

For family, friends, & alumni of Cistercian Preparatory School

CISTERCIAN IRVING TEXASONTINUUM

Fall 2019

Stewards of the Word

Alumni Authors
on Writing and
Cistercian Education

Success by Different Means

Students of 2009
travel various paths
to a career

Annual Report
2018–19 School Year

Will Arbery '07



Remembering Cistercian with a Planned Gift



Patrick A. Schnitzius



A Wonderful Legacy

Patrick A. Schnitzius was so happy when the Hungarian monks came to town. He was even happier when they were able to build the Abbey Church since he had attended Mass with the monks for many years. He prayed fervently for the monks in the hopes that younger men would come forward to be a part of the Abbey. He would often speak of the young men who were becoming novices, brothers, and priests. He attended Mass at the Abbey regularly, always taking his seat in the sixth row at the end of the pew, and so it was no surprise when he prepared his estate planning documents to ensure that upon his passing, there would be funds available to support the Cistercian Abbey for the continued care of the monks and the formation of future young men. Pat died January 18, 2019, but his memory will live on in the legacy he left behind.

MEMORARE
SOCIETY

To remember Cistercian with a planned gift, contact Erin Hart.
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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

Blessed is the man who has filled his quiver

"Sons are a gift from the LORD, the fruit of the womb, a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man who has filled his quiver with them." (Ps 127:3-5)

Like the psalmist, I also feel incredible gratitude as I reflect on the gift of our alumni. Nurtured in the *alma mater* of Cistercian, they are like an overflowing



Fr. Paul McCormick

quiver of arrows, fanning out across the nation and globe to positively impact the world. In our cover article, Gary Nied, English Department Chair, updates us on alums making this impact specifically as professional writers. From off-Broadway plays to Yale Series poets, journalism to speechwriting, and even gaming, he highlights how they have successfully honed their talents and skills, while remembering with gratitude the Cistercian faculty and opportunities for writing that got them started.

quiver of arrows, fanning out across the nation and globe to positively impact the world.

In our cover article, Gary Nied, English Department Chair, updates us on

Similarly, as a follow-up to last spring's highlight of both our first and most recent class, our College Counselor, Chris Blackwell, in our second feature reaches out to the Class of 2009 to see what life and career look like for those ten years past graduation. He discovers that, despite a variety of career paths, common to all is the very same appreciation, again, for the faculty and the programs that prepared them.

Then, **Smokey Briggs '84**, himself an established writer, with characteristic humor and humility insists that writing's true rewards are never measured by the size of a paycheck. Finally, Fr. Roch offers a poignant reminder, as we go through life, to remember how our ability to forgive, when rooted in Christ, is exponentially more powerful than any opposition we encounter.

May God bless all of the wonderful alum "arrows" that fill Cistercian's quiver as they continue their efforts *to enkindle and to enlighten*, each in his own way.

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News & Notes

New faces on campus

Marco Iglesias-Rodriguez joined the faculty this year as a Spanish teacher. He came to Dallas from northern Spain (Mieres, Asturias) four years ago to teach in Dallas ISD. With an MA in Spanish Philology (Spanish Language and Literature) from the University of Oviedo, he went on to receive a “Suficiencia Investigadora” (Diploma of Advanced Studies) after finishing his doctoral courses, and he has published several articles on Spanish literature. “Spirituality and knowledge are fundamental for the best possible education,” said Marco, “and at Cistercian, I have found the finest of both.”

Austin Nevitt '04 returned to Cistercian after teaching and coaching at Jesuit College Preparatory School and St. John's Episcopal School. “Having the opportunity to return to Cistercian, which was so formative in my education and influential in my decision to become an educator, is a blessing,” he remarked, “and I am thankful to be able to give back to a place that has given me so much.” Austin is the Director of Transportation while also coaching middle school football and both upper school football and basketball.



Anastasia Munoz, Br. Christopher Kalan, Austin Nevitt '04, and Marco Iglesias-Rodriguez.

Although he has assisted previously with the Cistercian Chess Club, Br. Christopher Kalan is in his first year teaching at the School. He graduated from the University of Dallas in 2015 with a BS in physics and then earned his MS in mechanical engineering from Texas A&M. In addition to teaching Form I computer and continuing to assist with the chess club, he is taking philosophy and theology courses at UD. One of the most rewarding projects he is working on with Form I students is shaping their PowerPoint lessons to help them create content to be displayed on the electronic monitors in the gym and Founders' Hall.

Anastasia Munoz, a veteran drama teacher from St. Patrick's and an experienced Dallas thespian, has taken the reins of the drama department from her husband, Seth Magill. Anastasia is teaching drama, directing Cistercian theater productions, and

sponsoring the middle school speech league. “I have big plans for this department. I also have a new son, and I look forward to him soaring here in 10 years. I call him my baby hawk,” she said.



Jonathan Figueroa

Jonathan Figueroa joined the maintenance department as sports field keeper. He is a Jesuit alumnus ('08) and previously worked as the complex supervisor at FC Dallas's MoneyGram Soccer Park. He has been impressed by how welcoming everyone has been, and he enjoys working with the faculty and staff toward a common goal of providing the best for our students.

When Cistercian music teacher Kelly Shea and her husband, **Joseph Shea '78**, moved to Pinehurst, North Carolina, last September, the School needed to find a worthy successor to teach her classes and take on the Christmas Concert and Spring Recital. **Patrick Spence '08**, who teaches English at Cistercian, thought his wife, Monica, might be interested in the position. Already teaching a few music courses at Cambridge School of Dallas, she was excited by the opportunity: “Let's be honest, working at Cistercian is a dream come true. I grew up around the monastery and the prep school — Fr. George Ferenczy gave me my first confession and Holy Communion, and I went to every home football game and dance during high school — and I used to joke about starting a boys' choir here as my life's goal, and now I have the chance!”



Kelly Shea and Monica Spence

Faculty and staff discuss diversity at Cistercian

In an effort to evaluate and challenge how the faculty and staff engage with one another, the students, and the larger community, Fr. Paul invited Dr. Mia Mbroh, a licensed professional counselor, to conduct a workshop before the school year began. Dr. Mbroh guided faculty and staff through a process of self-reflection, awareness, ownership, and progress with respect to diversity at the School. A summer reading assignment provided a starting point for an array of fruitful discussions.



Dr. Mia Mbroh

Cistercian surpasses last year's record on North Texas Giving Day

Cistercian broke its own record by raising \$760,202 from 828 donors on this year's North Texas Giving Day. The number of donors was the highest among schools, garnering Cistercian the "Thriving Community Award in Education" along with a \$2,500 bonus. "The Cistercian community was tremendous again this year," explained Sustentation Chair **Mark Roppolo '88**. "Support from current parents, alumni parents, and friends combined with increased participation from alumni made this another banner day for the School. This generosity is just one of many ways the community shows its support and affinity for Cistercian."



Ordinations of Fr. Raphael and Br. Francis '01

In August, Bishop Edward Burns ordained Br. Raphael Schaner to the priesthood and **Br. Francis Gruber '01** to the diaconate in the Abbey Church with a standing-room-only crowd of family, friends, and members of the school community. The assembly looked colorful as the Schaner family traditionally wears tasteful "Hawaiian shirts" to formal events. Looking back, Fr. Raphael said, "It dawned on me in the days leading up to the ordination that, while it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a Church to raise a priest. This was made especially clear to me in the abundance of prayers and support both from my California family and from my extended Cistercian family." On the following Saturday, Fr. Raphael celebrated his First Mass, and Br. Francis served as deacon.



The newly ordained, Fr. Raphael and Br. Francis '01

Mass of Thanksgiving for Fr. Zak Boazman '10

Fr. Zak Boazman '10 was ordained this summer in the archdiocese of Oklahoma. He came home to visit Cistercian and celebrated Mass with the monks who guided him in his youth.

"In returning to my alma mater, God reopened my eyes to the many graces I received in my time as a student at Cistercian," he said. "The monks' example of merciful love for God and his truth has imprinted on my soul a great zeal for authentic evangelization of both mind and heart."



Fr. Zak Boazman

After the Mass, faculty, parents, and alumni gathered for a reception to congratulate Fr. Zak on this milestone. His priestly ministry will be at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Ponca City, Oklahoma.



Hiett-Prize luncheon

For the past four years, Rick Illes, the father of **Grant Illes '06**, has generously invited a group of juniors and seniors to attend an annual luncheon honoring the Hiett Prize recipient.

This \$50,000 prize is awarded by the Dallas Institute of Culture and Humanities to an up-and-coming scholar in the humanities. This year's winner, Dr. Jessica Wooten Wilson, is a Flannery O'Connor and Dostoevsky scholar, so her speech was of real interest to the students who attended. Cistercian was the only school group present at the event.

Science department's newest tool

Over the last three years, Dallas Southwest Osteopathic Physicians, Inc. has donated nearly \$100,000 to the School. Those funds have been crucial in the science department's efforts to integrate more labs and hands-on experiences into the curriculum. The acquisition of a suite of state-of-the-art sensors and data collectors for college-style experiments would not have been possible without this generous support. One of the most recent additions has especially sparked students' interest and curiosity about science: a new skeleton to illustrate the anatomy and function of the skeletal and muscular systems.



News & Notes

Model UN broadens students' outlook

After hearing about Model UN from their friends at other high schools, junior **Saish Satyal '21** and senior **Nathan Paul '20** decided to start their own team for two conferences this fall. Librarian Jacquelyn Dudasko agreed to sponsor them, and they worked with interested classmates every week to prepare policy papers on a variety of subjects from crises in Venezuela and Kashmir to disaster relief guidelines for the United States. Their hard work paid off, and every Cistercian delegate who attended the most recent conference received an award. "The conference was legitimately one of the most fun things I've ever attended," Saish said, "and I was able to learn so much. I highly recommend the club to anyone willing to put in the work."



