For family, friends, & alumni of Cistercian Preparatory School

CONTINUUM

Spring 2021

TAKING NOTHING FOR GRANTED

Seniors Navigate the Pandemic Together

A Beautiful Language of Rigor and Expression

Cistercian's Math Program, Past and Present

Remembering Cistercian with a Planned Gift

We were honored in 2017 when the Abbey accepted our gift of an antique crucifix that had been in our family. The crucifix now hangs in the Abbey Crypt, and we hope it brings comfort when a monk passes away and others pray during the all-night vigil.

Cistercian is a happy constant in our lives. We were very blessed to have our two sons, Juan '05 and Pablo '09, graduate from Cistercian and then go on to great careers at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Chicago. So one could say that from the academic standpoint, there is no doubt Cistercian was the right choice.

But the presence of Cistercian in our family's life runs so much deeper. We have gone back to the Abbey for both of our sons' weddings and for the baptism of our four grandchildren. Even when none of the Muldoon clan resided in Dallas, we arranged for these important Catholic life celebrations to take place at Cistercian.

The Cistercians have had an influence on our family beyond the education of our sons. They have been confessors, counselors, and have offered their prayer and moral support in trying times. We will always be gratefully connected to Cistercian and will continue to support the mission of the Abbey and School.

Juan & Elena Muldoon

MEMORARE SOCIETY

To remember Cistercian with a planned gift, contact Erin Hart.
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Photo by Jim Reisch

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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.

Letter from the Headmaster

Be thankful in all circumstances

“Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Fr. Paul McCormick

When so much of a “traditional” senior year proved to be anything but traditional, the Class of 2021 genuinely reflected St. Paul’s lesson to be thankful in all circumstances, even those of a pandemic. As captured so insightfully in our feature article penned by English teacher Fr. Stephen Gregg ’01, God’s provident Love was clearly at work as the Class of 2021 rallied throughout the year to support, lean on, and rely upon each other, their Form Master, teachers, coaches, and staff in ways that might surely have been taken for granted in a more “traditional” year. And, we could not be more proud of them.

In our second feature, the story of Cistercian’s math department is told by former math faculty member Jon Erickson ’12, from its pioneering start with Fr. Denis through the ongoing, veteran leadership of Dr. Richard Newcomb today. Again, reminiscent of St. Paul’s instruction, many an alum has told me they remain more grateful for their C (or sometimes *lower*) grade in senior calculus than all of their A’s in business, medical, law, or other graduate or undergraduate classes combined! Admittedly, however, such gratitude can often emerge only after the particular circumstance of calculus is over. I hope you will also enjoy being introduced to our current math faculty and learning about recent updates to the program.

Also in this issue, with his uniquely classical wit, English and Latin teacher Patrick Spence ’08 lightheartedly ponders in his column all things Cistercian at the instigation of a neighborhood ice-cream truck. While Fr. Roch, soon to celebrate his 60th anniversary of priesthood, sagely reminds us that humility means to be happy in “all that I am and all that I receive, even the hard and hurting things.” And, of course, be sure to check out the always popular Class Notes to catch up on the latest news about so many friends and classmates.

Yes, in all circumstances, even in a pandemic, let us give thanks in Christ Jesus!

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News & Notes

Diamond Jubilee for Fr. Julius

Sixty years ago, Fr. Julius and Fr. Denis were ordained to the priesthood on July 9, 1961, at the Abbey of Lilienfeld, Austria, and Fr. Julius celebrated his First Mass at the Abbey of Zwettl, Austria, on July 16 of that year. His Anniversary Mass will be held on Sunday, July 11, at 10:30 a.m., in the Abbey Church.

Hillary Award

Sam Laber '21 was presented with the 2021 Tom Hillary Award at the Athletic Banquet on May 4. Voted on by the coaching staff, this honor is given to a senior who plays multiple sports at a high level with "sportsmanship, leadership, and character" while maintaining "a high level of achievement." Coach André Bruce noted that "When his coaches speak about Sam, they talk about his willingness to serve those around him. They talk about his ability to model hard work and sportsmanship. They describe him as a fierce competitor who strives to be the best athlete he can be while maintaining balance and perspective. He has set the bar high for future athletes who come through our program. With his standard of energy, effort, and enthusiasm, he embodies everything about this award."

Mock Hawks return to State Championship

The Mock Hawks, Cistercian's mock trial team, advanced this year to State for the second time in the team's history. The first trip to the championship saw **Jack Bitterman '14** and his team place 14th in the competition. After two grueling and long days competing in four rounds against the best in the State, this year's team placed fifth out of 24 teams, which means they just missed advancing to the semifinals.

Accompanying the team and Coach Rwan Hardesty was Jack Bitterman himself, who has enjoyed helping and watching the program improve steadily. "The team has always been successful, but we have been working for several years to figure out a formula that can take us to the next level," said Bitterman. "We felt that we had found it this year, so to finish with a result that supports that belief is incredibly gratifying!"

Faculty Lecture Series

While alumni events were cancelled this year due to COVID, the new Faculty Lecture Series provided the perfect way for faculty to connect with alumni. Peter Saliga was the first presenter in the series with "Revolution in a Toolshed." Bob Haaser, Fr. Gregory, Fr. Bernard, Gary Nied and Tom Pruit followed with a wide variety of topics. Although the original broadcasts are limited to alumni and alumni parents, the recorded lectures can be viewed by everyone at https://school.cistercian.org/faculty-lecture-series/.

Robotics team helping the community

With robotics competitions in a virtual format this spring, Fusion Corps, Cistercian's robotics team, has engaged in more community service projects than past years such as hosting virtual STEM nights monthly for elementary and middle school students at St. Cecilia. During these STEM nights, team members offer presentations about two STEM topics that relate to the real world. Participants are then led through experiments based on the presented topics. They have balanced paperclips on water to illustrate surface tension and made gliders out of cups and rubber bands to illustrate aerodynamics. The team even did a presentation on how COVID works and vaccines help.

They also presented to a group of FLL teams (First Lego League) and gave them a virtual tour of the flex lab. Fusion Corps hopes to invite both groups to Cistercian when the campus opens to visitors.

Elective format changed due to COVID-19 protocols

Elective course offerings were revised due to safety protocols this year so that Forms stayed together and did not cross over with other Forms. While this meant fewer electives to choose from, it also meant that faculty had the opportunity to teach their elective to an entire Form by the end of the school year. It was definitely a different year, but the reorganized electives worked very well.

Gary Nied

Tasia Magill

Form V's electives were Crime Fiction & Film Noir taught by Gary Nied and Improv Games taught by Tasia Magill. Form VI had three choices with Ag Practicum: Farming 101 with Fr. Raphael, The History of Film: Alfred Hitchcock with Fr. Augustine, and Studio Art: Encaustic Painting with Roberto Munguia. Form VII elective options were Graphics Programming with Greg Graham and Introduction to Finance with Nicholas Merrick.

Fr. Raphael Schaner

Fr. Augustine Hoelke '00

Fr. Raphael's Ag Practicum came from a conversation with his freshman theology class last spring when one student suggested a farming elective. With a third of the sophomore class enrolled, they were ready to get serious and work. They built four raised beds at the Abbey, utilized the raised beds on the science building balcony for soil amendment testing, propagated fig trees, participated in a honey harvest (bee suits and all!), and grew arugula, radishes, garlic, onions, peas, tomatoes, basil and passion fruit.

Roberto Munguia

Greg Graham

Nicholas Merrick, father of **Matthew Merrick '15**, has taught a finance elective at Cistercian for nine years. "As president of Mt. Vernon Investments LLC, an investment company with over $1 billion in assets, Mr. Merrick brings incredible expertise to the classroom to teach our juniors about finance. Being an alum parent, he also understands the School and our students. His course has been a favorite of many for years, and we are delighted that he was willing to teach both semesters this year," said Greg Novinski '82.

