

For family, friends, & alumni of Cistercian Preparatory School

CISTERCIAN IRVING, TEXASONTINUUM

Fall 2015

INSIDE

A new appreciation for the challenges form masters endured in the 70s and 80s

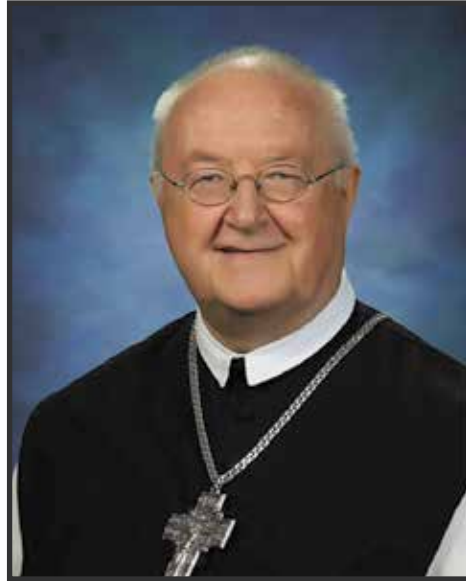
Fresh focus

Exploring refinements at the school and whether more may be coming

LEADERSHIP TEAM
Fr. Paul McCormick
with Greg Novinski '82
(left) and Chris Medaille

THE THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL CATHOLIC FOUNDATION AWARD DINNER

Please join The Catholic Foundation in honoring
RIGHT REVEREND DENIS FARKASFALVY, O. Cist.
Abbot Emeritus



Fr. Denis has been selected as the 34th Catholic Foundation Award honoree in recognition of his impact on the Cistercian Abbey and School and the Catholic Community of Dallas. Please join us to honor this remarkable man of faith, perseverance and service.

Cistercian's own Patrick Andrews '17 will also be receiving The Catholic Foundation Scholar Award during the dinner.

Friday, the Nineteenth of February | Two Thousand Sixteen

The Hilton Anatole | Chantilly Ballroom
2201 North Stemmons Freeway | Dallas, Texas

Cocktails at 6:30 p.m. | Dinner at 7:30 p.m.

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The real treasures of this "household"

"Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old."



Letter from the headmaster
Fr. Paul McCormick

This edition of *The Continuum* reminds me of this wonderful saying of Jesus. Indeed, year after year, the School continues by God's blessing to draw out treasures both new and old as it pursues its mission to educate and form talented young men in the Cistercian tradition.

The first article draws from the past, recounting some of the unique challenges confronting certain Forms during the 1970's and 1980's and how several of the monks were asked to stretch themselves beyond their natural gifts and abilities to serve as Form Masters. Their willingness, however, to leave their "comfort zones" and to embrace the boys who needed their paternal guidance and direction during these turbu-

lent times proved not only to be a lifelong blessing for the boys, but ultimately for the monks, as well.

Our lead feature draws from more recent developments in the School as a new administrative team and a host of new Form Masters and Department Heads apply "fresh eyes" and a youthful enthusiasm to tackle a host of current challenges. Responding to a call to look constantly for ways to improve, these dedicated men and women have ushered in a number of refinements to schedule, curriculum, and programs in just the last couple of years that are already making a significant difference in the lives of our students.

This Fall (Ha!) issue also contains our 2015 Annual Report highlighting the on-going financial support the School receives from so many, many generous alumni, alumni families, current parents, and the larger Cistercian family.

The real treasures of this Cistercian "household," are the lives of all our students, both current and former, who have studied, worked, played, and prayed with the monks and the lay faculty, and who with their families strive to share this experience with the larger world.

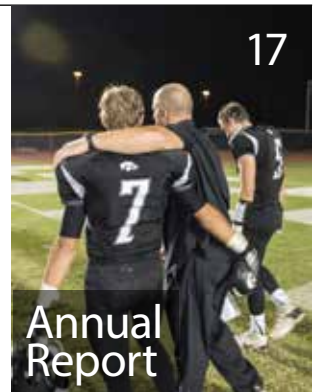
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Jim Reisch



Fresh focus 42
Exploring refinements at the school and why they've been so successful

By David E. Stewart

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, & offering them guidance with both understanding & discipline. Cistercian Preparatory School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national, or ethnic origin in the administration of its admission & education policies, financial aid programs, athletic programs, & other activities.



CHANGES TO SENIOR YEAR

Also see Fresh Focus, p. 42

The Spanish Senior Elective Seminar is conducted by Tara Kennedy in the library.

SENIOR ELECTIVE SEMINARS

Students and teachers find seminars “invigorating”

“The senior elective seminars transform the traditional rows and columns of the classroom,” said Peter Saliga, director of college counseling, “into something more circular.”

“Nobody can hide in these classes,” laughed Fr. Gregory Schweers, who leads the “Perspectives on the Renaissance” seminar.

“The students are participating and contributing,” said Greg Graham, director of technology and teacher of the technology seminar, of his 16 students (the most of any of the seminars). “They are bringing up issues, arguing their view points and critiquing each other in constructive ways.”

The general structure of the seven seminars calls for a first semester that offers a global or philosophical perspective. The focus will narrow in the second semester as students gravitate toward a capstone project.

For Graham, that has meant first-semester discussions about “not how or if you can do something with technology, but should you?”

“There’s not much coursework that explores those kinds of questions in colleges of engineering,” said Graham who has a MS from Texas A&M and a master’s in theology from the University of Dallas.

“It is an attractive teaching assignment,”

insisted Patrick Mehen, whose philosophy seminar is conducted in the conference room in Founders Hall. “We are offered an opportunity to teach coursework that excites us at the pinnacle of learning in the school.

“It’s an invigorating atmosphere.”

While it is no surprise that 16 seniors signed up for Graham’s technology seminar (such a course has been requested for some time), both Fr. Gregory and Mehen were pleasantly surprised that their humanities courses attracted healthy numbers (5 and 7, respectively).

Another surprise: the mix of students in each seminar.

The students in Dr. Newcomb’s math seminar, which delves into applications of math based on a student’s interests, does not resemble the math club.

“Some of the choices were surprising,” acknowledged Mehen.

“Some guys selected their seminar to explore, aware that heavily scripted majors like pre-med or engineering will limit that.”

“There were guys who said I want to branch out,” he added. “It’s not about getting ahead, but broadening my horizons and intellectual suppleness.”

SENIOR CURRICULUM

Refinements streamline schedule, reduce stress

Seniors, teachers, and administrators were giving positive marks (in late November) to the senior year refinements that took effect this fall and lightened the feel of senior year at Cistercian.

They revolve largely around the new senior elective seminars, a selection of year-long courses that meet three times per week.