The middle school production of **Aladdin** sold out both performances before Thanksgiving Break.

Community comes together after tornadoes

Quite a few current and alumni families were affected by the October tornadoes that hit Dallas. We saw the best of our community as families checked on one another, helped with cleanup efforts, and offered food and shelter. The weekend after the storms, the Community Service Club went into the community to help with cleanup.



The Community Service Club clears debris in a local neighborhood.

Making Cistercian safer for everyone

This fall, the School improved the safety of our campus and for our community as a whole. The new Thor Guard lightning detection system provides campus-wide coverage during potentially dangerous inclement weather. Additionally, an automated external defibrillator has been installed near Hawk Field for greater access and visibility in an emergency situation. "The safety of our students and our fans is of the utmost importance to the School. These technological improvements allow us to put our best foot forward in that regard," said André Bruce, Athletic Director. •



Athletic Director André Bruce with the newly installed Thor Guard lightning detection system.



Faculty milestones: Mr. Jim Reisch, 30 years; Dr. Richard Newcomb, 25 years; Mr. Michael Humphries, 15 years.

College Matriculations

Hawks from the Class of 2019 spread their wings for college

The 42 members of the Class of 2019 are attending 30 different colleges this fall, meaning that more than 70 percent are attending college without a classmate from their Form. Sixty percent of the class has chosen to go out of state for college, and of the 40 percent remaining in Texas, half of them are attending public schools. Overall, 43 percent are attending public colleges with 57 percent enrolled in private schools. Five students from the class are attending three different Catholic universities. Uniquely, for the first time in over 25 years, no member of a Cistercian class chose to enroll at Texas A&M University. In contrast, five students from the class enrolled at Texas Tech University, with as many students going in one year as have in the last 25 years combined.

30
Number of colleges attended by 42 students in the class

“This class was united as a strong community but had different goals and interests as they chose their colleges,” said Director of College Counseling, Chris Blackwell. “They knew what they were looking for, so, coupled with support for one another, each felt comfortable charting his own path for the future.”

Similar to previous years, the Class of 2019 is focusing their studies within the STEM or business fields. A third of the class (14 students) is pursuing business, the natural sciences account for 30 percent of the class with seven focused on pre-med, and 25 percent are studying engineering. Of the remaining six students, three are majoring in the social sciences (two psychology and one political science), one in journalism (see article on page 8), and two in philosophy.

Strong test scores and accomplishments earned full-tuition or full-ride scholarships for five members of

88%
Planning to major in STEM or business-related fields

3 Number of athletes playing for their school's team

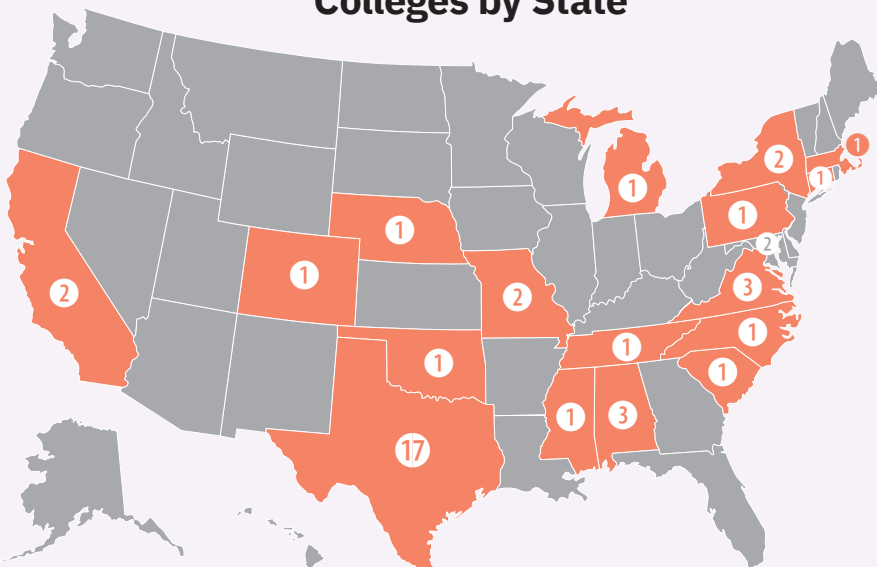
the class. **Kevin Paul** had to choose between two full-tuition scholarships, ultimately accepting the Trustee's Scholarship at the University of Southern California. **Matthew Sawtelle** was one of ten full-tuition Archdiocesan Scholarship awardees at The Catholic University of America. **Aidan Click** accepted the prestigious Hunt Leadership Scholarship at SMU.

Three students are continuing their athletic careers in college. At the Division III level, **Harry Crutcher** is playing football at Washington and Lee University, and **Jack O'Neil** is playing basketball at Southwestern University. **Brian Jiang** “swam-on” to Michigan State University's swim team and is the first Cistercian student to attend that school. Two other students are the first Cistercian alums to enroll as freshmen at their respective institutions: **Sam Kirby** to Clemson University and **Sebastian Currllin** to the University of Colorado at Boulder. •

Colleges

- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- Auburn University (2)
- The Catholic University of America (2)
- Clemson University
- University of Colorado at Boulder
- Cornell University
- Creighton University
- Harvard College
- North Lake College (2)
- Michigan State University
- University of Mississippi
- University of Missouri Columbia
- New York University
- University of Pennsylvania
- Rhodes College
- Rice University (2)
- University of Richmond
- University of Southern California
- Southern Methodist University (3)
- Southwestern University
- St. Edward's University (2)
- Stanford University
- Texas Tech University (5)
- The University of Texas, Austin (2)
- University of Tulsa
- University of Virginia
- Wake Forest University
- Washington and Lee University
- Washington University in St. Louis
- Yale University

Class of 2019 Colleges by State



Stewards of the Word

Alumni Authors
on Writing
and Cistercian
Education

Gary Nied

Every Cistercian class has its share of amazing writers. Some are precocious—exhibiting, even in middle school, a gift for storytelling, a flair for expression, and a depth of insight beyond their years. These budding authors often write all through high school, and their talents are made conspicuous when they win the literary competition (often multiple times), get their work featured in *Reflections*, and share their work with others. Given such promise, who could doubt their ability to become professional writers? And although it is rare, some do.

Among the ranks of alumni there are, in fact, an impressive number of authors, especially playwrights, poets, screenwriters, essayists, and journalists. Some have even garnered distinctions and awards. Last year it was announced that Duy Doan '00 had won the 2017 Yale Series of Younger Poets prize for his manuscript “We Play a Game” (published by Yale UPress in 2018), and this fall Will Arbery’s (’07) off-Broadway play “Heroes of the Fourth Turning” has received glowing reviews from a number of prestigious journals, including *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, and *The New Yorker*. For this article, five of our alumni authors discuss their writing careers and share with us the pleasures and challenges of their craft.



Scene from the off-Broadway play “Heroes of the Fourth Turning” by Will Arbery '07

Journalist and Teacher Tom Molanphy '89

Tom Molanphy teaches journalism, creative writing, and composition at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. A published author, he is best known for his environmental journalism, with essays appearing in a number of places including *The Bay City Beacon*, *SF Weekly*, *USA Today*, and *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Molanphy's articles on the environment are notable for their scientific accuracy and humanistic outlook. An important influence on his work was Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, a book, he says, that not only contained sound science but communicated effectively through powerful prose.

Recently Molanphy wrote about the reintroduction of grizzly bears in the Northern Cascades. The article grew out of an interview with a park ranger who candidly shared what it was like to first encounter a grizzly.

Anecdotes such as this are key to Molanphy's brand of journalism. "Just as important as the facts is the how and why of the human players."

Molanphy says he always had an inclination towards writing. Being an introvert, he found that writing was the easiest way for him to communicate. This connection between

introversion and writing is beautifully explored in his memoir *Loud Memories Of A Quiet Life* (2012).

At Cistercian, Molanphy says, reading was always touted as something important. He recalls in middle school having to memorize and recite poems such as Percy Shelley's "Ozymandias." In upper school he recalls the impact that Flannery O'Connor's short stories had on him, in particular "A Good Man is Hard to Find"—"It spoke about deep truth and every sentence counted." Writing practice was also important. In first



form he won a writing award, and his form master Fr. Peter was "very encouraging." Later he developed a specific interest in journalism through editing the *Informer*.

Molanphy admits that he was never a strong science student, but he enjoyed the challenge. He credits Cistercian's solid science curriculum for giving him the confidence needed to communicate with scientists and to comprehend the science underlying the topics he canvasses.

After Cistercian, Molanphy attended Loyola University New Orleans, where the Jesuits were influential in developing his critical thinking skills and his commitment to social justice. After graduate work at the University of

Montana, he lived in Belize for two years, where he worked with Jesuit volunteers serving Mayans in rural areas. His published MA thesis, *Following Mateo: Two years searching in Belize* (2002), was an attempt to understand what it means to be a Mayan in the 21st century and to reflect on the lessons he learned from his relationship with the elder Mateo Ack.

From the beginning of his career, Molanphy has understood the significance of good journalism. "It's a form of public service. What a writer does ultimately is to explore what it means to be alive and to be together with others in this world. The good writer always thinks of his audience; in fact, writing involves a contract with the reader: the writer's responsibility is to do the hard work of composing, but together the writer and the reader work to understand and interpret the world."

"What a writer does ultimately is to explore what it means to be alive and to be together with others in this world."

Data Scientist and Poet Michael Lawson '09

Michael Lawson has always worked all parts of his brain. In this past year he has not only had several poems published in notable print and online journals, but he also finished his PhD in bio-statistics at UNC Chapel Hill. Currently he works as a data scientist in Boston, where he hopes to join a writing community soon.

