

For family, friends, & alumni of Cistercian Preparatory School

CCISTERCIAN IRVING TEXASONTINUUM

Spring 2024

adapt/ adopt

Class of 2024 reflects on its
formative years at Cistercian

A SCHOOL ✱ FOR THE ✱ LORD'S SERVICE

From crypt to
classroom,
monastic Spirit
is ever present



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Published each spring and fall
by Cistercian Preparatory School

3660 Cistercian Road
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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

"We give you thanks, Almighty God, for all your blessings. You live and reign forever and ever. Amen."

As they have for six decades, our students end each school day with this short prayer of gratitude. One of this year's valedictorians concluded his



Fr. Paul McCormick

address with these very words as a way to capture the deep sense of appreciation his class enjoys. The feature article on Cistercian's Class of 2024 (written by the

seniors themselves) expounds upon other distinguishing characters and characteristics of this class.

Gratitude is a theme that emerges in our second feature article as well. The piece explores all that goes into Cistercian being Cistercian as the only monastic school in North Texas. The Abbey has always had and continues to have profound effects on the unique character of the School and its distinctive approach to the formation, education, and care of students, inculcating such characteristic monastic virtues as

community, humility, poverty, diligence, self-sacrifice, and stability/continuity. The result is often an admirable gutsy/feisty brotherhood among students and alumni with a "can do" attitude and confidence for doing remarkable things.

Be sure to check out News & Notes and Class Notes, and enjoy the wit of alumnus and current teacher **Patrick Spence '08** who reflects humorously on gardening and other life lessons picked up one day on a walk from the School to the Abbey Church.

Finally, on our back cover, Fr. Thomas explains how he employs the Cistercian motto of *Ardere et Lucere* (honoring our founding Hungarians) and the principle of *humanitas* ("hospitality") in his senior theology class as monastic pearls to illustrate the innate harmony between our endeavors at both the School and the Abbey.

Indeed, there are so many blessings for which to end each and every day with thanks!

Fr. Paul

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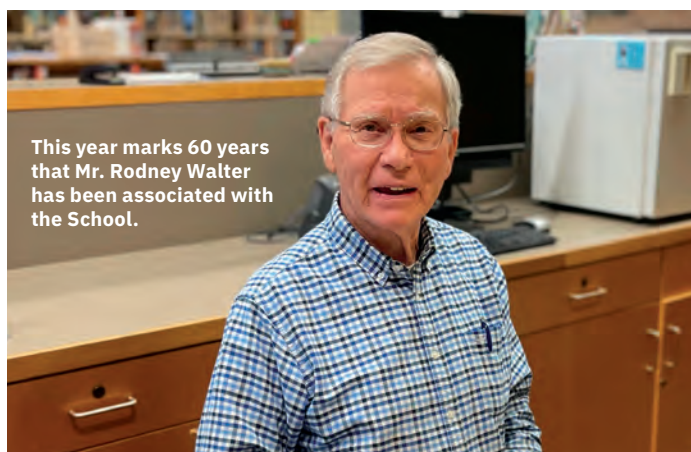
News & Notes



Hillary Award

Michael Peterman '24 was presented the 2024 Tom Hillary Award at the annual athletic awards presentation. 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. "Michael has a drive and internal fire that separates Cistercian competitors from our opponents. Coach Hillary himself would have been proud of this young man

for earning this award, because he expected his athletes to represent Cistercian with class while not shying away from a physical battle," said **Jack Dorn '05**, athletic director.



This year marks 60 years that Mr. Rodney Walter has been associated with the School.

Alumni College Panel

In January, Cistercian welcomed back **Andrew Arras '20** (UT), **Mike Stautz '21** (Notre Dame), **Paul Miller '20** (Hillsdale), and **Kyle Blessing '20** (Texas A&M) for the annual Alumni College Panel. The panel offered advice on meeting with professors, forming new friendships while staying connected to old ones, and different ways to get involved on a college campus, including creating their own opportunities. They also encouraged



students to lower the anxiety surrounding college admissions. The panel assured the boys that they're going to find success wherever they end up "because of the education and skills you learn at Cistercian."

Work of Heart Award

Roberto Munguia was honored in front of students, faculty, and staff by The Catholic Foundation with its Work of Heart Award. Recognizing outstanding Catholic school educators



for their "tenure and leadership, acts of kindness or charity, Christian example, and for simply going the extra mile for an individual student, family or the community," this well-deserved award included \$1,000.

Hal Tehan Scholar

The Catholic Foundation's Hal Tehan Scholar for this year, **Joshua Hays '25**, was selected among all juniors enrolled in Catholic schools in the diocese based on his impressive essay "What My Catholic Education Means to Me," his Form Master's letter of recommendation, and a long list of notable personal achievements. Josh spoke so well at the dinner in receiving the award that several asked for a copy of his essay, and Bishop Burns, as he took the stage, joked about having "to follow" him!



DSG Dance

This year saw the return of a beloved Cistercian tradition: The Down Syndrome Guild Dance. With 140 student volunteers and over 40 guests, the luau-themed lunchroom was packed with games, music, and dancing. Before hosting, volunteers reflected on the inspiring stories of two famous Catholic servants of the special-needs community: Eunice Kennedy Shriver (founder of the Special Olympics) and Venerable Dr. Jérôme Lejeune (discoverer of Trisomy 21). Special thanks to **Jack Landis '25** and his father for bringing Howdy Homemade—a business whose employees all have special needs—to serve their awesome ice cream during the dance.



Gospel of Life Disciples and Dwellings

Several Cistercian students, parents, teachers, and monks joined forces during spring break to volunteer at the Gospel of Life Disciples + Dwellings, a special residence for the



elderly and infirm started by Sr. Maria of the Trinity (www.gospeloflifedisciples.org). Among other tasks, they replaced old raised beds with new ones built on site. It was a great way to relax over the break and an edifying encounter with a wonderful philanthropy.

Exodus is a gold medalist

SNAPSHOT, Cistercian's 2023 yearbook, received a gold medal rating from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, scoring 873 of 1000 points and earning All-Columbian Honors. One judge shared: "The book is all about the students at Cistercian and their lives, their thoughts, their hopes and dreams. One cannot help but feel a connection to the school community after reading this book. That's what makes it so special." In response to this judge's comment, Editor-in-chief **Mateo Creixell '23** responded simply, "Mission accomplished."

Junior World Affairs Council (JWAC)

Cistercian's Junior World Affairs Council (JWAC) chapter gathered in February at the University of Texas at Arlington for the Dallas WorldQuest competition. The AWQ tests knowledge over 10 subject areas that change each year to reflect current events. **Ryan Fang '24, Keegan Cobleigh '24, Rithvik Gabri '24, and Rafael Ramirez '24** (Team 1) placed eighth; **Neel Perumandla '24, Owen Putnam '24, Thomas Sfikas '24 and Will Brittian '24** (Team 2) finished tenth; and **Owen Forsthoffer '24, Matthew George '26, and Christian Oh '26** (Team 3) took the twentieth spot among 77 teams entered from the DFW area. "We've made great progress in just three years, and I look forward to one of our teams finishing in the top three," said Lisa Hernandez, JWAC sponsor.



CPR certification for faculty and staff

Cistercian's athletic trainer Philip Agtarap and school nurse Kathy Nevitt teamed up to lead CPR classes for faculty and staff this semester with a goal of 100% CPR certification by



2025. Helping make this possible, Dallas Southwest Osteopathic Physicians, Inc. partnered with the American Heart Association to provide 13 additional CPR training dummies as well as two additional AED devices for our campus!

College Transition Series

Jacque and Adam Hoard '17 addressed seniors in one of four presentations in the annual College Transition Series. The couple encouraged the boys to always strive to remain men of virtue when interacting with girls. Sharing their own stories and experiences, they also stressed the importance of a well-grounded faith for making the most of the college experience and dating.



Fr. Bernard at Form II retreat



News & Notes

Form I Field Study

In what has become a yearly tradition, Form I embarked on a field study to the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center in the spring, performing experiments to test water quality and collecting macroinvertebrates (which included a large leech, some fish fry, and freshwater shrimp). As a bonus, the boys were greeted by an ornithologist collecting data after catching and releasing birds. Another great Cistercian day in the field!