Each offers a style of study new to Cistercian and gives seniors a chance to delve into a variety of meaty subjects: art, philosophy, the Renaissance, technology, math, Spanish, and French.

The seminars are intended to offer “a substantial intellectual experience” emphasizing student-teacher interaction and a “diversity of approaches within the classroom.”

In the old system, seniors enrolled in an elective first semester, an abbreviated elective for the third quarter, and a senior project for the fourth (all unrelated).

By offering seminars in Spanish and French, a fourth year in foreign language is no longer required.

The half days previously enjoyed by senior classes in the fourth quarter have been replaced by a 10:15 start on Monday mornings all year long.

“The class average after the first quarter rose to 3.64,” said Patrick Mehen, form master of the Class of ’16 and teacher of the Philosophy seminar. “That’s the highest average for the class ever.”

He credited a schedule that features three days with five or fewer classes (Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday) that “helps students to balance the manifold demands of senior year and helps them work more productively.”

Mehen also pointed out that limiting foreign language study to those truly eager to pursue a fourth year has given the remaining students extra time to invest in other classes (as well as on their college essays).

7 The number of new Senior Seminar Electives: philosophy, perspectives on the Renaissance, art, math, technology, Spanish, and French.

46 The number of years the senior schedule included half days during the fourth quarter in which students were to work on senior projects.



A new appreciation



(Top, left to right): Frs. Bernard Marton, Roch Kereszty, Denis Farkasfalvy, and Julius Lelóczy in the seventies (insets) and at Homecoming. (Above) Cartoon from Class of '73 blackboard.



The challenges form masters and their students endured in the seventies and eighties have brought them closer together

By David Exall Stewart

THE SILENCE PERSISTED in the Form VI classroom on this warm, sunny first day of school in 1970. Fr. Roch Kereszty, 37, had just introduced himself as the new form master of the Class of 1973. The 18 sophomores were pondering their response.

The Class of '73 — Cistercian's first-ever two-section form with 32 students in Middle School — had seen more than its share of form masters already.

Fr. John Vereb, a confident 40-year-old Hungarian with a master's in economics from SMU, had managed his "leeetle brodders" effectively for two years.

When he departed after two years for Florida to seek treatment for a persistent disease, the form master position became a revolving door.

In the absence of a strong leader, the class became more difficult to handle.

A series of substitutes struggled to corral a class so blessed with numbers, size, and talent (the form enjoyed outstanding success in Middle School sports).

Although its numbers shrank as the class entered Upper School, its untamed nature did not.

Would they, could they trust this new master now introducing himself?

"Good morning, form master," Peter Verhalen '73 finally piped up perfunctorily.

The response may have satisfied Fr. Roch and some his classmates; but not everyone.

"How dare they do this," Joe Pat Martin '73 muttered so all could hear, "without consulting us first."

RIGHT FROM THE START in 1962, form masters distinguished Cistercian as a European-styled education. (The accents of the Hungarian monks also helped.)

All of the Cistercian monks, while not all educated in Cistercian schools, had grown up with form masters.

Form masters permeated primary and secondary schools in Austria and Hungary for centuries. Men or women, religious or lay, form masters serve in every kind of Hungarian school: private, parochial, public and even vocational.

While the title of form master may have originated with the

intent of offering students longevity, stability, and expertise over the course of their formation, reality varied widely from this ideal.

In many cases, form masters served primarily as administrators, and often for just one year at a time.

Monks offered promise in the role of form masters since they might bring students spiritual guidance along with a higher probability of leading a group over multiple years, even all the way to graduation.

But they did not always fulfill this promise.

The Cistercians enjoyed a sterling reputation as secondary educators in Hungary, based largely on the success of the Budapest school, St. Imre's (the crown jewel of their five schools).

Abbot Wendelin Endrédy of the Abbey of Zirc (himself a form master and headmaster at St. Imre's early in his career) selected the best teachers for the big city school. It is likely that he paid similar attention to the assignment of form masters.

In Texas, Abbot Anselm Nagy did not have such a large stable of monks dedicated to serving in secondary education. In fact, many monks in Texas were unwilling to serve in the prep school, having more training and more inclination to teach at the University of Dallas.

As far as we know, only one of the monks in Texas in the sixties — Fr. Placid Csizmazia, who arrived in 1965 — had actually served as a form master in Hungary.

So in addition to the challenge of starting a school, the Cistercians faced the added complication of providing each class with a monk capable and interested in the formation of adolescents to see them through to graduation.

THAT EXCHANGE WITH JOE MARTIN in 1970 still echoes in Fr. Roch's memory. He felt the students were saying, "These Hungarian refugees should feel honored to teach us."

It was no honor.

Like so many monks in the abbey, Fr. Roch faced a dilemma.

The Cistercians had come to Texas to put their advanced degrees to work as university professors at the University of Dallas, and they enjoyed success doing so.

But the Cistercian tradition in Hungary called them to teach in secondary schools.

The university offered prestige and steady work, but little security.

The school promised security (eventually), but the work posed all kinds of administrative and disciplinary headaches (especially in light of the Hungarian's language and cultural challenges).

In the abbey's highly charged atmosphere — full of intelligent

and proud refugees with strong opinions — the monks would find a consensus difficult to achieve.

Very quickly, each monk's opinion on this central debate (prep school vs. university) would be expressed by where they chose to work.

Fr. Roch started at the university, but began teaching at the prep school with just one course (theology to the Class of 1970) in 1968 at the behest of Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy, one of the abbey's strongest proponents for the prep school.

Then in the following two years, he was persuaded to teach two classes while maintaining his full teaching load at UD, where he had become quite popular.

"I always thought I would be a good teacher," Fr. Roch said. "And I enjoyed teaching at UD.

"I never envisioned myself as a form master."

Students at the prep school in the early years would test the fortitude of every monk heroic enough to accept duty there.

"MY FOUR YEARS with the Class of 1981 felt like a permanent crisis," admitted Abbot-Emeritus Denis Farkasfalvy, who stepped in as form master in the fall of 1977,

at the beginning of Form V.

"A moving disaster. Nothing I tried worked," he insisted. "The experience humiliated me."

Fr. Denis was stepping into a muddled form master position. He succeeded both Fr. Julius Lelóczy (Forms I and II) and Fr. Melchior Chladek (Forms III and IV). The Class of '81 became only the second class with three or more different form masters (Class of '73 being the other).

"It was tough on Fr. Denis," Tim O'Connor '81 suggested, "trying to figure us out as freshmen." And beyond.

They broke out into an intentionally loud disturbance in one of Fr. Roch's religion classes, leading Fr. Bernard to intervene, all of which was caught on tape by a member of the class. (The only copy burned in a house fire.)

A broom ball contest on their junior retreat resulted in broken brooms and busted pillows. Fr. Denis saw the aftermath as an act of vandalism.