Excelling in both math and literature, Lawson says these two ways of thinking have been mutually reinforcing, “They are two creative energies that feed into each other.”

“The most important skill you can possess is the ability to communicate. A great writer’s ability to make the reader see something translates to stats—you have to let the graph do the talking.”

essential in demonstrating how visuals can communicate abstract concepts. He also appreciates the rigor of the Cistercian program: “We were able to be inspired by the things we read because we read such good books



Lawson likes to tell the stats-oriented student, “The most important skill you can possess is the ability to communicate. A great writer’s ability to make the reader see something translates to stats—you have to let the graph do the talking.” Lawson says that both Mr. Novinski and Dr. Newcomb were influ-

and we delved into them deeply. We also learned to think deeply and with an attention to detail in math and science.” Lawson’s poems often reflect this double focus with direct references to scientific and mathematical concepts.

Lawson also found Cistercian to be a good environment for writing. Unlike some of his friends at UNC Chapel Hill who said that in high school they only had a single teacher who would read their work and encourage them, Michael found the Cistercian teachers

to be very supportive, and he said there were many opportunities for creative expression, such as BraveArt Coffee Shop, writing contests, and *Reflections*.

This past year, Michael had two poems featured in the 40th anniversary issue of the *Tar Heel Review* (Fall 2018)—a particularly gratifying accomplishment, he says, because the issue also included a poem by his teacher-mentor Michael McFee. Most recently, his poem “Doubting” was published in the University of Illinois’ literary journal *Ninth Letter* (Spring/Summer 2019).

New alumni literary anthology planned

In addition to celebrating the accomplishments of these five writers, let this article also stand as an invitation to seek out and experience their work. In an effort to showcase alumni writing, Cistercian plans to publish a second alumni literary anthology (the call for submissions will be coming soon). We invite all alums to consider submissions in the categories of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and lyric.

Playwright
Will Arbery '07

Will Arbery has been touted as an up-and-coming playwright for some time. Now, you might say, his star is definitely on the rise. With glowing reviews by *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *First Things*, and others, and with a cast full of notable film and television actors, Arbery's latest off-Broadway play "Heroes of the Fourth Turning," which debuted in September at Playwrights Horizons, has created quite a stir. My favorite quote from a drama critic thus far is Sara Holdren's in *The Vulture*, "Will Arbery's 'Heroes of the Fourth Turning' is so frighteningly well written, it's hard to write about. It's the rare play where standing and picking up your s#@! and shuffling down steps and going outside—especially onto 42nd Street—immediately after feels like a kind of

"The stage provides the space for ideas to be spoken without the immediate need for rebuttal."

violence. You're not ready for it yet. You're still in Arbery's world — murky yet lit by lightning, lyrical and scary, brave and terribly gentle." At Playwrights Horizons, to keep conversation alive in the minds of the playgoers, quotes are posted in the bathrooms that relate to the play. For *Heroes*, the quotes are from Flannery O'Connor, St. Augustine, and even a haiku about a lunar eclipse that Arbery composed as a first former at Cistercian. Will says that composing that 17-syllable haiku (which won the poetry category in the literary competition) was a formative moment. "It was the first time I felt like a writer."

Arbery started writing plays at Cistercian, but it wasn't until his senior year at Kenyon College that he knew he wanted to be a playwright. "Plays felt like the right fit. With so many different voices around me, from my female-dominated household to the intensely male voices at Cistercian, I felt an overabundance of perspectives in my head. Playwriting allowed me to find a flow, to fall into the voices."

Since college, Arbery feels he has awakened to the world in a new way through living in New York City for



Korde Tuttle

six years, and two years in Chicago. And yet, he says, he never quite has a full sense of belonging. He says, "I listen to all sides with a quiver of pain: liberals and conservatives, the religious and non-religious. Through my art, I am attempting to bridge that gap—to challenge the audience not just to sit and empathize but to think the way the other side thinks, to sit with their thoughts. It's the only way forward without danger. The stage provides the space for ideas to be spoken without the immediate need for rebuttal."

Some of Arbery's recent work is intensely personal containing obvious autobiographical references. An artist is not always in full control of the direction his genius takes. For now, writing about the personal is Arbery's way of exploring important ideas and issues and universal truths. His play "Plano" (which will have an extended run at NYC's Connelly Theater in April) was inspired by three of his sisters. "Heroes of the Fourth Turning" features characters who mirror his parents. How his family would respond was a real concern. "I learned that what I needed to do was have my parents read the play and to have a personal conversation about it. As long as I can be up front and get ahead of these conversations, the play can actually bring us closer even though it doesn't go easy on anyone. In fact, it is almost cruel." Will says he wishes he didn't have to write about such personal subjects, but for now it is necessary, even though "it feels like a curse at times."

As for his Cistercian education, Arbery says, "It's impossible to overstate how supportive the Cistercian faculty was of my writing efforts. There was a coterie of English teachers with a passion for cultivating talent and curiosity when they perceived it in a student." Of all the teachers, Will says, "We felt your passion."

Screenwriter, Essayist, Game Designer

William Peirson '01

William Peirson is one of the most interesting, creative people you will ever meet. When he's not writing essays on the work of Jane Austen or Shakespeare, he's consulting on movie scripts, designing games, or running his software company. A common denominator of all these interests is a love of puzzles and problem solving.

A member of the Jane Austen Society of North Texas, Peirson has written and presented essays that explore the unique structural qualities of Austen's novels. In one essay he uses the analogy of chess to explain the workings of plot and character; in another, "Happily Clever ever After," he compares Austen's work to a lock with a series of complex tumblers: to understand

"Cistercian... continues to inspire me to keep pursuing innovation in the creation of a world that is comprehensive yet different and new."

the appeal of her work you must discover the key that turns the lock. Peirson asserts that the

key is recognizing that Austen uses familiar fairy tale plots, but reverses the masculine and

feminine roles: we find men exhibiting classic female virtues and vice versa. In *Emma*, for example, there is a classical fairy-tale setting, but it is Emma who is the beast of the castle.

As a script consultant, Peirson helps clients make a story work for them. His specialty is the structure and dynamics of plot. "Actions," he says, "have to speak for themselves." Another strength is his ability to envision how scripts will actually play out on the screen. He



Jim Reisch

prides himself on offering practical, efficient solutions that don't require an author to rewrite a whole script. Peirson has also had success writing for movies and television; he is best known for the TV series *Inspector Mom*.

Peirson is the owner of Peirson Creative Consulting, LLC, a company that specializes in writing, special event planning, and design for the entertainment and service industry. He has designed a number of escape rooms, immersive games, and games for kids. Some of his notable escape room adventures include: "Ultimate Indiana Jones," "Haunted Theatre," and "Santa's Workshop." Recently he has been designing escape rooms for in-home parties.

At Cistercian he felt that artistic expression was well supported, "Everyone was very

encouraging but not in a stifling way. There were many opportunities/chances." He remembers spending a lot of time making a short film in high school, which introduced him to the craft, and he said BraveArt was a big influence: "It was great to see everyone contributing; you got to see people in a new light when you discovered their ability to draw or play music." The biggest influence, he says, was the place itself: "Cistercian is a unique separate world with a rich Catholic tradition and history. It continues to inspire me to keep pursuing innovation in the creation of a world that is comprehensive yet different and new."

Playwright, Screenwriter, Actor Daniel Mitura '05

Daniel Mitura is an actor and writer living in New York City. He has had several plays produced in New York and internationally. His adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* played at Theatre Row (The Kirk Theatre). "Locker Room Talk," a modern-day adaptation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, was performed at the Cherry Lane Theatre. "Plan B The Musical" (for which he wrote book and lyrics) was produced at the Looking Glass Theatre and subsequently played in Canada. Other works include "The Genius!" inspired by the life of surrealist painter Salvador Dali (which



"If you're going to work in the arts you have to know what came before. It is a basic cultural language."

literature there are numerous references to literature, history, philosophy, and religion. "It is a basic cultural language." Just as important are the great forms found in the classics: "The Odyssey may be an ancient text, but what you realize is that it is still a great model of storytelling. When you're young you want to rebel, but then you learn the virtues of the given form. There are a finite number of stories; even original works are, in a

had a reading at the Atlantic), and an adaptation of Richard Condon's *The Manchurian Candidate*. Mitura is a graduate of Columbia University with a degree in art history and theater.

Mitura says that Cistercian's focus on classics prepared him well for being a writer because "if you're going to work in the arts you have to know what came before."

He points out that in contemporary

sense, adaptations."

Mitura says that a key to discovering those forms is to study genres (tragedy, comedy, satire)—an often neglected subject. As a writer, Mitura has come to appreciate "the short cuts that genre gives you." Paraphrasing Goethe, he says, "It's working within limits that the master defines himself." As one who has written, not only in different genres but for different media (films, plays, the printed page), Mitura always asks himself, "what is the virtue of this particular medium?"

In addition to literary and cultural education, Mitura also feels like

Cistercian helped develop his moral sensibility. Today, he says, "people want things to have meaning. There is less appetite for escapist entertainment. Many of the moral messages are pointing to what will produce cohesiveness in society. A key is understanding the effects one's actions will have on other people; a consideration of intentions is not enough."

Mitura appreciates in particular the inclusion of diversity in literature. He says that art improves where there is a diversity of perspective. When Mitura creates characters unlike himself (white and male) he says it is important to portray them in a way "that is not a stereotype." To do this well requires openness and humility. When it comes to imagining the lives of others, you have to approach it with "respect and a recognition that you don't know everything."

