

THE GUARDIAN GAZETTE

The Newsletter of St. Michael Academy

November 14, 2019

GUARDIAN GREETINGS!

As we close out our first quarter, we have plenty to be proud of here at St. Michael Academy!

The big news since our last Gazette is the performance of our Boys Cross Country Team, which exceeded the lofty expectations we had for them this season. By far the smallest school at its Division 4 Regional and State Finals, our harriers placed 2nd (of 17 teams) at its Regional, then placed 5th at the State Finals the next weekend. Fifth place for the entire state of Michigan (D-4)... WOW!



You can read more about their performance below, but suffice it to say that this season was a huge step forward in establishing a culture of athletic excellence here at SMA. Our young men are using Athletics to grow as Catholic gentlemen of virtue and character.

All we do at SMA is intended to encourage our students to model Christ, whether in the classroom, the community, or on the athletic fields. Our Boys XC Team has done that, embracing the dedication and sacrifice needed to reach such heights, ever since its training began over the summer.

We are also proud of our entire student body for the academic excellence they have exhibited during the first quarter, especially many of our new students who are still adjusting to our classical curriculum. Just walking through the halls, overhearing classroom and lunchroom discussions, and interacting with our students at Forum, I can attest that our students are “getting it” in terms of the high level of instruction that our Great Books model is affording them. Our faculty looks forward to meeting with the parents of these ordinary kids who are achieving extraordinary things.

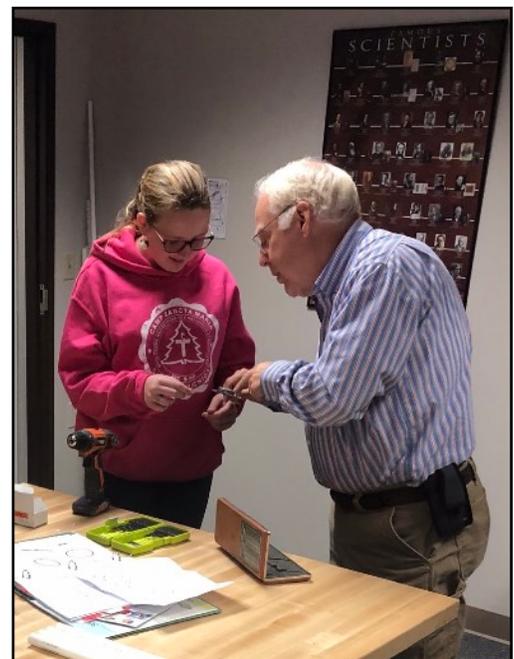
Finally, the spirit of service is alive and well at SMA, with several new clubs stepping-up to lead charity efforts, school functions, and enrichment activities. New student leaders are roaming the halls of SMA, giving us hope for the future. Thanks for sharing your most precious gift, your children, with us!

St. Michael, pray for us! Dr. Richard Brake, Headmaster

St. Michael Happenings

More slices of life at SMA from the last few weeks!...

- A cadre of underclassmen attended the Career Quest event at NCMC on Friday, October 18.
- Faculty and students worked and attended the Marian Center's Annual Conference at Boyne Mountain from October 25 to 27. Our beloved Theology teacher Andy Moe, and his wife Katie, run the Center, and the conference is always invigorating for those in attendance. This year's event featured inspiring speakers including Marcus Grodi, Tom Peterson, and Susan Tassone.
- Our Quiz Bowl Team traveled to Central Michigan University to compete in the state tournament on Wednesday, October 30. Its televised match with Mackinaw City HS went into sudden death overtime, but unfortunately our team came up one question short. Valuable experience was gained by all, and the team is looking forward to its next local match on November 22.
- In anticipation of All Saints Day on November 1, students selected a patron saint, then we discussed the significance of the Lives of the Saints at Forum. We celebrated Mass as a community of Faith at St. Francis Xavier Church that morning.
- Later on All Saints Day, SMA welcomed renowned intellectual and editor-in-chief of *First Things* magazine Rusty Reno! He addressed our student body at Forum, then gave a lecture to a packed house later that evening for parents, faculty, and the general public. Dr. Reno discussed his new book *The Return of the Strong Gods*, and related our current cultural discontents to the renewal project here at SMA. We were blessed to have him share his tremendous insights with us.
- The SMA Robotics Club is hard at work, designing and building underwater remote operating vehicles (ROV). The 5-member team has built and tested two underwater ROVs and is now constructing an underwater obstacle course in preparation for the Seaperch (sponsored by the U.S. Navy) regional competition at the University of Michigan in March. The club meets Monday and Friday mornings from 7:00 to 7:45 am at SMA.
- The first week of November was "Key Club Week." Our club generated enthusiasm for its mission among the student body, then participated in food drive activities at Brother Dan's Food Pantry.