Rumors also arose of a wager among members of the class as to whether or not Fr. Denis would resign as form master.

"There was a bitterness, a limbo of uncertainty," Fr. Denis suggested. "I did not understand the anger that the boys





Fr. Julius Leloczky served as form master in Forms I-III (top left), Fr. Melchior Chladek in Forms III-V (bottom), and Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy in Forms VI-VIII.

manifested at unexpected times.”

“A large percentage of the 20 guys had parents who were separated,” explained John Phillips ’81. “Most of my classmates weren’t getting much direction from home.”

“We were very independent,” acknowledged Owen Hannay ’81. “We had each other’s backs. We did things as a group. It was us against the world.

“I can see how he thought we were very challenging.

“It’s not easy to pick up a class that is broken,” Hannay added. “It’s like trying to put Humpty Dumpty back together again.”

“I HAD A FEELING OF HAVING the upper hand,” Abbot-Emeritus Denis reflected on the irony of his mindset prior to taking on the job as form master of the Class of ’81.

Indeed, he had overcome a great deal.

In only his fourth year at the school, he had been named college counselor and assistant headmaster. The next year: headmaster at 33 years old.

Along the way, he had managed crisis after crisis at the school.

But one crisis lingered. Elder monks in the abbey viewed the prep school as a losing proposition, one that might never stop bleeding red ink. They felt the university provided a safer, more stable income stream.

When Fr. Denis, fresh off graduating his first class as form master (the Class of 1974), sought a seat on the abbot’s council, the elder wing in the abbey balked. Fr. Denis threatened to resign, but was granted a sabbatical for the 1974-75 school year.

Abbot Anselm was caught in the crossfire, and the monks gave

him a vote of no-confidence in early 1975. The monks elected Fr. Christopher Rabay to serve as the conventual prior of the monastery for a year.

The elder members of the abbey hoped a less assertive personality than Fr. Denis might operate the school effectively (although Fr. Henry Marton gave notice that he planned to serve only one year, 1974-75, as headmaster). And they dreamed of a new abbot who would see things their way.

But no such leaders emerged. Within a year, the headmaster and the abbot were reinstated.

Both men learned an important lesson: the school would have to earn its keep, and quickly.

Fr. Denis crafted a growth plan to increase enrollment.

To make it work, he was counting on the monks currently working at the school and on two newly ordained American monks.

Fr. James Lehrberger began at the prep school in the fall of 1976, serving as form master of the Class of 1984; but, it wasn’t long before he wanted out. Fr. Bernard (appointed headmaster in 1981) replaced him in the fall of 1977.

Fr. Robert Maguire, named form master of the Class of ’85 in 1977, also found the prep school incompatible with his skill set. Fr. Roch succeeded him in the fall of 1978. (Of the original 26 students, only five graduated.)

Both Fr. James and Fr. Robert would go on to highly successful careers at the University of Dallas.

With the retirement of Fr. Melchior as form master of the Class of ’81, three monks out of the form master rotation had been sidelined in a matter of two years.

“I AM NOT A DISCIPLINARIAN,” acknowledged Fr. Julius. “I joined the Cistercians when I was in Hungary to become a monk. I did not think of myself as a strong teacher.”

Nevertheless, not long after his arrival from Hungary in 1964, Fr. Julius was enlisted to take on various duties at the school, most notably as the school’s first librarian.

His classroom work started as a study hall supervisor for the Pre-Form (Class of ’74) in 1965. The next two years found him teaching Form II religion (without a textbook), starting with the Class of ’73.

Then he was thrown headlong into the form master thrasher, also known as the Class of 1973. By the end of Form III, its two sections had already dispensed with four form masters.

For a monk uncomfortable with meting out discipline, this assignment offered little appeal; but Fr. Julius accepted the task.

“The Texas History trip was very hard,” Fr. Julius remembered. “I felt like a prison guard.”

Fifth Form was worse.

“They would write on the blackboards where they were holding parties,” said Fr. Julius, shaking his head.

“There were times when they had let loose thousands of butterflies in the classroom.”

By the spring of Form V, he served notice: he could not return.

The experience scarred Fr. Julius, leaving him feeling incapable of disciplining students in Form IV and above. He would go on to serve three classes for a few years in Middle School before handing them off (the Class of ’78 in Form IV, the Class of ’81 in Form III, and the Class of ’83 in Form IV).

With a dwindling number of monks able and willing to serve as form master in the spring of 1978, the school and Fr. Denis were depending on Fr. Julius to take the Class of ’86 all the way through to graduation.

“TOM HILLARY OF CISTERCIAN,” wrote Harless Wade in *The Dallas Morning News* in August 1986, “doubts any coach in America can match the marks of nine seniors who started for the Irving prep school team last fall.

“They have been accepted to: Princeton, Yale, Stanford, Holy Cross, U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, Boston College, Amherst, and Austin College.”

“I had decided I would serve for the entire eight years,” Fr. Julius said. “I was helped immensely by the parents of the Class of ’86. They were very supportive, and mostly my age, which was helpful.”

“We knew Fr. Julius had been a form master for several classes,” said J.D. Bondy ’86, “but only for the first two or three years. We knew we’d have to be special, to do things right, if we wanted to keep him.

“And we felt he was a very good form master to keep.”

When an accidental gunshot killed George Lopez (’86) — brother of Carlos ’84 and Alex Lopez ’89 — over the summer between Forms V and VI, the class united around their peaceful and reflective form master.

“At his core,” Bondy said, “Fr. Julius is a very compassionate man and that helped us through it.

“I don’t want to take anything away from the others,” he added, “but I can’t imagine having a better form master than Fr. Julius.”

His steady leadership had come at a critical juncture for the class and the school.



(Top) The Class of ’87 with their form master Fr. Aloysius Kimecz in Form III after an infusion of 10 students grew their numbers to 34. After an illness prevented Fr. Aloysius from continuing early in their sophomore year, Fr. Bernard Marton took over as form master. (Above) Only 17 remained to pose for their senior class picture.

In addition to the losses of Frs. Melchior, James, and Robert in the late seventies, the abbey lost two more form masters in the early eighties.

Fr. Mark Major resigned from the Class of ’82 after Form VII in order to return to Europe. And after picking up the Class of ’83 from Fr. Julius and leading them to graduation, Fr. Aurel Mensaros, left the priesthood following their graduation.

The Class of ’86 would be the first class since the Class of 1980 to be led by a single form master through its eight-year journey.

Its 27 graduates ranked as the largest class ever (and the first to

graduate with two sections).

And out of that number, 21 received recognition as National Merit Finalists (still the highest percentage ever).

Coach Hillary's pride in them had been well deserved.

More importantly, Fr. Julius had come through for them — and for the school and abbey — when it counted most.