BraveArt 2024

This year's BraveArt theme was "Work of His Hands..." from Psalm 19. "After listening to feedback from our students, we shifted our focus to even more hands-on art workshops this time around," said Tasia Magill, head of fine arts. New workshops included mixed media print, pasta making, calligraphy, and music recording. During lunch, the Art



Board hosted four different events: Play-doh Sculpture Tournament, Dry Erase Sketch Competition, Dueling Musicians Competition, and Bach's Lunch Medley. The welded senior sculpture was a saint, the likes of which we have not seen on campus: a Saint Bernard dog, ready to come to the rescue. It was a wonderful, creative, handmade day!

Middle School Science Fair

In January, Cistercian hosted its inaugural middle school science fair. Students in Forms II through IV presented independent research projects covering topics from biology to computer science. Three excellent projects were chosen as winners: **Erik Visan '30** (The Food War: Organic or Conventional Produce?), **Chase Theriot '28** (The Burning Question: Are Spicier Chips Also More Acidic?), and **Zac Vaid-Shaikh '28** (Classifying Countries Using Machine Learning Models). Vaid-Shaikh advanced to the Dallas Regional Science Fair at Fair Park, and Visan earned an honorable mention in his category for outstanding work and presentation.

Victory at the Diocesan Middle School Religion Bowl

Cistercian successfully defended its title at this year's Diocesan Middle School Religion Bowl. With 30 schools from across the diocese, each school sent four of its best religion scholars—one student from each of grades five through eight. To prepare for the tournament, each team member was responsible for different categories of knowledge—from church history to Scripture, sacraments, catechism, popes, and saints. One of our student competitors said, "We were nervous at the beginning, with everyone looking at us when we arrived, but we settled in, focused, and worked together to reclaim the trophy. It was awesome!"



Fusion Corps competes at Worlds

Last year, Cistercian's robotics team, Fusion Corps 6672, qualified automatically for the World Championship after winning the event in 2022. This year, the team had to earn their way, ultimately ending the season as a finalist in the Curie Division. According to one metric, the team ranked 72/3474 in the World, 63/2806 in the U.S., and 4/173 in Texas. Fusion Corps brought home its share of awards from multiple competitions this season too, including the Creativity Award sponsored by Rockwell Automation (FIRST at Texas Fort Worth event finalist), the Industrial Design Award sponsored by General Motors (FIRST at Texas Dallas event winner), and the Industrial Design Award sponsored by General Motors (FIRST at Texas District Championship finalist).

Congratulations to the robotics team, Fr. Mark, Dr. Kroll, and the generous volunteer mentors and donors. The leadership and support of graduating seniors **Keegan Cobleigh '24**, **Owen Forsthoffer '24**, **Rithvik Gabri '24**, **Nam Ha '24**, **Max Harold '24**, **Saaketh Kari '24**, **James Novinski '24**, **Neel Perumandla '24**, **Owen Putnam '24**, **Gabriel Ramos '24**, **Thomas Sfikas '24**, and **Jonathan Zabolio '24** will be missed!



Jim and Lynn Moroney Award Dinner 2024

In front of a full house at the Park City Club, **Matthew Nevitt '97** was honored in January as this year's Jim and Lynn Moroney Award recipient. Introduced by his brother, **Austin Nevitt '04**, Matthew's speech reflected his remarkable commitment to his family and the Cistercian community. It was a wonderful and inspiring evening filled with humor and joy!



Bright future for Quiz Bowl program

It was a memorable year for Cistercian Quiz Bowl! At their first tournament, three Upper School teams finished in a three-way tie for first; **Ryan Fang '24** finished third at the National Quiz Bowl Tournament in Chicago; and the team had a first-place finish at their final regional tournament. At the Small School National Championship Tournament, Cistercian finished eleventh. At that tournament, sophomore **Christian Oh '26** was ranked 14/284 and received the "Rising Star Award." The Upper School team heads to Atlanta soon for their final national tournament of the year.



For the first time, the Middle School team traveled out of state to the Middle School National Quiz Bowl Tournament. **Henry Butler '28**, **Dhruv Gohel '28**, **Andrew Kosel '28** and **Canon Blackwell '28** made the trip worthwhile by finishing 13th out of 1600 teams. The future of Quiz Bowl at Cistercian remains bright!



Upper School Drama takes on a modern-day classic

This spring, Upper School students put on a new, not-yet-published production of *Cyrano* by Jason O'Connell and Brenda Withers based on the play *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand. **John Paul Jacob '24** shined as the title character; **Nam Ha '24** had the audience rolling in the aisles with his hilarious take on the bad guy, Count De Guiche, and **Santiago Barajas '24** played Cyrano's best friend, Le Bret, with heart and also served as the production's dramaturge (having studied the original *Cyrano de Bergerac* for his French Senior Seminar). "This year, we are saying goodbye to a talented group of seniors, eight of whom were involved in this production. They will be missed and are leaving large shoes to fill. They have set a beautiful precedent of what this program can do," said Tasia Magill, head of fine arts.



Interscholastic Colloquium

The tenth annual Interscholastic Colloquium was hosted by Jesuit and focused on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, celebrating the dystopian classic's 75th anniversary. Select student essays composed by students from eight area private schools were publicly presented, including those by Cistercian students **George Saliga '25**, **Byron Duhé '25**, **George Birdsong '26**, and **Ryan Kattady '27**.



News & Notes

Keeping alumni & alumni parents connected one city at a time

Headmaster Fr. Paul McCormick and Director of Development Erin Hart have been busy hosting happy hours all over the map! Starting with Fort Worth in February to Dallas in March, they wrapped up their yearly tour in San Francisco and Seattle in April. Keeping up with community is always a good time!



Ft. Worth

Jim Reisch



Dallas

Jim Reisch



San Francisco



Seattle

Faculty, staff, and coaches make their escape

To promote a greater sense of community, faculty, staff, and coaches took a break from their normal schedules to participate in Escape Room exercises. With the help of alumnus and designer **William Peirson '01**, the group enjoyed solving puzzles and problems to make their escapes before enjoying a meal together.



AI presentation

Mr. Kaushik Gohel, a Form IV father, hosted an on-campus Artificial Intelligence (AI) presentation for Upper School students in January. A distinguished panel of speakers included several utilizing AI in different industries, along with **William Howison '03**, who shared his experiences with AI in legal practice, and Fr. John Bayer, who added a philosophical perspective. "I was especially glad we included Fr. John on the panel," said Greg Graham, director of technology. "He was able to address the deep concerns we have about AI threatening our humanity."



Purple Comet Math Meet

The four-member Middle School math team of **Dhruv Gohel '28, Markham Hay '29, Louis Flaherty '28, and Shivank Satyal '28** finished first in Texas in the prestigious Purple Comet Math Meet. Competing against top schools in the nation and world, they also placed 37/192 in the nation.



Jim Reisch

The solar eclipse was incredible and even better together!

The Stations of the Cross Trail is finished and dedicated

On Palm Sunday, Fr. Abbot Peter dedicated the Stations of the Cross Trail with many current and alumni families along with friends in attendance. He offered that this trail is open to the whole Cistercian community as a beautiful outdoor place to walk and pray throughout the year, and especially during Holy Week. It was wonderful to see so many groups and families taking him up on this offer on Good Friday. This renovation was made possible by the Formation Beyond the Classroom Capital Campaign and is a blessing to both the School and Abbey!



Photos by Jim Reisch



The Cross-Country Trail is 80% complete

Another wonderful result of the Formation Beyond the Classroom Capital Campaign: The premier 3.1-mile cross-country trail that winds through Cistercian's 82 acres by the baseball fields, tennis courts, pond, and Trinity River before linking with the top of the Stations of the Cross Trail is almost complete. The final piece is a new bridge providing access for the first time from the lower middle school parking lot directly to the Hidden Field, along with an attractive gathering space where runners can start and end their race. Forms can enjoy cookouts before football games, and classes can meet outside. The trail and gathering space will be a memorial to Steven S Reinemund, Jr. '99. This project will be completed this summer and dedicated in time for the fall cross-country season and a middle school cross-country meet.