Nicholas Merrick

News & Notes

Fr. Paul receives Work of Heart Award

In April, Fr. Paul was surprised when Michael George from The Catholic Foundation came to campus to honor him with their Work of Heart Award. Students, faculty and board members gathered in the back parking lot for the surprise. Mr. George read some of the heartfelt comments that were made with Fr. Paul's numerous nominations. "Sometimes, it is really important to shine the light on a wonderful example of humble, lifelong and faith-filled service knowing what an inspiration that in itself can provide to others," said Mr. George. Students, faculty, staff and guests enjoyed treats from Howdy Homemade Ice Cream afterwards!

Michael George congratulating Fr. Paul for the Work of Heart award.

The show must go on!

Not to be deterred by a global pandemic, Tasia Magill and her drama students presented a live show for the Cistercian community when they performed *Twelfth Night,* a romantic comedy by William Shakespeare, using the front of the School as the stage in their own "drive-in theater." The audience enjoyed the evening from their cars in the parking lot while tuned into a radio station. "It was a great success," Mrs. Magill said, "not just because of the technical magic of body mics and intelligent lights but also due to the talented actors who, despite masks and distancing, were able to communicate the comedy in a manner that seemed effortless and entertaining to their sold-out crowds every performance!"

The cast of *Twelfth Night.*

Theology and science joint initiative

Fr. John, Dr. Martina Kroll, Fr. Ambrose, and Mr. Greg Graham participated in a Science & Religion Initiative through the University of Notre Dame last summer. Their experience culminated in a lesson plan titled "The Scientific Human and the Human Scientist," which Fr. John and Dr. Kroll presented in January during a virtual showcase for interested educators sponsored by Notre Dame. Their lesson plan focused on the scientific method, its philosophical presuppositions, and the uniquely human character of science, and they were able to share resources and teaching materials with other educators. After the showcase, attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the material presented.

Spelling bee champ

Rishabh Rengarajan '25 won first place in the Diocesan Schools Spelling Bee in January. Having been very successful at spelling bees in the past, he said, "My favorite word on the test was "harangue," as it brings back memories of the Diocesan Bee in Form II when I spelled that word right! A word that I regret missing on the test is "quiescence," as I definitely could have spelled it right if I had thought about my spelling roots. Later that day, I came across the word "quiesco, quiescere, quievei, quietum" in Latin class, and that made the misspelling hurt even more." Cistercian will host next year's Diocesan Schools Spelling Bee since we had the winning student this year.

Rishabh Rengarajan '25

Math team wins State!

The Texas State Math League pronounced Cistercian's Upper School team the winner of the state championship after a grueling six-round contest. At the individual level, **Andrew Oliver '23** and **Christopher Hardin '22** placed second and third respectively in Texas. **Brendan Herman '24** finished tenth, and **Coby Scrudder '21** and **Joseph Spak '21** also placed in the top 20. "A wonderful tribute to the team," beamed Dr. Newcomb. "The Upper School team persisted through this long contest and worked hard to improve their problem solving skills!"

The Middle School team also had outstanding results. Form II earned a fourth place finish, and Forms III and IV both secured second place finishes.

The Upper School Math Club with Dr. Newcomb.

Mental health is a priority

To complement the Grant Halliburton Foundation's virtual presentation earlier this year, Cistercian invited adolescent counselor Jeremy Edge to give presentations to students, parents, and faculty. He discussed the warning signs of young people struggling with problematic internet and screen use and how it can affect their mental health. He also walked through the steps to help students detach from such distractions and live a healthier lifestyle.

Students have also taken an active role in promoting mental health on campus by creating the Mental Wellness Club. The inaugural meeting speaker was Dr. Alice Holland, wife of alumnus **Brian Holland '04** and sister of **Steve Spurgin '06**. She is a distinguished pediatric neuropsychologist who works with children and teens to address mental health concerns. Dr. Holland works at Children's Medical Center Dallas, is an Associate Professor at UT Southwestern, and was the 2019 President of the Texas Psychological Association, all while running a private practice. This meeting was such a success that the students stayed and asked questions even after the dismissal bell.

Community service with RETREET

The seniors gathered with **Fr. Lawrence '01**, Fr. Raphael, and **Jack Dorn '05** for a service project facilitated by RETREET, an organization founded by **Grady McGahan '00**. RETREET provides disaster relief to communities by replanting trees and educating the public about environmental stewardship. The seniors planted 77 trees to replace those damaged by the October 2019 tornado. A special thank you to **Paul Tomaso '80** and his company, Living Earth Technology, for donating the mulch for this project.

Cistercian seniors planted trees to replace those damaged by the October 2019 tornado.

OmniGlobe on loan to Cistercian

For two weeks in February, Cistercian was the temporary home of the OmniGlobe, a 32" spherical projection device that displays geophysical, social, political, historical, and astronomical data. On loan from EarthX, an international nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to educating and inspiring people and organizations to create a more sustainable future, the capabilities of the OmniGlobe spanned the curriculum. Students in science classes were able to study the continental drift from Pangea to today's continental layout, while students in social studies learned from an up-close look at historical maps.

TAKING NOTHING FOR GRANTED

Seniors Navigate the Pandemic Together

Fr. Stephen Gregg ’01

Cheerleaders’ message to seniors in library hallway.

Many alumni know the words: *Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch’entrate*—“Abandon all hope, you who enter here.” Most senior classes at our School inscribe these words, in elaborately calligraphic or plainly brutal form, on one board or another of their classroom, inspired by the long-standing tradition of studying Dante’s *Divine Comedy* early in senior year, and perhaps also by their own sense of dead-end doom as they face the overwhelming burdens of academic, athletic, family, and social life all while juggling the possibilities and perceived lack of possibilities for their futures. You might have expected something even drearier in this plague year, but the principal greeting available to the eye that entered the senior realm was a large, colorful poster made by the cheerleaders, with a simple claim: “WE LOVE YOU.” (The last cursive curl expands naturally into a giant red heart.) This banner appeared at some point in what would have been football season. It condenses into one ecstatic message all the many tags the cheerleaders would normally have made to post on lockers, those bright displays that communicate to the boys in a way only the cheerleaders can all the positive hopes that the whole community wants to pour onto our students. They could have written, “We miss you,” but intuition guided them toward the right word. Attentive students of Dante also know that the words inscribed on the gate of Hell proclaim divine Love (and Power and Wisdom); this year the message just came through in a clearer and less intimidating tone.

This senior realm was not what these young men had known for the previous seven years: the senior hallway, the Saliga/Pruit/Mehen offices, the pair of bunker-like classrooms, and the Blackwell college counseling suite, all situated as closely as possible to the students' parking spots, to the Upper School restroom, and to the nine-square pit. Hoping to combine the need for separation from other Forms and faculty with the seniors' need for a distinctively good space, Fr. Lawrence resolutely planted the Form VIII flag in the best available territory, our beautiful library. The former senior classrooms entered a state of strange dereliction and repurposing with post-apocalyptic overtones: a classroom with no desks in it but the old teacher's desk, where our newly hired tech assistant Mr. Joseph Nied '16 sat, surrounded by various technological detritus coagulating like some new sort of vegetation, and ready to respond to the endless requests from a faculty dealing with a radical increase in its reliance on computers. A group of seniors (old believers, let's say) gathered in one of these empty classrooms to eat brisket sandwiches and watch *Bridge of Spies* on the eve of a long weekend—eager to get back into the space they considered theirs by right rather than just head home for an extra break from the grind.

The library offered the students two very different rooms: the one we call the "library classroom," which is part computer lab, and then the actual library, which was now also a classroom (some terminological confusion ensued). The former, the library classroom, was more like a normal classroom, except that instead of lockers for their stuff the seniors were surrounded by an array of desktop computers, whose illuminated lock screens provided something of a beach vacation on all sides. Also, the room does not have the usual crucifix and flag. For the cross, there is a nice reproduction of Da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi* (a curious point for those who follow art news); for the flag a black-and-white printout of a flying flag was tacked to the whiteboard. One could not discern if this was a sign of political radicalization or of mandatory colorless neutrality in an election year. Eventually a large yellow Gadsden flag came onto the scene, but never for pledging allegiance; mostly it was used as a tablecloth to cover the teacher's podium or desk. Again, the precise meaning of this gesture was unclear.

