

THE GUARDIAN GAZETTE

The Newsletter of St. Michael Academy

December 18, 2019

GUARDIAN GREETINGS!

With Thanksgiving now past, Advent upon us, and Christmas around the corner, we pause to give thanks for the many wonderful blessings and accomplishments that have transpired this semester here at St. Michael Academy. Below you will find more detailed descriptions of all the goings-on at our high school, but certainly a major highlight of the last month was our first annual C.S. Lewis Essay Contest & Awards Ceremony, co-hosted by the C.S. Lewis Festival of Petoskey.

The audience was mesmerized by the scholarship of our finalists – Rosemary Hoffman, Will Gagnon, Mac Moore, and River Pease – with the top prize awarded to Miss Pease for her outstanding essay on Lewis’ masterpiece *The Abolition of Man*. I encourage you to go to our [newly redesigned website](#) where you can watch the speeches by Miss Pease, Mr. Moore, and Mr. David Crouse, the Chairman of the C.S. Lewis Festival, in the [Video Gallery](#).



Mr. Crouse was blown away by the quality of analysis offered by our students, likening it to the work of college seniors. He also expressed that, in many ways, our awards ceremony “was the culmination of all of the previous seventeen years of work done by the Festival to promote the kind of academic excellence personified by C.S. Lewis himself.” That’s mighty high praise coming from Mr. Crouse, highlighting the outstanding instruction and formation that’s occurring every day at SMA.

As we head into 2020, I urge everyone to re-double their efforts to recruit new families into the SMA fold, as our future continues to rest upon the growth of our student body. Please work and pray for our expansion so that more students can benefit from this truly transformative educational experience.

St. Michael, pray for us!

Dr. Richard Brake, Headmaster

St. Michael Happenings

More of the daily delights at SMA from the last several weeks!...

- River Pease earned top-spot and a \$400 scholarship for her essay on C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*. Mac Moore was runner-up, with Will Gagnon & Rosemary Hoffman as honorable mentions. The C.S. Lewis Festival also donated several books to our library.
- SMA won the most recent area Quiz Bowl Tournament held at North Central Michigan College! The team went undefeated for the day, beating Charlevoix in the semifinals and Ellsworth in the finals to claim the victory!
- Prior to Thanksgiving, students collected foodstuffs for Brother Dan's Pantry, and then volunteered at New Beginnings thrift store in Harbor Springs. In December, our junior high students volunteered at St. Francis Xavier Parish, moving and organizing presents for its Giving Tree program.
- SMA Headmaster Dr. Brake recently toured the St. Francis Xavier (SFX) School with its Principal, Adam Dobrowolski, and SFX Pastor, Fr. Greg McCallum. Dr. Brake thoroughly enjoyed his visit, especially the chance to meet with several SFX students who plan to attend SMA next year!
- Our Pro-Life Club recently volunteered babysitting services to the Petoskey Pregnancy Care Center for its "Pampering Party" for new mothers.
- Students in Ms. Rogers' Art class painted Christmas images that were then transformed into beautifully designed Christmas cards. Please take a look at the inventory in the SMA foyer, and see Mrs. De Agostino if you would like to purchase cards for \$2.00 each.
- SMA students, parents, and faculty participated in the filming of a new promotional video produced in conjunction with the Charlevoix Area Chamber of Commerce. The videographer took a whole host of shots capturing the typical day of a SMA student which, in six-weeks' time, will appear on both the SMA and Charlevoix Chamber websites.
- On December 20, the Drama Club will perform character sketches from the Spoon River Anthology at a special Forum presentation. Huge thanks to Dale Hull, our Drama Club Advisor! Later that day, the entire school will visit several area senior centers to regale residents with Christmas carols and holiday cheer!



SMA Delegation Visits the Twin Cities

In order to strengthen our new partnership with the Chesterton Network of Classical Catholic High Schools, a seven-student delegation traveled to Minneapolis-St. Paul in early-November to visit the Chesterton Academy of the Twin Cities (CATC). This flagship school of the Network was founded by EWTN personality and Chesterton Society President Dale Ahlquist, who visited SMA in March.

CATC has nearly 150 students (in grades 9-12) being educated according to its top-flight classical curriculum. SMA students benefited

greatly from the visit, observing how a larger, more established classical high school functions in terms of academics, faith formation, extracurriculars, and family life. Our students were impressed by CATC's tight-knit faith community and also by how well SMA faculty and students measure up to what is arguably one of the top classical high schools in America. We will continue to benefit from this new partnership as students look to implement initiatives learned or inspired during their trip.



In addition to relationship-building and fact-finding, a clear highlight was our audience with Archbishop Hebda at the gorgeous Cathedral in St. Paul. Of course, Archbishop Hebda was formerly the Bishop of Gaylord when SMA began, supporting and assisting with its founding, and he confirmed all of our student leaders. In many ways, the meeting marked a beautiful uniting of the origins and the future of SMA.

Our Heavenly Hosts

Thanks to the parents who appeared in our promotional video, providing testimonials in support of our mission!