For the Class of 2024, the senior classrooms have served as the melting pot for all the different personalities in our Form. In any Cistercian classroom, students can be seen hurrying to finish homework or cramming for an upcoming test or quiz. If homework is not a current priority, we might be discussing major sports news, playing various fun board games with Fr. Philip, or plotting what new substance to put in someone's chair before they sit down. Amid this chaos, our Form feels inseparable. We have taken this School as our own, growing with it and leaving a unique mark. We have handled so much adversity together that even if Smoky John's Bar-B-Que Sauce ends up on our shorts, we know that we have each other's back. In the face of the many challenges, we do not back down—we adapt.

adapt/ adopt

**by Thomas Sfikas '24
and Ryan Spurl '24**



Middle School

It is hard to believe that almost a decade has passed since we entered the ominous Form I classrooms. Our journey, however, started even earlier. At a pool party before our first day of school, a bond formed immediately. It took only a sand volleyball pit, a soccer ball, and the game Nuke 'Em to show every anxious fifth grader that we'd have a group of true brothers for the rest of middle school. The excitement didn't stop there. As First Formers, we dove into trends that enthralled us for months at a time. First, we all could be seen tossing yo-yo tricks. Then, it was who could solve a Rubik's Cube the fastest and make the coolest patterns. Chess, the culmination of our competitive spirit, became the most exciting game of all. Through these trends, our Form meshed personalities and interests, slowly molding us into young men who could support each other in any situation. This bond stayed with us throughout middle school and was most evident on the Texas History Trip.



Every Cistercian student looks forward to the Texas History Trip, and our entire class was incredibly excited to take part in this time-honored tradition. From finishing two full rounds of "100 Bottles of Milk on the Wall" on the bus to making incredible drink concoctions of water, salt and anything else within our reach at a Mexican restaurant, this trip seemed like a perfect bonding opportunity. Our much-anticipated trip took an unexpected turn on our second night when the hotel's electricity shut off during a tremendous storm. In the face of such a scary and dangerous situation, we decided it would be best to slide around on our stomachs on the ground and run around in the mud outside our hotel. Illuminated only by the golden arches of a nearby McDonald's, complete chaos ensued



as 40 sleepless seventh graders slid from room to room, had mud fights, and even marched into the hotel lobby behind one of the parents chanting “We want ice cream!” The fun continued as the entire Form gathered in one room for a dance party and culminated with one of the chaperones bursting in and proceeding to jump up and down on the bed. Michael Peterman said, “As a third former, the power outage was scary, but the spontaneous dance party egged on by one of the chaperones turned the night into a thrilling experience.” That would not be the last time we faced a challenge, adapted, and made an unexpected situation fun.



together. Our Form worked around the obstacles that stood in our way and used them to become even stronger as brothers for life, ready to tackle the next step.

High School

On the first day of high school, forty of us put on our school uniforms—a white polo and pants (optional)—to join the day’s first Microsoft Teams video call. This was high school in August 2020. Most of the class was familiar, but a quarter of the class was new! For the ten new guys, this wasn’t their first chance to meet us since we had written welcome letters and many of us had connected online. We created a Discord platform so we could connect through text, voice, and video. As much as this facilitated our connection outside of class, it was hard for some to resist listening to Fr. Raphael lecture about church history without simultaneously building a house together in Minecraft.

Thankfully, Cistercian was among the earliest schools to return to in-person learning, and we were back within a month (with masks). Our freshman year, however, was very limited. There was no homecoming and no football season. Despite this, Mr. Nied and our parents adapted, organizing a socially distanced freshman mixer on the football field.

Sophomore year was full of surprises. Instead of Fr. Lawrence, Dr. Newcomb taught Algebra II, and we were the first to have Mr. Saliga for two consecutive years. These changes, in addition to the return of



The Texas History Trip was not the only middle school bonding experience for our Form. Many of us were active in Cistercian’s drama program, competing in improv competitions and contributing to

middle school theater productions. “Being a part of middle school improv competitions was super fun, and it taught me important life skills like public speaking and teamwork,” said John Paul Jacob. Under the direction of Mrs. Magill, many of us discovered hidden talents in our call to the limelight and brought much of that love with us into upper school theater.

We moved through middle school at a normal pace, and it looked like we would have our breakout year as freshmen in high school. That is, until we heard the joyous news that we would get two weeks off for Spring Break instead of one. Little did we know that we were going to be trapped by a worldwide pandemic, not allowed to return to school, and required to finish middle school online. While online class was difficult for everyone, we adapted and found ways to stay connected. We could hop on video calls on a whim or play video games





football and homecoming, made the year feel like a second freshman year. We jumped in and embraced every opportunity, as displayed by our incredible attendance at homecoming workdays and the madness at the Homecoming Dance. The return of intramural tournaments, such as volleyball and frisbee, also caught our interest too. All in all, it was a great time for us to come out of our shells.

As upperclassmen, the high school excitement settled, and we shifted our focus toward community. Mr. Nied and Mr. Saliga catalyzed this goal during our junior retreat, asking us to arrange ourselves into share groups and open up to each other with trust and humility. Following the retreat, share groups met voluntarily each week, both in and out of school, to pray together and discuss the unsung things in our lives.

It is for reasons such as these that, in addition to our general love for dogs, we constructed a St. Bernard for our BraveArt metal sculpture. The St. Bernard is known for being strong and loyal, traits which undoubtedly have been cultivated within our Form. We are loyal to our Form Master and to each other. The St. Bernard is also a rescue dog. At times when classmates have been metaphorically lost in the snow, others have been known to reach out and enkindle the hope and love necessary for change. Fr. Raphael beams, "[The seniors] burst at the seams with joy, excited for no other reason than to be alive and with each other. [They] dug me out of [my] snow, gave me a draught of joy, and have walked steadily with me since. [They're] a St. Bernard in my life."

Sports

When talking about one's time at Cistercian, sports must be addressed. Almost every year, at least half of each Form participates in a sport, and we were no different. In the classic manner of our class, however, we could not get by easily. In our sophomore season of football, some of us accompanied the varsity football team to the SPC 3A championship. As juniors, we helped lead the team to an 8-2 record, as well as beat St. Marks for the first time in 25 years. However, going into our senior football season, Coach Burk accepted a collegiate position and moved. This left the football team with a massive hole to fill due to Coach Burk's impact on the football program and players.

Nevertheless, we persevered and went into the season ready to adapt and face any adversity. The core group of Jacob Brown, Grant Nevitt, Michael Peterman, and Ryan Spurl played every game with heart on both sides of the ball and helped lead those around them by example. Charlie Humphreys (committed to Yale Football) helped provide great coverage and a gap that Nick Schieferdecker and Patrick Garda could use to threaten any defense. While our season was more challenging than expected, we ended with an amazing homecoming win over Greenhill. Football was not the only sport to challenge our class. Keegan Cobleigh, a top-ten

runner in SPC, guided a young and anxious cross-country team to a successful season.

In the winter season, our swim team put on an amazing performance. Tom Gambow, Sam Rogers and Billy Neylon guided a group of young Hawks to a silver medal in the

SPC championship. Gambow and Rogers even adopted the middle school swim team, giving up some of their mornings to train the younger Hawks and ensure the winning mentality carries on past them. Rogers said, "It was rewarding to see the improved times of my swimmers. It was also special to get to know some of the middle school swimmers, especially since we don't see them often during the school day." On the basketball court, the dynamic duo of Grant Nevitt and Ryan Spurl led the basketball team to a third-place finish in the SPC Championship. Spurl and Nevitt led the team in every statistic imaginable, and their basketball legacy will be remembered by the younger players on the team. The Cistercian soccer team, led by seniors Patrick Garda and Michael Peterman, boasted a perfect season. They gave up no goals and did not lose a single game. This absolute domination allowed the team to be ranked 13th in Texas, a feat that will forever be etched in Cistercian history.

