficult paper that will reveal your intellectual shortcomings, so that you can cure them, arduously and after many failures." Still, that's what a brain is for.

I want to teach my students to prefer the grind of real thought to the pointless ease of slop, as Ateas preferred the neighing of his battle horse to the music of flutes.

I want my students to turn into people who *like* being able to think, and who no longer wonder why they have to. A lot of pens are going to get chewed up in class as I pursue this foolish and outdated dream. I guess that's all right. •



THESE ARE THE MARKS OF MY GRANDMOTHER'S BABY TEETH.

August 16
Profession of Vows

August 18
Opening Ceremonies

September 13
10:30 a.m. Mass
65th Anniversary of Fr. Julius's
Ordination to the Priesthood

October 23
Homecoming Game vs.
St. Andrew's Episcopal School

Finding your own Calcutta

Mother Teresa has long stalked me, in the singular way saints have of quietly and persistently refusing to leave you alone. Having seen photos and videos of her while she was still alive, books about her have kept her memory bright in my mind; one of the Abbey's parlors, essentially a shrine to her, features an autographed picture of her on the wall.



Fr. Thomas Esposito

She confronted me in a particular way when I accompanied a group of university students on a spring break trip to Calcutta in March. I celebrated Mass at her tomb, befriended her Missionaries of Charity sisters, and served alongside them at various centers dedicated to disabled boys, lepers, the elderly, and the dying.

Of course, I did not need to visit Calcutta to find abject poverty and the misery of the human condition. Mother Teresa herself once gave the following directive: "Find your own Calcutta. Find the sick, the suffering and the lonely right there where you are—in your own homes and in your own families, in your workplaces and in your schools." "Find your own Calcutta" is precisely the inspirational quote animating the beautiful work of Anand Bheemarasetti, the founder of Project Finding Calcutta, a Dallas-based ministry. I traveled with Anand in Calcutta; he met Mother Teresa as a young boy in India, and her witness to the Gospel has shaped the course of his life. Some of our current students have volunteered with Project Finding Calcutta.

After the trip, I gave a presentation to the seniors during theology class. They were attentive to the sobering pictures I shared and images I painted of the slums, the leper colony next to the trash heap, and the disfigured boys whom I spoon-fed. But I recognized the risk of such a presentation: the greater our affluence, material comforts, and subtle sense of superiority,

the greater our insulation from the urgent fire raging gracefully in Mother Teresa's words. We admire her work, grateful that someone is tending to the poor in faraway lands; but more is needed to incite our consciences to recognize, admit, and address the poverty among and within us.

This next quote, I think, hits home. In a 1970 interview with the famous British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, Mother Teresa expounded a radical view of poverty:

"It is not very often things [the poor] need. What they need much more is what we offer them. In these twenty years of work amongst the people, I have come more and more to realize that it is being unwanted that is the worst disease that any human being can ever experience. Nowadays we have found medicine for leprosy and lepers can be cured. There's medicine for TB and consumptives can be cured. For all kinds of diseases there are medicines and cures. But for being unwanted, except there are willing hands to serve and there's a loving heart to love, I don't think this terrible disease can ever be cured."

She rightly prophesied what the US Surgeon General recently called "our epidemic of loneliness and isolation." Other government agencies around the world have expressed similar alarm in secular terms. Lest we think that Cistercian alumni are somehow immune from this disease, several tragic stories in recent months have only reinforced my sense that everyone in our community needs to find their own Calcutta—in our school hallways, hearts, and homes.

Granted that some form of poverty exists within and among you, and granted the accompanying darkness that such poverty brings with it, what sort of light are you emitting in the darkness of your own soul and the lives of others around you? And what heat are you radiating amid the cold heartless march of politics, history, hatred, and division among human beings?

These questions are not meant to be a beatdown—I swore that I would never go Fr. Roch on alumni in this column!—but he, like Mother Teresa, had a unique ability to goad one into fruitful self-reflection. Let the constructive principle in seeking one's own Calcutta, one's own poverty and that of others, always be, to quote Mother Teresa again, to do "something beautiful for God." •