AT OPEN HOUSE IN THE FALL OF 1984, Fr. Bernard made an unexpected visit to the Form VI classroom.

"Fr. Aloysius [Kimecz] has become ill," he announced to the 34 students in the Class of '87.

"He cannot continue as your form master.

"I am your new form master."

The students and the few parents in attendance for Open House were stunned.

"We were very tight with Fr. Aloysius," said Chris Rakowitz '87. "Nobody knew what had happened. We would get the full story only much later that his health had failed him and that he'd had a breakdown.

"We really missed him and we were kind of intimidated by Fr. Bernard," he said. "Having the headmaster as your form master was a worst-case scenario."

It wasn't the best-case scenario for Fr. Bernard either.

The headmaster (and college counselor) had just graduated his second class ('84) as form master the previous May, and he was serving as form master of Form I (Class of '94) at the time Fr. Aloysius took ill. (Fr. Julius would step into his place until Fr. Bernard returned to them after the Class of '87 graduated.)

"EVEN MORE THAN A FATHER," the seniors wrote in their dedication of the 1987 Exodus to Fr. Aloysius, "he was a brother and a close friend, for his spirit of warmth and humor was felt by all."

"Sophomore year was a bad time for a change," Rakowitz reflected. "We had people with family problems. Fr. Aloysius knew most of us since we were 10 years old. We needed his supervision and guidance."

"He had an almost psychic ability to read kids and lead them," said Fr. Denis, "and an intuitive understanding of the class and its dynamics. They admired him and felt secure with him."

Fr. Aloysius represents many of the Hungarian monks who heroically struggled for the sake of "their boys" and the school.

When he could not continue, the dam broke.

"BY THE TIME I LEARNED HOW to be a form master," Fr. Roch suggested humbly, "it came to an end." He would go on to graduate five classes ('73, '78, '85, '93, '01) as form master; the last two he led all eight years.

In his 31 years as a form master, he learned some lessons.

"I made sure beginning with the Class of '78," he said, "to talk to each student individually about their studies, home life, difficulties, and spiritual life.

"It helped them realize that this is a life-long relationship."

He sees four of his students (Abbot Peter, Fr. Stephen Gregg '01, Fr. Lawrence Brophy '01, and Br. Francis Gruber '01) quite often; they live with him in the abbey.

It was through the Class of '01 — one that needed his counsel

after the passing their classmate Brian Price freshman year — that he earned wide recognition for his talents as a form master.

But the benefits of the form master system were not confined to the "good" classes.

"The Class of '73 loves to get together," said Fr. Roch of the group that caused him more than a few fits. "In 2013 at their 40th reunion, they organized a three-day event. Only two were unable to be there."

He was accompanied to those reunion festivities by Abbot Peter, of course, and Fr. Julius, who served the class in Forms IV and V.

"I want to apologize to you," Joe Martin said sheepishly to Fr. Julius at the 40th reunion. "I don't know how you put up with us."

"Joe," Fr. Julius replied simply, "none of us is born grown up."

FR. JULIUS IS DOTED UPON by two of his former students in the abbey, Fr. Augustine Hoelke '00 (form master of the Class of '18) and Fr. Philip Lastimosa '00 (form master of the Class of '21).

In all, Fr. Julius served eight forms for a total of 33 years.

He graduated two classes (serving all eight years), including the highly decorated Class of '86.

"I was old enough to enjoy the Class of '00 as little children in Middle School," he said fondly. "They were more respectful and well behaved than earlier classes."

Recently, Fr. Augustine invited his form master to share details on his life and vocation with his Form VI during a form masters' period in the small lecture hall.

"I was very impressed with how Fr. Augustine holds the reins of his class," Fr. Julius said. "They were absolutely quiet, sitting straight, and looking at me with awe.

"It was very good to be among the students again," he added. "I missed them."

AS A FORM MASTER FOR 39 YEARS (six classes, three from start to finish), Fr. Bernard leads all form masters in years served.

He has shared a part of himself with as many as possible in each class, taking large numbers of Cistercian students on 10 trips to Hungary, including members of the Class of '87.

"I enjoy showing them Europe how I experienced it," Fr. Bernard said, "showing them where I stood as a refugee."

The Class of '87 still stands out to Fr. Bernard, perhaps because they had been refugees of a sort themselves after Fr. Aloysius' departure.

"We're real happy we weren't black-balled," laughed Chris Rakowitz '87, "when my son applied." Luke is a Second Former.

"We love Fr. Bernard now and I keep up with 11-12 of the guys from our class," he added. "We have a two-thirds show up to our reunions every five years. It's a pretty tight knit group.

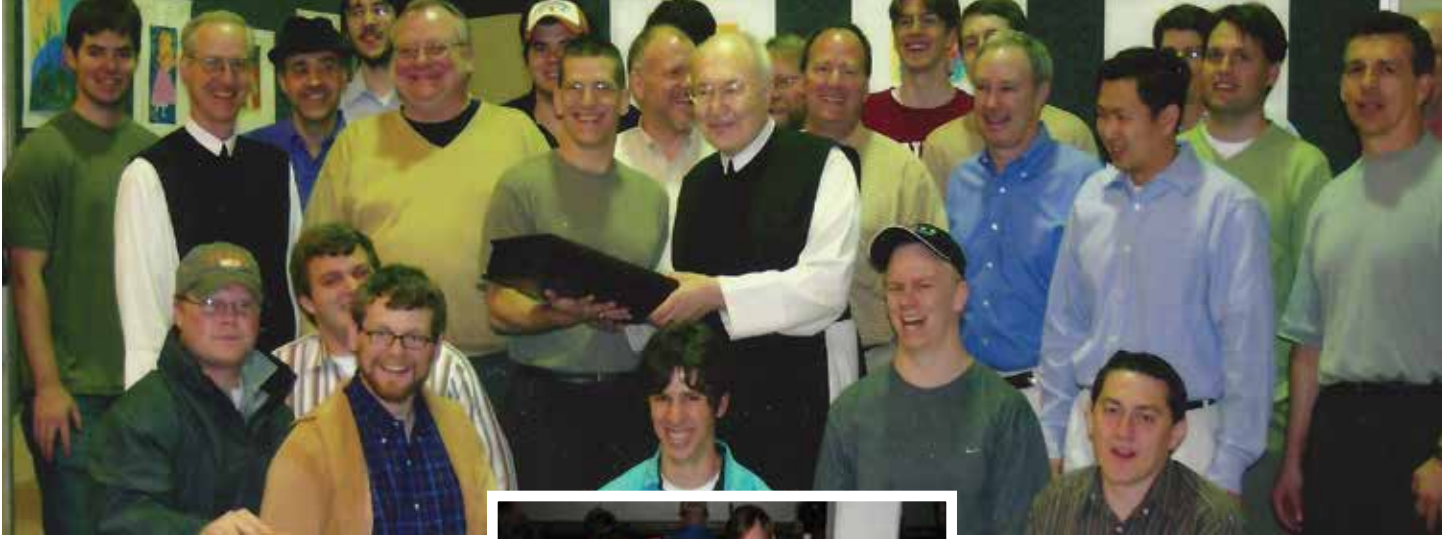
"Alex Frutos '87 has a son in Form III. A number of the other guys want their boys to go to Cistercian."