Finally, the spring season was one of the most successful in Cistercian sports history. Track and field





shattered records! Ben Refakis broke both the 100-meter and 4x100-meter school records; Ryan Spurl shattered his old discus school record by ten feet and even broke the school shot put record by two feet; Jacob Brown also made an impressive run in the SPC championship with the high jump, 400-meter race, and the 4x400-meter race, leading the team to a first-place finish. Brown said, “This year’s SPC meet was my favorite meet ever. After three seasons with Coach Harris, this team bought

and executed like we needed to. The track culture is strong and competitive, and I look forward to seeing what this team achieves in the future.” The baseball team, led by Owen Putnam and Josh Reaves, made an impressive start with new head baseball coach Ricky Barrett. The team proceeded to make an incredible run in the SPC Championship, finishing second overall. The tennis team, led by Thomas Sfikas and Ryan Fang, started the season with an influx of talent along with new coach Scott Pollock. They were undefeated all the way to their first-place win in SPC.

The sports culture this year at Cistercian was incredibly strong, and we are proud to leave our legacy for younger students to follow.

Extracurriculars

Lunch is a beloved period for any Cistercian student, but the Class of 2024, in particular, was always ready to play a new game. Freshman and sophomore year, our class dominated a PVC nine-square court, a number of injuries even having occurred from this sometimes risky game. As do all nice things around a group of rowdy boys, the nine-square court eventually broke and was moved out of our domain. Thereafter, we adopted basketball and soccer as popular lunch-time activities. Senior year, StuCo (student council) seniors campaigned for a ping-pong table and others brought frisbees, thus adding these two sports to the bunch. Those who wanted to stay indoors could be found playing Chicken Fight, a retail card game invented by classmate Diego Avila.

Artistic talent is pervasive in our Form. Through ArtBoard-organized events such as Coffeehouse, we were given many opportunities to showcase our talents. Classmates Jonathan Zabolio, John Paul Jacob, Jonny Sanford, and Thomas Sfikas formed an acoustic/folk band, while Aidan Smith, Rafael Ramirez,



and Will Brittian formed a rock band. “The seniors have a huge presence at Coffeehouse and will be dearly missed,” said Fr. Ambrose, director of student activities. Matthew Kim, Mauricio Menchaca, Jonathan Zabolio, John Paul Jacob (ArtBoard chair), Jonny Sanford, Nam Ha, and Will Brittian were prominent thespians. John Paul said, “Drama is a great way to be a leader for the younger Forms. Underclassmen look up to seniors to see the achievement that’s possible through dedication.” Musicians Thomas Sfikas, John Paul Jacob, Charlie Humphreys, Jacob Brown, and Jonathan Zabolio continued “Miracle Melodies,” a musical group comprised of seniors who lead praise and worship for the school community at the Notre Dame School of Dallas.

The Class of 2024 is a remarkable group of talented leaders and innovators. Several boys have earned their Eagle Scout: Owen Forsthofer, Charlie Humphreys, Aidan Smith, Zeb Minear, Jacob Brown, and John Paul Jacob. Finance Club leaders Rithvik Gabri, Sam Rogers,

Tom Gambow, and Ben Refakis won the Texas Stock Market Game. The robotics team, led by captains Will Brittian, James Novinski, Neel Perumandla, Gabe Ramos, and Thomas Sfikas, won the FIRST Robotics World Championship in 2022 and qualified for Worlds again in 2023 and 2024. Billy Neylon, in addition to becoming Cistercian’s first diver, earned the rank of captain in the Civil Air Patrol. The Junior World Affairs Council, led by Keegan Cobleigh, connected with Ursuline to initiate joint cultural events. Led by Ryan Spurl and Dominic Halbmaier, respectively, many seniors worked on the award-winning yearbook *Exodus* and school newspaper *The Informer*. Seniors on the Community Service Council—Patrick Garda, Owen Forsthofer, and Mauricio Menchaca—brought back the Down Syndrome Guild Dance. Seniors on Student

Council—Charlie Humphreys, Jacob Brown, James Novinski and Thomas Sfikas—organized what many students throughout the high school have called “the most fun year yet,” with sports tournaments, scavenger hunts, new amenities, and even a faculty dodgeball tournament.

Form Master

Mr. Gary Nied is one of the very few laymen who have been asked to serve as a Form Master. As our Form Master, Mr. Nied has always embodied the spirit of serene, monastic stability which Cistercian is founded upon. He never pushed us to do more than we were capable of, but neither did he allow us to squander the gifts we had been given. He always expected

that we would accomplish what was needed and live up to the standards set out for us—not for the sake of transaction or utility, but out of a true sense of humble gratitude, a recognition of the beauty and value of ourselves and those around us, our teachers and friends.

It was in

this environment that our Form was able to grow, to flower, and ultimately to bear fruit. Indeed, our brotherhood is a testament to our classmates as well as Mr. Nied’s gentle formation. When the Form comes together, it is never spurred on by an external mandate but instead by the excited, imaginative vision of each individual. And once one person has burned with this blazing anticipation, the fire spreads quickly. Whether for service or shenanigans, this mutual enkindling and enlightening is at the heart of our fraternal bond. As our Form departs for the next phase of life, we hope to leave this legacy for the next generation of Cistercian students and carry that same passion to each of our destinations; that we might “set the world on fire, and would that it were already kindled!” (Félix Ravaisson, *Selected Essays*, edited by Mark Sinclair, p. 267) •



A photograph of three men in clerical attire standing in a modern church interior. The man on the left is older, balding, and holds a wooden cane. The man in the center is younger, wears glasses, and has a large pectoral cross. The man on the right is middle-aged. They are all wearing white cassocks with black surplices. Behind them is a large, minimalist crucifix mounted on a concrete wall. The church has a modern design with large concrete pillars and a high ceiling with recessed lighting. Benches are visible on either side of the central aisle.

A SCHOOL ✠ FOR THE ✠ LORD'S SERVICE

Bob Greenfield

IN SOLEMN STILLNESS SURROUNDED BY MONOCHROMATIC MARBLE WALLS AND SMOOTH CONCRETE FLOOR AND CEILING, ONE FEELS SUSPENDED IN TIME AND SPACE, BETWEEN THE PAST AND A GLORIOUS FUTURE, BETWEEN THE HERE AND A THERE MANY MILES AWAY. IN A VERY REAL SENSE, THE CRYPT IN THE ABBEY CHURCH IS THE CORNERSTONE UPON WHICH THE SCHOOL IS BUILT. THIS IS WHERE THE SCHOOL'S FOUNDERS, AND THOSE WHO HAVE FOLLOWED AND WILL FOLLOW THEM, BECOME PHYSICALLY A PART OF ITS FOUNDATION.

In the strictest sense, Cistercian Preparatory School is a monastery school, but what it is and what it means to so many far exceeds any such label. It is a school that is monastic in its nature. The communal way of life of the monks is palpable in its hallways, classrooms and playing fields. The virtues, values and holiness of the monks permeate every aspect of campus life.

Abbot Peter Verhalen '73, alumnus, teacher and former headmaster, likens the classroom to a family. "We hope the boys learn that it's through this group of classmates who become friends that each boy becomes fully himself. This is a reflection of what we're trying to do in the abbey. St. Bernard said it like this: I am loved by God as I am. This lifts me up and impels me to love the other as I myself am loved. I experience God's love for me and I share that with others," he said.

A SCHOOL FOR THE LORD'S SERVICE

Saint Benedict, who wrote the great monastic Rule which Cistercian monks follow, said of his Rule that the monastery is 'a school for the Lord's service.' In many ways, this applies to the prep school as well.

"It's a symbiotic relationship between the monastery and school," said Fr. Bernard Marton, who escaped from Hungary at the age of 15, finished high school in Dallas, enrolled at the University of Dallas, and then became a novice and continued his formation at Our Lady of Dallas, Cistercian Abbey. He went on to become a longtime teacher and the school's third headmaster. "Without the school, the monastery wouldn't be the same. And the same can be said of the school. Without the monastery, the school would be different."

