For family, friends, & alumni of Cistercian Preparatory School

CONTINUUM

Fall 2022



NOT JUST ENGINEERS

How Cistercian alumni have applied their STEM education in multiple industries

Steve Paxton '95

AT THE APOSTLES' DOORSTEP

Monks in Rome

Annual Report

2021–2022 School Year

Remembering Cistercian with a Planned Gift



Jeremy E. Gregg ’97

Cistercian has been my home since 1989. It has taught me, held me, lifted me, and inspired me throughout my life. It is now the place where my brother, Fr. Stephen Gregg ’01, will spend the rest of his life—so, in my estate plan, I treat Cistercian like a cherished family member. I feel a great peace imagining I can help this community in this way to strengthen the lives of others.

MEMORARE SOCIETY

To remember Cistercian with a planned gift, contact Erin Hart.
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Head of Middle School

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Head of Upper School

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CONTINUUM

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Published each spring and fall
by Cistercian Preparatory School

3660 Cistercian Road
Irving, TX 75039

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www.cistercian.org

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

One’s True Wealth: Seeking to Touch Lives in a Loving Way

“Working on human progress (science, arts, technology) is important in God’s plan, but your true wealth is love. How many lives have you touched in a loving way?” (Fr. Roch)

In this issue, you will find this lesson from the Desert Fathers reflected in the lives and stories of so many alumni and their teachers. Our feature article highlights graduates who went on to apply their Cistercian formation and education in a wide variety of STEM fields. Though their individual journeys vary, what they all share in common is how much their lives were touched in a loving way by the men and women who challenged them because they cared for them.



Fr. Paul McCormick

Our second feature explores why many of the monks spend time in Rome during formation. **Fr. Stephen Gregg ’01** suggests that studying in the Eternal City is not simply to grow through a better understanding of the universality of the Church, but actually to *experience* it through daily interactions with professors and fellow Cistercians/seminarians from around the world.

In addition to the always popular class updates, this fall issue contains a witty *Afterthoughts* column by **Jess Clay ’13** who humorously focuses his attention on “the other half,” dedicating his musings to those graduates who pursued life in *non*-STEM fields.

Finally, Fr. Roch shares a variety of his “scattered ideas” honed from a lifetime of experience to help each of us discover and live “the happy life.” In fact, the quote above represents just one of these important life lessons from our beloved teacher and Form Master.

May God continue to bless all of our wonderful alumni, both within and outside of the STEM fields, who are actively *enkindling and enlightening* others. May we indeed find our true wealth in “touching the lives of others in a loving way.”



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News & Notes

New and familiar faces on campus

Dr. Renee Phillips joined Cistercian as a full-time counselor after more than seven years at The Episcopal School of Dallas. A licensed psychologist, Dr. Phillips has a BS from Texas Christian University and PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. She subsequently completed her postdoctoral fellowship at Baylor University Medical Center. She is also a member of the leadership team for Warriors on the Way, an organization that takes combat vets on the Camino de Santiago. "Mental health impacts all aspects of an individual's life, which is one of the many reasons why working in a school community is both professionally fulfilling and personally meaningful," said Dr. Phillips. "I enjoy working and communicating with teachers, families, students, and outside professionals to understand the well-being of the whole student. I value being a part of a student's journey as they navigate life's challenges, knowing that helping students cope with their struggles positively impacts their present day life and their future."



Dr. Renee Phillips



Mrs. Kelly Lipscomb

With a master's in education and an extensive background as a reading specialist and dyslexia therapist, Mrs. Kelly Lipscomb brings a wealth of experience to her role as the new learning specialist. As the owner of CoachKellyReading, she has provided literacy services to students of all ages and abilities for over ten years. "In my practice, I encourage students to see opportunities in their obstacles and to visualize their full potential beyond their personal struggles." Both as a wife and mother of alumni (Charles '84 and Charlie '18) as well as a senior mom (Connor '23), Lipscomb is looking forward to supporting students and their families through her new role.

Br. Barnabas Robertson teaches Latin to Form I. Growing up, he was homeschooled and spent time in Austin, Houston, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and India. "I can say some Azerbaijani phrases, like, 'Salam, necəsınız?', which means, 'Hello, how are you?', but it's probably better that I teach Latin," he said. Br. Barnabas obtained a BS in physics from Wheaton College in 2016 and moved to Texas A&M University where he earned a master's in physics in 2021. While at A&M, he began to consider seriously how he should respond to the evangelical counsels. A priest encouraged him to visit the Cistercians in Dallas, so he made visits to the Abbey. He entered as a postulant in 2021 and made his first temporary vows on August 28, 2022.



Br. Barnabas Robertson



Mrs. Jennifer Ditto

Mrs. Jennifer Ditto worked as a finance liaison with the advertising and corporate communications departments at American Airlines for 23 years before joining our business office part time as an accounts payable specialist. "I was truly fortunate to retire from AA and continue to travel, one of my favorite pastimes," said Ditto. "I am excited to be at Cistercian and look forward to collaborating with staff, parents and vendors to prepare payments in a timely manner."



Ms. Melissa Dow

Although she joined the staff full time this year as the front desk receptionist and assistant AP coordinator, Ms. Melissa Dow is no stranger to Cistercian. "I worked the front desk during Summer Programs for a couple of summers before COVID, and even in that short time, I was deeply impressed by the whole atmosphere of the School," said Dow. She is also a PhD candidate in the Institute of Philosophic Studies at the University of Dallas.

Mr. Tim Hamstra joined Cistercian as an assistant varsity basketball coach, middle school football and track coach, and director of transportation. For the last five years, he has been a part-time coach for junior varsity basketball at Cistercian while also building his commercial real estate portfolio. Previously, Hamstra was an assistant coach at St. Edward's University where he also received his MBA. "I look forward to helping these young men develop fundamentals on the court as well as some of the necessary skills that lead to success in life: work ethic, teamwork, and perseverance through adversity," said Hamstra.



Mr. Tim Hamstra

Also joining the Cistercian coaching staff this year is Mr. Greg Walls. A graduate of Texas Christian University with a bachelor's degree in education, Walls is an assistant coach for varsity football and head coach for middle school football,

Photos by Jim Reisch



Mr. Greg Walls

basketball and baseball. In addition to his coaching duties, Walls is the owner of Performance Experience. With his experience coaching college football at both Division I and Division II levels and his success as an all-conference cornerback at TCU, Walls knows firsthand what it takes to prepare and perform with excellence in the realm of sports. "Attitude and effort is everything," said Walls.

Cistercians in Rome

Abbot Peter Verhalen '73 and Fr. Ignatius Peacher traveled to Rome in October for the Cistercian general chapter, which occurs every five years. One of the tasks was to reelect Abbot General Abbate Mauro Lepori. Approximately 120 men and women, all Cistercian superiors, had an audience with Pope Francis. They were joined by Fr. Francis who is studying in Rome. To view a short video of Pope Francis addressing the group, go to *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_eF-nX23_s*



Abbot Peter, back right; Fr. Ignatius and Fr. Francis, back middle

Ordinations at the Abbey

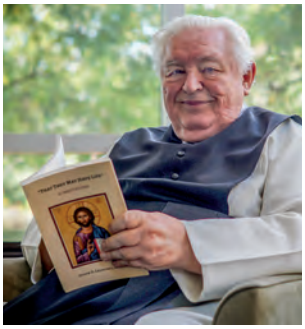
August was a glorious month for the Cistercian Abbey! On Saturday, August 13, Bishop Burns presided over Br. Matthew Hegemann's ordination to the priesthood and Br. Christopher Kalan's to the diaconate. Just two weeks later, Br. Barnabas Robertson took his first set of temporary vows.





New book by Fr. Julius Leloczky

Fr. Julius has released a new book. *"That They May Have Life"* is a rich anthology of writings very much in the spirit of the documents of the Second Vatican Council and of the ideas represented by the discourses of Popes St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI. This collection of 35 meditations crystallizes the thoughts of Fr. Julius through his sixty years of pastoral service.





The book combines reflections on a variety of liturgical feasts and different aspects of spiritual life like faith, humility, prayer, judging others, and death. The overarching tone of this slender volume is optimistic, and its pages are brimming with a spirit of hope and serenity.