Mitura is working on a new play for next summer and a new film project—a political thriller set in the US embassy in Paris; it's about someone who tries to manipulate a special election. •

Author's note

As a postscript, there are many more writers than were interviewed for this article. At the risk of leaving out names, here is a partial list: **Smokey Briggs '84**, editor, publisher, and journalist with whose works readers of the *Continuum* are quite familiar; **David Stewart '74**, marketer, content strategist, and writer (including longtime editor of the *Continuum*); **Martin Bourqui '05**, freelance writer and activist; **Darryl Ratcliff '04**,

poet, art journalist, and social practice artist; **Carl Weiland '04**, policy analyst and speechwriter (currently for secretary of state Mike Pompeo); **Rob Madole '06**, translator, teacher, and published author; **David Newcomb '10**, self-proclaimed "part-time poet and mathematician," who has published a delightful book *In A Word*; **Jeremy Gregg '97**, published author and social entrepreneur; **Brian Melton '71**, lifestyle journalist whose articles are chock-full of clever literary references; **Robert Erickson '14**, literary

critic; **Wheeler Sparks '02**, artist, filmmaker, and storyteller; **Peter Koutsogeorgas '05**, director and film writer; **Jim von der Heydt '92**, a Harvard PhD, once a lecturer in English at Harvard, author of a profound book of literary criticism on American poetry, *At the Brink of Infinity* (2008); and we should also recognize our singer-songwriters, whose poetic lyrics are notable for their originality and cleverness, artists such as **Dylan Starrs '05**, **Court Hoang '06**, **Stuart Leach '12**, and others.

Writing at Cistercian Today: The Tradition Continues

In recent years, Cistercian has expanded its repertoire of support for writers through a variety of contests, clubs and extracurricular opportunities. In addition to the *Informer* and our award-winning literary journal *Reflections*, we have added clubs such as Mock Trial and Model U.N. as well as in-house writing competitions, such as the annual Spooky Story Sudden Fiction contest. This year's judge was Cistercian teacher and coach Jack Dorn '05. There has also been a considerable uptick in submissions to outside writing

competitions. And as always, we participate in the NCTE Writing Award Competition. In the past fifteen years a Cistercian student has won the award eight times. Last year Nicholas Walz '20 was one of only four students in the state of Texas to receive the Certificate for Superior Writing.

Opportunities for critical writing have also increased. For the past seven years upper school students have participated in an annual interscholastic literary colloquium hosted by an area independent school.

Each year several Cistercian students have been honored by having their papers selected for publication and public presentation. Last year's colloquium, sponsored by Hockaday, was on Sandra Cisneros's classic novel *The House on Mango Street*. The keynote speaker was the author herself!

Hiett Prize Luncheon

For the past four years, a group of juniors and seniors has been invited to attend an annual luncheon honoring the Hiett Prize recipient. This \$50,000 prize is awarded by the Dallas Institute of Culture and Humanities to an up-and-coming scholar in the humanities. At the luncheon, the awardee delivers a lecture exemplifying his or her scholarship. The Cistercian table has generously been sponsored by Rick Illes, father of Grant Illes '06. •



Jacquelyn Dudasko

Jack Dorn '05 works with students during the Spooky Story Sudden Fiction contest.

Cistercian Preparatory School

Annual Report of Giving

2018–19 School Year



Jim Reisch

Year in Review

2018–19 School Year

This year's Annual Report again offers an astounding list of those who have generously shared their financial resources during 2018–19 in support of the mission of the Cistercian Preparatory School and Abbey. Please accept my sincere gratitude on behalf of all our students, monks, faculty and staff for each individual, family and organization mentioned in the following pages. Thank you also for continuing to bless us with your time, your talent and your prayers.

Sustentation Drive

The 2018–19 Sustentation Drive collected more than \$798,600 to meet those inevitable one-time capital costs of maintaining and enhancing our facilities each year. As important as the total amount raised, the 100% level of participation among current parents clearly manifests the tremendous support and loyalty we enjoy from our Cistercian families. Thank you and all our alumni parents and grandparents for your ongoing commitment to the School. Our sincere appreciation also goes to the superb leadership of this year's Sustentation Form Captains: (Form VIII to Form I) Kent Clay (Chair), Brian Jones, Chris Vaughan, Bonnie Black, Mark Roppolo '88, Matthew Nevitt '97, David Folmsbee, and Michael Brittan.

Scholarship Drive

The alumni have continued to be extremely generous in contributing over \$275,720 to the 2018–19 Alumni Scholarship Drive with 30.93% of our alumni participating. These funds

are dedicated entirely to providing the necessary scholarships to ensure a Cistercian education for promising young men regardless of socioeconomic background.

North Texas Giving Day

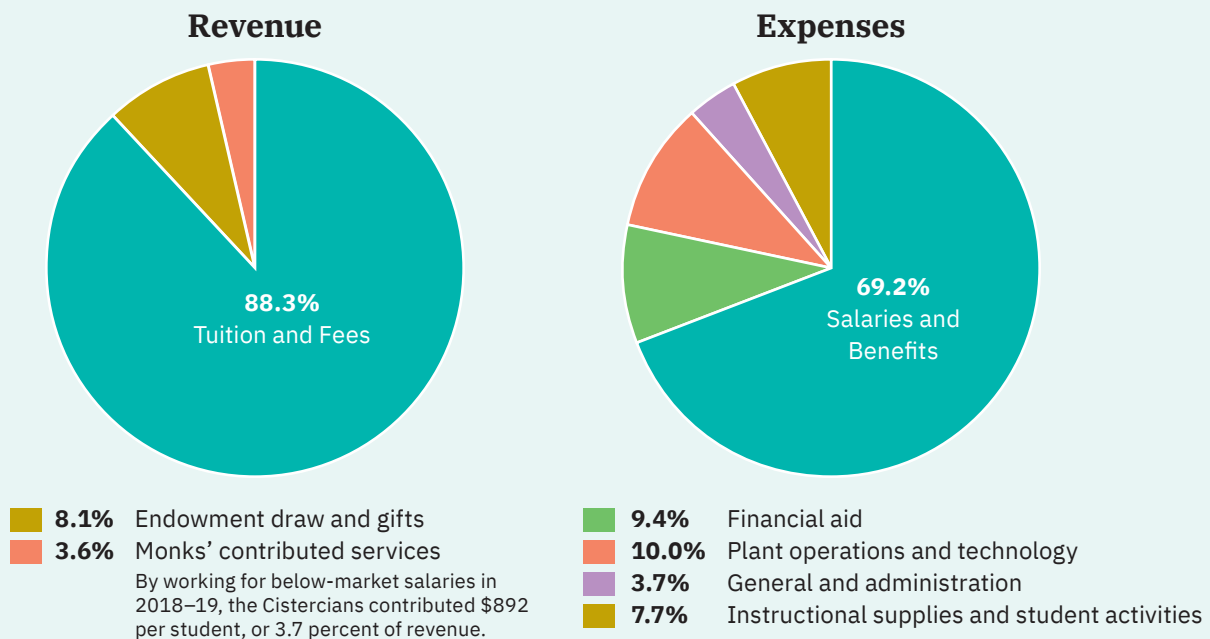
Since this report covers the 2018–19 school year, I am reporting only on the 2018 North Texas Giving Day, which continues to grow in popularity with new School records for both participation and money raised. Through the success of this program each year, much of our annual sustentation and scholarship funds are collected on a single day in September! In fact, Cistercian finished second among all North Texas nonprofits in 2018 with a total of \$760,122 from 800 individual gifts!

Memorare Society

Of course, Cistercian always remains profoundly grateful for our friends in The Memorare Society, Cistercian's planned giving society. Currently, numbering 96 members and growing, these special individuals are helping to ensure the long-term ability of the School to educate and form future generations of students by remembering Cistercian in their estate plans. It is an honor to have their names listed in the annual report (page AR – 37) and also on a plaque in the Abbey crypt.

Financial Report

Cistercian Preparatory School operates each and every year in the black with tuition revenue and other income fully covering all of our annual operating costs. And, as confirmed in our 2018–19 audit by Whitley Penn, our accounting policies and procedures are always clean and reflect the highest degree of financial due diligence. This is due in no small part to the wise guidance and support of Cistercian's Audit Committee. Many thanks to Peter Smith '74 (Chair), Dan Odom, Karl Springer, and Bayard Friedman '03 for





Cistercian 2019 faculty, coaches, and staff

sharing their time, energy and expertise throughout the 2018–19 school year.

Further, despite the vicissitudes of the market each year, the returns on Cistercian’s endowments regularly rank in the top quartile of any educational endowment in the country, large or small. Much gratitude is owed to all the members of the Investment Committee, including: Fr. Abbot Peter ’73, Kathleen Muldoon (Chair), David Haley, Ed Johnson ’80, Alex Nettune ’94, Duane Roberts, and Peter Smith ’74.

Finally, a huge debt of gratitude is owed to Cistercian’s Business Office under the leadership of Cindi Tenney and Ann Picha. From budget to insurance, workers comp and healthcare to faculty retirement issues, financial aid to financial statement prep, and so much more, their work is a key reason our finances remain stable and secure. Speaking of retirement issues, particular thanks is owed to Nancy Gatens, CFP and mother of Marty Gatens ’11, who has donated most generously her time and expertise over the past two years to offer collective and individual financial guidance and advice to our faculty and staff. It is most appreciated by all of us.

I do hope you will have an opportunity in the coming year to visit the campus and see firsthand how these resources are making a significant impact in the daily life of the School and how they are helping to ensure a uniquely Cistercian formation for future generations of boys as well.

Sincerely,

Fr. Paul McCormick
Headmaster

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The 2018–19 Annual Report of Giving includes gifts received between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019. In producing this report, every effort has been made to ensure that it is accurate. Please report any errors or receipt of multiple copies to the Development Office at 469-499-5406, and please accept our sincerest apologies.