"FORM MASTERS CAN DO ONLY SO MUCH," suggested Abbot-Emeritus Denis, partly in defense of the difficulties he faced with the Class of '81 (a class that included a larger than average percentage of students from broken homes). "Parents have the ultimate responsibility.

"Form masters can only accompany them."

Members of that class differ with that assessment.

"His unconditional love steadied us," said John Phillips. "He



was a calming force who did not lash out at us.”

“My father was gone after my sophomore year,” said Owen Hannay. “I had no male role model at home. Fr. Denis became a father figure for me.

“He helped support me personally when I really needed it.”

When Fr. Denis became very ill nearly two years ago, Phillips, the abbey’s chef, spread the word to his classmates.

“After talking with Phillips,” said Tim O’Connor, “we started planning a dinner for a time when Fr. Denis felt better. We wanted to reconnect.”

In June, they took their form master out for dinner to celebrate his 79th birthday. Nearly everyone in the DFW area turned up in the largest gathering of the class in decades.

“He was thrilled,” noted O’Connor, “to see how guys have developed and overcome difficult situations.”

After dinner, O’Connor delivered a few remarks to express the sentiments of the class toward their form master.

“You were too good for us, Fr. Denis,” he concluded. “You didn’t deserve us.

“And we certainly didn’t deserve you.”



SINCE BEING FORCED to leave their homeland, the Cistercians had faced many tough choices.

When asked to start a school in the early sixties, the Cistercians may not have been prepared for the complexities. But they knew this opportunity may not come again.

They imported the familiar form master tradition despite its many challenges, administratively and personally.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can now fully appreciate the sacrifices made by monks like Fr. Bede Lackner and Fr. Daniel Csanyi (the first two form masters),

Fr. Henry Marton (’72, ’80, ’88, ’96 each all the way), Fr. Aurel Mensaros (’76 and ’83), Fr. Melchior (’70, ’75), Fr. Aloysius (’79), and many others.

The form master tradition threw monks and students into the cauldron of formation of 10 to 18-year-olds, in which hard times forge children into adults.

The various bumps along the way that shaped the experience of each class confirm (each in its own way) the power of the centuries-old tradition, one that continues to distinguish Cistercian just as it did back in 1962.

The life-long bonds are proof of that.



(Top) Members from many classes served by Fr. Roch at the announcement of a scholarship fund in his name. (Center middle) Fr. Julius with members of the Class of ’00. (Above) Chris Rakowitz ’87 with Fr. Bernard Marton at Homecoming. (Right) Members of the Class of ’81 celebrate with Fr. Denis on his 79th birthday.

Fresh focus

By David Exall Stewart

Exploring refinements
senior seminars – and



“**A** NONDESCRIPT NOTE AT THE TOP of Friday Notes on August 14, 2015, took more than a few readers by surprise: “Improvements to Cistercian grading system.”

“After much consideration,” the brief explained succinctly, “the school is moving from a cumulative, year-long, course grade system to one based on separate semesters.”

Alumni all the way back to the seventies will remember the cumulative second semester grade as a slab of Cistercian bedrock, as immutable as the monks’ black and white habits.

Complaining on this item had been heard and discussed informally for decades. After all, at college campuses across the country, admission officials had always assumed that Cistercian’s second semester grades reflected only the second semester (that’s how it works everywhere else).

In 2009, then-headmaster Fr. Peter Verhalen ‘73 and Greg Novinski ‘82 (then dean of students and head of Upper School) considered a proposal to improve the grading system.

They hesitated, however, in light of complications with Cistercian’s senior year schedule, which included, for example, just three quarters of classwork in a foreign language and in theology.

Like the grading system, senior year had been the subject of countless private conversations over the years between veteran faculty members and administrators.

In March 2014, the nine-member 2013-14 Faculty Strategic Planning Committee organized by headmaster Fr. Paul McCormick echoed in its final report concerns from senior projects and senior electives to senior foreign languages and senior stress levels.

But it stopped short of recommending action.

“More substantial changes,” the report acknowledged repeatedly, “will need to wait as part of a longer term consideration of the senior schedule.”

“**WHERE DO WE BEGIN?**” Fr. Paul McCormick asked Christine Medaille, head of Middle School, and Greg Novinski ‘82, head of Upper School and assistant headmaster, at a January 2015 meeting in the headmaster’s conference room.

The two 28-year Cistercian veterans, both Cistercian parents as well, smiled at one another. At long last, they were tackling one of Cistercian’s thorniest curricular issues — senior year.

“We know exactly what we want to do,” Novinski and Medaille said, almost in unison, as they sat with Fr. Paul.

at the school – like the new
whether more may be coming



PHILOSOPHY

Patrick Mehen, form master of the Class of 2016, makes a point during his philosophy senior seminar in the conference room.

Point by point, they addressed the essential (and often difficult) issues.

“We took all the ideas and figured out how to make it work,” remembered Medaille.

“Chris and Greg can see things that I can’t,” Fr. Paul said of his two associates. “There’s a trust there.”

Medaille, the master scheduler, ran various scenarios and iterations; the three took turns playing devil’s advocate.

Eventually, a plan rose above the rest: one featuring, among other things, year-long senior seminars, no foreign language requirement, and a late start (10:10 am) on Mondays all year long.

CHRISTINE MEDAILLE WAS SEETHING. “I returned from class on a very busy December day (with a yearbook deadline looming),” she explained, “to find my extremely small office filled with stuffed animals.”

On another occasion, it was a huge Santa Claus.

Unleashed

Partial list of initiatives implemented since 2012

CURRICULAR

SEMESTER GRADES/GPAs

No longer cumulative; GPAs now figured on credits rather than class periods.

SENIOR YEAR SCHEDULE

Half days, senior projects, senior electives, and required foreign languages replaced by a selection of year-long senior seminars. Seniors arrive on Mondays at 10:10 am.

FORM IV ARTS

Students divided into four sections that rotate through music appreciation, theater, art, and art history.

LANGUAGES

Foreign language in Forms I-VII now count as full credit, weighted the same for GPA calculations as math. New Latin textbooks introduced. Chinese elective now offered.