Athletic Branding Contest

The Athletic Department is excited to announce a branding contest to update or replace the current Hawk logo. Visit *https://school.cistercian.org/athletics/athletic-branding-contest/* for details and requirements regarding the contest. The deadline is **Friday, February 10, at 5:00 p.m.,** and submissions should be sent to *jdorn@cistercian.org*. The winning submission will receive a $500 credit toward the purchase of Cistercian online apparel!



Current Hawk logo

New maintenance building dedicated

Before the start of the school year, faculty and staff gathered to dedicate the new maintenance building. "By consolidating office space, shop and garage work space, and tool and supply storage all under one roof, the new maintenance building has allowed our small maintenance staff to work much more efficiently than ever before," said Steve Schunk, director of maintenance. The new 3,200 square foot structure has significantly larger and more functional storage space and large fans and gas heaters in the shop space that allow maintenance to work on equipment more comfortably in extreme cold or hot weather. The office space in the gym vacated by maintenance allowed us to meaningfully increase the usable space for athletics and athletic training without adding on to the footprint of the gym, something that would have been cost prohibitive.

News & Notes

A successful season for quiz bowl

Cistercian's upper school Quiz Bowl team is off to a great start. At the Tal Adkins Memorial Quiz Bowl Tournament in Shreveport, LA, the Hawks placed first, second and third, qualifying two teams for All School Nationals and three teams for Small School Nationals. Individual awards went to **Ryan Fang '24** (first), **Christian Oh '26** (second), **John Paul Jacob '24** (third), **Drew Durgin '26** (fourth) and **Andrew Oliver '23** (fifth). In their second tournament, the Cistercian B team with **George Birdsong '26**, Durgin, Oh and **Bennett Tschoepe '26** tied for fifth place. Cistercian's A team is currently ranked seventy-sixth nationally. In their third tournament, the team placed second and fourth and earned several individual awards: Fang (third), **Rafael Ramirez '24** (fourth), Tschoepe (fifth) and **Neel Perumandla '24** (sixth). The winning teams also include **Nico Chio '23**, **Byron Duhé '25**, **Rishabh Rengarajan '25**, **Joe Schulz '26** and **Nick Saldaña '24**.



Suzanne Durgin



Jim Reisch

Middle school cast of The Music Man, Jr.

ISAS accreditation

Every ten years, Cistercian goes through an extensive reaccreditation process with ISAS (the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest) during which the School explores its program while assessing its strengths and weaknesses in light of our mission as a monastic school. After a very fruitful self-study year (2021–2022), the School submitted a comprehensive report to ISAS and then prepared for a visiting team to arrive and conduct its own observations. From September 18–21, the School hosted a group of distinguished educators from other ISAS schools who looked at every facet of our program and community, from academic classes to advancement initiatives, from athletics to art, from financial and facility plans to faith and formation activities. Through meetings with students, faculty, staff, parents, administrators, alumni, and board members and through visiting classes and exploring facilities, the team validated the School's study. The visiting team offered several commendations within its report, but a common thread underlying the various individual strengths mentioned was a sense that the School community is very strong in both its understanding of the mission and in effectively living out its mission.



Jim Reisch

SPC restructures championship format

Recently, the SPC split into two divisions—3A and 4A—for every sport, much like the football structure for the last several years. Although there may be some change in the other teams from sport to sport, Cistercian will always be in the 3A division for future championship tournaments and will continue to compete in the North Zone during the regular season. "Cistercian athletics is thrilled that SPC has decided to go in this direction as it gives our athletes a chance to compete for SPC championships in each sport," said **Jack Dorn '05**, director of athletics and physical education. •

College Matriculations

Competitive admissions for Class of 2022

College admissions for the Class of 2022 continued to look different than it had before COVID, and many colleges still are not requiring admissions testing. As a result, the tremendous spike in applications seen last year remained at about the same level this cycle, keeping the admission rates at highly selective colleges historically low. Boston College's admission rate was down to 16.7%, Notre Dame to 12.9%, the University of Chicago to 5%, and likely the most selective number ever seen was at Harvard University with 3.19% of applicants accepted... and co-valedictorians **Christopher Hardin** and **Cole Boyd** were among the *very* select few admitted (both are enrolled). Our third co-valedictorian, **Nathan Comeaux**, was selected for the liberal arts honors program at the University of Texas at Austin, Plan II, as well as the selective Canfield Business Honors Program with classmate **Ethan Christopher.**

26
Colleges chosen to attend by the 45 students in the class

"Watching my guys apply and receive decisions was an emotional process. There were moments of elation and pride when they received good news from the schools to which they were passionately connected. There were days of compassionate frustration and empathetic anger when the decisions went the other way; it was a roller coaster," recalled Fr. Anthony Bigney, Form Master for the Class of 2022.

In total, the 45 members of the Class of 2022 chose to attend 26 different institutions. In a typical year, nearly 60% of students attend colleges as the sole Cistercian graduate enrolling, but this year the statistic was flipped, and 60% of the class has someone from their Form in their freshman class. 47% chose to stay in-state for college vs. 28% in 2021, which is more in line with the typical 35-50% in-state number. For the second year in a row, seven students chose to enroll at Texas A&M.

47%
Chose to attend a college or university in Texas

89%
Plan to major in STEM or business-related fields

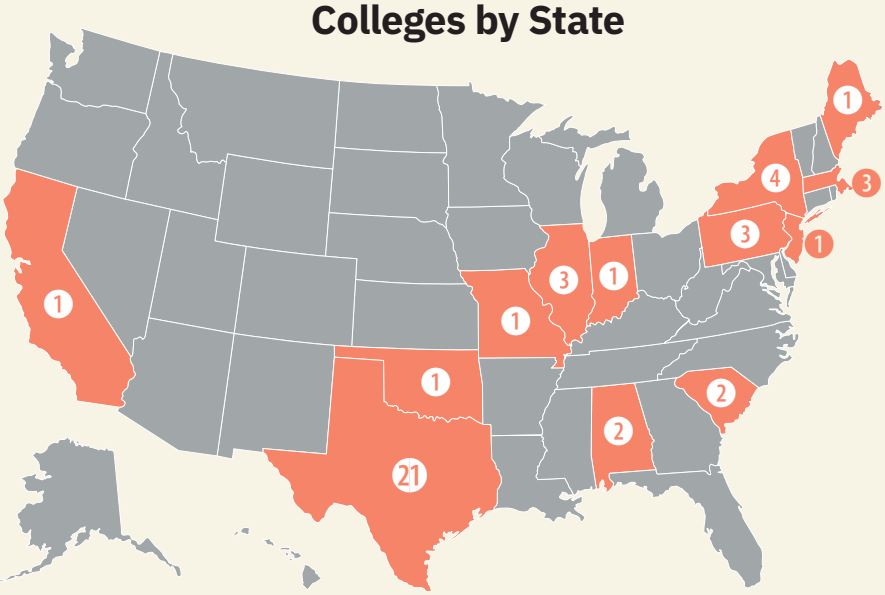
Five students are attending colleges which no Cistercian alum has claimed as their alma mater: **Franco Miele** to Bates College, **Nicolas Frano** to DePaul University, **Leo Ontiveros** to Lafayette College, **Connor Smith** to Stevens Institute of Technology and **Peter Ellis** to Thomas Aquinas College, and one student is taking a gap year.

The Class of 2022 is focusing their efforts on two predominant fields of study: 17 students (38%) will study a major related to business, economics, or finance; 23 students (51%) will have a major in a STEM field with six in the natural sciences, two in technology (computer science), eleven in engineering and four in math or physics.

Alex Ardemagni will play baseball for Washington University in St. Louis. **Julian Delorme** enrolled at the United States Military Academy at West Point, and **Devon Comstock** is participating in Army ROTC at the University of Oklahoma.