For students and lay faculty, the spiritual presence of the monastery in the school is inescapable. As an alumnus, math teacher, assistant headmaster and head of upper school, Greg Novinski '82 should know. He feels it every day. "The Faculty/Staff Handbook points out that the lay teachers and staff 'participate in the daily work of the monastery by

agreeing to enter into their professions with similar goals: individual transformation while living in community through service.' That is, we, both monks and lay teachers, have the same opportunity to give our lives to this place and receive the blessings of growth that come with striving for community. The faculty share in the fundamental charism of the monastery when

we join this endeavor. Each one of us become more ourselves by building community and, by coming to know ourselves better, we come to know God. We are always asking ourselves to grow and also asking others to help us grow."

CONSTANCY, CONSISTENCY

Much is expected of Cistercian students. The curriculum is rigorous. The homework can pile up and become overwhelming if a student gets behind and doesn't maintain a daily routine of study. In many ways, the monks inculcate their constancy to prayer, their rituals and their way of life to the students. Fr. Lawrence Brophy '01, math teacher, form master and head of middle school, saw this as a student. He lives it now as a monk.

"It can be easy to cut corners on the little things," he said. "But part of the wisdom of monastic life is the schedule, doing the same thing every day. When we submit to this, after a while it gets through our stubborn wills and we realize that praising God is important, and we'll make sacrifices to do it. And I think there is a positive connection between the day in, day out life of formation that the monks live and the day in, day out education and formation that goes on in the school."

Alumnus and form master Fr. Philip Lastimosa '00 tries to share with his students in the prep school what four-times-a-day communal prayer has shown him.

"At other schools and in corporations, the guiding voice is whoever shouts the loudest in the boardroom," Fr. Philip said. "What we as monks do is listen to God in prayer, and from this we hope to find His wisdom so we can guide our students properly. A huge part of prayer—and many people have not learned this—is not just reciting prayers or even talking to God, but rather it's about listening to God. It's hard to teach that. One of the stories my Form Master, Fr. Julius, shared with me later in life was a story about St. John Vianney, who asked an old farmer one day what he was doing when he simply

sat in church day after day gazing at the tabernacle. Nothing, the old man said. I'm looking at God and He's looking at me. That is what true prayer is."

Fr. Julius Leloczky has experienced monastery schools most of his life. He attended a Benedictine monastery school growing up in Hungary before coming to Our Lady of Dallas to teach in the prep school where he has served as a Form Master for 32 years.

"Bringing together a group of boys for eight years in a Form really shapes the group into a community that's like a family," he said. "As a Form Master, you become a father figure to them, and many of the boys feel that being with their classmates becomes a second home for them. So, in that sense, Fr. Philip and Fr. Augustine are some of my sons," (he smiles proudly and laughs softly at the thought), "and since both of them have gone on to become Form Masters, the boys in their forms are my grandsons."

STABILITY, LONGEVITY

Cistercian monks take a vow of stability, but Abbot Peter points out that this is more of a vow to a certain community than to a specific place. "Our vow of stability," he explains, "is first off to the monks in our community. The monastery here is the remnant of the community of monks from Zirc, Hungary. The monks who came here from Zirc are living out their vow of stability thousands of miles from where it started."

Given the longevity of many of the lay faculty and staff, one might think that some sort of vow of longevity was hidden in the fine print of their contracts. As it turns out, the devotion and humility of the monks can be contagious.

"I'm just getting started," said Tim Parker '90 (director of facilities, biology teacher, form master, and former basketball coach). "I was planning on medical school when Fr. Peter, who was headmaster at the time, asked me to teach at Cistercian. I thought I'd do it for a year and then go to med school, and here I am 28 years later."

Of course, Parker is correct. He really is just getting started when compared with the likes of Rodney Walter (associated with the school for

60 years and a teacher for 46 years), Bob Haaser (55 years a teacher, form master and coach) and Father Gregory's 46 years as a teacher and form master. Alongside these longtimers is this year's class of retirees from the faculty, Tom Pruitt (46 years) and Roberto Munguia (45 years).

"I was very happy here as a student, but I didn't really come to appreciate this place until I came back to teach," Parker said. "And even then, it took me another 10 or 15 years before I came to really get just how uniquely special this place is."

But Parker's 10 or 15 years is just a blink of an eye for the Cistercian Order.

"I look at that painting on the second floor above the main entrance to the school, and I think that's who we are," Haaser explains. "That's where we've come from all the way back to 1098 when the Cistercian Order was founded." You'll notice that he includes himself in the Cistercian family, as every student, faculty and staff member does.

Jack Dorn '05 is now director of athletics and physical education as well as head varsity basketball coach. "In all their humility, the monks try to attribute the stability of the place to the staff and faculty, and the students and parents, but we all know that they are the ones who provide it. It starts at the top of the hill and trickles down to all of us."

The Workers WORKING FOR THE GREATER GOOD

Like all schools, Cistercian depends on the parents of students, friends, alumni and other supporters who tirelessly volunteer in many different ways. Some of these volunteers have specialized professional knowledge and skills that they gladly share with the leaders of the school and abbey.

"For me," said David Haley, father of two alumni (David '06 and Connor '09), former School Board member and current member of the Investment Committee, "it's a privilege to give the monks my professional expertise to help them achieve best practices. I'm sure it's the same for everyone who has ever served them. What the monks and the school are doing is important. Serving them is an opportunity for me to support that and, after all, what else would I be doing that would be as important?"

Jere Thompson '74 was eight years old when he arrived at the new Cistercian campus in 1965. He graduated

in 1974 and has been a School Board member for 39 years. He has witnessed many changes to the campus. More importantly, he continues to witness the growing bonds between the school and so many alumni.

"In the early days, the campus was very simple. The Middle School sat alone on a bluff. Landscaping was minimal. There was mud everywhere. Caked shoes lined the hallway tiles outside the classroom doors. We played soccer on a white gravel field. We climbed ropes and learned to fence. The Trinity River seemed to flood over its banks every year. Cistercian was different," Thompson said. "A lot of people—the monks, lay staff and parents—were working very hard to build the school from scratch in the wilderness with little money. The monks contributed their teaching salaries to subsidize the school and help keep tuition relatively low. The Abbey made ends meet with salaries from the monks teaching at UD. Everyone effectively supported the prep school.

"Cistercian was fragile back then. But over time as its well-prepared graduates went off to fine institutions across the



Jim Reisch

Bob Haaser, Rodney Walter, Father Gregory, Tom Pruitt, Roberto Munguia

country, its reputation grew. The early students realized that the monks in their walk with God only wanted what was truly best for them. They began coming back for reunions. They returned to get married here and to have their children baptized in the new church. They knew that they would find their teachers and Form Masters still here and still interested in their lives. Cistercian becomes an anchor for all of us. That's unique."

Similar to Thompson's memories of the early days, the simplicity of the campus made a lasting first impression on a parent of three alums when he first visited with his wife in the late 1990s. "Our boys were coming from a public school that had a lot of fluff about it.

Contributed Services Explained

"Contributed Services" is the difference between the fair market value of the monks' service at the School (teaching and, especially, serving in administrative roles) and the actual compensation paid to the Abbey in the form of Abbey Support. Contributed Services is a tangible gift from the monks to the School in that the total payroll savings created by Contributed Services lowers school operating expenses and, therefore, helps to keep tuition down.

would be on education and not fluff. They don't get distracted here by a crack in a sign." Graham went on to become a habitual volunteer, and his wife, Sue, served as president of the Parents' Club. Another alumnus, who has donated

There were pictures of pink teddy bears on the walls and lots of fuzzy stuff like that," recalls Joe Graham, father of Peter '02, Parker '06 and Preston '06. "The first time we came to visit the school, a truck had backed into the sign at the entrance and the sign was tilted back and to the side a bit. And there was one dead flower in front of it. I saw that and I thought, this is our kind of place. There was something about the simplicity that told me our boys would get a good grounding here, that character building goes on here, that the focus

many hours of professional service to the school, said he felt he had a debt to repay. "First, I donate my time because my father did before me. So, it's partly out of loyalty to him, but also because the monks pushed me in the right direction," he said. "It was more than pushing though. I needed people who wouldn't let go of me, and they wouldn't. They saw potential in me when I couldn't or when I just didn't care."