FACULTY SUPPORT

DEPARTMENT HEADS

Given more responsibilities and authority. Encouraged to visit classes in other departments and schools to explore refinements. Meet as a group with Fr. Paul weekly.

FORM MASTERS

Meet together every two weeks and individually with the Middle or Upper School head every week.

COLLOQUIUMS

Faculty gatherings “outside the office” to discuss summer reading and perform service.

OTHER FRONTS

PERSONNEL

Since June 2012, six new department heads have been named as well as three new administrators (including the first female and first African-American).

SUMMER CAMP

Refashioned into a single program offering academic, athletic, and spiritual enrichment during the month of June.

ADMISSIONS

Reaching out to under-represented groups.

TECHNOLOGY

Fiber optic cable brought to campus. WiFi now available throughout campus. School directory and *The Informer* now on-line. 3-D printing in technology seminar.



FRENCH

New look senior year

The senior seminars (pictured here and on the previous spread) offer varied subjects, sizes, and classroom environments: 16 technology students meet with Greg Graham in the science building; Spanish gathers with Tara Kennedy in the library; Roberto Munguia (and guest speaker Darryl Ratcliff '04 on this day) talk art in the art room; Richard Newcomb conducts math in one of the senior classrooms; Fr. Gregory waxes poetically in the library classroom; and Nancy Obels-Robinson in her class of one.



RENAISSANCE



MATH





TECHNOLOGY



SPANISH



ART

Fr. Paul, the serial perpetrator, enjoyed Medaille’s reaction each time with a belly laugh.

Over the years, the office mates became close friends, and Fr. Paul had come to depend on her wise counsel on issues he faced as form master for the Classes of 2005 and 2013.

“Fr. Paul has made building a community a huge priority,” Abbot Peter Verhalen ’73 said in a Continuum story in the Fall of 2012, referring to Fr. Paul’s years as a form master.

“It comes from his understanding of his role as a priest. He’s not a cheerleader, but a Boy Scout who builds a community out of service. He wants us all to be attached to each other.

“Fr. Paul,” the abbot continued, “has transformed what we have come to expect from a form master.”

In June 2012, Abbot Peter handed Fr. Paul the keys to a smoothly operating institution with experienced faculty members and freshly renovated Middle and Upper School buildings.

In one of his first acts as headmaster, he named Medaille as head of Middle School and Novinski as head of Upper School.

Just as she had counseled Fr. Paul over the years, Cistercian’s first female administrator would counsel Middle School form masters in individual meetings every week (and participate in the bi-weekly form master meetings).

Novinski, appointed by Fr. Paul as assistant headmaster in addition to his duties as head of Upper School, would likewise meet individually with Upper School form masters every week.

“I WOULD REALLY HATE TO LOSE this man,” Fr. Paul wrote in an April 2013 letter of recommendation for André Bruce, who was being pursued by heads of local private schools who hoped to hire him as their athletic director. “Yet, I write so glowingly of Mr. Bruce because he has earned my highest respect in every regard.”

The headmaster was torn.

At the conclusion of his first year in his new office, Fr. Paul was faced with losing Bruce, along with longtime athletic director Dan Lee, who had announced days before that he was leaving Cistercian to accept an offer from Houston Christian.

On May 6, Fr. Paul announced his decision to name Bruce as Cistercian’s new athletic director (and in keeping with the trend among private schools) he would not serve as a head coach of a varsity sport.

The hiring came as a surprise to some. But only to those who didn’t know Bruce or Fr. Paul.

“**A**RE WE STILL TALKING about the same old things?” Jackie Greenfield remembered thinking during more than a few of the bi-weekly meetings of the 2013-14 Faculty Strategic Planning Committee.

But slowly she sensed Fr. Paul’s ability and determination to coax out of the group a plan that expressed “what we want to happen and why we want it to happen.”

After six months, the strategy group’s final report included a large wish list, but recommended action on just one front: fix the Form IV arts program.

“There were good ideas from the committee on Form IV,” said Medaille, “but Fr. Paul, Greg, and I had to figure out how to put them into play.”

Medaille proved invaluable in moving resources (i.e., teachers and classroom space) around.



Faculty, coaches, and staff gathered at the North Texas Food Bank in August for community service and fellowship.

“We tried two sections,” she said, “but found that four worked better. It created nice small groups of 10-11 students.

“Four sections also gave the boys the needed exposure to art, speech and drama, art history, and music appreciation,” she said. “We were fortunate to have the right teachers for these subject areas and appropriate spaces in which to conduct them.”

Other less flashy Form IV issues were handled as well. E-Lab was discontinued and some of its subject matter folded into an additional period of English (which increased from four to five periods per week). Meanwhile theology would begin to meet three times per week (to allow for Confirmation preparation).

It didn’t take long for the changes to make a positive impact on Form IV students and teachers.

“The success of the Form IV changes,” Christine Medaille reflected recently, “gave us a certain momentum once we began to consider changes to senior year.”

But the chemistry between Fr. Paul, Medaille, and Novinski had started to coalesce a year earlier.

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION for Founders Hall had stagnated for some time by the Fall of 2012. The building committee (composed of Abbot Peter, Fr. Paul, Tim Parker ’90, architect Gary Cunningham ’72, and builder Warren Andres ’77) needed a spark.

Fr. Paul made a bold move: he invited Chris Medaille and Greg Novinski to join the committee.

“Chris and Greg brought a very valuable perspective to the discussions,” Parker remembered. “Greg’s thinking, in particular, helped reorient the project.”

“We have been trying,” Novinski wrote in a memo dated March 21, 2013, “to find ways to fit [our desire for a sacred space] in among the other needs.

“But perhaps we have it backwards,” he contended. “Maybe we need to consider the chapel the first goal.”

The new emphasis re-invigorated the committee and especially Cunningham and his team. The design, now on a new tact, moved

forward quickly.

“Fr. Paul likes to have a lot of eyes on problems,” Parker said. “He’s very open to the best solution.”

“He really listens,” agreed Cunningham, “and commands respect without dominating.”

“The experience of working together on such an important building project,” said Fr. Paul, “helped our leadership team bond and grow in confidence.”

“It was like remodeling a house,” he laughed. “It could lead either to divorce, or to stronger relationships.”

BEER AND BRATS welcomed Cistercian department heads and form masters to the Cistercians’ retreat house on the north shore of Lake Grapevine in August.

They came at Fr. Paul’s invitation “to get away from the office” and discuss their summer reading, *The Road to Character*, by David Brooks.

This was an effort to focus the faculty on a summer reading about adolescent development that offered the bonus of bringing many of the lay faculty to the lake house for the first time.

They discussed Brooks’ exploration of the dichotomy between our material and spiritual selves, and its relevance in the lives of individuals from St. Augustine to Dwight D. Eisenhower as they charted their life goals.