Every member of the Class of 2022 has found a place to continue to build upon the flame of knowledge enkindled in them at Cistercian. "In my eyes, what matters at the end of the day is that each one of them knows he is loved, supported, encouraged and believed in. Know thyself," said Fr. Anthony. •

Class of 2022
Colleges by State



Class of 2022
College Destinations

Bates College
Baylor University
Boston College
Bucknell University
Clemson University (2)
DePaul University
Fordham University
Harvard University (2)
Ithaca College
Lafayette College
New York University
Southern Methodist University (2)
Stevens Institute of Technology
Texas A&M University (7)
Texas Tech University (2)
Thomas Aquinas College
Trinity University (TX)
United States Military Academy at West Point
University of Alabama (2)
University of Chicago (2)
University of Dallas (4)
University of Notre Dame
University of Texas at Austin (4)
University of Oklahoma
Villanova University
Washington University in St. Louis

Cistercian Preparatory School has long been recognized for its rigorous all-honors curriculum and its math and science programs.

As the college counselor, my job is to communicate the rigor of our coursework to colleges so our students can be evaluated appropriately among thousands of applicants from myriad schools and curricula. I often witness affirming nods when I explain how most programs stop teaching with proofs after the geometry course, for example, and then watch their eyes widen when I explain our students use them all the way through calculus, deriving the formulas (rather than simply being given them as in most schools). Their expression then turns to disbelief when I explain senior calculus is also the first time students use a graphing calculator, a tool that is standard issue to most high school freshmen! Similarly, to highlight the strength of our sciences, I describe how freshman biology is so rigorous that nearly 90% of students who elect to take the AP exam (created for a senior-level course) earn a score of three or higher! Admittedly, many a senior laments the amount of work and the difficulty of the coursework at the time. But, I've found that most inevitably look back after college with sincere gratitude, not only for the lessons and content imparted, but for the confidence, discipline, time management, and resiliency they acquired.

NOT JUST ENGINEERS

How Cistercian alumni have applied their STEM education in multiple industries

Chris Blackwell

Roughly 50% of our graduates pursue majors in STEM fields each year: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. With the tremendous success of our robotics team winning the FIRST Robotics World Championship last year, and even more students choosing to hone their STEM skills in this endeavor, I reached out to several Cistercian alumni who pursued engineering after high school. I was curious to find out what they're doing now and how they are utilizing their Cistercian STEM foundations.

STEVE PAXTON '95

President at Astro Sheet Metal Co., Inc.

BBA Management from University of Texas at Arlington



Steve Paxton warns me that his story doesn't follow the conventional Cistercian graduate's path. He started at UT Austin studying engineering after graduation. Burnt out and unhappy after a couple years, he made the decision to take a break and return to his high school job and family's business to discern what he might do next. Less than two years later and recently re-enrolled in college at UT Arlington, the general manager of their company resigned, and the 23-year-old Paxton was named his replacement. He paused his studies again and dedicated himself to learning how to run the business. Paxton would not return to finish his degree for another 11 years, but he did not feel hindered during his hiatus from school. "The mathematical concepts and skills that were drilled into me at Cistercian through proofs and having to know the 'why' behind the formulas—ones that appeared to be foreign concepts to my counterparts—were put to use to solve the problems I encountered in the business."

Paxton remembers Mr. Don Martin's physics class where students were asked to construct a simple machine that could enter an "arena" to capture an object from the center and pull it back to the side. This was a challenge: you had to create a device within the specific size and weight, and you had to make it retrieve the object before a classmate could capture it from the opposite side. Activities like this catered to the students' creativity and competitiveness and set the stage for them to recognize that even though they were unsure how the device would be created, they knew enough about physics to conceptualize it. "I spent a day with my dad in the metal shop trying to figure out how to do this," Paxton recalls. "Mine ended up being an accordion-like design that would start folded and had handles that you could pull apart, and it would telescope out and had a grabber on the end."

While the specific details have faded, the lesson has stayed. "I don't often hear a challenge and think, 'No, I don't think I'll be able to do that.' Cistercian gave me a lot of confidence to overcome self-doubt with the assertion to say later in life, 'Yes. I'll tackle that challenge, and I know I can do it.'"

Whether it was applying his Latin skills to translate Italian on a trip to Italy with Fr. Gregory or understanding the Theory of Relativity with Dr. Hal Willis, who broke it down to Algebra II concepts, Paxton says, "The most valuable skill I learned at Cistercian was how to learn—how to take a subject that I am curious about, seek out the proper information, and apply that information to the task at hand."

"One of the most impactful statements I remember from high school was from our biology teacher, Murry Gans, whose words have stuck with me for decades from the first time he spoke them. He said 'there's nothing known that you can't know.' This gave me the freedom to explore with confidence and not be intimidated by anything; to be endlessly curious."

GEOFF BARNES '90

Staff UX Design Manager at Google

BFA Painting, Graphic Design, Performance Art from School of the Art Institute of Chicago

MFA Painting from University of Oregon

GEORGE JOHN '88

Retired Professor at Stanford University

Former CEO at Rocket Fuel

BS, MS, and PhD Computer Science from Stanford University



George John transferred to Cistercian in Form IV and still remembers the first time he saw the Form's grades posted on the door at the end of the first quarter (a practice that has since been retired). "My name was number two...and I didn't want to be number two!" From that point on, he was motivated to never receive an A-, which he successfully accomplished over the next five years. "I developed an amazing work ethic at Cistercian," he recalls, "such that in my professional career, I never hesitated to work hard; I knew that effort produced results."

In his first year at Stanford, John realized how well Cistercian had prepared him when he had to reread Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—he had read both as a high school freshman. The exciting challenges came when he started studying computer science under Nils Nilsson just as the internet was taking off. Nilsson, his advisor, professor, and chair of the department, is now regarded as the father of artificial intelligence. "I imagine it was like being a physics student when Newton and Gauss were teaching."

Cistercian's dual credit program and AP exams allowed John to finish his undergrad degree in just 2.5 years and begin working in research in artificial intelligence and machine learning in robotics. He credits his friendly, encouraging teachers at Cistercian with helping him build habits that allowed him to interact more effectively with professors and managers, resulting in many opportunities in college and later in his professional life. He started building his teaching reputation at Stanford when he was invited to instruct a computer science class the summer after his sophomore year. Such teaching and research experiences helped John secure acceptances to top PhD programs, but he chose to stay at Stanford.

He has worked with Lockheed Martin, IBM, E.piphany, salesforce.com, and Yahoo—all before he started a company in 2008 to build the world's first fully autonomous online advertising engine. His company, Rocket Fuel Inc., went public in 2013 and was ranked the #1 fastest-growing company in North America by Deloitte that year.

"I had to ask the questions that didn't really have answers, like 'What should the AI be paying attention to?'" He remembers approaching the problem the same way Mr. Don Martin had explained in high school physics, how Ernest Rutherford created an experiment to test his hypothesis about the structure of an atom. "I took a similar scientific approach, putting together statistics from large samples and just trying to figure things out."

Today, John teaches entrepreneurial science for Stanford's coveted Lean Launchpad course and invests in benevolent technology startups in areas like education, health, agriculture, safety, and sustainability—companies that are working to make the world a better place.

GABI FERENCZI '06

Principal Engineer at Powerex

BS Mechanical Engineering from Florida Institute of Technology



Curiosity was the driving force behind Gabi Ferenczi's persistence and success in the field of research and development, and it was fostered in large part at Cistercian, particularly by his Form III physics teacher, Fr. Mark. "He introduced me to the Solar Car Challenge and its organizer," Ferenczi recalls. "Then I took his robotics elective, and then he helped with my senior project: building a solar-powered, remote-controlled airplane from scratch—which I still have in my garage!" He remembers questioning why he was learning such high-level math and thinking, "I will never use differential equations in my life!" Although he claims that he uses about 10% of the knowledge he gained in college for his current job, he humbly admits that "Cistercian forced us to learn this stuff because it teaches you how to think through challenging problems."

Ferenczi's career started with a co-op for a defense contractor, designing scopes and sensor arrays for rifles, tanks, and helicopters. He then landed his "dream job" working for Motorola, starting initially with the team that designed the original Razor flip phone. And while he learned so much during the few years he was there, they may have been the toughest years of his life. He was working 18-hour days, traveling to China five to six times a year for two to three weeks at a time. His driving motivation was knowing that he was working on technology that didn't exist yet, and solving problems that didn't have solutions.

"You have to know how to ask the right questions; how you arrive at the solution is almost as important as the solution itself. Failure is a huge part of engineering, but people don't like being wrong and especially admitting it. When you learn why things go wrong, you can understand what works, what doesn't, and then improve the next design."