Halley gained a more profound appreciation for the monks six years ago when his daughter entered religious life. "Here I am on an Investment Committee for a group of monks who have taken the vow of poverty," he laughed. "But their wisdom is just amazing, and I know firsthand the sacrifices they and their families have made and are making. The goals of the Form Masters and all the teachers are more ambitious than simply the mastery of an academic subject. They are guiding the boys through the Cistercian way that's centuries old. They are dedicated to prayer and service. That's beautiful and a powerful testament to the values they imbue in the students."

CENTURIES OF CONTINUITY

“What we’re doing here is not new,” Abbot Peter said. “As Cistercians, we have continuity that stretches back centuries, and we take pride in that continuity... a pride that’s rooted in gratitude and truth. I’ve seen what Fr. Damian and Fr. Denis and Fr. Bernard started as headmasters, and I wanted to continue that work. And now, Fr. Paul is doing the same. But we each did it in our own way.”

Headmaster Fr. Paul notes that his perspective is quite unique from that of his peers at other private schools. “At Cistercian, we really benefit from our monastic institutional memory,” he said. “Our headmasters aren’t here for five years and then move on. We live and die here. When it comes to building a building or tweaking the school’s program in a dramatic way, instead of thinking only about the next few school years, we as monks always make decisions with a lifetime perspective.”

It might be more accurate to say that the monks

have an eternal perspective. “Our formation of the boys is not about teaching them to succeed in a merely secular sense, such as accumulating the most awards or money or winning the most championships in athletics,” Fr. Paul explains. “Instead, it’s about helping each boy apply his talents toward a larger goal of maximizing his potential. We strive to teach the boys to be grateful for their gifts so they can use them to His greater glory... to the greater glory of God.”

The monks of Our Lady of Dallas, Cistercian Abbey don’t have to make their mark or leave their legacy here on earth. All one has to do is visit the crypt, breathe in the cool air and feel the always present spirit of the place to know that the mark they’ve made is for an eternity. •

Bob Greenfield is the father of Rob ’92 and Michael ’99, grandfather of Joseph Hess ’22 and spouse of Jackie Greenfield, Cistercian English teacher for 24 years until her retirement in 2017.

The Builders BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION

While the monks and the monastery are most certainly the foundation upon which the school has been built, several graduates share credit for how the buildings and campus look today. Architect Gary Cunningham ’72 designed many of the buildings, and Warren Andres ’77 oversaw their construction along with his father, Gil Andres, and brother Wade Andres ’75. Later, landscape architect David Hocker ’96 transformed the campus with the natural beauty of a sustainable design.

“I’ve been working on building projects with Cistercian for more than 30 years now,” Cunningham said rather incredulously. “The monks live at the school; it’s their life. I’ve seen how that plays out in the decisions they make for the school and how they reach those decisions. Sustainability and reuse of facilities is important to them. Abbot Peter has brought the school a long way toward native and natural and sustainable landscaping around the school.”

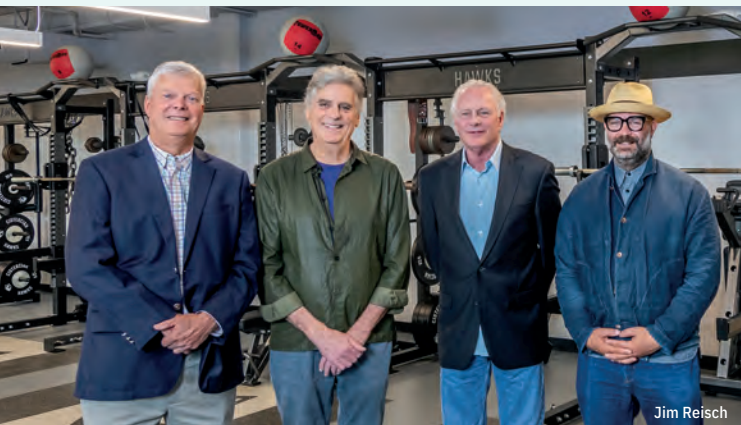
As a 24-year-old recent college graduate just getting started in the construction business, Andres remembers working with the first Abbot, Fr. Anselm Nagy, on the Science Building.

“I’d come by to pick up a check and I’d have to go into the abbot’s office to get it directly from him. He’d write it out while I stood waiting and then he’d say to me, ‘Warren, are you sure you have earned this?’ I had to account for every penny, and that’s the way it should be. After the first couple of jobs, I earned the trust of the monks and they would say, ‘Whatever

you say, Warren. We believe in you.’ And I wasn’t even a very good student at Cistercian. I was more of a football player. But the kind of responsibility they gave me and the trust they showed in me—that’s hard to measure.”

Similar sentiments were echoed by Cunningham. “I traveled to Hungary with Fr. Denis before designing the Abbey Church,” he said. “I attended a lot of meetings with all the monks at the time. One thing I was taken aback by was the wisdom that came from those meetings. Fr. Denis would sit back and let every monk voice his opinion, never interrupting or inserting himself into the discussion. He’d listen to everyone in the meeting. The respect and trust all the monks showed in me—well, I’m not sure I deserved it. But Fr. Denis knew that what I was doing was important to me because it was a chance for me to give back to the school.”

The bond he has with his Form Master has endured the intervening years. “I had nine siblings, and I had Fr. Henry as my Form Master for eight years,” Cunningham said. “He was another father to me. The rest of the monks, they were my parents too. Now, when I go into the crypt, it hits me every time. It has something to do with the physical proximity to my Form Master and Headmaster, Fr. Damian, and Fr. Denis too.”



The Builders: Warren Andres ’77, Gary Cunningham ’72, Wade Andres ’75, David Hocker ’96

Class Reunions



In Memoriam

Gabriel Garcia '86

Remembered by Fr. Julius Leloczky

At the Mass of Christian burial for Gabriel Garcia, I started with these words: “Gabriel, I am in a very deep mourning over your passing. It hurts. My dear friend, why did you leave us so young, so quickly, so early? When I visited you in the hospital the last time with J. D. Bondy '86, Matt Walter '86, and David Patrick '86, you were very ill but still so full of life, so energetic—talking, joking, recalling funny events from your school years. Where did your laughter disappear, where is your vigorous, dynamic personality?”



Gabriel Garcia

When I asked the members of our Class of '86 about their memories of Gabriel, Matt Walter recalled our last visit: “My lasting memory of Gabriel will be the beautiful moments we shared together in the hospital in his final days. He was so vociferous in expressing his love for you [Fr. Julius], Fr. Bernard, and the Class of '86. I will remember you ministering to him in his final hours, reminding him of God's love for us and comforting him with your words and your touch. I will also remember kissing him on the forehead to say goodbye and telling him how fortunate I was to be able to call him a friend and that we were classmates.”

Farewell, Gabriel, fly into God's loving arms, and rest there in peace forever.

Gordon Michael Bulger

Remembered by Bob Haaser

While working his 'day job' in the insurance business, Mike Bulger was asked to be an assistant Hawks football coach in the first half of the 1970s, specializing in line play and defense, by Head Coach Bob Cahill, a fellow teammate at Jesuit some years earlier. 'Coach B,' as he was known by coaches and players alike, was asked to stay on by Coach Bob Haaser and then later by fellow SMU teammate, Coach Tom Hillary, in those same capacities. During those years, Coach B helped to coach, teach, train, inspire, and 'make men' out of a generation of young football players. What's more, however, he formed a winning attitude in each of the new entries to the program with something that inspired his years at SMU—“The Poem.” The first line of “If you think you are beaten, you are” can surely be repeated by all who played under Bulger and is still used by Head Coach André Bruce in training his young football players each year. In this way, Coach Mike Bulger lives on in the Cistercian athletic program of the 21st century.



Mike Bulger

Mike was preceded in death by his parents and his son, Brent Bulger '83. He is survived by his daughter Michelle, his son Scott (Li), and six grandchildren, including Brent's son Kyle (Class of 2018).

Eddie Anderson '03

Remembered by Abbot Peter Verhalen '73

Eddie Anderson '03 went by several names. To his mother, he was Edward. To his classmates at Cistercian, he was Eddie. To his West Point friends, he was Ed. And to his wife, Rachel, and his Houston friends and work colleagues, he could be “Extra Ed.” It is that last name that captures Eddie's character: he was always one to put in the extra work, to go the extra mile.