“The lake house gatherings are Fr. Paul’s way of bringing department heads into the inner circle,” said Novinski, “and demonstrating that their opinions matter.”

“Fr. Paul,” noted Tim Parker, director of facilities, “doesn’t lead the discussions. It is just a conversation among peers.”

“It’s a time to exchange ideas,” said Fr. Paul, “a chance to eat, talk, and get to know one another better.”

And a chance to appreciate the passion of teachers across departments in their service to the development of the students.

"WHAT DO YOU EXPECT OF ME?" asked Jim Taylor, the newly appointed director of admissions in 2012.

"What do you think we can improve?" responded Fr. Paul.

Taylor's work over the past several years has answered that question.

"We're trying to tear down walls," Taylor explained of his work to introduce the school in new parts of town. "We're casting a wide net, and trying to attract talented boys, regardless of where they live.

"Diversity is key. Diversity in what the boy's interests are, where they live geographically, and diversity in their family background. Many of these families have never heard of Cistercian."

In concert with Taylor's work in admissions, Michael Humphries, director of summer programs, has introduced a voucher program, designed to give parents and boys a chance to experience Cistercian through its summer programs.

"We reached out to principals at 32 different schools," Humphries said, "and asked them to select one boy who might benefit from attending our summer program."

The initiative wasn't the first proposed by Humphries.

Since its inception, the summer programs — summer school, sports camp, and the new recreation camp — had been operated independently.

In 2013, Humphries proposed that all of the programs be incorporated under one umbrella. He laid out a plan for a summer program designed to address the academic, athletic, and spiritual needs of attendees as well as a full-day option that responded to the needs of parents.

"I wondered aloud," said Fr. Paul, "whether 2013 (with Founders Hall under construction) was the right year to embark on this program."

And the headmaster laid out his objectives to Humphries: fill the classrooms (as long as we're going to have the lights on), help boys unfamiliar with the school see its benefits, give our seniors summer jobs, and pay some bills.

Since 2013, the number of attendees has increased 15 percent, and the schools represented have risen almost 50 percent.

"I WANT TO SEE WHAT OTHER SCHOOLS are doing," Lisa Hernandez told Fr. Paul three years ago when asked how she might improve a department that has not always been viewed on par with the "core" subjects of math, English, history, and science.

Specifically, Hernandez, a Spanish teacher who had just been named head of the foreign language department, wanted to see how teachers at others school were instructing their students in Latin.

"For some time," she explained, "we had seen the need to make the four-year Latin curriculum in Middle School more logical, and more effective."

She shared her thoughts with the abbot, a Latin teacher for many years at the school.

"Fr. Peter attended two workshops," Hernandez explained, "and he joined me on a visit to St. Mark's. I also visited Hockaday and Jesuit."

In each, they found teachers employing a book series that offered more exercises and on-line components to help students connect with Latin and Roman culture in a longer-lasting fashion.

"I consulted with Fr. Peter and sent samples of the textbooks to Fr. Justin (who was studying in Austria at the time and is now the

school's lead Latin teacher). We discussed how to proceed."

They all agreed to make a major change: from the Oxford series to the Cambridge (in Forms I-III).

"We envision several positive developments from the change in textbooks," Hernandez said, "including coordinating more closely with the E-Lab classes and preparing boys to take Latin electives in high school."

In addition to a more coherent Latin curriculum, the relevance of the language department looks to be on the climb.

As a part of the major improvements made to the senior curriculum this year, a foreign language is no longer required. But seniors may choose to enroll in an upper-level course in Spanish or French as their senior seminar (as seven seniors did this year) to improve their fluency.

In the course of their refining the second semester grade this summer (i.e., no longer cumulative), Fr. Paul, Medaille, and Novinski also modified the way in which GPAs are calculated. Rather than the number of class periods per week, each subject is now weighted according to its Carnegie unit (a full or half credit).

In short, foreign language grades in Forms I-VII now figure into a student's GPA just as importantly as math, English, science, or history.

SENIOR PARENTS AT THEIR FINAL form parent meeting in late October expressed their pleasure (but not surprise) when form master Patrick Mehen announced that the class average for the first quarter (3.64) ranked as the best ever for the Class of '16.

The gathering felt relaxed, almost nostalgic — in marked contrast to their last meeting in the spring when Greg Novinski was peppered with questions about the first major modification to senior year in decades.

"In an informal survey during last form master's class," Mehen reported, "the guys said they were really enjoying their senior year.

"The late start on Mondays received high marks," he said. "They also talked about how the schedule felt lighter, with just four classes on Monday, and five on Wednesday (which includes a double period of science) and Thursday. I think it has helped them work more productively."

He added that nearly all enjoyed their senior seminars (see more on the seminar courses on p. 5).

"But by far the guys' favorite improvement," he emphasized, "is having the option whether to focus on a foreign language (in their senior seminar) or on another one of the seminar subjects."

While still early, Mehen concluded that the refinements "give the seniors more breathing room to better negotiate the manifold demands of senior year."

IN LESS THAN TWO YEARS, a surprising number of the recommendations in the final report of the 2013-14 Faculty Strategic Planning Committee have been implemented.

And Fr. Paul, Medaille, and Novinski don't appear to be resting.

The process and momentum suggests future refinements will be equally effective and smoothly integrated into Cistercian life.

Some of the remaining recommendations include a "vigilance over the schedule and its tendency to become over-packed," more individual counseling by form masters, and greater inter-curricula coordination through a paid curriculum coordinator.

How about redefining the role of the arts in the Upper School curriculum? Perhaps an unlikely prospect; but then, improving senior year didn't appear likely just one year ago.

Letter to my departed friend, Greg O'Hagan '84

Dear Greg,
I am a few steps behind the power curve, as usual, but there are few things I wanted to tell you.

I wish I had written this letter sooner.



Afterthoughts
Smokey Briggs '84

In an email. I am glad we kept up the little we did. I wish we had done better.

But, as you know, life gets busy.

While it is not fair to judge a person based solely on a mere four years of their life, our years at Cistercian were revealing.

Forms V-VIII at Cistercian were an intense experience, and we could not help but learn a few things about each other, for better or worse.

You know, you could have been a real jerk. As a matter of fact, when we first met, I pegged you for one, based simply on previous experiences with the Big Man on Campus.

I have not envied many people in this life.

I envied you a little. Looking through my young eyes back then, you had it all.

I envied your athleticism. I strived to be a great athlete. You were a great athlete. I know you worked at it, I was there in the weight room and on the field, but you made it look easy.

As a running back you had the speed to turn the corner, and the agility to juke tacklers. You made running look effortless — especially when we were running sprints at the end of practice. I had unkind thoughts about you more than once as you glided down the field in front of me, always pulling away.