Ferenczi now leads an R&D team looking at air compression technology for the commercial electric and hybrid large vehicle industries. "Florida Tech and Cistercian taught me to think in an efficient way. R&D takes patience and the expectation of failure, which most people can't handle and burn out. Cistercian helped me tune myself to adapt. No amount of complaining ever changed the outcome, so we just had to keep going after it."

JAMES CONNOR '02

Owner and Founder of Corbalt

BS Mathematical and Computational Science from Stanford University

MS Computer Science from Stanford University

During his time at Stanford, James interned at Google as part of the Google Scholar program and then worked for the company for seven years until he was recruited to be part of the team that salvaged the flailing healthcare.gov website, getting the system through two open enrollment periods. He founded Corbalt in 2015 and now builds software infrastructure to meet government requirements for security and compliance so that the government can build applications and manage data in cloud computing data centers, making sure that everything works within the appropriate security system.

TOMMY CECIL '01

Owner/Attorney at Cecil Law, PLLC

BS Electrical and Computer Engineering from Olin College of Engineering

JD from University of Virginia



Tommy Cecil had always enjoyed the liberal arts and math and science. Although he thought originally of attending UT Austin to combine an engineering degree with Plan II, the director of admission from Olin College of Engineering came to Cistercian to recruit from the brightest minds in Dallas. He gave a pitch to the students: they could be the first class to graduate from a new school that would provide a hands-on, innovative, engineering education paired with management and entrepreneurship learning, which also brought in the liberal arts, and, at the time, offered free tuition to anyone admitted.

"This was exciting," Cecil remembers, "especially the idea of helping start a new institution; it was too much to turn down." He interacted regularly with the administration and enjoyed the times when he found himself helping or advocating for his classmates to the board of trustees or the office of student life. He served for two years on the executive board of Olin's student government, including one year as president. "Because of Cistercian, I think I stood apart a little bit in terms of my ability to write, which helped a lot in what I ended up doing: getting involved in student government, working on committees, and contributing to projects."

Throughout his education, Cecil realized that he was more motivated and energized after helping his friends deal with the more tedious aspects of invention and saw that a law degree could channel his skills.

After law school, Cecil worked in patent law and intellectual property rights. While he built a successful career in litigation, licensing, strategy, and prosecution, eventually becoming partner in his firm, he realized that it was taking him further away from working directly with the smaller inventors and entrepreneurs that had originally inspired this career. So, in 2020, he started his own practice handling intellectual property matters like patent and trademark prosecution and data privacy issues.

"**Meditate on the question, 'what do I want my career in life to be?' instead of 'what should my major be?' or 'what should I study?'** The answer to that question will help you choose a school and start building your network earlier to get you to the right place faster."

NICK MACHAK '13

Project/Test Engineer at ERC (NASA contractor)

BS Biomedical Engineering from Washington University in St. Louis

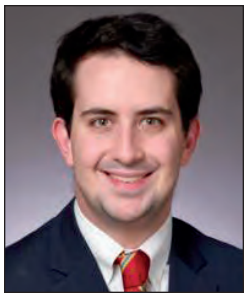
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BS Chemical and Biological Engineering from Princeton University

MD from University of Texas Southwestern Medical School



Jack Squiers went to college fully intending to go to medical school. He picked chemical engineering as a major because his brain was naturally inclined toward math and science, the classes conveniently overlapped with his medical school requirements, and he knew that whatever he chose to do, the principles he had already learned at Cistercian would formulate a way for him to approach anything later in life. "And that's borne out to be true in spades: I'm learning how to be a heart surgeon, and every day I put a patient on a heart-lung machine, which is just a sophisticated engineering device. An engineering degree has allowed me to understand complicated technology, adapt to it, and use it, without too much mental anxiety."

In college, he worked at Princeton's writing center, atypical for engineers not particularly known for their writing skills, and found himself advising classmates to reference concrete details and provide evidence for their arguments, marking papers the same way Mrs. Greenfield, Mrs. Medaille, and Fr. Gregory had marked his in Cistercian English classes. "Eventually, I decided to pursue a job in academic medicine, which requires you to write papers, and I knew my foundation for this was built at Cistercian." Remembering English Lab with Coach Kowalski, he says, "Man, it was so painful then, but I'm so grateful that someone was willing to teach that stuff to us."

For Squiers, it was the Cistercian teachers who made the material memorable. He remembers that Fr. Mark taught his class a method to keep track of units and conversions on H brackets when he was learning physics in Form III, "and I used that later in high school, in college studying engineering, in medical school studying biochemistry, and today when I'm trying to dose medicines... and I learned it when I was 13 years old in seventh grade!"

"After my first flying assignment, I realized that I had been so concerned with performing well and showing that I was a prepared and competent pilot that I turned the job from something I enjoyed into something terrifying, just trying to not screw up. When I knew the assignment was ending, I tried to enjoy the job instead... and turns out it was way more fun! I worked hard in high school. Looking back, I would try to enjoy the process more; stop avoiding failure all the time. Do your best and then recognize that the results beyond that are out of your control; have confidence that you've done what you can, and what you do is enough."

LT. COL. CHRIS UMPHRES '04

Assistant Director of Operations, 356th Fighter Squadron at Eielson AFB, AK for USAF

BS Aerospace, Aeronautical, and Astronautical Engineering from University of Virginia

MS Management Science and Engineering from Stanford University

PhD Public Policy Analysis from Harvard University

J. MICHAEL MORGAN '84

Invasive-Interventional Cardiologist at Biltmore Cardiology

BS Mechanical Engineering from UT Austin

MD from UTMB at Galveston



When Michael Morgan tested for Cistercian after moving from Houston, he remembers Fr. Bernard looking at his admission test results and telling him that he was, to put it plainly, below average. "Our boys get 99s in all these areas," the priest told him, "but you're lucky; a boy dropped out this week, so we'll take you." Michael proudly graduated in the top half of his class but was undecided on a future career. He had amassed enough credits through AP exams and dual credit to be considered a junior in college. His parents would only pay for state school tuition, even though he was accepted to Vanderbilt and Duke, so he enrolled at UT for mechanical engineering, keeping a pre-med track and adding a biomedical block of studies. "I thought it was the perfect major for mathematically inclined smart kids who weren't exactly sure what they wanted to do; it left the options open."

When asked if Cistercian prepared him for college, he recalls a difficult engineering physics class he took freshman year with 300 students. On his first test, he correctly answered 13 of the 15 questions, a disappointing 87%. The teacher then announced to the class that the average number correct on the exam was 5, two people got 11 right, and one person correctly answered 13. "I give Cistercian complete credit for that!"

"There is no better undergrad major than engineering. It sets you apart as someone who is inherently logical and capable of figuring out challenges," says Morgan. His engineering degree perfectly complements his medical work because it formed his brain to think analytically and practically. "Good medicine is objective—analyzing the data behind the studies and test results."

Michael now lives an adventurous life in Phoenix. He and his wife have visited Fr. Bernard in Hungary, still giving him a hard time for his initial skepticism, but eternally grateful for giving him a chance and providing him unwavering stability through a very rough childhood.

"**Civil Engineering has helped with my real estate law practice.** When looking at diligence documents or surveys, I know how to interpret and analyze them. I also find it helpful to have familiarity with all parties involved in a complicated real estate transaction."

K. SCOTT SLOAN '10

Bradley, Associate at Real Estate Practice Group

BE Civil Engineering from Vanderbilt University

JD from Texas A&M University School of Law

CAPTAIN JONATHAN MONSALVE '10

U-28A Draco Instructor Pilot at Air Force Special Operations Command, USAF

BS Systems Engineering with a focus on Astronautical Engineering from U. S. Air Force Academy



When one thinks of studying at a U.S. Service Academy, it's usually not about their humanities majors, but this was on Jonathan Monsalve's mind when he entered. He knew that Cistercian had prepared him well for both STEM and humanities fields, and when he looked into the requirements of the astronautical engineering degree, he saw that the technical elements of that major were not the only courses of study he was interested in. But when he found that "English was nowhere near as tough as Fr. Gregory's senior year English class" and "Dr. Newcomb's calculus classes were twice as difficult" as the calculus classes he was required to take, he thought he could pursue an engineering major that combined his two interests. Systems engineering was the best blend, allowing him to take top-level astronautics courses while still learning about managing a project, team, or system.