Annual Funds 2018–2019

St. Bernard Gold

\$10,000 and up

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Ms. Elizabeth Arpey
Richard D. Bass Foundation
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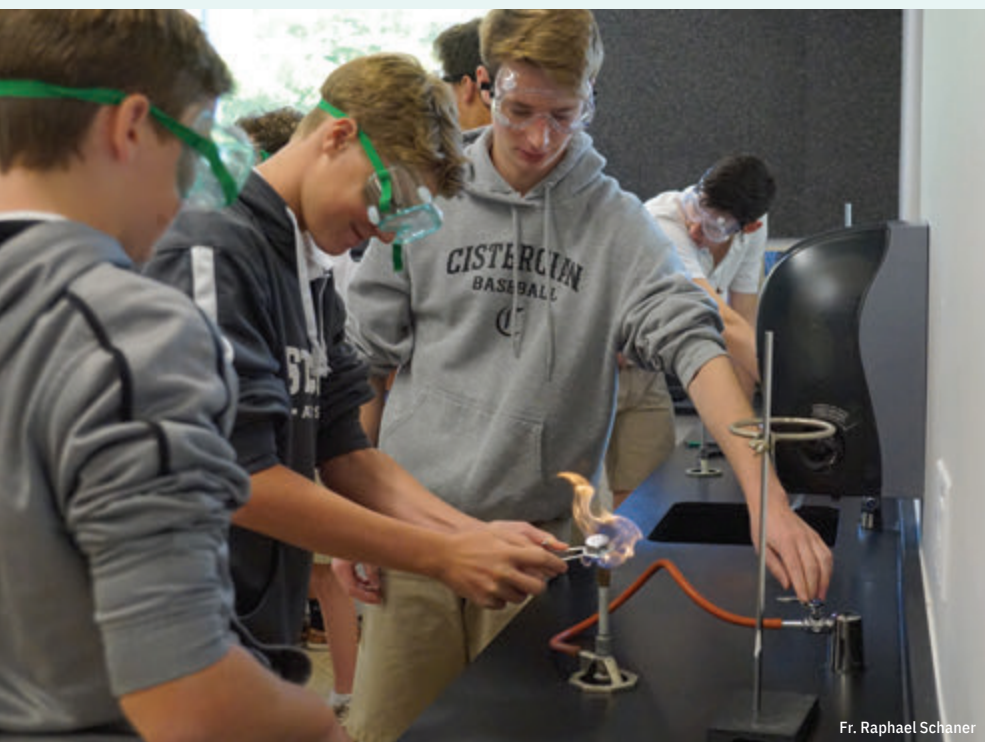
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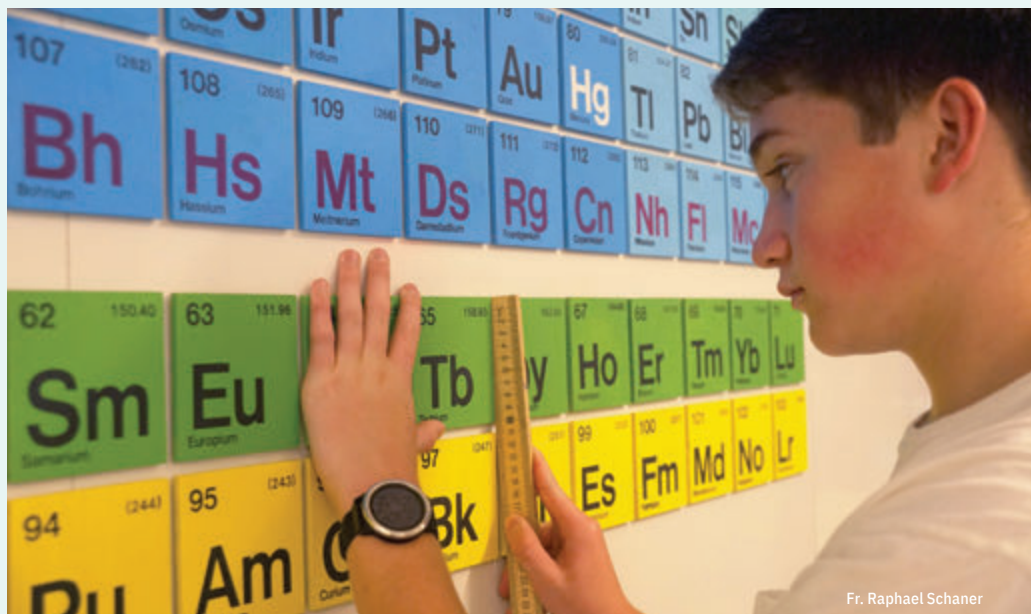
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Lymon Hall
Peter Kurilecz
Jim Pritchett
Sims Slaton
Tim Sullivan
Charlie Williams
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'71

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Michael Kurilecz
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'72

\$6,100.00

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'73

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Tom Lewis
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Abbot Peter
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'74

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Jim Moroney
Peter Smith
David Stewart
George Susat
Jere Thompson

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'76

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Tom Stimson
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'79

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Clayton Snyder
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'83

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'84

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Shannon Collins
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'86

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 Kittu Parekh
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Success by Different Means

Students of 2009 travel various paths to a career

Chris Blackwell

Last spring, I worked with the School's 50th graduating class in my role as Director of College Counseling and reflected on the students' choices of college destinations, majors, and future careers. Shortly after, I read stories in the spring issue of the *Continuum* about the School's first graduates from 1970 and how their Cistercian experience had formed them into the men they became. What I found myself longing for, however, was news about those classes in between, the data points on my college scattergrams whose last names I might recognize from cousins or current siblings, but most of whose stories were unknown to this newcomer of two and a half years. When Gary Nied shared some stories from the Class of 2009's ten-year reunion, I was inspired to reach out and learn more. In just over a decade, these alums had traveled the world, attended graduate school, and pursued careers both in and outside of their majors. As they approach thirty, their stories reveal their initial thoughts on college, the plans they made for themselves, and the twists and turns their individual paths have taken. And like the essays written for their college applications ten years before, each story is unique while sharing one commonality: credit given to Cistercian for shaping them into the men they are today.

For the Class of 2009, graduation was accompanied, to a certain degree, by anxiety about the future. The U.S. was grappling with an economy rocked by a financial crisis that decimated investments, delayed retirement plans, and raised unemployment. In contrast, the country's 44th president had just been elected with a campaign slogan of "Hope." It was into this environment that the Class of 2009 would land as they entered college. While there may have been anxiety about the future, their undeniable fortitude had been built early on when Fr. Julius Leloczky stepped down as their Form Master just two years into their Cistercian experience, and veteran teacher Gary Nied took over. Here are their stories.

It has been said that each Form that travels through Cistercian takes on a certain character, but the Class of 2009, as described by their senior English teacher Fr. Gregory Schweers, was more of "a cast of characters." Not only did they actively participate in theater, they also had an abundance of multisport athletes. While some students spent considerable time within the sciences and technology, others gravitated to the humanities. The class ran in individual packs, yet was unified under the Cistercian experience.

"We promote unity, class solidarity, and charity, and while it can lay the foundation for intentional friendships, it is actually something that the students have to choose to do for themselves," comments Gary Nied. "I think the members of the Class of 2009 were able to form those intentional, serious friendships: they could talk about serious things, hold each other accountable, and encourage one another. They even took charge of their own spiritual lives, pursuing spiritual advice not only from the Abbey, but also from other lay teachers; they really took their experience to heart."

Intentionality went beyond the friendships they formed and into their college choices. "Older friends were telling us we needed to play it safe and major in an easily employable field – like accounting," says Drew Albert '09, "but in a way, we had it pretty good: we were going to be sheltered from having to find a job in the market for at least four years, and hopefully the economy would have time to recover."

Albert often called on his experiences at Cistercian, especially while pursuing his law degree at George Washington University. "The thought process went something to the effect of 'Michael Lawson '09 would rock this paper,' or 'Max Tenney '09 would ace this test,' so it was just my turn to hold up my end of the Cistercian bargain. And if tasked with giving a presentation, I took solace in knowing I had once recited Chaucer's General Prologue in Old English in front of a classroom."

A class agent for his form, Albert appreciates the connections inherent in the Cistercian experience: "Ten years after graduation, our class is gradually entering a new chapter. Each wedding, childbirth, or reunion in Dallas underscores the bond our class has built; it calls us to warmly reflect upon its foundation at Cistercian."



Daniel Valero '09



**ElectroMechanical Engineer
Lockheed Martin**

*From the age of five,
Daniel Valero dreamed
of being an inventor.*

After acquiring a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, a master's in electrical engineering, and now working toward a second master's in materials engineering, he knows he has the education necessary to meet his goals.



Valero entered Cistercian in Form IV and began immediately to thrive in an environment where not belonging to the norm was accepted – even celebrated – as part of the School's culture. He felt like he was able to develop individually, to delve deeper into

engineering and math while surrounded by other students just as eager to learn. But he was also pushed outside his comfort zone and challenged by teachers like Mr. Nied, whose influence as an English teacher and as his Form Master, encouraged him to avoid tunnel vision when looking at life

“[Cistercian] was one of the things that enabled me to make this decision in the first place.”

and to appreciate good poetry and literature.

The flexibility within the Lyle School of Engineering at SMU attracted Valero. He could take elective courses in vehicle dynamics and compressible flow that both satisfied his interest in fast cars and rockets and could be applied toward his degree. He spent one summer in Taos, New Mexico, where he took electives in environmental engineering. His inventor's mind recognized, however, that most of the systems being built in the 21st century had both mechanical *and* electrical components, so when he asked himself if he had enough knowledge to invent

a product that would be relevant today, his answer was no – he needed to know more. So he began to make plans.