One of the pleasures of the former senior classrooms was the full wall of windows looking out toward the fields, offering a view for a weary senior of Middle School students frolicking on their way to P.E. or hitting each other with pebbles and spear-grass. But the library classroom is also surrounded by windows, which meant that in the last ten minutes of a certain period each day the room would seem surrounded by berserk Fourth Formers on their ten-minute break. The seniors seemed willing to restrain themselves to the library rather than scare away all others who needed the adjacent outdoor space. But they could still enforce a little privilege: although the Middle Schoolers now had access to the Ping-Pong table outside, the seniors kept the paddles to themselves. So out the windows we could watch the Fourth Form create a strange game of table tennis using only their hands, with four players rotating in a running circle around the table, as if the ground were burning sand. Sometimes a mischievous youngster would try to hide from his Middle School classmates by sneaking around to the abbey side of the library building, to lurk in ambush where the hillside begins. Such a boy would fail to realize that he was hiding

Fr. Thomas teaching in the library.

Line of demarcation between library stacks and senior classroom.

directly in the window niches that looked into the library classroom down below, basically sticking his tail into the seniors' faces. When we would subtly draw the child's attention to this state of affairs, he would peer past the window glare wide-eyed, observing before he ran off what must have seemed like a very advanced tribe of cavemen, surrounded by computers and adorned in college hoodies, with mild countenances that nonetheless presaged cannibalism.

To convert the library itself into a classroom was a more curious venture. The classroom space was basically a square, marked off on two sides by wheeled whiteboards and a long, low bookshelf. With some unclamping these boards can be flipped over to reveal their other side. Teachers did not take advantage of this, and so it left the seniors a sort of inverted mirror space on which to carry on their own debates. For virtually the whole year the back of one board contained a comparison chart of the relative merits that could help to determine an age-old question: Who would win, a silverback gorilla or a grizzly bear? The relevant statistics lurked upside down behind every math problem solved on the other side of the board.

What we had to think of as the back wall of this classroom carved from the library's space consisted of the actual library stacks, modified into a barrier. The entire reference section had to be boxed up to make room for the desks. The low shelves that held the reference books were then jammed into the aisles between the main library shelves, and the heavy, cardboard boxes of dictionaries and atlases were stacked at the aisle entrances to block access even further. In addition, a tape barrier was set up with "DO NOT ENTER" signs glued throughout. This echoed the "DO NOT ENTER: Library work area" sign that greeted you ironically as you entered the room, a barrier set up more to protect the poor librarian's desk area from senior invasion than to invite Dantean parallels. These bands of tape became something like spider webs, with bits of paper, broken pens, small action figures, and other scholastic detritus stuck in them. We refrained from allegorical interpretation of this atmosphere as the inaccessibility of knowledge. The ghost-town vibe increased weirdly when, halfway through the year, our librarian Dr. Dudasko left the School to bring her hard-won learning to bear on new tasks in Austin. Everyone knows libraries have their own ghosts and seem, even when empty, to be full of something demanding silence—the tens of thousands of voices and stories floating within their volumes. As the year progressed and the space around us emptied of apparent human presence, we seemed to be huddling closer and closer together around a fire, surrounded by a dark wood of mysterious, closed-off, and unused spaces. At least one senior, however, made sure to leap over the barriers occasionally to make raids on the inarticulate and snag a library book or two. At one point he boasted, "I have not read this many library books since Form II!" We hoped that in Form II he had not been reading Sartre.

To compensate for the size of the room and to

overcome the damping effect of mask wearing on the voice, the teachers have been using microphone necklaces. In the library this broadcast the teacher's voice from a small speaker posted on a shelf in the opposite corner, returning a certain tinny quality to the dampered voice and giving the teacher a hollow omnipresence. The teachers might have felt more than ever that they were simply talking to themselves, and the students that they were oddly surrounded by a real person in front of them and a robotic replica of the same person trying to be helpful by repeating the teacher's words from right over their shoulders.

The other dominant sound in the library room was the School's bell system, which chimes loudly from a speaker on the opposite side of the room. The main difficulty with this was, of course, that the bell followed the Middle School schedule, progressively more off by intervals of five minutes throughout the morning. This year-long exposure to mechanical bell tones completely insensitive to the seniors' state but seeming to have some meaning nonetheless helped the students grasp more perfectly the notion of the "Kafkaesque" when we read Kafka. But the bell puzzle also invited one of the only major customizations the seniors made to the library space given to them: they acquired a rather fine three-foot-diameter gong. To signal the opening or conclusion of class, the teacher could just call to the gong boy to summon its resounding beauty. Although the seniors did not interfere significantly in the spatial layout of the room provided for them, this small but charmingly odd innovation in the classroom structure gave the young men a sense of control over the flow of time, of being able to combat the mechanical irrelevance of the bell tone, of having marked out the area in the way that matters, not just in its physical space but in its calling us to experience. This small but extravagant addition to the room had an oversized spiritual effect, amplified by that power which, for boys in a treehouse, can make even elementary items seem suitable material for conquering a neighborhood empire.

With what seemed like smoothness these seniors put up with a great deal of cancellations and of new impositions. The alumnus spirit in me sometimes wondered: Why are they so docile? Why did the rooms and the schedule and everything remain exactly as instituted? For one thing, the students could not help but know that every opportunity they had this year—even just the opportunity to be in a classroom at all, rather than stuck online—was the fruit of many peoples' hard work, their Form Master not least among them. Having watched Fr. Lawrence finish his Ph.D. in Mathematics while on his first tour of duty as a Form Master, they knew his no-nonsense approach, and though you might expect him to be willing to cancel a party here and there, he is not the type to let go of a football season lightly. They had to live out, more immediately than seniors normally might,

Even class schedules made it to this year's senior classroom in the library.

Fr. Gregory teaching in the library classroom.

that sense of gratitude, of not taking anything for granted. On top of this awareness, which was the fruit of specific pandemic pressure, was the general habit of docile obedience, not the only virtue our School aims to cultivate but certainly one of them. I suspect, however, that there was another level to the seniors' willingness to play along, with plenty of complaining but little outright rebellion. On the last day of class, just for kicks, I had the seniors rotate all their desks ninety degrees in the library—"See, we can do what we want in this open space! It's your room; even the librarian is gone. Why did we have to just stick through in the same direction the whole year?" I can't say they were impressed (it was early in the morning…). The sense was: Look, Fr. Stephen, this whole arrangement is just temporary, scrapped together for the sake of maintaining what matters most here, our learning and our class community. We're not going to bother playing around with this stuff because, strangely, by playing with it we would be tacitly accepting it as real, normal, and absolute, when it really matters for us to recognize that this is not normal. We're just passing through this space clinging to what we really need.

This might have been one of the benefits of this otherwise cancelled and messed-up year: the seniors were freed from that tendency to absolutize every moment through that sentimentalism that is a whole industry—commemorated for these guys in the absurdly large homecoming mum from the year before that appeared mysteriously on the couch lounge in front of the senior classrooms and just sat there unattended for weeks. Rare were the temptations to think, "It will never be this good again!" The pandemic forced their minds forward, which is precisely what our Form VIII program tries to do for them anyway. The combination of Government and Economics brings history and theory into the everyday; Calculus guides them to the power to analyze realer, more dynamic forms; the diversified science curriculum promises them greater specialization and a view of the full possibilities of future study in each field; Theology looks outward to other religions; and the seminars offer substantial, communal engagement and chances for mature presentation of carefully prepared projects. The literature curriculum in English class looks to other worlds, underworlds and overworlds: Dante's Inferno, Prospero's Island, More's Utopia, Bacon's New Atlantis, the dark realities of Levi's Auschwitz and Solzhenitsyn's Gulag, the puzzling meditations of Calvino's "invisible cities," the trip to Soseki's Tokyo, or to Kafka's penal colony.