Now, as an instructor pilot, he uses these skills every day knowing and understanding the science behind his fuel system, hydraulics, and flight controls. He also knows how to work with a copilot, crew, and other members of the team. "Now that I'm an aircraft instructor, I'm glad to have had all of the managerial experience of engineering projects; that's really helped me."

As for being a U-28 pilot, one of his primary jobs is overwatch, ensuring that U.S. troops or other friendly forces get to and from their destination safely by identifying threats from those trying to cause them harm. He says, "A lot of folks in the military deploy, and their kids ask them, 'why do you have to go away?' I feel like I have the best answer for mine: 'I have to go to make sure that somebody else's mom or dad comes home to them too.'"

CHRISTOPHER KRIBS '85

Professor of Mathematics and Curriculum & Instruction at UT Arlington

AB Mathematics and BS Electrical Engineering from Duke University

MSEE from Georgia Institute of Technology

MA and PhD Mathematics from University of Wisconsin, Madison

From the time he started college, Chris Kribs knew he wanted to make a positive impact on the world. After double majoring at Duke and spending time as a trailblazer at Georgia Tech's international campus in Metz, France, he started in digital signal and speech processing with Texas Instruments motivated by a presentation about using voice commands to operate motorized wheelchairs. He took a year off to teach high school science and math at a school for Native American children in New Mexico, which is where he found his teaching vocation. Kribs returned to grad school to complete a PhD in math and now has a joint appointment in math conducting research in epidemic modeling using differential equations, and also in teacher education, doing research in mathematical discourse analysis. After 25 years in this role, he's had a positive impact on teachers by changing their paradigm of what it means to learn and do math. "Anyone who goes into teaching elementary math can affect thousands of students and have a profound impact on future generations. I help them to see that the skills you need to be a good math teacher will help in any content area."

RYAN SITTON '93

CEO at Pinnacle

BS Mechanical Engineering from Texas A&M University



Ryan Sitton grew up loving science. He attributes this to his father Jim, a physics teacher, and to his mother Betty, Cistercian's longtime chemistry teacher. Pursuing an engineering degree after graduation was a natural next step. He chose mechanical engineering because he wanted to apply physics to the natural world. After working in roles supervising machine maintenance and repairs for Oxy and Marathon, he started a company that provides multiple industries with reliability and integrity programs for their process facilities, working with over 200 companies around the globe. From 2014–2020, he was elected to the Texas Railroad Commission, the state regulatory agency that oversees oil and gas production in Texas. He was the first engineer in 50 years to serve in this post. Sitton has also authored a book titled *Crucial Decisions* and is working on a PhD in data science and engineering from the University of Tennessee.

His hunger for knowledge and willingness to venture into unfamiliar territories were not always character traits for him. As the self-proclaimed worst-behaved kid in the school for the eight years he attended Cistercian, Sitton gives one word for the greatest lesson he learned at the school: "Discipline." From Fr. Roch as a Form Master to Fr. Bernard as Headmaster, he recalls that the Hungarian monks were uncompromising in demanding excellence, persistently requiring him to reach up to their high expectations until he crossed the stage at graduation. This was what allowed him to see his potential.

His second biggest takeaway has been understanding service, especially from Fr. Roch, who "showed up every day, to pour his energy, passion, and knowledge into a young man who, quite frankly, was a jerk... and he did it for eight years straight without one single solitary sign of appreciation, which wouldn't fully come until about 20 years later! So when it comes to real faith, real love, and real wisdom, I don't know if I've ever seen an example of true service as strong as Fr. Roch."

Sitton's advice to students is that they learn how to learn and to genuinely get excited about material. "Because of Cistercian, you already know how to work and strive for excellence; add to that a desire to learn, and you will be unstoppable."

HAROLD PHILLIPS '78

Senior Project Manager at Salas O'Brien

BS Civil Engineering from University of Notre Dame

MBA from University of Dallas

Initially, Harold Phillips thought he would put his creativity and math skills to use as an architect, but his mom had him take the newly created Aptitude Inventory Measurement Service (AIMS) assessment in Dallas, which revealed an aptitude for engineering. So, after graduating with a civil engineering degree from Notre Dame, Phillips began work as a design engineer where he focused on the structural systems of mid and high-rise buildings. He started taking on field work assignments to visit construction sites and work with the teams to troubleshoot building problems. This led him to want to investigate problems more regularly, leading to a career shift towards forensic engineering, which has accounted for the majority of Phillips' career. Helping others is a priority. He spent a year with the Peace Corps working on roadway development projects in Antigua and helped recently on a water supply project in Peru by doing the structural design for a water treatment building and water tank.

TIM BOCK '85

Director of Data Center Sales at Dell Technologies

BS Aerospace Engineering from University of Southern California

MSBA from Boston University

MS Telecommunications from Colorado-Boulder



When students were complaining about learning the material in Mr. Martin's junior physics class, Tim Bock remembers their teacher positing a thought to them: Look at Fortune 500 CEOs and see how many of them have an undergraduate engineering degree; how a foundational, problem-solving skill set coupled later with a solid understanding of business could lead to a successful management career. So Tim decided he would become an engineer and enrolled at USC, taking advantage of the ROTC program to help pay for college. Fr. Roch's stern "corrections" when he was out of line at Cistercian had prepared him for the discipline he would need in the military. During his 13-year career in the Army, Tim was assigned to the U.S. Army Signal Corps, working with radios and satellites and running data centers in a variety of locations, including Belgium, Germany, California, Kansas, Colorado, and Hawaii.

Tim earned his MSBA from Boston University during his first assignment overseas without ever stepping foot in Boston. He helped with tactical and satellite communications in the Persian Gulf War and, after a few more assignments, was selected to study for a second master's, this time in telecommunications, from CU-Boulder. Tim credits the character-building components of the Cistercian curriculum for fostering a natural sense of service to others, a driving force behind his military commitment. Now operating in a civilian role, Tim leads a team of sales executives that sell data center solutions to the U.S. Navy and DOD services in Europe, Africa, and Asia. In this role, he is helping his customers support soldiers as they deploy.

Though his degree is in aerospace engineering, his technical training allowed him to understand electronics in a more thorough way. Again, Tim credits the core curriculum at Cistercian for the "soft skills" he uses now to teach this technical information to his sales team of English, political science, and history majors. "My engineering degree has helped me in some form or fashion in every job I've ever held, even though I have never really been an 'engineer' in the true academic sense."

"**Playing sports at Cistercian allowed me to be more efficient in my work and studies.** In college, I was able to prioritize my time and better manage tasks as a result. Being a captain also gave me experience leading others on a team, a large component of my job now."

JOE GRAHAM '10

Chief Project Developer (subsea wellhead systems) at TechnipFMC

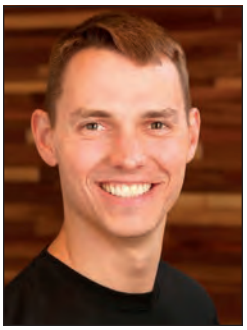
BS Mechanical Engineering from Oklahoma State University

ANDREW BELLAY '05

Owner and Founder at MetaNeer

BS Chemical Engineering and BA in Plan II from UT Austin

MS Management Science and Engineering from Stanford University



With enough dual and AP credit to allow him to graduate from UT Plan II in two years, Andrew Bellay decided to pursue a second degree in chemical engineering, because he loved his high school chemistry teacher and mentor, Mrs. Betty Sitton. "I thought it would be like chemistry on steroids; I had no clue what I was getting into."

To learn more about the field, Andrew took advantage of a co-op program and spent time working at the ExxonMobil oil refinery in Baytown, the nation's largest oil refinery. At 19, he learned how to blend gasoline and oversaw the production of 10 million gallons of gasoline a day, accounting for 3% of the nation's supply at the time. Though recruited to work for the company after graduation, he envisioned a future beyond the oil and gas industry and returned to school to complete his degrees and focus on graduate school.