He recalled the advice that his former college counselor, Janet Bucher-Long, gave him as a senior, “that it would be easier to be an inventor if you're not saddled with debt,” so Daniel enrolled in the electrical engineering master's program at the University of North Texas. As a more mature college graduate, he would approach this stage in his education from an entirely different perspective. “I was thinking, I'm here purely by choice, just because I *want* to be, because I want to learn this stuff, different than just a requirement to fulfill. I was ready to dedicate as much time as I had in the past – really, as I had at Cistercian – to being a diligent student and loving learning... [Cistercian] was one of the things that enabled me to make this decision in the first place.”

Joseph Keliher '09



**MBA Candidate
SC Johnson Graduate School
of Business
Cornell University**

“I'm not sure if you've realized this yet, but Cistercian is kind of a rigorous academic environment.”

Joseph Keliher laughs through his sarcasm when asked why he chose



**Johnson
Cornell
SC Johnson College of Business**

to take a gap year after graduation. “To be honest, I was just ready to take a step back from the daily academic grind and take a more focused approach to what I actually wanted to do for myself.” As he looked for programs that would allow him to serve others and conserve the environment, he had to smile as he settled upon “Carpe Diem Education” – only appropriate that the Latin infused Cistercian curriculum would follow him halfway around the world.

Keliher spent his first semester in remote parts of Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand, mixing cement and asphalt to build roads and provide infrastructure for small villages alongside other gap year students. He quickly formed strong bonds with the people in his small group. “Cistercian consistently sends the message that you have to improve not only yourself but also the people and the world around you. So the first semester of my gap year, I did just that.”

After completing his second semester with a NOLS program in the Rocky Mountains, he returned to Texas and enrolled at TCU. With new knowledge of self and his leadership skills honed, Keliher majored in finance with a minor in accounting and energy technology. He joined Capital One’s Energy Banking division as a credit analyst and was eventually promoted to assistant vice president.

Now back in school at Cornell, Keliher feels like he’s returned to a community that is very similar to the one he had at Cistercian: collaborative, tight-knit, and one where people feel like success is only really achieved if the entire group succeeds. He recalls the online forum set up for their form by a Cistercian classmate (Nick Rotundo ’09): “The site had areas for different courses, so people could share study guides they created. It was a phenomenal resource because it

was an ever-present study group with a think tank mentality: we’re all going to do this together, and we’re all going to succeed.”

This fall he’s studying abroad in St. Gallen, Switzerland. After seeing art and listening to music in Mr. Saliga’s World Civilizations and Cultures classes, Keliher is excited to experience these things in the context in which they were created. “I still

recognize Debussy’s Clair de Lune and link it to French impressionism in the 1800s because of a class I took sophomore year of high school – and Cistercian has so many classes with teachers like that! Mr. Saliga is probably one of the better teachers I’ve ever had in my life. Period. He was probably one of the roughest teachers I’ve ever had in my life too, but in all fairness, it says something that I still remember the things he taught me.”

T.J. Alcalá '09



**Math Department Head
Dawson School**

T.J. Alcalá grew up an outdoorsy guy – climbing, hiking, skiing, and rafting.

So it’s no surprise that he is living in Boulder, Colorado, and is a coach for Dawson School’s canoe and kayaking team (and a manager for Team USA!). Alcalá is also the head of the math department at Dawson. And while he feels somewhat underqualified in that he doesn’t have as much experience as others, he said, “I feel like I’m standing on the shoulders of giants, some really big people. After working with Dr. Newcomb and Mr. Humphries, and being mentored by Greg Novinski ’82... I’ve learned from some pretty qualified experts, and that goes a long way in giving me confidence.”



Alcalá made his decision to attend Fordham University based on a combination of cost and opportunities available to him. Already attracted to New York, to continue studying liberal arts in the Catholic tradition was an equally important consideration. However, like many of his classmates, it was a full-tuition scholarship and invitation to the Honors Program that sealed the deal.

As a high school student, Alcalá would say that he enjoyed his Cistercian experience, but it wasn’t until his first math class in college that he began to

truly appreciate the education he had received. He had never considered himself a “math guy,” usually reserving that term for others in his Form. But it was his first-year math class covering Euclidian Geometry (something he had learned first as a sophomore at Cistercian) that awakened his love for math. He also recalled a time in high school when Mr. Novinski was called to substitute for Fr. Denis’s algebra II class. “It was a very memorable day for me as he was using this colored chalk, and the way the proof was ordered... it was like somebody opened a huge window where all of this beauty came in. I just remember leaving class that day and thinking ‘Holy cow, math is beautiful!’”

And when his peers in college started looking to him for help, he quickly figured out that he loved helping others build their own understanding of material. He also spent seven weeks in Gulu, Uganda, at a high school where an experience teaching

“I’ve learned from some pretty qualified experts, and that goes a long way in giving me confidence.”

a blind student to prepare for a national math exam further convinced him that he should be a teacher. T.J. taught for a year in the Bronx but was given the opportunity to return to his alma mater shortly after. As a teacher at Cistercian, Alcala found that he was able to connect well with his students because of their shared experiences. He could say “Guys, I’ve been in your shoes, and you can do this!” Now in Boulder, he thinks about trying to recreate the classroom environment he remembers at Cistercian, where students feel good being themselves, providing the atmosphere where they’re comfortable learning, and where “they can nerd out on whatever they nerd out on, regardless of what it is; my job is making sure everyone feels safe to be themselves.”

Paul DiFiore '09



**Public and Government Affairs Advisor
ExxonMobil**

In Houston, Paul DiFiore advances a corporate social responsibility project in Brazil, one of the 40+ international affiliate offices working with ExxonMobil.

Soon he’ll head to Rio de Janeiro to see the fruits of his team’s labors:

ExxonMobil

planting trees and preserving land in an environmental program that will have a substantial impact on the wildlife and ecology of the region. Working in public affairs for a deep water offshore drilling operation is an interesting combination. “Global energy and environmental policy is a hugely important sector going forward, and there’s a lot of good to be done, but there are also a lot of changes that I think should be made.” In his career, Paul hopes to help shape the energy and environmental policies of the future and preserve the people and cultures that became so fascinating to him 15 years ago.

DiFiore’s career path likely took root in his freshman Spanish class at Cistercian when he realized that he had a knack for learning the language and also enjoyed the cultural component that came with the honors course. Additionally, his senior theology course with Fr. Roch opened his eyes to the religious practices of other cultures: Buddhism, Hinduism, and a particular intrigue with the Middle East and Islam.

At Davidson College, DiFiore initially focused his studies on Spanish and Latin American history. Conscious of the Arab Spring uprisings in northern Africa in early 2010 and the conflict in the Middle East, his interest in the history, politics, religion,

and culture of those regions compelled him to study Arabic.

As his interests started to coalesce in college, he decided to live abroad after graduation. While many places in the Middle East were off-limits, the American University in Cairo was recruiting graduates from universities in the U.S. The job did not pay much, but it would provide a cultural immersion experience, opportunities to travel in the region, and free one-on-one Arabic lessons after work; he could not wait to start.

After his stint in Cairo, Paul worked at Hunt Oil for three years handling general public affairs and learning as much as he could about international corporate social responsibility programs (CSR) before pursuing graduate school at Georgetown University. Georgetown's program was flexible

enough for him to find what he was seeking: the background of an MBA, with classes in accounting and finance that also had an international and global focus, courses in global energy and economic awareness, as well as studies in environmental policy and sustainable development.

Now, when the necessary paperwork is done, DiFiore travels to the places where he is develop-

ing CSR programs for ExxonMobil to witness their impact. "It's that kind of stuff that makes the job very rewarding and what keeps me motivated. And someday I hope to be in a position where I can really influence and have more decision-making authority," says DiFiore. "But until then, I'm thrilled to get exposure to some impactful projects around the world."

"Someday I hope to be in a position where I can really influence and have more decision-making authority."

Paul Pesek '09



**MBA Candidate,
Wharton School of Business
University of Pennsylvania**

Paul Pesek had academic credentials and an impressive résumé that afforded him the opportunity to be a competitive applicant at highly selective schools around the country.

Instead he chose a school largely unknown to the Cistercian community:



Wheaton College in Illinois. Sometimes deemed "The Harvard of the Christian Colleges" due to its academic rigor and strong evangelical culture, Pesek was introduced to Wheaton at Camp Kanakuk. The summer before his senior year, he was encouraged by two counselors to reach out to the soccer coach at their college (Wheaton), where they described the experience as "a more intellectual version of Kanakuk, and year-round." The thought excited him.

Ultimately, the ability to play soccer within a community where others shared his faith proved to be his deciding factor. Initially, his teachers and peers were surprised by his choice, but the more they understood his reasons for wanting to attend, the more supportive they became. Fr. Roch, however, was a little harder to persuade.

Although raised in the Catholic faith, Pesek had many questions for Fr. Roch, his senior theology teacher. "He challenged me, but was always patient with me. You could tell he was focused on helping me understand my spirituality." And a similar feeling was felt for his other teachers. "Their care and interest in us were certainly evident as we worked through things; you can just feel how much love they have for you as students. Simultaneously, they are going to push you to grow and to become better."

Pesek might have second guessed his college

decision when he decided that he wanted to land a high-impact job in finance or consulting after graduation. “I didn’t fully appreciate how much networking I would need to do, coming from a non-target school, to have the same opportunities as kids from other places.” Even his career services advisor told him “we just don’t send students to finance jobs in New York.” Pesek was undeterred.

Cistercian had taught him that when a formula for a solution is not given, he still likely has the tools to be able to find the desired result. So he called Abbot Fr. Peter Verhalen ’73, who put him in touch with Justin Goh ’89 in New York. “I showed up in New York, had never rented a car before, paying for my own hotel, and [Goh] took me under his wing.”