Dante's *Inferno* always comes to life in the minds of Form VIII readers, probably not always for the right reasons. But we can easily say that this year no students felt more lost in a dark wood than these seniors at the beginning, called to face the difficulties of a year marked by the pandemic, a final year

at Cistercian with many of its large delights taken away and few, at first, seeming likely to return. Like Dante they could sense the need for a Vergil to guide them, and they had many guides—counselors, coaches, teachers, Form Master, friends. Amid all the exhaustion, many of these other worlds came to life for them, and not just in the sense that reading about the malevolently rigorous logic of Auschwitz makes you think things could certainly be worse.

In the last days of class, I asked the seniors if any of the more than fifty miniature portraits of strange places in Calvino's *Invisible Cities* seemed to them like good images for their own experience this year. Of course they did not come up with the one I had hoped they would, but their answers were thus all the more interesting. It made them think of the city of Thekla, patterned on the starry sky: it remains always under construction so that its destruction can never begin, as the students keep focused and working in order to keep something afloat and not see the inevitable end. Or it was like the city of Fedora, a vast, dull gray metropolis which nevertheless contains within it a shining metal building, in each room of which rests a bright blue globe containing an image of an ideal the city could have become at particular moments in its past but happened not to become—as one student said, "This is like us arriving into this hard year, each with our own ideal within, things that wouldn't end up being as perfect as we might have hoped. But each having our own glowing image inside us is what gave this time life." Another student pointed to the town of Raissa, a sad city where life is unhappy, but in which nonetheless a trail of delight always flows—a child looking out a window and laughing at a dog snatching some food dropped by a worker joking with a chambermaid, and so on. As the fictional Marco Polo explains, "There runs an invisible thread that binds one living being to another for a moment, then unravels, then is stretched again between moving points as it draws new and rapid patterns so that at every second the unhappy city contains a happy city unaware of its own existence." The student suggested that it had indeed been a sad year in many ways, but that strangely there were countless moments of transient joy weaving this secretly happy city within the gloomy framework.

As the year took its course these joyful threads began to appear to the seniors. After a sportless opening of the year, the hard work of coaches began to pay off as the possibility of winter sports began to arrive—with some stellar achievements for the senior soccer all-stars. We tried to discern just when the sporting joy began to revive: the first big game? the first game at all? the first practice? It turned out to be even earlier: not the first, but the second e-mail. When the seniors received a message from the Athletics Department about their interest in winter sports, they shook the first one off as just another survey to take. It was when Coach sent a second message indicating "We do actually need you to respond to the first email" that they began to think, "Wait, this will actually happen!" Homecoming did not happen, but as spring rolled around it turned out Prom actually could happen, and the young men felt again that strange excitement—"Wait, this is happening!"—as they dressed their finest, gathered with their beautiful dates for meals and millions of photos, lounged

Fr. Lawrence '01 and Coach Walsh celebrate a soccer win with seniors.

Prom 2021 at the Dallas Arboretum.

around the Arboretum and danced their heads off, with one of the Form's own fathers as DJ.

The senior seminars also took on a new feel. One discussion-heavy seminar reported having students attend remotely from dorm rooms of colleges they were visiting, from the vaccine prep and recovery room at a clinic, from an airport waiting area, from bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens, dens—any space with Wi-Fi became a means of remaining in on the seminar conversation. Somehow the horror of "distance learning" gave them instead a sense of unboundedness—who says I have to be in the classroom itself?

Pandemic precautions also argued against holding the usual "Seminar Night" gala when outside experts in different fields come onto campus and all the seniors give their brief presentations in one night simultaneously spread throughout different rooms. Instead, the seniors presented throughout the second half of the second semester, a few at a time in each seminar. This reduction also provided a lot of new excitement: each day you would see a small number of seniors in "professional attire," surrounded by their slovenly classmates, and we would all be eager to hear about the presentation to come and to cheer on the fellow. One student forgot to bring his nice suit, and so, the morning before his presentation, we needed a lively class debate about whether he should go as is, pull his wrinkly prom tuxedo out of his car trunk, run quickly to the thrift store, or just borrow something from a classmate who lived nearby. It was like we were all teaming up to get him dressed for his seminar presentation, a joy that never would have occurred in a normal year. Presenting throughout the semester also meant that they could actually attend each others' presentations. Some seniors presented during a period before lunch, and the students and invited faculty had a chance then to spend their whole lunch period talking about the fruits of his research together, rather than a sparse few minutes. Furthermore, the faculty felt a certain honor as we were invited in by the seminars to serve in place of the outside scholars as the expert commentators. In the technology seminar, a student had produced a fun computer game, and instead of just presenting it to some outside computer scientist he ended up displaying it to a room flooded with Form I Computer students, super-eager to play the game and ask all the right questions about it. (There is no greater expert in computer gaming than a happy First Former, perhaps.) And the science seminar, instead of just presenting to local science experts, produced visually stunning and scientifically awe-inspiring research posters that hang in our Science Building, gawked at by impressed younger students on their way to a lab.

Moments of discovery and simpler, mutual delight slowly managed to reveal how they took the place of the grand sentimental occasions of senior year. An emblematic moment: one senior was excited by some poems of the recently deceased Polish writer Adam Zagajewski, which I threw at them in English class not as part

of a curriculum but just because they were good and the fellow had just passed away. This senior decided he wanted to read more, but not much else was online. Suddenly he realized he could actually go to a book store again. As he masked up and entered Half Price Books, he happened to find a volume of exactly that same poet. Even better, when he checked out he had an experience at the counter that seemed exactly like the kind Zagajewski might have written about, so he rushed home and on Saturday evening composed a poem that he eagerly e-mailed to his English teacher. After a little revision, he submitted it to the Literary Competition and ended up winning the Upper School Poetry prize—which surprised him as much as receiving exactly $2.22 in change for the book. This little experience of odd, inconsequential, almost magical luck brightened him up for the rest of the year: he realized these strange, small delights had been all around, that friendly connections with the world and its inhabitants and with oneself pop up unannounced once you realize you can just go look.

Much of the planned excitement of senior year did not happen, but in place of that fixed-in-stone calendar came the shifting marvel of the revolving sky, many small beauties we could only see by turning out the bright lights. A bit like what Dante sees as he finally crawls out from the other side of Hell.

Many rightly foresee the negative consequences for our nation's youth brought on by the breakdown of normal schooling. I suspect, though only time will tell, that our most recent class has also been granted a special preparation and subtle awareness that will serve them well. It's an elementary but no less elemental lesson that if a person would just make the effort, there's something to be learned from everything. •

Senior celebration. The year ended well.

Math department, l-r: Fr. Lawrence Brophy ’01, Michael Humphries, Dr. Richard Newcomb, Greg Novinski ’82, Dr. Grant Mindle

A Beautiful Language of Rigor and Expression

Cistercian’s Math Program, Past and Present

Jon Erickson ’12

Though the story of the Cistercian Mathematics Department technically begins with the founding of the School in 1962, its earliest influences can be traced to one of the most prominent figures in the history of the Cistercian Monastery and School. In 1962, Fr. Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy had just finished six years of advanced theological study at the Pontifical Athenaeum of Saint Anselm, but the fledgling prep school was in need of mathematicians. Hence, upon his arrival in Texas, Fr. Denis began a master's degree in mathematics at Texas Christian University. After completing his degree in 1965, he would continue to teach mathematics for more than 40 years, despite the substantial demands of his service to Cistercian in several important roles, including Headmaster, Form Master of four classes, and Abbot. When he became headmaster in 1969, Fr. Denis worked tirelessly to instill the high educational ideals that he and the Cistercian community brought from the tradition of Zirc, and the mathematics curriculum was certainly not exempt from this influence. His own desire for intellectual rigor led him to seek advice from several of the best mathematics teachers in the Dallas area, including W.K. McNabb, a local teacher (then the mathematics chair at St. Mark's School of Texas) who was known for his research in mathematics education and was closely involved with several prominent mathematical societies. In fact, it is for Mr. McNabb that the McNabb Mathematics Competition, familiar to many Cistercian alumni and students, is named.