His advisors told him that no student could graduate in four years with both degrees and also complete co-ops, but they didn't know that Cistercian had given Bellay the ability to see what was required of him, the discipline to prioritize tasks and assignments, and the diligence and determination to work toward their completion. He devised a plan, repeatedly assured advisors and professors he could do the work, and became the first student to graduate with both chemical engineering and Plan II majors in four years while maintaining a 4.0 for seven semesters.

His studies at Stanford taught him entrepreneurship, strategy and design, which allowed him to start his first small business with Cistercian classmate Weston McBride '05. They believed that engineering was a meta skill, transcending the limits of the degree to be applicable to and grow other skills, so they named the company after a combination of the two: Meta+Engineer, MetaNeer. He works with clients to design, develop and strategize how to bring their ideas to tangible products.

Cistercian prepared Andrew academically for college, but more importantly, "it really shaped who I am as a person and how I carry myself in the world with honesty, integrity and a deep curiosity—characteristics that were born at home but were built upon day after day in the woods of Irving." At Cistercian, he learned the trivium—grammar, logic, and rhetoric—but he didn't know to call it that until over a decade later. He now references with clients how the logic and grammar garnered from E-lab, Latin and foreign languages, and the rhetoric learned from the humanities, have helped him relate to others and stand apart in his communication.

His advice to current Cistercian students: "Do the things you don't want to do. So much of life is about doing the hard things, so even if you don't think you're going to use calculus and Dr. Newcomb's class is extremely hard, do it anyway. You'll be better because of the effort and work you put into it."

"**My favorite memory of Cistercian is the brotherhood.** I still have friends from when I was 10 years old. Cistercian taught us how to be good men. I still get together to have a beer with classmates and monk friends at the monastery, and it's just like old times."

ROBERT NORTHRUP '00

Inventor at Northrup, Inc.

BA Documentary Film and Molecular Biology
MS Biotechnology from University of Texas at Dallas



AT THE APOSTLES' DOORSTEP

Monks in Rome



Fr. Stephen Gregg ’01

When our students tour the Abbey, certain questions always arise about this unfamiliar phenomenon of monastic life in America. They used to ask, “Do you have to learn Hungarian?” To which another would smartly respond, “No, they all speak Latin.” Sometimes their questions have to do with their own greatest domestic annoyances: “Do you have to wash the dishes?” or “Do you have to clean your room?” [No, and only if we want to.]



Often they think of their own confused delights: “You mean you can have soft drinks whenever you want?” or “Do you guys ever have pizza?” [Yes, and yes!] The fundamental confusion for the students is that the monks are part of the School’s DNA and are its very symbol, and yet we are not just mascots or kids in monk suits. We are actually adults with our own specific vocations, from many places and with many purposes. Often the students ask, “Do you have your own rooms?” And that question reminds me of something Fr. Denis used to tell, that the first time he ever had his own room was when he arrived at the Cistercian college in Rome. That brings us to a more advanced question than monastic chores and pizza: Why do some monks go to Rome? What do they do there?

Right now two of our monks are in Rome, Fr. Francis Gruber ’01 and Fr. Matthew Hegemann, at a place called in Italian the *Casa Generalizia* (and in Latin the *Domus Generalis*) or the *Curia*—the place where people take *care* of important things. In English it is called “The Generalate,” which sounds slightly intimidating but simply means that it is a monastic house in Rome that is intended for all Cistercians generally who are in the City, and it is where the Abbot General resides and has his base



of operations in his work in favor of the whole Cistercian Order. The Generalate is located where a temple of the goddess Diana used to be, near a few small but very ancient churches on the Aventine Hill—the rather tall hill that is southwesternmost of the seven hills of Rome, right along the Tiber River. [Hercules slew the monster Cacus there. Remus (not Romulus) set up there. The Gracchi died there. St. Athanasius and St. Jerome lived there, maybe St. Paul too, and Thomas Aquinas, and Pius V, and… I will avoid the details.] The Cistercian Generalate was built there in the early twentieth century, using money loaned from Zirc before its closure—or so the Hungarians would always point out. Global religious orders tend to have a headquarters in Rome, and this was designed to be ours. As an added bonus, it is a very nice part of Rome to be in: just above the Circus Maximus, at the edge of the main part of the City. It is nicely elevated for good views in every direction—like that famous garden keyhole that frames the dome of St. Peter's—and is mostly inhabited by very wealthy people, with much less traffic and noise than the rest of the City. Thank goodness the Cistercians bought it back in the day! It is basically the closest you get to a nice, gated community on the edge of Rome proper. It is also right near the heart of the most important city in history. Furthermore, the large Benedictine Generalate and University of Sant'Anselmo is right nearby, a convenient monastic center for our use.

Obviously a cool place to be. But why do monks go there? Shouldn't they stay in the monastery and do work in the School? The Generalate, or General House, is not actually a monastery with an abbot and vowed members. In fact, lots of the people who live there are not monks at all, but are "secular" priests. It is a headquarters for the Order and is also a "house of studies." Officially, our monks who live there are students in the "International College of St. Bernard in the City." In this case, however, "college" does not mean that classes are held there, that it has a faculty, etc.—it's more like how a student at Rice University is a member of William Marsh Rice College, a "college" or "linked group of people" who form a unit of the University, or someone at Cambridge University who is in Pembroke "College." It is where you live and it is the means by which you officially connect to all the university systems in the City. Thus, to get things straight: To be in Rome does not mean that our monks have some important role they are fulfilling in the governance of the Church or even of the Order. They are just going to school, in Rome, and the General House offers, amid the insanity of modern Rome, a quasi-monastic place to live, pray, work, and study. Why go to school in Rome as a monk? We'll get to that later.

First, let's consider Fr. Francis and Fr. Matthew, who are both students at Roman institutions. Fr. Francis is a doctoral student in philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University, and Fr. Matthew is a student at one of its many subsidiary institutes. [Footnote: The Gregoriana is not for Gregorian chant; it goes back to Pope Gregory XIII and St. Ignatius of Loyola, and is an important center of Jesuitical





education and one of the largest universities in Rome.] Fr. Francis is working on a dissertation on the work of Martin Heidegger and the important philosophical school of phenomenology; one early title of his dissertation includes the phrase, "Tracing the Movement from Ownmost Facticity to Outermost Possibility in the Co-Originality-and-Fruition of the Execution of the Phenomenological Method." This course of studies has consumed several years of Fr. Francis's life—including the complex period of the pandemic in Italy—and looks to be concluding this year or next. He is working at the highest possible level of Roman Catholic philosophical inquiry. Fr. Matthew, by contrast, is working on a one-year diploma in spiritual direction, or "for formators to the priesthood and religious life," at the St. Peter Favre Centre at the Gregoriana. With courses in confronting psychological difficulties, in directing spiritual vocations, in canon law, in Jesus as the "formator of formators," and so on, Fr. Matthew's program is something like a counseling degree, an expert course on how to guide people toward their callings.

Why go to Rome for this? I'll get back to that. First of all, they are not the first of our monks to be there. The middle age of the monastery includes many with Roman degrees of one level or another: Joseph, Thomas, Ambrose, Lawrence, Anthony, John, Philip, Ignatius and myself. And then Paul. And Bernard. And Julius and Roch. David and Denis. Even Anselm and Bede. Fr. Denis, Fr. Roch, Fr. Julius, and Fr. David, in fact, when they arrived in Rome from Hungary, were tossed immediately into the worldwide ferment of the Second Vatican Council. Much has been told of the impact of that experience on those young men in the 1960s who would end up becoming the cornerstones of our community and who have given such a distinctive international character to our School and to the University of Dallas. Even until quite recently, students at Cistercian could know that their teachers and formators not only knew about the events of world history, but had witnessed them and been deeply affected by them—a striking antidote to the potential malaise of American suburban life. Even St. Benedict was a student in Rome. [Of course, he is said to have started his life as a hermit in Subiaco after fleeing the City because the students were so depraved.]