“I do feel like Cistercian provides a lot of advantages and a wonderful education,” Goh remarks, “but what I try to explain to people is that they might not be positioned coming out of undergraduate for what they want to be doing.” Goh says that he’s

“... school loyalty and appreciation for the education is special and unique.”

grateful to have gotten to where he is today, but “if I only knew back then what I know now, I certainly might have done things differently.” With this mentality, he imparted his wisdom to Pesek.

Pesek’s efforts paid off. An internship secured at Morgan Stanley his junior year provided the experi-

ence to land a job with McKinsey & Company at graduation. Two years later, Pesek joined the New York office of Insight Equity, a private equity firm headquartered in Southlake, Texas. He has now returned to graduate school at the Wharton School of Business.

Asked why he thinks Goh was willing to help him, Pesek says, “Cistercian is such a small school and the experience is pretty consistent across all classes, so while you’re tightly knit to the guys in your form, you’re also connected to those ahead of and behind you; the school loyalty and appreciation for the education is special and unique.”

Greg McGuire ’09



**Masters Candidate,
Graduate Assistant,
Nonprofit Leadership
Management
University of San Diego**

Greg McGuire had dreams of “going away” for college, as well as the grades and test scores to make him eligible to apply to highly selective schools.

However, the turn in the economy forced him to think about schools closer to home where he wouldn’t have to worry about travel costs or private school tuition. He begrudgingly applied to the University of Texas at Dallas, but when he received a full-tuition scholarship with his acceptance to the school, he conceded that the school deserved more credit than he gave it.



Before making his decision, McGuire applied for The Eugene McDermott Scholars Program that covered the entire cost of tuition and housing, experiential summer excursions, attendance at cultural events, and undergraduate research opportunities. McGuire was humbled to receive the scholarship.

McGuire headed to Berkeley after graduation for an internship with a landscape design firm to test an interest in landscape architecture. It didn’t take long for him to realize that this would not be his career path. Greg stayed in California when his internship ended and went to work. His older brother, Tim McGuire ’95, lived in the San Diego area and invited him to stay with him to figure out his next steps. “I knew I wanted to do something with meaning and really use my mind for good. Not having any loans really allowed me to have that time for growth.”

His work with the local Boys and Girls Club and an extended day program at a local charter school led to the discovery of his passion. Greg recognized that the children he saw daily were dealing with adult problems – broken homes, abuse, gangs, and drugs – and he resolved to make the school a safe place

where they could explore and advance their potential. He was ready to use his mind to find ways to help these children eventually lead happy and successful lives. Now, with a clearly defined career path, Greg is a Nonprofit Leadership Management masters candidate at the University of San Diego and will graduate this spring.

“I wanted to do something with meaning and really use my mind for good.”

Greg recalled that at Cistercian, there were teachers who lived by example. In particular, Form Master Gary Nied was what Greg perceived

to be “a good parent and spouse, able to provide for the needs of his own family, and yet could still manage to completely be there for his students. And Greg Novinski, who seemed like he did everything with fire and energy. You could tell he tried his best in everything and wanted us to do the same... they inspired me.”

.....

Max Tenney '09



**Vice President of Finance
Waterloo Sparkling Water**

*“Teachers and coaches:
Thank you for putting up
with me.”*

A quote from Max Tenney’s senior yearbook page hints at the kind of student he was at the end of his Cistercian career. “To be fair, my experience was incredibly positive up to



about Form VI; I loved every second of it. Then as a junior, I think I was just kind of over it and couldn’t wait to get out.” Now, ten years after graduation and with a finance degree from the University of Virginia, after having worked on Wall Street and in private equity, and now serving as the Vice President of Finance for a startup beverage company based in Austin, Tenney acknowledges that he’s become increasingly nostalgic – and grateful – as he thinks about the time he spent with the people at Cistercian.

About his work after college, Tenney reflected:

“It was very challenging from an intellectual standpoint, but there was lots of red tape, checking the box, ‘this is the way we’re going to do things’ – it just seemed very formulaic.”

His Cistercian classes rarely provided him a formula to use. “I think about a problem in calculus – we weren’t just given a formula and asked to use it in problems. We were asked ‘Is there a shorter way to calculate this answer? Is there another way to calculate the integer?’”

Now in his role at Waterloo, Tenney manages fundraising, investor relations, cash flow, and payroll for the company, while also setting his sights ahead to larger business decisions that move the company toward profitability. “Cistercian absolutely laid the foundation to get me where I am today. Sure, if I would have gone somewhere else I still might have been able to get to this point, but Cistercian certainly made it easier and my decisions were more intuitive. I feel like I *know* a lot, but not just the material itself. I can think critically about my priorities and workstreams in the context of the broader picture: ‘What do I need to prioritize? What’s most important? Where should my energy go?’ So while I might have been able to get this job, I wouldn’t be able to *excel* at my job if I didn’t have that background and mindset instilled in me from the time I was 11 years old.” •

“Cistercian absolutely laid the foundation to get me where I am today.”

Multiple alumni from the Class of 2009 were interviewed for this article, but space simply did not allow us to include every story. A theme consistent throughout all of them, however, was an appreciation for the educational and formative experience

provided at Cistercian that laid the foundation for the success they have achieved in their lives and careers – and the happiness that has accompanied it.

Does Cistercian know your story? Chris Blackwell would love to have additional

anecdotes to share with current students or colleges about what our graduates are doing. You can send him an invitation to connect on LinkedIn, or email an update to CBlackwell@cistercian.org

Sports

Hawks Football rushes to another winning season

Coming into the 2019 football season, the coaches did not quite know what to expect. Sixteen seniors from last year's team were gone, and several members who had only seen time on JV (**Beto De Los Santos '21** and **David Cox '21**) would be relied upon heavily this year. One thing was certain: they had a massive offensive line, especially by Cistercian standards. The line, which consisted of **Brandon Williamson '20**, **Henry Parmenter '21**, **Alex Ardemagni '22**, **Aidan Chance '21** and **Matt Donohoe '20**, averaged almost 250 pounds. These five

physical specimens set the tone for the Hawks offense throughout the season, allowing the ball carriers to average over 250 yards per game.

The highlight game of the season came on homecoming versus eventual SPC Champion, Fort Worth Country Day. In the last

homecoming game of their careers, the four senior captains, **Jack Schieferdecker '20**, **Kaosi Unini '20**, **Alex Banul '20** and Donohoe, led their team to a spirited 34–28 upset over the Falcons. Schieferdecker threw for 108 yards and ran for another 106, accounting for two touchdowns. Unini did his part on the ground as well, following Donohoe for 126 yards rushing and two touchdowns. Banul was a force on defense, as the coaches credited him with 17 tackles and one sack.

For the season, Schieferdecker finished with 690 yards rushing, 229 yards passing, 13 touchdowns and four interceptions. Unini totaled 903 rushing yards, 212 receiving yards and

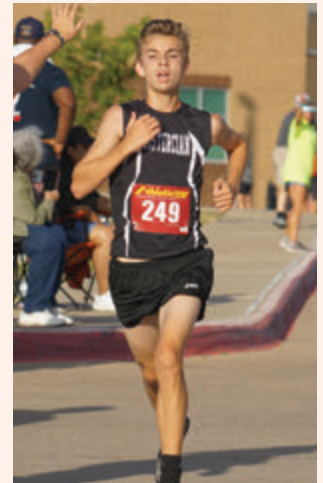
15 touchdowns. Defensively, Banul lead the way with 66 solo tackles while getting help from Chance and **Connor Popolo '21** who had six sacks each.

The Hawks finished the season 6–4, amassing victories over both teams that played in the SPC Championship game. With only six seniors graduating, the nucleus of this power running game will return for a championship bid next year while adding some talented underclassmen who are hungry to contribute.

Cross Country wins four meets on way to best SPC finish

In his fourth year at Cistercian, Coach S.L. Roane has improved the cross country team finish at SPC every year. This year, they tied their high mark of 9th from 2018, and won four invitational meets (Waxahachie Woodhouse Invitational, Paschal Invitational, Burleson Centennial Spartan Invitational, NTX Small School Championship) prior to making their mark at SPC.

Captains **Stephan Salhab '20** and **Nico Walz '20** set a tremendous example in the summer as they trained in the heat and encouraged their teammates to join them. Their hard work paid off with every member of the squad setting a PR throughout the season. Coach Roane was especially pleased with newcomers **Noah Vetter '22**, **Stephen LeSage '23**, **Chris Rieke '23** and **Juan Diaz '22** and has high hopes for these runners in the future.



At SPC in Houston, **Luke Rakowitz '22** led the way with a school record 16:54 in the 5K securing 17th place out of 146 runners. **John LeSage '20** also ran one of his best races of the year, with Vetter, Stephen LeSage and Walz putting up times that brought the Hawks to their highest finish in four years. With the majority of his core runners returning, Coach Roane is looking forward to bettering their records next season. •

Our Lady of Dallas Hosts International Conference

In the year 1119, Pope Callixtus II granted the first-ever Papal charter to a confederation of independent monasteries. That charter is known to history as the “Carta Caritatis” (the Charter of Charity), and the institution that it legally created was the Cistercian Order. The Carta indicated that its principles and procedures were aimed at uniting many monasteries under “one charity, one Rule, and similar lifestyles,” and with its visionary guidance, the Cistercian order quickly expanded from about twenty monasteries to more than three hundred. As the centuries marched by, however, the unity of the order proved difficult to maintain, resulting, for example, in the secession of a large group of monasteries in 1893 to form the new Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (Trappists).