Fr. Denis in early years

McNabb fully supported Fr. Denis's decision to pursue one of the most unique features in Cistercian's mathematics curriculum: the requirement that all students learn calculus in their senior year. While many other schools have since added or expanded options for their students to take calculus courses, Cistercian is still distinguished today by the expectation that each member of its senior class will have a strong understanding of single-variable calculus before he graduates. It was here also that the basic structure and order of the classes was settled; students would study basic arithmetic and geometry in Forms I and II and would learn basic algebra by the end of Form IV. In the Upper School, students would gain experience with rigorous mathematical proof through freshman Euclidean geometry, giving them the ability to think logically about the more advanced material in Algebra II, Precalculus, and Calculus. In conversations with current math department faculty, many of them recounted the value of Fr. Denis's insight and prescience. While there have certainly been changes and improvements to the math curriculum since those early years, the framework he created is still essentially the one in use today. As a result of his efforts, the department's emphasis on clear, reasoned argument and deep understanding has been a part of Cistercian's culture from its earliest years.

The joy of teaching

Fr. Denis's influence on the math department can also be felt through the connection he had to several of its current members. Michael Humphries, who currently teaches Forms I and V, remembered receiving his first teaching assignment at Cistercian when he was a junior at the University of Dallas. At the time, he met regularly with Fr. Denis for spiritual advising. "Fr. Denis told me 'You will teach my math class in two weeks

Dr. Newcomb during the 2003–2004 school year

when I am gone to Rome. The reason you are going to teach it is because you are a little bit afraid of me, and will do what I tell you to do,'" recalled Humphries. Despite this slightly gruff initiation, Humphries appreciated the confidence that Fr. Denis placed in him and would go on to teach at the School full time after his graduation. He also deeply valued Fr. Denis's example as an educator. "He never got in the way of my teaching but was always willing to tell me how he did things and what he had changed and seen. Know the material, love the boys, and make your copies ahead of time," said Humphries.

Fr. Lawrence Brophy '01, who is currently responsible for Algebra II (a course which Fr. Denis taught for many years), recalled how his ideals for teaching were shaped by Fr. Denis: "You could definitely see that Fr. Denis viewed Algebra II as a vehicle for formation. He was the Abbot and could choose his own class, and wanted to have that important stage covered—academically and emotionally. The importance of the math he was doing and his care and concern for the boys really shone through." Similarly, Greg Novinski '82, who teaches precalculus and a linear algebra course, emphasized the impact that Fr. Denis had on him both as a Form Master and as a mathematics teacher. Even as a student, he was impressed by Fr. Denis's discipline. "This is a guy who was told 'You will be a math teacher.' And in eighteen months, not speaking English, he went and got a master's in mathematics. During the summer, before he taught a course, he would work every single problem in the textbook. That was one of the first lessons I got from him: things become your own because you did the work," said Novinski. As time went on, he also came to recognize the model of humility and devotion to duty that Fr. Denis provided: "Here's a guy who was a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, one of the few people in the world that the Church would go to and ask, 'What does Scripture say on this? Please help us interpret it.' But he still walks over the hill from the Abbey and teaches Algebra II, because someone needs to teach Algebra II and do it well. For a person of his intellect to submit to that idea—that the needs of the boy were the most important—really set the School up with that ethic."

Mr. Novinski also shared his path to becoming a faculty member at Cistercian and how this journey intersected with that of the current Head of the Mathematics Department, Dr. Richard Newcomb. While Novinski majored in physics as an undergraduate at Texas A&M, he felt a vocation to teaching and focused on math courses during his junior and senior years so that he would be able to teach at the secondary level. After getting married and teaching at a small Catholic school in

Greg Novinski in the 1991–1992 school year

San Antonio, he received a call from Fr. Bernard Marton (then the Headmaster) telling him that the School was in need of a math teacher. The opportunity was unexpected but welcome. Novinski said, "I had hoped that maybe somewhere down the road, I could come back to Cistercian—that would have been my dream job." He also explained that during his first year of teaching at the School, the sophomore class (of which his brother David Novinski '90 was a member) enjoyed playing "stump the teacher" by asking the hardest mathematical questions they could think of. This somewhat impish desire for rigor from the students helped inspire Novinski to pursue a master's degree at the University of Texas at Arlington, where he took several courses in analysis from Dr. Newcomb.

It would turn out that Novinski found himself well suited to analysis and often spoke with Dr. Newcomb outside of class. When Novinski mentioned that he would need to miss an upcoming class in order to attend Holy Thursday Mass, the two realized that they had more in common than just overlapping mathematical interests. Dr. Newcomb explained how fortuitous those discussions were: "They came as my career was evolving. I was enjoying the teaching at UT Arlington more than the research. The more I found out about Cistercian, the more it appealed to me." Dr. Newcomb also looked back fondly on the year between his undergraduate and graduate education that he spent teaching in a two-room schoolhouse in Pisinemo, Arizona. (Humorously, the only subject Newcomb did not teach at this school was mathematics. It was the favorite subject of the nun who ran the school, and she reserved it for herself.) Providentially, Cistercian soon began a search for a new department chair, where Newcomb's experience both as a research mathematician and as a teacher of advanced mathematics would prove to be invaluable in the education of the School's young men.

Several of Dr. Newcomb's colleagues pointed out the importance of his deep knowledge of and love for mathematics. Fr. Lawrence emphasized the way that Dr. Newcomb's experience helped to provide a vision for the entire mathematics program: "Both the breadth and depth of his understanding of math are extraordinary. Since he has such a good knowledge of the field, even at the graduate level, he is able to pull connections between topics all the way down to

Greg Novinski in the 1995–1996 school year

the middle school courses. When you are in Algebra I, trying to figure out what it means to define a variable, Dr. Newcomb is simultaneously laying the groundwork that's going to help you get through your college calculus sequence." In addition to his duties as a teacher and a department head, Dr. Newcomb founded both the Middle and Upper School math clubs. Mr. Novinski recalled, "There was a time when it wasn't cool to have a math club on campus. We didn't have anybody who was getting a degree in mathematics as an alumnus, to study math for its own sake. Nobody was doing that until Dr. Newcomb came along to push it forward and really give love to those math students."

Cistercian's math clubs have enjoyed a great deal of success in competitions at the local, state, and national levels; for example, Cistercian's Upper School team placed first (with three individuals in the top 10) in this year's Texas State Math League, a six-round contest where they faced opponents ranging from small private schools to large 6A public schools. Several alumni described how much they enjoyed the competition and camaraderie the clubs provided. Arthur Yang '05 said, "What was exciting was getting to satisfy our competitive spirits participating in regional, state, and even nationwide math competitions." Similarly, Joseph Simmons '07 remembered that he "loved 'playing the game' (solving math problems) and hanging out with what felt like my 'team' (the other club members), even if math is mostly a solo sport." However, the club also provides

Michael Humphries in the 2018–2019 school year

an opportunity for members to encounter and explore advanced mathematics outside of Cistercian's unique curriculum. Simmons recalled a lecture on String Theory delivered at a mathematics competition at Rice University. "It went way over my head, which was itself a really worthwhile experience, to be reminded of how little math I knew and how much there was to learn," he said.