Before I try to give the obvious answer to why it is worth studying in Rome, let's stop and think for a moment about forming a monastery. Maybe there is a monastery-building strategy game out there; I don't know. But if there is, a player might



think that an advanced degree in Heideggerian phenomenology, or in ancient Greek Patristics, or in whatever quirky subfield of Dogmatic Theology, is not really the most useful thing for running a school. Ancient Syriac? Paleography? How about air-conditioner repair or kinesiology? The point is—back to kids asking about pizza—that what is going on here far transcends the normal, day-to-day planning of life and even the predictable operations of a school. And I mean historically, not just spiritually. An abbot planning the future of a monastery has to prepare his young monks for countless possible futures, not just for specific practical tasks. Our Hungarian forefathers experienced the catastrophic closure of their whole way of life; some entered Cistercian life *after* the monastery and its schools had already been suppressed by the Communist regime. We don't expect such disasters in Dallas—but no one can foresee the myriad possibilities and challenges that a monk, teacher, and priest will face over the several decades he will remain in this location. If all else fails and everything closes, we are still monks and need to be ready for anything. Ironically, the vow of stability, of promising to be in one place for the rest of one's life, demands the greatest mobility: enrich your mind as much as you can, go to Rome, go where you can learn as much as possible from the whole world as quickly as possible, without having to live an unmonastic life.

To put it simply: when men join our monastery, they need to study a lot of different things just to be ordained priests, not to speak of acquiring educations to teach at the level we expect in all the disciplines beyond theology. Much can be acquired at the University of Dallas, but not all, so they will have to go somewhere. Where to send them? Lots of good secular programs are available in the Metroplex. But when it comes to spiritual learning and monastic awareness, more is needed. The danger of self-satisfaction, of isolationism, can so easily swamp the greater goals of a school and a monastery. How easy it is for a young man to join a monastery and immediately feel he has some spiritual status, something important to say to the world, some superiority to vaunt over the children. The young monks need to feel the pull, the power, and the challenge of the universal; they need to face the possibility of putting their efforts up against the pursuits of the entire Catholic world at the center of the Church. This need is especially real for us in Dallas which, though it is a residential and commercial megaplex, is quite provincial when it comes to the Church and the Cistercian Order. The nearest Cistercians are nuns in Wisconsin leading a very different life. Hungary is quite a distance and for most of our monastery's history simply was not open. At a mysterious level, each of us needs to realize we are connected to a story that spans continents and millennia. An abbot of Dallas sees he needs to invest as much as possible in the broadening of his monks' experiences, so that at least a few of them preserve that vision that we of a certain age remember in our Hungarian teachers and Form Masters. You can't fix every monk's flaws, but you can hope they will transmit to the younger generations something of the true spirit of religious adventure. From the roof of the General House in Rome you can see the sun rise over the statues atop



the Pope's cathedral, St. John Lateran. That's not true at Notre Dame, or CUA, or wherever else you might go for formation.

Why study in Rome? You get to know a lot more people, and a lot more Cistercians, from across the world, and they get to know us. Maybe an example from this time of Fr. Francis and Fr. Matthew in Rome might help. Their studies are clearly designed to make them as useful as possible to the students they will teach in the coming decades. But to be in Rome is also to be at the heart of the Church in the most direct of ways. Fr. Matthew could study pastoral psychology anywhere, but in Rome he stands as the only American alongside more than fifty men and women, many from Asia and Africa, mostly priests and religious, who come together not only to study but to share experiences from across the globe of what it means to live in the light of God's call. Fr. Francis studies the most difficult philosophy (pretty much ever), but not just in a library; he is among many talented Christian students who are pursuing the very heights of human understanding as part of their priestly and missionary vocations. But our monks remember something more remarkable than the broadening effect of school in Rome. Shortly after Russia initiated its latest effort to conquer parts of Ukraine, our two monks in Rome had a chance to participate in an all-night prayer vigil. They gathered, with some thousands of other people, at the basilica of St. John Lateran, and walked during the night to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Divine Love, an important and miraculous shrine some twenty kilometers south of Rome. As they walked, the multitude prayed the Rosary in every language they could manage.

Can you imagine that? We all had experiences like that. I walked out of class one day to hear from the Pope, speaking at the Wednesday audience in the front yard of my school (i.e. St. Peter's Square), that my professor had been made a Cardinal. Some of us witnessed St. John Paul II's beatification and canonization. In Dallas, we cannot "manufacture" such Pentecosts, but in Rome, by the very nature of its having a little bit of everybody, of its being the home of so many young Catholic students at the top of their game, of its continued draw as the center of the Western Church, the Holy Spirit has an extra freedom. It's always been that way, and we know it's crazy. St. Peter was a fisherman from Galilee. Rome?!



Everyone says that the reason to be in Rome is to experience—not to understand, but to experience—the universality of the Church. Although God has not yet ended the conflict in Ukraine, or the many other conflicts in the world, he has marked the souls of another two of our monks with the prayerful hope for peace. We can hope that this conflict will end soon; but students at Cistercian, and everyone in any way associated with our monastery, will be able to benefit from the gift of that night-long procession for years to come. •

Fall Sports

Football beats St. Mark's

Cistercian football was at its best this fall. Early in September and in one of their most memorable games, the Hawks beat St. Mark's 41–28 for the first time since 1995 when that team won the SPC Championship! The Hawks had a historic season, finishing with an 8–2 record—one of only six times in Cistercian football history that a team has won eight or more games.

Led by **Stephen Cox '23** (41 tackles, four sacks and two interceptions) **Ryan Sporl '24** (39 tackles, 23 QB pressures) and **Jacob Brown '24** (45 tackles), Cistercian's defense ranked second in the conference and had two shutouts, the most in a season since 2009. The Hawks' offense had its highest scoring and yards per game output in the history of Cistercian football, with 432 yards per game and 39.8 points per game. Both **Dan O'Toole '23** and **Nonso Unini '23** were able to rush for over 1,000 yards with incredible up-front blocking by **Charlie Humphreys '24**, **Cade Burk '25**, **Aiden Harrod '23**, **Gus Coligado '23** and **Albert Parmenter '23**. All-around player **JP Roppolo '23** was the leading receiver in yards and touchdowns while also getting four interceptions on defense.

Underclassmen who played a big role on varsity included kicker **Dean Nevitt '26**, linebacker **Jacob Liu '26,** and offensive lineman Burk. All-SPC players for the Hawks were Coligado, O'Toole, Roppolo and Unini.



Lynn Roppolo



Rebecca Slezak, *Dallas Morning News*

Strong season for Cross Country

Cistercian's cross country team started the season with a string of notable times in their first meet. Led by freshman **Ben Brittian '26** with an 18:30 finish and **Stephen LeSage '23** and **Marc Maalouf '25** with sub-20:00 runs, the Hawks felt good heading into their second event. At The Buff in Haltom City, Cistercian finished third overall against a group of much larger public schools. By the third meet of the season, the boys really started to see times improve and settled in with a strong team presence when Brittian, LeSage and Maalouf turned in great times once again and **Keegan Cobleigh '24**, **Andrew Novoa '26**, and **David Fernandes '25** finished just over 19:00. At Southwest Christian, the Hawks came close to hanging on to their first-place finish from 2021. Though several boys broke 19:00 and Brittian finished with a stellar 16:58, Cistercian finished second overall. Out of 124 runners, our strongest five runners finished in the top 25! The following week, the boys were headed back to The Buff to face defending TAPPS state champions Dallas Covenant for what turned out to be a great competition. The Hawks pushed hard to finish second by only one point! Brittian was Cistercian's top finisher and landed in the top five overall.

Times continued to improve leading up to North Zone and the SPC championship meet. **John Paul Hays '23**, **Burke Landrum '26**, and **Sebastian Lee '25** began to contend for a spot in the top seven to qualify for the SPC Championship in Houston. To keep things interesting, **Jules Tyler '26** and **Gabriel Berbarie '26** broke 21:00. Brittian was the only runner to break 17:00, with LeSage, Novoa, Maalouf, Cobleigh, and Fernandes finishing under 19:00. Hays locked in the seventh position. After a strong performance from each of the athletes, the SPC team was set.

Cistercian finished North Zone in the top five before heading to Houston for the SPC meet. Unfortunately, the Hawks lost their number two runner to a foot injury while Brittian was also out for several weeks with an injury. Though not 100 percent, Brittian was able to return for the championship meet. The Hawks finished their season in the top five with All-SPC honors going to Brittian and Cobleigh. Hays, Maalouf and Cobleigh finished the meet with personal records.