Eddie Anderson

Eddie last visited Cistercian in 2023 when he drove up from his home in Houston to join classmate Ian Cary '03 at the Funeral Mass for their beloved theology teacher Fr. Roch.

While in middle school, Eddie added a little extra “punch” when Ian taunted him once too often—and decked the classmate who was to become his best friend. Always the athlete, Eddie helped lead the soccer team that was arguably one of Cistercian's best.

In his five years with the United States Army after West Point, Eddie earned the respect and loyalty of the men he led, especially during two tours of service in Afghanistan. As a project manager with Oracle, he won the esteem and love of his bosses and team such that they gladly covered for him during his yearlong battle with cancer. Their words of appreciation fill a 50-page book.

Throughout his life, Eddie put in the extra effort, but never more so than in his last battle. Just weeks before the end, Eddie's oncologist asked whether he wanted to try one more drug regimen. Even though he knew the physical and emotional toll the regimen would entail, Eddie immediately assented to the suffering—for the sake of his wife, Rachel, and their son, Merritt.

May Eddie, Ed, Extra Ed rest in peace.

Adrien Lorrain '74

Remembered by Billy Hassell '74

Adrien and I bonded when we played varsity soccer. We played midfield, and together we were a formidable pair, although Adrien was the superior player. He was a natural and unbelievably talented. After high school, I saw him a few times at his mom's in Austin. We went to Hippie Hollow Park and Armadillo World Headquarters; he knew the coolest places.



Adrien Lorrain

Adrien was a bit of a mystery to those who knew him; he had a brilliant mind. When he went to Columbia University, we all thought he would write a great book or win a Pulitzer Prize. He loved going to the MOMA in NYC. He told me about seeing *Guernica*, Picasso's famous antiwar painting, and the impression it made on him. I know he had an impressive collection of blues records on vinyl, and I wish I'd had the chance to hear some of those. I wish I'd had the chance to spend more time with him.

Winter Sports

Soccer takes back-to-back SPC Championships!

Oops, they did it again! Coach J.P. Walsh's squad went undefeated for the third time in four years. But, for the first time in school history, the team went UNSCORED upon. "The boys took pride in earning shutouts. The entire team was committed to defending as a unit," said Walsh. The Hawks' defense was recognized by the Dallas Morning News as the best in the Metroplex. Senior captain **Michael Peterman '24** and sophomores **Jacob Liu '26**, **Raad Nino '26**, and **Patrick Sporl '26** made up the back line, and freshman **Mateo Maalouf '27** proved unbeatable in goal. The workhorses in the midfield were **Marc Maalouf '25**, **Dean Nevitt '26**, and **Alberto Macher '27**. Up top, the strikers were senior captain **Patrick Garda '24** and sophomores **Dylan Kowalski '26** and **Andrew Novoa '26**. To repeat as champions, the Hawks beat ESD and FWCD. Game-winning goals came from Liu in the semifinal, and Maalouf (Marc) in the final.



Hawks soccer



Swimmers take second at SPC

With a young team, the AquaHawks were ready to defend their 2023 SPC Championship under the leadership of co-captains **Tom Gambow '24** and **Drew Durgin '26**. Along with diver **Billy Neylon '24**, the team put together a string of individual and relay performances that carried the AquaHawks to a second-place finish at this year's SPC Championship.

Gambow took first in the 50 free, second in the 500 free, and third in the 100 backstroke while swimming key legs on the 200 medley and 400 free relays. Overall, he scored individually or helped relays score 48 of Cistercian's 97 points! Durgin stepped up to help the team as well with second in the 100 free, fourth in the 200 I.M., and sixth in the 100 backstroke. Along with Gambow, he helped lead the 200 medley and 400 free relays to second and third place finishes. Neylon won his first diving championship, scoring an important nine points for the team. With strong showings all season, **Carter Ivory '27**, **Landon Osterberger '27**, **Mateo Rey '26**, **Addison Sloan '27**, and **William Thomas '27** staked their claim as the AquaHawks of the future.



AquaHawks

Basketball places third at SPC

The graduation of ten seniors in 2023 left **Grant Nevitt '24**, **Ryan Sporl '24**, and **Dylan Smith '25** as the only returning lettermen going into this year's season. And once again, the nonconference schedule included some of the largest private schools in the area—Bishop Lynch, Prestonwood and Southwest Christian, to name a few—a big challenge for an inexperienced group. Though this year's team didn't come out victorious in those heavy-weight matchups, the challenges provided valuable experience for newcomers **Omah Egedigwe '25**, **Stuart Walton '25**, and **Burke Landrum '26** heading into SPC Conference play.



Hawks basketball

For the second consecutive year, the Hawks landed the #4 seed in SPC with a matchup against Trinity Valley. This victory pitted the Hawks against John Cooper in the SPC semifinals, a one-possession game until the last minutes when the Dragons pulled ahead. After a disappointing loss, the Hawks responded with an inspired third place game win over Oakridge with tremendous leadership from **Joshua Reaves '24** and **Nick Schieferdecker '24** in the last basketball game of their Cistercian careers.

Nevitt and Sporl were recognized as All-SPC players this season, while also entering the Cistercian Basketball Hall of Fame for single-season statistical achievements: Nevitt (season assists) and Sporl (points, rebounds). •

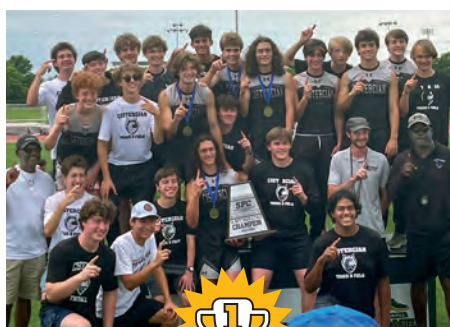
Spring Sports

Track & Field wins SPC!

With the return of **Jacob Brown '24** and **Ben Brittan '26**, the Hawks expected to do well at SPC. At the Greenhill Relays, the team hit 18 SPC-qualifying marks. Led by thrower **Ryan Sporl '24**, Cistercian earned 95 points, second behind St. Marks. For the second consecutive year, the Hawks won the Tom Landry Invitational and the Hawk Relays, where **Matthew Brown '26** won the long jump with a personal record jump of 20'5" and broke that record a week later with a 21'11" jump.

At SPC, a three-point margin separated St. Andrews Episcopal, FWCD, and Cistercian. On day one, Sporl won discus with a throw of 168'9", and Jacob Brown won high jump with a

6'2" jump. As the competition began to heat up on day two, the lead was exchanged three times in four events. In the 400m, Jacob Brown, Matthew Brown, and **Carter Kenny '25** ran their best race to push the Hawks ahead.



Track and field

The lead was secured in the 300-meter hurdles by **Patrick Sporl '26**, **Henry Folmsbee '25**, and **Paul Ellison '27**. A win by Matthew Brown, Carter Kenny, **Bobby Quinn '25**, and Jacob Brown in the 4x400 relay capped off the tournament.

Baseball hits for second at SPC

Coach Ricky Barrett watched with pride as his varsity players cleaned into the Championship Standard motto set this season by captains **Josh Reaves '24**, **Owen Putnam '24**, and **Jamison Berard '25**. The Hawks entered the SPC Championship as the #6 seed and proceeded to battle their way to the championship game for the first time since 2000, with wins over ESD (2-0) and FWCD (5-4). With a stellar pitching performance by **Owen Kane '25** and error-free defense from **Dillon Pitts '26**, **Major Beasley '26**, and **Vaughn Irish '25**, the Hawks played to win. In the semifinal against #2 seed Fort Worth Country Day, Cistercian snagged an extra inning win with **Alex Wang '27**, **Cash Lechler '25**, and **Charlie Kobdich '25** leading the way. Though the Hawks lost the championship game, the standard has been set. "We

have talented young men to lead us, and we believe that we can compete with anyone regardless of classification."

said Coach Barrett.



Baseball

Tennis wins SPC!