Students in the Scola

Finalists for the C.S. Lewis Society Essay Contest are:

- Mac Moore
- Rosemary Hoffman
- River Pease
- Will Gagnon

Their essays were forwarded to a panel of judges who are in the process of rank-ordering the contestants as we speak. The grand prize winner and runners-up will be announced at an evening program at SMA on Thursday, November 21. Congratulations!

Focus on the Faculty

Mr. Mark Spinnenweber was originally planning to begin doctoral studies in philosophy after completing his MA in philosophy at Franciscan University of Steubenville. Deciding that classical education was the right industry to enter with his Great Books background from Franciscan's Honors Program, he began his job search, focusing on Texas and Arizona, not because he'd ever even been there or knew anybody there but because he was tired of a lifetime of Ohio winters!



This job search kept coming up empty but a friend mentioned an opening at SMA at a graduate student banquet and he decided to give it a go. Realizing that landing the job was the work of Providence, he took it when he was offered it and hauled his non-wintery self a half-mile from Lake Michigan for his first post-graduate job.

Now at SMA, Mr. Spinnenweber teaches three philosophy courses, a history course, and a "Trivium" course for the middle schoolers. His freshman philosophy course serves as an introduction to the subject with a focus on the ancient Greeks. They just completed a reading of Plato's dialogue Crito which is on the nature of justice and oratory. The sophomore course prepares students to study medieval philosophy,

focusing heavily on Plato. They are puzzling through the Theaetetus dialogue trying to figure out the nature of knowledge. The junior course focuses on the study of medieval philosophy, with a particular emphasis on Thomas Aquinas. Mr. Spinnenweber loves teaching Aquinas as something of a specialty and enjoys having a captive audience to whom he can hold forth on the Summa Theologica, getting to know Aquinas even more deeply himself.

In his history class, freshmen study the ancient world through the use of primary texts, currently the Histories of Herodotus, where they are studying Darius the Great and the Shah of Iran who expanded the Achaemenid Empire to stretch from Libya to India. The middle schoolers are being introduced to basic logic in Trivium, focusing on rhetorical fallacies and how to recognize bad reasoning.

Mr. Spinnenweber enjoys his role in the SMA project and looks forward to seeing what fruit it will bear!

Athletic Annex

The St. Michael Academy Boys Cross Country team took 5th place at the Division 4 State Finals!



It's hard to express how proud we are of our guys. For a second-year program at a school our size to cap off a groundbreaking season with a Top 5 finish at the State Finals is an incredible accomplishment.

Sam Paga led the way for us in 31st place, followed by Mac Moore in 41st, Adam Paga in 49th, and Hammond Law in 56th. John-Michael Kargol completed the scoring in 129th. Ben Brooks and Will Gagnon placed 175th and 176th, respectively.

As usual, our front four did solid work, placing in the Top 40 (of team scoring). As is also often the case, our younger guys overachieved, with Sam, just a sophomore, missing All-State honors by just one place and Mac finishing as the 3rd fastest freshman in Division 4. At 5th man, John-Michael picked a great day to run his best

race as his 87th place finish (team scoring) propelled us past a couple teams to land in the Top 5!

Our qualification for the State Finals on November 2 came out of a stellar performance at our Regional the prior Saturday, October 26. There, we finished 2nd (of 17 schools vying for just three qualifying spots), falling only to 3rd-ranked East Jordan, 39-49. All other teams tallied more than 100 points.

The race was great fun to watch and the final score correctly depicts the 2-team slugfest that it was... East Jordan placed 2-5-7-9-16 for their 39 points. We placed 4-6-8-10-21 for our 49 points. It was close! We were led that day by Adam Paga who finished 4th in a new SMA-record time of 16:51!

In other Athletic news, our Lacrosse co-op with Petoskey HS (and including Boyne City HS) was approved by MHSAA! Our young men are eligible to join the team this spring!

I'd like to thank everyone who helped make our outstanding XC season possible, especially my son Andrew who made invaluable contributions as my Assistant Coach! Blessings, Mr. Rudnicki



SMA's Heavenly Hosts

Our first Book Club of the year on October 23 was fantastic. A substantial crowd gathered at the home of Jean Musilek for scrumptious food, and even more scrumptious discussion of C.S. Lewis' classic *The Four Loves*. Please join us for our next Book Club on Wednesday, December 11, when Shea Whitmore will lead our discussion of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Stay tuned for more details!

Counselor's Corner

In talking with our seniors, it sounds like college applications, essays, and scholarships are in full swing! What an exciting time! We've had several SMA students take advantage of the Ave Maria visits to South Florida to see the beautiful (though remote!) campus. Several of our seniors are already accepted at this great Catholic university!

Our Seniors and Juniors were asked to create a portfolio in the first quarter, organizing surveys they've completed and writing a reflection paper. The reflection seeks to help them assess and summarize their Spiritual Gifts and to see how they, along with their values and personality, may shape their future lives in college, career, the church, and family life - as well as how they feel about leaving high school and home.

We had a visit from Alma College last week and will welcome Northern Michigan University and Grand Valley State University this week.