Both Simmons and Yang went on to use their mathematical background during their undergraduate careers—Simmons majored in pure mathematics, while Yang studied biomedical informatics and then spent several years conducting biocomputational research. Of course, it is not only the members of Cistercian's math club who gain advantages from the strength of the School's mathematics program. Each Cistercian graduate benefits from his ability to think rigorously and solve challenging problems. Sometimes their mathematical knowledge becomes useful in unexpected ways; Dr. Newcomb mentioned that one alumnus, returning for a visit, described using calculus to solve a problem in the field during his military training. Dr. Newcomb is most proud, however, when he hears from students who struggled through senior calculus but found success in their college studies using the strong mathematical foundation that they built at Cistercian (more than one such student, he claims, has ended up tutoring their college classmates in calculus). "My hope," said Newcomb, "is that when students reach their junior or senior level classes in college, they'll appreciate even more the kind of insight we were able to convey to them… even if they may not be able to quite see it yet."

It was also through Cistercian's math clubs that Dr. Grant Mindle, Cistercian's newest member of the math faculty, would build a relationship with Dr. Newcomb. Before joining Cistercian, Dr. Mindle spent nearly two decades teaching at the Greenhill School, where his duties included leading their middle school math club. The two first met at a meeting of mathematics teachers from several local schools which, coincidentally, included Mark Mrozek '79, then the mathematics chair at the Episcopal School of Dallas. Mindle said, "At that meeting, it took only a few minutes for me to recognize the tremendous depth of knowledge of Dr. Newcomb, not to mention what an amazingly kind and patient man he is." However, their relationship was cemented when Dr. Newcomb, after hearing that Greenhill had struggled in the early rounds of the MathCounts contest series, put together a practice competition for Greenhill, Cistercian, and Oakridge. Greenhill went on to qualify for the state contest. "I always made a point of sitting beside Dr. Newcomb, since I knew he would graciously explain to me anything I did not fully understand," Mindle said. He also turned to Dr. Newcomb when Zachary Abel, an advanced Greenhill student, was attempting to qualify for the International Mathematics Olympiad, the world's premier mathematics competition at the pre-university level. "I prepared Zach for BC Calculus as a 9th grade student, but I needed advice about what books and curriculum he should pursue on his own. Needless to say, I turned to Dr. Newcomb for advice… Dr. Newcomb graciously offered to work with him for free. Zach did qualify and won a silver medal at the International Math Olympiad, none of which would have been possible were it not for the assistance provided to me by Dr. Newcomb," said Mindle.

In his time as department head, Dr. Newcomb has

Fr. Lawrence '01 in 2014

overseen a further strengthening of both the individual courses in Cistercian's curriculum and the connections between them. One of the unique fruits of this effort has been the creation of several mathematics texts just for Cistercian's math program. The first of these textbooks was written out of necessity by Dr. Newcomb and Dr. Jonathan Gray, who taught mathematics at the School from 2011-2013. Mary Dolciani's Algebra series, which the School had used for decades, was no longer being printed. Since the finite number of copies still in circulation would eventually become too difficult for students to obtain, it was necessary to find a replacement. When the department was unable to find a sufficiently rigorous alternative, they decided to simply write their own. Today, students in Forms III and IV receive spiral-bound copies of Elements of Advanced Mathematics and Foundations of Algebra. These texts encompass the typical material found in pre-algebra and algebra courses as well as unique topics outside the "standard curriculum," such as combinatorics in Form III and finite probability in Form IV. Dr. Mindle, who currently uses Foundations of Algebra in Form IV, said, "Dr. Newcomb's Form IV text is amazing. It is designed to help students begin to think like a mathematician. I have enjoyed working with it, and I appreciate the opportunity Cistercian offers faculty to put their own stamp on a course and imbue it with some creativity of their own."

In the past few years, the department has significantly restructured senior mathematics, where students are now able to select a specialized topic of study in their final spring semester. This year, students were able to choose between linear algebra, economic and financial mathematics, and STEM calculus. This reorganization, which allows students to focus on topics that will be most relevant to them in their undergraduate education, relied upon efforts to improve and consolidate material in the earlier years of high school. Dr. Newcomb described this as the culmination of decades of growth within the department. "Even since the sixties, as the department was getting stronger, more calculus was always being covered. In recent years, we have been able to incorporate a good chunk of differential calculus in our Precalculus curriculum. As we were able to gradually increase the mathematical strength of the student body as a whole, the students were arriving

Dr. Mindle in 2020

in junior year on more solid footing, so more time was available for the topics of calculus. The department has really embraced the idea that we can accomplish this and essentially study a good chunk of first semester calculus throughout the junior year. Going forward, the plan is to get the basics of integral calculus done in the first semester of senior year, which has opened up the opportunity for the boys to specialize in the second semester," said Newcomb.

Faculty members are excited about these recent changes and feel they will help further the core principle that Fr. Denis established in the School's earliest years: that mathematics provides students with an opportunity to encounter concrete truth and to sharpen their ability to think rationally. Fr. Lawrence said, "I think that the mathematics program really complements what the English department does with literature and grammar: forming young men so that they can think authentically for themselves and make informed judgments. A big part of that is being able to reason logically through a sophisticated argument." Similarly, Mr. Humphries recounted one of his favorite quotes from a student, who said, "It really was the combination of freshman geometry and Mrs. Greenfield's writing exercises that helped me to clarify my thought." Humphries elaborated, "Even if you're not going to be a 'math guy,' mathematics crystalizes and clarifies what it means to think clearly and rigorously. It provides a language of rigor and expression that can be applied universally." With the hope of sharing the beauty of this language with each student, Cistercian's faculty continue the School's tradition of mathematical excellence. •

In Memoriam

Francis G. "Jerry" O'Brien—A Gentle Shepherd

Francis G. "Jerry" O'Brien, a founding faculty member of Cistercian Preparatory School, passed away November 15, 2020. Born August 4, 1928, in Evanston, Illinois, he was drafted into the U. S. Army in 1953, and after completing service, began his teaching career at St. Edward's Academy and Ursuline Academy in Dallas in 1958. In 1962, he joined the fledgling Cistercian Preparatory School team, teaching mathematics in both Pre-form and First Form. He remained with the School for another 25 years, retiring in 1987. Through the years, he taught math to middle school and upper school Forms, along with math electives. In 1969, he became the School's first lay Form Master, successfully shepherding the class of 1971 through graduation.

Fellow faculty member Rodney Walter, who arrived at Cistercian two years after Jerry (with minimal teaching experience and zero experience dealing with Hungarian monks), found him a valuable friend as well as an informative resource. "Jerry was gifted with high intelligence and could discuss just about any subject," recalled Walter. "He was a reliable source to depend on, then and in future years. He was also gifted athletically and engaged with the students during recesses and outings, playing soccer and football. I can recall images of him playing with the boys on the large lawn in front of Merici Hall on Walnut Hill, the School's first location."

Jerry O'Brien

This photo from the 1971 *Exodus* captures perfectly O'Brien's personality. The caption reads: "Patience is… Mr. O'Brien." Michael Kurilecz '71 said, "Mr. O'Brien had boatloads of patience. He demonstrated wisdom, kindness and persistence to all his students—those blessed with high-level math skills, as well as those who just wanted to not flunk."

"He truly was a renaissance man, and what stands out more than anything in my mind was his meticulousness," recalled Fr. Bernard Marton, himself a young teacher at the time. "He took fairness to the extreme and always paid attention to how an individual compared to the achievement of his fellow students. He often agonized for hours—if not days—over a particular grade, wanting to be fair to that particular boy and also to the class. This balancing act often resulted in grades handed in at the last moment—or after the last moment."

Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen '73, both a student and later a fellow teacher, said, "My memories are of an always-gentle, thoughtful and well-spoken man. When I was a young Form Master, he told a student to do something, not knowing I had just told the boy to do the opposite. Jerry came up to me privately and apologized, saying that he'd never want to countermand something I'd said. I thought of him as a real hero for starting so early in the School's history and sticking with us through the roughest years, as a model of thoughtfulness, intelligence and gentle wit."