Cistercian's tennis team captured their first SPC 3A Championship this spring. Fans rushed the court to congratulate the number one doubles team of **Jacob Liu '26** and **Kouki Fraccaroli '27**, whose dominant win in the final match against Trinity Valley clinched the Championship.

For the first time in over ten years, the Hawks beat both Trinity Valley and Fort Worth Country Day twice, which led to the team's #1 seed in SPC. The top ten players in order of rank: **Josh Hays '25**, **Jose Fabregas '26**, **Peter Bui '26** (MVP and undefeated for two seasons), Liu, Fraccaroli, **Garrett O'Neill '26**, **Liam O'Neill '26**, **James Marlowe '26**, **Ian Tran '27**, and **Rishi Gopal '27**. Also winning SPC matches this season: **Rithvik Gabri '24**, **Grant Nevitt '24**, **James Hays '25**, **Matthew George '26**, **Landon Osterberger '27**, **Chris Bergin '27**, **Joe Schultz '26**, **George Saliga '25**, and **Taylor Mackey '25**.



Tennis

Great golf season

The Cistercian golf team completed another successful season in May. Led by **Jamison Berard '25** and **Nick Schieferdecker '24**, the Hawks placed third at the Hockaday Invitational. At the Trinity Valley Invitational in Fort Worth, **Patrick Garda '24** and Schieferdecker posted a team best 76. The golfers represented Cistercian with pride and class throughout the season. •



Golf

On My Dead Plants

Have you ever had a symbol of failure in your house and just left it there? This is how I feel about my plants. Why water them when I can fail them, let them die, and have them serve as a frequent reminder of mortality? For the same reason, St. Jerome kept a skull in his cave. If he had had a houseplant, it would have been a dead cactus. It wasn't a Dr. Delphinium's at all in there.



Patrick Spence '08

I was on Zoom with my friend Kip, and what he saw up behind me on the wall, because I forgot to adjust the camera, was a couple of dead staghorn ferns.

Believe me, they were once beautiful.

"That's its own kind of statement, right there," Kip said. Kip is a very kind Midwesterner, and he's accepting of my dead plants. He doesn't take them personally.

I'm sure Jerome's visitors all said, "The skull looks lovely today," and just left it at that.

The Bible, which Jerome translated into Latin, touches frequently on the subject of plants, but not in a way that is encouraging to someone like me. For example, there's the uncomfortable directness of Christ's plant metaphors. "I am the vine. You are the branches." He doesn't say, "I am similar to a vine, and you are like branches, but unlike the vines and branches at your house, which are dead, you're going to be okay."

Then there's the confusing time when Christ curses the fig tree that didn't bear any fruit. Should I think of myself as the fig tree, or am I more like Christ cursing the fig tree, in the sense that if I went near a fig tree, probably it would die?

All the extravagant promises about yields of thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold apply to the weeds in my back yard, because I no longer mow them. They remind me of that parable about the man whose enemy sows tares in his wheat field at night, and then he has to let everything grow up together.

But I don't have any wheat, or even an exceptionally dedicated enemy sowing tares in my yard—just a poor work ethic around weeding.

Still, it's the plants that die in my own house that make me feel the worst. They were right here in front of me, and I could have prevented their deaths but I was thinking up pitches for this column. I leave those dead ferns by my bookcase as a reminder that not all mistakes can be fixed by judicious editing.

"You don't have to fix everything," my wife says, not in reference to the guest-bathroom door, which I obviously do have to fix, but in reference, I imagine, to the visceral, haunting memento mori of the dead staghorn ferns.

I was walking to the Abbey chapel and thinking about classes when a couple hundred pink evening primroses appeared alongside the path, startling against the long grass and the low grey concrete angles of the crypt. (I have exactly one primrose in my front yard; I mow around it.)

Beyond the primroses are grape hyacinths, bluebonnets, perfectly formed winecups, scatterings of yellow coreopsis, and a dozen other wildflowers I have looked up the names of too many times.

Some of them resemble baby's breath sprouting in clusters as flat as dinner plates. Some are fractals, with miniature replicas of the whole flower spiraling from the middle of it. There's one big yellow-orange flower that looks like the Apollo capsule or a baby pulling a dress

on. There are blown lupins everywhere, like spidery reminders.

Which of them dies without going to seed? This is what my backyard is trying to be. Instead of lamenting it, maybe I should get out of the way.

Past the wildflowers you come to the chapel. Inside is a giant new Easter candle—thirty pounds of light stored as beeswax in the middle of the sanctuary.

I don't think my ferns are going to come back to life, but it's a nice reminder that some things do. •

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August 18
**Profession of Temporary
Vows at the Abbey**

August 21
Opening Ceremonies

November 1
**Homecoming Game vs.
Houston Christian**

Ardere et Lucere at Abbey and School

No Hungarian Cistercian has roamed the orange-tiled hallways of the School for several years now. While Fr. Julius and Fr. Bernard still make occasional visits during Form Master periods to tell their precious stories, the legendary anecdotes about their Magyar confreres are as elusive as their accents, which echo in impersonations by Fr. Augustine and the other American monks.



Fr. Thomas Esposito

That is why I incorporate a brief unit on the origins of our monastery and school into the senior theology class. It is strange to share my own vivid memories of Fr. Denis, Fr. Roch, and others to students who know them only as names consigned to a past age. One particular way of honoring them is to reflect on the meaning of the motto *Ardere et Lucere*, which they brought over from the motherhouse of Zirc.

The motto goes back to Jesus himself. The Lord extols John the Baptist as “a burning and shining lamp” (John 5:35), *ardens et lucens* in St. Jerome’s Vulgate translation, who pointed his contemporaries to Jesus, “the true light which enlightens everyone” (John 1:9). Saint Bernard of Clairvaux takes up this phrase in a sermon preached on the feast of John the Baptist, exhorting his monks to imitate the Baptist’s vocation: “Merely to enlighten [*lucere*] is vain; merely to enkindle [*ardere*] is not enough; to enkindle and to enlighten [*ardere et lucere*] is perfect.”

Saint Bernard, a master psychologist, highlights the necessary harmony between head and heart, brain and soul, reason and desire. The verb “to enkindle” implies the sparking of some passion, the nurturing of an ardent desire to pursue something worthy and beautiful. “To enlighten” suggests the acquisition of knowledge, an illumination that comes from exiting the dark cave of ignorance. Something would be amiss

if we cultivated only the vain quest for knowledge as power or influence. Likewise, merely to focus on emotional or religious matters without proper appreciation of secular subjects would be insufficient, even detrimental, to a fully integrated life in Christ. (The Hungarians were never sappy enough to fall into that latter trap!)

I love the fact that *Ardere et Lucere* is the motto of the Abbey as well as the School. In the monastery, we monks are the direct objects of those verbs. God is at work enkindling and enlightening us as we seek to love Him in the monastery, which St. Benedict defines as a “school for the Lord’s service.” We learn in this school how to devote ourselves to a lifelong love of learning, which teaches us to receive so that we can give away the love we have known in our prayer. Our monastic learning, then, allows us to become the subjects of those verbs when we walk across the hill to the Prep School. We aim to enkindle in our students a desire to love God and to enlighten them with the knowledge that all finite truths guide us toward the infinite God who is Truth itself.

I share with the seniors one other pearl of monastic wisdom that, to my mind, perfectly harmonizes our endeavors at the School and the Abbey. In his chapter on the reception of guests, St. Benedict instructs the monks that they are to show *humanitas* to all who wish to find shelter in the monastery (*Rule*, chapter 53). The word *humanitas* is often rendered as “goodness” or “hospitality,” but I think it indicates a broader purpose undergirding our prayer and work. We are to receive every guest as Christ Himself, whether at the Abbey or the School, and we therefore strive to model for every student, alumnus, and their families the proper understanding of *humanitas* that Christ calls us to embody. In this sense, *humanitas* encompasses the fullness of our dignity as human beings made for communion, the cultivation of a life rightly ordered by the virtues, both natural and supernatural. This demonstration of *humanitas* leads us to think of the Abbey and the School as a refreshing oasis of Christian culture. The radiant gift of our own lives as monks, priests, and teachers thus allows Christ, the perfection of *humanitas*, to enkindle and enlighten others through us. •