Also, Seniors and Juniors will soon prepare to be the first SMA students to take the Classical Learning Test this February! More details to come!

Yours in Christ, Mrs. Mikelson



Faith Matters

On Monday, November 11, SMA hosted its annual Veterans Day Mass here at the Chapel with Fr. James Gardiner as our celebrant. Family, friends, and Veteran guests of honor celebrated Mass with us, then joined us afterwards for a celebratory lunch in honor of their service to our country. As always, it's a privilege for us to host the distinguished Veterans of our community and to hear their personal stories of service to our great nation.

We'd love to do a Christmas volunteer project as an SMA Family on the weekend of December 13-15. If you have suggestions of a cause and/or location, please let us know. Afterwards, we could have a get-together at the school and perhaps watch an old-fashioned Christmas movie?

Headmaster Musings

On Friday evening, November 1, All Saints Day, the SMA community was treated to a tour de force lecture by First Things editor-in-chief Rusty Reno, a professional colleague of mine stretching back to my days at the Intercollegiate Studies Institute.



When I asked Rusty to come and speak about the virtues of classical education, he said “Of course, anything for a Catholic Classical School,” for he has long realized that schools like ours hold the key to cultural renewal for our country. But as a very prominent public intellectual who runs the top journal of religion and culture in the nation, he is in high demand, so the only time he could come out our way was on All Saints Day. (He had a book launch event in Chicago the next morning).

So out he came, and when I picked him up at the Traverse City airport, we had a lengthy discussion about the challenges facing our country and our Church, especially for people of faith. His new book, *The Return of the Strong Gods*, had just been published by Regnery, and it’s clear that he has great concern over what he regards as the break-up of the cold war consensus, making it harder and harder for those of strong attachments to family,

faith, and country to avoid ostracization and persecution. As these sentiments are shared by many in our community, I encouraged him to speak on those topics and connect them to our mission at SMA.

At his Friday lecture, Dr. Reno took his time “setting the table”, laying a deep foundation for his argument, providing evidence that the “open society” which, by the present day, had become deeply suspicious of anybody, or any institution, with strong attachments to what Russell Kirk referred to as the “Permanent Things,” and what we here at SMA call the “True, Good, and Beautiful.”

I could tell that some were wondering when Dr. Reno would get around to our school and its curriculum, but as often happens with substantive presentations, it wasn’t until the “Q&A” that all the dots were connected and all was made clear. And so it was on All Saints Day 2019. Dr. Reno reminded us that the inability of our age to acknowledge transcendent Truth is the lead reason that schools like SMA have formed, and why we are teaching our students as we are.

Dr. Reno summed it up beautifully when he declared that “We are building societies of Love and Loyalty.” How true, how true! I’d like to encourage everyone to think of SMA in just that way – as a place of strong loyalties to family, friends, neighbors, country, and Church; as well as a school of Love, where we learn the truth of academic disciplines, as well as the Author of Truth Himself – God.

God bless, Dr. Brake

“It’s not the will to win that matters - everyone has that. It’s the will to prepare to win that matters.”

Coach Paul “Bear” Bryant

Prayer Intentions

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Mary Hammond, beloved Mother of our Director of Advancement Marie Law, who passed away on October 30.

Upcoming Events

- 11/15 Service Project at Brother Dan’s Food Pantry
- 11/18 Boys Basketball Begins
- 11/21 SMA - C.S. Lewis Festival High School Essay Contest and Awards Ceremony at SMA
- 11/26 Service Project at New Beginnings
- 11/27-29 Thanksgiving Break
- 12/10 Mens Basketball at Northern Michigan Christian Academy
- 12/11 Parent-Teacher Book Club: *Jane Eyre*
- 12/13 Mens Basketball v. Cadillac Home School (at Central Elementary)
- 12/17 Mens Basketball at Cadillac Heritage Christian
- 12/18 Poetry Out-Loud Contest at SMA
- 12/19 Mens Basketball v. Traverse City Home School (at Central Elementary)
- 12/20 SMA Fundraising Reception at Messiah Concert at Bay Harbor
- 12/21-01/05 Christmas Break

Reminders

Please try to attend our first annual Essay Contest and Awards Ceremony in partnership with the C.S. Lewis Festival on Thursday, November 21. We’ll have a Reception at 6:30pm with the Ceremony to follow at 7:00pm. The top student essayist will earn a \$400 scholarship!

For our young men, please turn in your school blazers to the office on Friday, November 22 to have a new SMA Crest Patch ironed-on to them. They will be returned to you on Monday, December 2, the first day back from Thanksgiving Break.

Speaking of school blazers, significant interest has been expressed for an optional blazer for our young ladies. Please let us know if you’d like to purchase one, once a vendor and style are selected.

With Advent almost upon us, we’d love to pack our chapel for Mass on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11:30am. Why not include Mass at SMA in your observance of Advent, and join us as we prepare for the coming of the Lord?



St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.