In honor of this year’s 900th anniversary of the Carta Caritatis, the Abbey of Our Lady of Dallas hosted a special colloquium on July 16–19 to study the

document and build a spirit of fellowship with members of other monasteries. The colloquium was attended by thirty-two Cistercian and Trappist monks, nuns, abbesses, and abbots, including the head abbot of the Trappist order and our own Abbot General; several lay medieval historians also attended as guest experts; all told, eighteen monasteries and four continents were represented. The focal point of the program was a series of presentations in the School’s small lecture hall by Cistercians, Trappists, and lay experts. As a complement to these, the participants enjoyed reflecting together on medieval and modern Cistercian life by sharing breakout sessions in the school lunchroom, prayer and Eucharist in the Abbey church, and wine and ice cream in the Abbey refectory and recreation room.

The colloquium was received as an enormous blessing by all. Fr. Alkuin Schachenmayer of the Cistercian Abbey of Heiligenkreuz in Austria wrote that

a particular moment of shared singing and celebration was “a moment in my memory which I will cherish for many years and gives me great cause for gratitude to God for all he has given us in our monastic lives.” Writing of the event more broadly, Fr. Simeon Leiva-Merikakis of the Trappist central administration in Rome expressed his thoughts in a recent Trappist newsletter: “our palpable communion in Christ, fruit of this exploration of our shared Cistercian vocation, is, without any doubt, the golden thread connecting all the experiences the last three days in this monastery have afforded us—whether intellectual, spiritual or affective. We leave Dallas much the richer, with many tales, both hilarious and sublime, to tell our communities.”

We monks of Dallas were especially grateful that hospitality gave us an opportunity to be known by the various Trappist monasteries of the US, inspiring us with the hope of building new relationships of mutual support and service with monasteries to which we had previously been strangers. Together, we all hope to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in renewing the Cistercian charism around the world. •



Eighteen monasteries and four continents were represented at the colloquium.

Class Reunions



40 Year Reunion '79



36 Year Reunion '83



30 Year Reunion '89



24 Year Reunion '95



15 Year Reunion '04



6 Year Reunion '13 for Fr. Paul's Birthday



5 Year Reunion '14

So you want to be a writer...

Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings made famous the lyric, “Mama don’t let your babies grow up to be



Smokey Briggs '84

cowboys. Don’t let ’em pick guitars, and drive them old trucks, make ’em be doctors and lawyers and such.”

After a couple of decades of peddling words for a living I can tell

you Willie and Waylon could have substituted “writers” for “cowboys” and still have been singing good advice.

That actually has a ring to it — “Mama don’t let your babies grow up to be writers. Don’t let ’em peck keyboards and read them old books, make ’em be...” I may send that to Nashville. Who knows, I might make my fortune yet.

There is some deeper irony herein with me giving advice on career choices to aspiring writers as my first aspiration post-Cistercian was to work as a cowboy, something I had spent some time doing as a boy ante-Cistercian, and something I truly loved doing.

That plan soured when I stripped third gear in my ’46 Chevy truck on US 287 near Clarendon, en route to a job on a ranch in northern New Mexico — the upshot being the path that led me to the present.

So, family and friends were actually relieved as I moseyed toward a career as a starving purveyor of words.

There is a lesson here — expectations are everything. I promise, if you make public your inclination to ditch med school to try and write your way to prosperity, family and friends will fret mightily. (As they should).

It might be a good plan to drop their expectations even lower for starters, enough that sober and starving as a newspaper reporter sounds like a real

step up for you. Plans to earn a living cowboying, rodeoing (not the same thing), working carnivals, chorus dancing (maybe), or accounting (definitely), all might help set the stage properly.

I used this same tactic when I showed my beautiful bride, Lori, our first house — first I drove her to a long-abandoned abode sans windows or doors. To her great credit, with a single tear running down her pretty cheek, she nodded and said we would make it do. I felt a bit like a heel as I explained to her that I was just kidding, and drove off to the real deal that did have windows and doors.

I enjoy both kinds of music, Country and Western, so continuing with my theme, Hank Thompson sang, “Every man must leave his footprints, On the shifting sands of time, But I’ll just leave the mark of a heel.” I may have qualified for Hank’s sentiment when I pulled up to that falling down house.

Expectations...

So we have touched on the expectations of friends and loved ones — let’s talk about your own.

Expect to be poor. Whatever you do, do not expect to be rich. It can happen, but the odds of you getting a multimillion dollar contract with the Cowboys are better.

Doctors and lawyers and such — Willie and Waylon knew what they were talking about.

Expect to work hard. Writing is hard work when it is not just the whimsical fancy of a rainy Saturday afternoon.

Writing is not fun. Having written — that is fun, especially if you wrote something worth reading. But actually writing is just work, slightly less tiresome than digging post holes.

Expect to work hard — and not just at writing. When I found out how poorly writing jobs paid I enrolled in law school with very little hope of actually writing

for a living past nifty closing arguments. (Which, I now realize, is writing for a living, but at the time I did not make the connection.)

Expect to have a second gig (that makes money). I know for a fact that behind every good writer there is a good editor. I suspect that behind every successful writer, there is also a second job.

Early on I supplemented my writing career as a small-town newspaperman by practicing law. Over time, I figured out how to make the newspaper gig work financially — the end result that I support my writing habit by troubleshooting computers, coaxing ancient pre-press equipment to life, changing rollers on a press nearly as old as me, taking out the trash, patching the roof, building budgets, hawking advertising, filling coin racks, happily counting quarters, and nursemaiding our small herd of cows, all of which occasionally turns a profit according to my accountant.

That said, the glue that keeps all of this lashed together is my ability to write passably well — well enough to entertain and inform with tales of city council, football, open records requests, tragedy, crime, joy, and even my weekly opinion of the world — so that folks will pay me a dollar to read my newspaper each week.

Mr. Hemingway, bottle in one hand, pen in the other, glamorously swash-buckling through life, I am not.

On the plus side, I really enjoy my life — all of it. There is a roof over our heads and food on the table. I have had plenty of time with my four children. Lori and I will pass the thirty-year mark as husband and wife pretty soon. My mule, Cole, almost never tries to buck me off, and I rarely feel like I am “working” when I am at work.

So if words are your thing (or a close second to something really dumb like nursing cows from the back of a horse), there are ways to make a living where you do get to write a bit — sometimes more, sometimes less — the key being sometimes.

Writing this has put me in mind of the last line of the Johnny Cash classic, “A Boy Named Sue.”

I think that if my boy ever asks me what he should do for a living, I will tell him... be an accountant, or doctor, or plumber, anything but a writer, it is still a dumb way to make a living. •

January 18
**Jim & Lynn Moroney
Award Dinner**

January 25 and February 1
Admissions Testing

May 29–31
**Golf Tournament and
Reunions Weekend**

Who Can Forgive?

During World War II, a German SS soldier was dying in a Polish military hospital. He begged the Jewish orderly, a prisoner from the nearby concentration camp, “Please forgive me so I can die in peace.” The prisoner, the future



Fr. Roch Kereszty

author and future “Nazi Hunter” Simon Wiesenthal, hesitated. “I cannot forgive him,” he reasoned, “because he did not hurt me... Not even God can forgive him—as some rabbis have said, only the ones he has hurt can do that.” And he walked away.

While reading Wiesenthal’s story, I first became very indignant: “How could he be so cruel that he would embitter the last hours of a dying man?” But years later, I read a statement by a Catholic theologian: “Only the tortured can truly forgive his torturer.” Then it dawned on me: “This is why the Son of God had to be crucified.” Yes, God could have forgiven us without exposing himself to the torture of our sins, and the forgiveness would have been valid. But would it have been credible? We may have thought: “God forgave us, it took him just a simple act of the will, so our sins could not have been so bad!” We would not have understood that every sin infinitely

hurts the infinitely loving heart of the Father, for every sin ultimately aims at disowning God who has become our Father. (Please do not be scandalized, dear Aristotelian Christians. The infinite sensitivity of God’s love is a divine perfection rather than a defect!)

On the cross, however, the full evil of all sins has been unveiled: the physical pain of the scourging, the nails, and the suffocating breathlessness on the cross make Christ’s experience what it means to be burdened and tortured by all sins. The innocent Lamb, like a magnet, draws to himself all the sins of the world. The Son of God alone can fully understand how much sin hurts the Father’s heart and how much it hurts the sinner. As St. Bernard and many other Fathers have said, when the soldier opened the heart of Jesus, he revealed the Heart of God. This heart alone could offer his Father a love, praise, thanksgiving, and atonement that infinitely counterbalanced the accumulated evil of all sins. Thus, he alone could credibly beg the Father’s forgiveness for all of us: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing!” (Lk 23:34). He alone could bestow upon us the Father’s forgiveness. More than that even: he shared with us his divine power so effectively that we can also forgive, with his love, those who sin against us. Let me give you just two examples to show how forgiveness is more powerful than hatred and violence.

I heard from a credible person another true story from World War II. An American nurse was captured by the Germans. An SS guard, widely known for his cruelty, began to kick her around until she collapsed. Before she lost consciousness, she whispered to him: “God bless you.” The next day she woke up in a hospital and found that same guard keeping watch at her bedside. “Could you please tell me what kind of a god you believe in that made you bless me?” he asked. She then began to explain to him the Christian faith, and the soldier asked for baptism a few days later.

The other story you can watch online: an 18-year-old boy forgiving and hugging the murderer of his brother in a Dallas courtroom after the defendant was sentenced to 10 years in prison. While many among the listeners of the verdict were raging against the “leniency” of the punishment, Brandt Jean, the brother of the slain Botham, told the convicted Amber Guyger in front of the TV cameras, “I know I can speak for myself, I forgive you, I love you as a person and I don’t wish anything bad on you. Giving your life to Christ would be the best thing my brother would want for you.” His face, his words and the protracted loving hug of the desperate defendant stunned the courtroom and the nation. The forgiving love of Christ has not diminished in two thousand years; the Church of forgiven and forgiving sinners continues to overcome all the powers and principalities of this world. It is a love that lives and ever inspires hope, even in a Dallas courtroom. •