Do you remember when Pittsburgh Steeler's linebacker Jack Lambert said, "Quarterbacks ought to wear dresses"? I always agreed, as you know, and I usually tossed running backs into the same group.

But not you. You were no prima-donna halfback. You were tough. Tackling you was a job.

Some of my fondest memories of playing football are of tackling you, or at least trying to tackle you.

In that flash of recognition when I saw it was you coming through the line, I thrilled in the moment.

I can see you clearly in my memory, head up, shoulders square, both arms around the ball, legs driving.

At that moment, I did not know who would win, but I knew it would be a great battle.

Thank you for that.

You were an amazing athlete. But you know that.

How many guys can walk-on the football team at University of Texas and make the squad?

I guess you must have been good looking too, judging by the flock

of girls that usually escorted you off the field at the end of a game.

By the way, congratulations on marrying the beautiful cheerleader, and fathering two beautiful daughters, who obviously inherited their mother's looks, and from all reports, both of your fine personalities. Nice job there. The world needs more people like you two.

And you were smart. Yes, you had to study, but you always got it — French, Calculus, Chemistry — I would have sacrificed digits on my right hand to have that kind of processing power upstairs.

So, there you were — you ran like a gazelle and tackling you evoked images of oncoming freight trains. You were broad in the shoulders and narrow at the hip, and girl's flipped their hair when you talked to them. To add insult to injury, making an "A" in any given subject was no big deal.

You could have been an arrogant, condescending, conceited, show-off — and could have backed it all up, walking the walk after talking the talk.

But you were not.

Instead, you were a truly nice guy who excelled in everything, and helped and encouraged your teammates in the classroom, and on the field, to excel with you.

I know, I was there.

Having you as a classmate, a teammate, and a friend, was a joy. I feel confident I speak for the entire class of 1984, and a lot of other Hawks as well, when I say that.

If Cistercian had a recruiting poster, you would be the guy on the poster.

Do you remember the Trinity Valley game our Junior year — the game I blew my knee? What was that, the second game of the season? That really took the wind out of me.

You probably do not remember the day a week or so later when I set the CPS record for the lowest score ever on a Physics test. I remember that day very well. I scored nine points on that test.

You did me a good turn that day. I was about as low as I had ever been at that point in my life. Football was one of the few things I was decent at in high school, and there I was, armpits raw from the crutches and my ACL sucked up into my knee so that it would barely flex, starring glumly at the paper Mr. Martin's pen had drenched in red. That bleeding test felt like a last straw.

I have never quit anything in my life, but at that moment, I was examining the merits of the concept.

I was staring at that stupid test when you punched me in the shoulder and said, "Come on Hocus, it's just one test."

"Hocus" is still not my favorite nickname, by the way.

Maybe they were not the most inspiring words ever spoken, but something about them, the way you said them, maybe just the fact that you bothered to utter them — something — did the trick. That I remember it 30-plus years later is proof enough.

In a brief moment my glass was half-full again.

Thanks for that. I suspect I am not the only person who owes you a similar "thanks." You were that kind of guy.

Sometime in the future some poor angel is going to draw the short straw and get stuck with the job of trying to lug my soul across the goal line at those Pearly Gates.

I hope it is you. With you carrying the ball, I might have a chance.

See you then.

JANUARY

- 30 Admission testing**
**30 James & Lynn Moroney
Award Dinner**

FEBRUARY

- 6 Admission testing**
**19 The Catholic Foundation
Dinner honoring Fr. Denis**

The Christian strategy for becoming great

Re-telling the preaching of Peter, the evangelist Mark has a special preference for pointing out how obtuse and slow the disciples were in understanding the teachings of Jesus:



On Prayer
Fr. Roch Kereszty

They came to Capernaum, and once inside the house, [Jesus] began to ask them: "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest (9:33-34).

Ironically, this happened a few hours after Jesus had solemnly announced to them that the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men. The apostles were obviously embarrassed by Jesus' question, but we are somewhat relieved: if the apostles themselves were ambitious, if they were trying their best to advance their own careers, we too might be forgiven for attempting to advance in our jobs as much as we can.

In fact, St. Paul encourages his readers with the language of athletic competition: "Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you win it" (1 Cor 9:24).

Jesus, too, encourages us to strive for true greatness: "if anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all" (Mk 9:35). So he does not discourage us from wishing to be first, but he turns upside down the values by which the world judges greatness. St. Bernard explains to us, that Jesus knows human nature since he created us, and he created us unto the image of God. Therefore, we have infinitely great desires. He knows that it would be totally impossible to suppress this desire for greatness. Besides, he does not want to prevent us from striving for what he himself has created us for.

But he shows the disciples and shows us how different true greatness is from what we imagine.

"If you wish to be first, be the last of all and the servant of all." This is the true greatness, the opposite of what the world is obsessed with. The disciple should strive to make his whole life a life of service. Service to those who are the closest to him, his family, but service also for many others as a doctor, lawyer, businessman,

maintenance man, merchant or priest and especially for those who are poor, abandoned or sick.

Many idealistic people want to change the entire world or at least the United States.

This is how Dorothy Day started out.

Then as she learned about Christ and the saints, especially when she came to know St. Therese of Lisieux, she realized that what she can do in the eyes of this world is very limited.

She created Catholic Worker Houses in the big cities of the country for those who were without a home and work and she helped them build up their lives. But she also knew that if she really wanted to do God's work, she had to do everything with the very love of Christ. "Love one another as I have loved you," said Jesus. If Jesus commands this, he will give the grace to obey. Is this not the greatest thing any human being can hope for? To love with the very love of God?

Yet this will not happen to us, unless we take the last seat at the table of God's banquet. What do we have that we have not received? asks St. Paul. The truth of our being requires that we acknowledge: without God we are nothing.

The more we admit our emptiness, the more God can fill us.

According to St. Bernard, wherever our alleged merits occupy the space within us, there grace cannot enter. If little space remains, little grace can enter; if our empty space is large, a river of grace can fill it up.

It is for this reason that Bernard presents Mary as the greatest soul among men and women since she does not attribute anything to her own merits, and everything to God.

She sings that "God has regarded the lowliness of her handmaid and ... he has done great things to me..." *plena confessio gratiae, ipsius gratiae plenitudinem signat in anima confitentis*: "The full confession of grace indicates the fullness of grace in the soul of the one confessing," writes Bernard.

Mary is full of thanksgiving, for she is full of grace.

God presents Mary as our model: she is at the same time the smallest and the greatest, the last and the first. To the extent that we empty ourselves of pride, vanity and self-righteousness, God's grace enters and transforms our heart. Then God can do great things through us, great things which in the eyes of the world will remain insignificant and perhaps even invisible.