After retiring from Cistercian, Jerry followed his dream and opened "White Horse Antiques" near Fair Park and later helped his wife open "That Book Lady" bookstore.

He often marveled about one of his most enduring memories—at age 17, he shook hands with a man who'd shaken hands with President Abraham Lincoln. Perhaps now Jerry is shaking Abe's hand himself.

Francis G. "Jerry" O'Brien is survived by his wife, Deborah L. Reiser-O'Brien; daughter Caitlin L. O'Brien Hajek, son-in-law Eric Hajek, and grandchildren Charlie O'Brien Hajek and Eleanor Louise Hajek. Donations may be made in Jerry's name to Cistercian Preparatory School.

Carl Fischer

Carl Fischer '89 passed away on Sunday, March 7, 2021, in New Jersey. He earned his doctorate in bio-medical engineering, worked in compliance and quality control for the government in the Washington, D.C. area, and moved a few years ago into private industry in New Jersey. One of his latest projects was to oversee the increased manufacturing capacity of syringes that make it possible to draw an extra dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from each vial.

Carl Fischer

Carl had a love for music. While still in Dallas, he played the organ and directed the choir for a small Anglican congregation near Knox Street and even played the organ at the Abbey for Masses. In D.C., he had entrée to a church where he could play their pipe organ privately and for various celebrations. Most recently, he bought and installed a large pipe organ in his home in New Jersey. During this time of the pandemic, he was working seven days a week from home but enjoyed taking a break from the computer screen to play a little Bach.

Carl is survived by his father, Roger; sisters Heidi and Joan; and a host of family and friends.

Sports

Hawk Basketball Sees Improvement

Coach **Jack Dorn '05** did not know what to expect going into the 2020-2021 basketball season after graduating his leading scorer from last year, losing **Colby Mechem '23** to injury prior to the season, and coaching through a pandemic. The only thing he knew with certainty was that he could count on strong leadership from his seniors. **Daniel Horlick '21** and **Sam Laber '21** were back as captains, and **Aidan Smithson '21** had been the second-leading scorer on last year's squad. These three seniors, along with newcomer **Luke Rakowitz '22** and returning player **Dan O'Toole '23**, formed a stout starting five that led the team to a 7-7 overall record (3-4 in SPC). Consistent bench contributors **Alex Ardemagni '22**, **Eli Sanford '22** and **David Cox '21** provided key moments throughout a season that had the Hawks eyeing their best finish in the SPC North Zone until COVID quarantine knocked out three top scorers for the last two weeks of play.

Soccer Wins SPC North Zone

After a one-loss season in 2019-2020, Coach JP Walsh and the soccer team set a goal to go undefeated this year. It was a lofty goal, but this group knew they were capable and committed to the extra work necessary to make their dream a reality. Senior captains **Beto De Los Santos '21** and **Chase Frutos '21**, who were awarded Defensive MVP and Offensive MVP respectively, set the tone for the work ethic and determination that led the Hawks to a record 12-0-1. They scored 69 goals and allowed only three all season, which led the Metroplex in goal differential. **Zain Dabbous '21**, **Masaki Fraccaroli '22**, **Joseph Smith '21**, **Maxwell Vaughan '21** and De Los Santos provided airtight defense in front of goalie **Devon Comstock '22**, who recorded nine shutouts. The offense was led by Frutos, **Jakob Quarles '22** and **Diego Prida '23**.

Andrew Farhat '21

Aqua Hawks Place Third in SPC North Zone

Coaches Jeff Veazey and Noah Thompson knew they would have a talented squad entering the 2020-2021 swim season, but the difficulty would be finding competitive meets during a pandemic. Despite the limited number of opportunities to compete, the squad worked hard and improved throughout the year. Senior captains **Evan Ringdahl '21** and **Mark Van Kirk '21** led the way, while **Nicolas Sobenes '23** and Newcomer of the Year **Tom Gambow '24** earned the most points throughout the season. A total of eight swimmers competed in the SPC North Zone meet and brought home the bronze medal for the team. Each competitor swam a season-best time in their events, with Sobenes winning a gold medal (100-yard butterfly) and Gambow taking silver (500-yard freestyle).

Pitching, Comebacks, and a Grand Slam

Coach Mark Gray looked forward to coaching one of his most experienced groups in recent years. **Connor Popolo '21**, **Bobby Vitale '21**, **Alex Ardemagni '22** and **Eli Sanford '22** had played crucial roles over the last three seasons, while **Luke Rakowitz '22** and **JP Roppolo '23** had gained valuable experience prior to quarantine last year. The veterans did not disappoint with Popolo batting .425 on the season, Sanford batting .362 with five doubles and two triples, Ardemagni driving in 17 runs on three doubles and three homeruns, Rakowitz batting .368, and Vitale playing near flawless defense at second base. Ardemagni led the pitching staff with 33 innings and 61 strikeouts on his way to a 1.23 ERA. He had help on the mound from Sanford (.71 ERA) and Roppolo (2.48 ERA). With a 9-7 record overall (4-3 in SPC play) and wins in their last four conference games, the Hawks saved their best for last as they defeated St. Mark's 8-2 in the penultimate game of the season behind a grand slam from Ardemagni.

Alex Ardemagni '22

Depth the Key for Tennis Team

The tennis team finished 7-3 for the varsity season behind senior leaders **Ankit Lulla '21, Sam Laber '21, Joseph Smith '21,** and **Coby Scrudder '21**. Coach Skip Boyden said his seniors "showed great poise and character on and off the court." Lulla was the #1 singles player and produced very well for the squad, while **Masaki Fraccaroli '22** and **Amar Vajja '22** held down the two and three spots respectively. Laber and Newcomer of the Year **Christopher Hardin '22** anchored the number one doubles team while **Cole Boyd '22** and **John Stigall '23** filled the second doubles team. The biggest team wins came over Trinity Valley, Country Day, Casady, and a 5-0 shutout over Oakridge to finish the season.

Masaki Fraccaroli '22

New School Record for the Track Team

Coach James Burk challenges his track athletes every season to compete against themselves as well as the competition to improve individual times, distances thrown, and heights achieved. This season was highlighted by **Devon Comstock '22** setting a new school record in the triple jump (43'6"), breaking the old record set by **Spencer Bethmann '03**. Comstock won the team's MVP award and qualified for the SPC Championship meet in the triple jump, long jump, high jump and 100m. Newcomers of the Year **Aidan Smithson '21** and **Jacob Brown '24** added additional talent to the squad. Smithson qualified for SPC in the long jump, high jump and 200m, while Brown qualified in the high jump, long jump, 100m, 200m and 400m, placing fourth in the high jump. Other awards of note were Most Improved going to **Samuel Menerey '22** and the Flying Hawk to **Kiefer Soo '23**. •

Jacob Brown '24

Ice-cream Trucks and the Art of Surprise

Late in March, the ice-cream truck that chooses my neighborhood's soundtrack started playing Christmas music. It was almost Easter, so you can imagine the feeling of creeping insanity I had, sitting on the porch with the redbuds blooming, thinking I heard "Jingle Bells." Then "Adeste, Fideles." Then a break for "Home on the Range." Then "Rudolph." This was all in a couple of minutes: ice-cream trucks change songs pretty quickly. It was only when he drove past me playing "Silent Night" that I knew I wasn't hearing things.

Patrick Spence '08

He's good, this driver. It's not the beauty of the songs that gets you as much as the sheer violence of the transitions. I've heard Dua Lipa right after "Annie Laurie." I've heard Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* mixed with that song about Easter bonnets. I've heard Jennifer Lopez' "(Tonight we gon' be it) on the floor" somehow turn into "Darling Clementine."