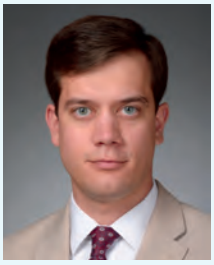




Photos: Fr. Raphael Schaner

Range and Altitude

This issue's cover story is a tale of STEM guys triumphant. We learn about true brain toilers: boys who went years without enduring the indignity of an A-minus, men who once went toe to toe with Dr. Newcomb and Mr. Martin before going on to great successes as computer scientists and medical doctors and patent lawyers and aircraft instructors. I wish to highlight two details from the cover story at the outset. First, the featured alumni variously describe Dr. Newcomb's calculus class as "extremely hard" and "twice as difficult" as the calculus classes required at the United States Air Force Academy. Second, Mr. Blackwell notes that roughly 50% of Cistercian graduates pursue majors in STEM fields.



Jess Clay '13

This *Afterthoughts* column is dedicated to the other half.

One morning during my senior year at Cistercian, I walked into the science building for my first class of the day. It was a biology class. We received our latest test scores, and mine was a 54%. I remember jocundly thinking to myself that, bad as the grade was, all that red ink came with a silver lining. A man and a day could only look up from such abyssal depths, after all. I jaunted back to Dr. Newcomb's calculus class, where I promptly received a different test result with a different grade. This time around, the score was 52%. These precise numbers sparked my interest in joining the roughly 50% of Cistercian graduates who do not pursue majors in STEM fields.

Since this is the fall issue of this magazine, I am also reminded of my high school football career, which was about as distinguished as my high school STEM career. In sooth, I think about Cistercian football almost every night, because I have a hard time sleeping on my left side thanks to a shoulder injury from a JV game, and I have a hard time sleeping on my right side because of a crick in my neck I acquired during the first day of full-pads practice as an Upper Schooler. But I also remember a poem—memorized and executed in challenging conditions by generations of freshmen football players—which began with the words, "If you think you are beaten, you are. If you think you dare not, you don't…" And I remember a line from a poem by John Milton, which I pondered as a senior from the sidelines while I watched great feats unfurl on the gridiron before me: "They also serve who only stand and wait." I have hypothesized that there is a direct correlation between how much you associate your football position with a 17th-century sonnet and how much playing time you get, but I need a larger sample size to test my theory.

My football days are now long over, save for my family's annual Thanksgiving Day Turkey Bowl. My STEM days are also in the rearview mirror, ever since I fulfilled most of my college's STEM requirements with courses in botany, ornithology, and natural disasters. In more recent years, I have taken to an annual effort to climb a big mountain someplace. The site of the climb has varied—West Texas, Colorado, Tanzania, Washington State—but the trajectory of the climb, beyond the predictable up and down, is constant. Invariably—when the excitement of embarking has long since vanished, but before the summit draws near enough to grasp and gasp at with a second wind—, there is a moment of great unpleasantness. On certain mountains and at certain heights, the moment is accompanied by the unholy trinity of thin air, bitter cold, and overheating wrought from the combination of massive caloric exertion and myriad warm layers at high altitude. It is accompanied, too, by slow steps, slow breaths, water frozen in its bottle, and a measure of regret and self-loathing. In such moments, I begin to mutter poems under my breath, and one of them begins, "If you think you are beaten, you are…"

For former Cistercian football players of a certain age, this may seem a textbook case of classical conditioning, a behavioral response to the stimulus of inhabiting a very cold and deeply unhappy environment. Pavlov had his dogs; the football team had its puppies. Whatever the reason, I start saying my words as I climb, and I repeat them until the fever of despair has broken or the summit comes into view. And as I say them, I ask myself two questions:

Is this harder than two-a-day football practices at Cistercian were?

Would I prefer to be taking a math test?

The answer to both of those questions is an unqualified "No." I would rather climb the Matterhorn with Dr. Newcomb than retake one of his calculus exams, and I would sooner freeze on Denali than report for two-a-days in the first week of August. But I am always grateful for having endured the struggle of broiling football practices, and for having taken the rigorous math and science courses that challenged our future engineers and humbled the rest of us. Sometimes I wonder what I would think about, high up on a mountainside, if I did not have my share of struggles at Cistercian to look back on. Sometimes I wonder if I would be on a mountain at all. •

If you think you are beaten… you are.
If you think that you dare not… you don't.
If you think that you'd like to win
but feel that you can't
It's almost a cinch that you won't.
For out in this world you'll find
that success begins with a fellow's will.
It's all in the state of mind.

Yes, many a race is lost
before ever a step is run,
And many a coward falls
before his work is begun
Think big and your deeds will rise
Think small and you'll fall behind
Think that you can, and you will
For it's all in the state of mind.

If you think you are outclassed… you are.
You've got to think high to rise.
You've got to know that you can
Before you'll ever win a prize.
Life's battles don't always go
To the bigger or stronger man
But sooner or later the man who wins
Is the man who thinks he can.

—Walter D. Wintle

Community Calendar 2023

January 28
Jim & Lynn Moroney Award Dinner

January 28 and February 4
Admissions Testing

June 3–4
Reunions Weekend

CISTERCIAN
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
3660 Cistercian Road
Irving, Texas 75039

A Happy Life?



Fr. Roch Kereszty

A former student asked me to write about how people can reach happiness and peace in this life. Like one of the Desert Fathers, I offer a list of aphorisms, scattered ideas taken from experience and my reading over a lifetime. It is not that I have realized any of them, but just striving for them provides a foretaste of joy. Needless to say, the list is very incomplete and subjective.

- Discover yourself:
  a) Your origin is infinite personal love, and you will be restless until you find Him.
  b) You are born to fulfill your part in God's plan in helping the universe to its final destination. The life of a street sweeper and that of a scientist are equally valuable in God's eyes provided that their love is equal.
  c) Working on human progress (science, arts, technology) is important in God's plan, but your true wealth is love. How many lives have you touched in a loving way?
  d) You are a mixture of mud and spirit, conflicting desires pull you down or upward. It is your choice to sink lower than the level of animals or to allow grace to lift you up to the dignity of a child of God.
- Jesus learned what to say and do by listening to the Father, reading the Scriptures, and interpreting the events around him. Analogously, you are called to do the same.
- Start and end each day with prayer: "Lord, thank you for a new day. Please give me the grace to love you and those around me more than yesterday." Or, "May I love you and others today with your own love."
- Finish the day by giving thanks for all you received from God and asking for forgiveness where you failed.
- The more grateful you are, the more generous God will be to you. Gratitude opens God's treasure chest.
- God stops giving grace to the ungrateful out of mercy lest they become more guilty for ignoring his gifts (St. Bernard).
- Look back at your past. You will see the infinite love through which God has guided even the smallest events in your life and how he speaks to you through them.
- Acknowledge and be happy for God's gifts to you, but give the credit to Jesus. St. Bernard said, "In yourself you are nothing, but in God's heart you are a treasure."
- When you are consumed by pride, ask God to show you your limitations. Your wait will be short.
- Do not be afraid to embrace your share in the cross of Christ. Everyone must carry a cross, but the unbeliever may kick and scream while the believer finds peace in knowing that he shares in the life-giving Cross of Christ.
- When you participate in the Eucharist, put yourself on the paten with the Host. In union with Christ, offer yourself to the Father and ask that you may become a gift for Him and for your neighbor.
- Realize that by receiving Christ, you become the Body of Christ (St. Augustine).
- For the Christian, the **real destination is God's Kingdom.** This life is a preparation for it, a school and playground. If you learn your lessons well and play honestly here on earth, you will be ready for heaven (Fr. Lóránt 'Sigmond, my saintly novice master in Hungary).
- Suffering out of love opens the door to deeper joy.
- The Christian does not seek suffering but cannot avoid it. Uniting his suffering with Christ's, he turns it into a treasure he can offer for the bodily or spiritual well-being of others.
- Envy is the source of much evil and makes it impossible to appreciate the good things God has given you.
- When torn by envy, thank God that he has given the other person what you are craving; this leads to friendship and peace.
- For people with only superficial faith, our life on earth is the real life; heaven is an uncertain shadow.
- Discover the signs of heaven's joy in your daily life and resist the lures of hell.

Some of these ideas may be familiar to you, but others are inviting you to try them out in your own life. •