It's hard to account for the delight this produces. I'd heard "La Cucaracha" and I'd heard "O Tannenbaum." But what drove some mad, prolific genius to transpose them (together with a staggering repertoire of other hits from folk and ballet to hymns and hip-hop) into the tinny, instantly recognizable sonic idiom of ice-cream-truck music? And now a twenty-five-watt megaphone spliced to a mechanical music cylinder designed in the thirties blares them in strange sequences, rolling down my street. The familiar is new again.

I heard "Greensleeves" once, which I've learned is the ice-cream-truck song of choice in the UK and Australia. Imagine standing by an ice-cream van (they're called vans in England) with a Good Humor bar in your hand and those bittersweet, melancholy notes in your ear. *Alas, my love, ye do me wrong to cast me off discourteously.* As a business strategy, it makes sense. If you want to drive up ice-cream consumption, get people thinking about the one who got away.

The "Glasgow Ice-cream Wars" of the nineteen-eighties involved gang-managed Glaswegian ice-cream trucks selling drugs and untaxed cigarettes and clashing violently with each other along profitable routes, all to the accompaniment of "Greensleeves." *Alas, my love! Ye do me wrong.*

In the US, the most common ice-cream truck song might be Scott Joplin's "Entertainer," but his wrenchingly lovely "Solace" is a better fit for ice cream, which you eat to be consoled, not entertained.

For a long time I couldn't remember where else I'd felt the enchanting combination of surprise and recognition that you get from a well-DJ'd ice-cream truck. Then it struck me that all of my favorite college professors had a knack for producing it—the ones with bottomless memories and a certain appetite for tangents. On the first page of my freshman *Iliad* notes, I find "The point of existentialism is that nobody can take a bath for you," right next to "Legend: the Greek alphabet was invented in the spring of 750 BC to write down Homer." No idea how these tied together. I have since gotten much better at taking notes. If I can help it, when my students get to college, they won't leave gaps in the record like that.

In my own classes, I try to be like the ice-cream truck—to teach by surprise, to churn up the widest selection of delights, and to be, like Rudolph's promotion to head reindeer in Lent, a bit out of step with my time. And not just because I teach Latin. We get hung up on antiquities in English too.

Take the etymology of "sycophant," which denotes an ill-intentioned flatterer nowadays but derives from the Greek *sycophantos* (a man who stirs up frivolous lawsuits), which literally means "someone who shows figs." That's because when Megara backed Sparta during the Peloponnesian war, Megarian figs (the Cuban cigars of the fig market) were banned in Athens, but everyone smuggled them in anyway. A sycophant was the type of guy who would point out the box of Megarian figs in your fridge just to cause trouble.

Once I threatened to punish a fractious Latin class by reading them the most boring article in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* if they didn't pipe down, and they didn't, so I read them an article on honey. Did you know that the infant Plato was fed honey by bees, and it made him eloquent? This should be common knowledge. Did you know that the honey from the shores of the Black Sea is bitter and induces madness? It's a shame that the American Pediatric Association won't even look at research with a publication date ending in BC. Imagine if medieval surgeons had been that narrow-minded.

Medieval surgeons aside, you can't beat my students for surprises. At homecoming a couple of years ago, a raft of Latinists came up to me, got on the ground like sea lions, and began barking and chanting Horace's letter to Lollius. I still haven't figured out why, but I view them with a new respect. And when they run for public office I may ask for a payment in exchange for my wife's video of this event.

Two juniors stopped me in the hall one day to ask if I had any sealing wax. I told them that, not being a hereditary nobleman, I usually just lick the envelope. Was this some sort of COVID precaution? No, one of them was working on his "prom ask." I like that they were working on it as a team. My classmates, too, were helpful wingmen in my courtship of a young siren from Hockaday whom I took to prom and afterwards to the Cistercian chapel to hear Fr. Philip say "You may kiss the bride." Actually, he forgot to say it, and we're not sure where we stand canonically. We mostly hold hands, anyway.

I think I like my local ice-cream truck so much because it's like Cistercian: rooted in tradition ("O Come, All Ye Faithful," "Greensleeves"), staunchly Texan ("Home on the Range"), culturally inclusive ("Stille Nacht," "La Cucaracha"), and deeply thought-provoking ("Jingle Bells"). I know it's a bit late, but Merry Easter, y'all. He is risen. •

Community Calendar 2021

June 6
Mass and reception: Fr. Roch's 60th Anniversary of Ordination

July 11
Mass and reception: Fr. Julius's 60th Anniversary of Ordination

August 13
Mass and reception: Br. Matthew's Solemn Profession and Br. Christopher's Renewal of Vows

August 14
Mass and reception: Br. Francis's Ordination to the Priesthood and Br. Matthew's Ordination to the Diaconate

CISTERCIAN
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
3660 Cistercian Road
Irving, Texas 75039

Humility and Audacity

"Magni magna audent"

A seasoned old monk once remarked about a mutual friend: "He would be a good guy if he were not as humble as a cow." Humble as a cow? Quite an expressive portrayal of humble people. The cow goes where she is driven, satisfied with her daily portion of hay, frightened even by a little dog, and at the end she goes obediently to the slaughterhouse. The great philosophers of antiquity would never consider humility a virtue for the above reasons. For them it is opposed to the ideal of the hero who dares to do great things and overcomes formidable obstacles.

Fr. Roch Kereszty

Humility became a virtue only in Christianity, and it is far from cow-like passivity. The truly humble man is a realist. He knows and accepts himself and others as they are. Once, a beggar tried to move Louis XIV to compassion. "Sire, I must exist," the beggar groaned. "I don't see it is necessity at all," quipped the cynical king of France. Consciously or unconsciously, Louis XIV uttered a deep truth, that were we not to exist, the universe would go on undisturbed. But then why do I exist? In a random universe riding a random evolutionary wave?

A truly humble person might give us a different answer. Yes, I do not have to exist, but I do because Someone loved me from all eternity, willed me into being, and arranged the web of innumerable secondary causes to work with Him in this process. By myself, I am indeed nothing. But if I look around—at my parents, ancestors, teachers, friends, and the entire material universe—they all contributed to my being in this world. And in the loving eyes of my mother, in the firm embrace of my father, in the quivering petals of the spring flowers in the garden, and in the budding leaves of the ancient oak tree in front of our church, Something, or rather Someone More Beautiful than anything else, is shining through. My Bible teaches me that this Someone More Beautiful is infinitely loving. He is my origin and my end; he is my Father.

Humility, then, is to accept this full reality, the notion that I am alone but in the creating hands of God, his beloved son. In every moment of my existence, he pours into me his love, which makes me myself and gives me his whole Divine Self in Christ. So humility means to be happy that all that I am and all that I receive, even the hard and hurting things, is a gift.

If everything is a gift, does it mean that I cannot be happy in my own achievements and victories? No. God's giving is so perfect that he makes his gifts become truly mine and, unseen by human eyes, enables me to struggle for my own achievements. As another wise priest once said: "Keep the joy of your achievements but give the credit to God."

Once this humility takes root in the soul, we will be capable of great things if God so directs us. "Everything is possible to the one who has faith," said Jesus (Mk 9:23). Mary is the humblest human being, and she is also the most daring; no greater audacity is imaginable than to accept to become the mother of God, welcoming the infinite light and fire in her womb, and facing death by stoning for adultery. Then let us remember Simon Peter, the fisherman from Galilee who decided to confront the wild beast, pagan Rome, and to convert it in the name of the Rabbi of Nazareth. A few years ago, Siamese twins were born in Bangladesh, their heads grown solidly together. As the parents searched desperately for a neurosurgeon to separate them, only one in the entire world volunteered. András Csókay from Hungary was a man of deep faith and a world-class surgeon. It took him and his team two years and several surgeries, but the twins were separated successfully and now live independently of one another. "Without prayer, this would not have been possible," acknowledged Csókay.

Cistercian graduates, what are your ambitions? Everything is a great work, no matter how small, if it is a work of love.

EXTRA CREDIT: Can you translate "Magni magna audent" (St. Bernard)? •