Be on the look-out for opportunities to help us celebrate Catholic Schools Week, January 27-31. We are especially in need of parent volunteers to assist with our Student Retreat on Friday, January 31.

Our next parent-teacher book club is Thursday, January 9, hosted by the Whitmores. *Jane Eyre* is on tap. Please join us for what is always a very enjoyable evening!

Students in the Scola

Here's to our champion Quiz Bowlers Seamus Nolan, Charlie Keefe, Hammond Law, Vinny Miranda, and Liam Nolan. Their achievement was recognized by Michigan House Speaker Lee Chatfield!

Kudos to the following SMA students who perform in the Petoskey HS Band: Grace Broz, Daniel Keefe, Mary Fran Forton, Alexa Holmes, and Vinny Miranda.

A special tribute to members of the SMA Drama Club who are performing Spoon River Anthology sketches on December 20: Marc Monclus, Mary Catherine Gengle, Daniel Jacobson, Grace Broz, River Pease, and Rosemary Hoffman.

Focus on the Faculty

We're pleased to announce our new Music teacher, Mr. Augustin Zehnder, who will officially join our faculty in January! An accomplished violin player, Mr. Zehnder is excited to bring his passion for liturgical and classical music to SMA. In addition to teaching our students choral music, instrumental music, and music history, Mr. Zehnder will also teach select courses in the Science Department and will serve as Faculty Advisor for the Music and Chant Clubs.



Mr. Zehnder holds an undergraduate degree in Liberal Arts from Thomas Aquinas College, and a Master's in Music Performance from Southern Illinois University. Prior to joining the SMA faculty, he held the First Violin Chair in the Southern Illinois Symphony Orchestra and has played in several other string and piano quartets.

Finally, Mr. Zehnder is an authority on Classical Catholic education, having worked closely with the Catholic Textbook Project of the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education (ICLE). We could not be happier, bringing such a virtuoso musician to our school as we work to ramp-up our fine arts program.

Counselor's Corner

On Friday, December 13, we received results of the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test). Overall, on this difficult standardized test, our students scored quite well! The test was available for Sophomores and Juniors, with ten students participating. The average Sophomore score was 1087 (75th percentile) and the average Junior score was 1240 (93rd percentile)!

In February, with the new semester in full swing, the students will walk through a full analysis of their respective scores with time to pursue personalized study plans in areas of relative weakness (through the Khan Academy) as they seek to improve their scores next year, whether on the PSAT or the SAT.

Additionally, we had our final visit of the semester from North Central Michigan College (NCMC), featuring an informative 40-minute presentation about this great resource, right here in our own backyard! Our students were particularly interested in the option to transfer from NCMC to other 4-year universities. We plan to schedule more college visits in the new year.

Yours in Christ, Mrs. Mikelson

Athletic Annex

The St. Michael Academy Boys Basketball team has opened its season, winning two of its first three games! Our Guardians were victorious over Northern Michigan Christian Academy and Cadillac Heritage Christian, while coming up short against the Cadillac Area Panthers.

Returners Will Gagnon, Mac Moore, John Paul Friske, Adam Paga, and Charlie Keefe lead the largest athletics team (13 players!) in school history. The team is substantially ahead of where it was a year ago and continues to improve through its dedication and tenacious work ethic!



We invite you to join us for our home games at Petoskey’s fabulous Central Elementary Gym!

Hockey (through our co-op with Petoskey HS) is also underway and the Nolan Brothers (Seamus & Liam) are back to represent SMA. The team is gaining experience as younger players replace the recently graduated veterans who led the team to its first Regional Championship last season.

Finally, I’m pleased to report the first athletic scholarship offer to a SMA runner as Ave Maria University is recruiting our multi-sport standout, Adam Paga! Congrats, Adam! Blessings, Mr. Rudnicki



Faith Matters

SMA is now planning the formation of a Gregorian Chant Club which will begin to learn the various chants of the Latin Mass. Mr. Spinnenwebber and incoming Music teacher Mr. Zehnder have been tapped to lead this exciting liturgical venture for the students.

Thank you to the Marian Center in Joy Valley for loaning us its beautiful statue for our celebration of the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Headmaster Musings

It’s the third Sunday of Advent as I write this reflection. As Catholics, we know Advent to be a season of prayerful preparation and anticipation of the Incarnation of the Logos, the Word that “became flesh and dwelt among men.” Our Latin Master, Mr. Whitmore, informs me that Advent comes from the Latin “adventus” meaning “a coming, approach, arrival” which Church Latin formalized to signify “the coming of the Savior.”

As a separate season from Christmas, Advent has its own internal logic and rhythm which is made clear in daily Mass readings as we are reminded of the events, in both the Old and New Testaments, in which the Coming of Jesus is pre-figured, pre-dicted, and pre-conceived.

Pre-eminent among these “good stories” or “good spells” of Advent are the Feast Days dedicated to Our Lady. First, of course, is the Immaculate Conception, in which we are reminded of the reality of Mary as the New Tabernacle of God. Mary is the first disciple who takes on faith that she is, as she puts it, “the handmaid of the Lord,” letting it “be done to me according to your Word.”

The second is Our Lady of Guadalupe, commemorating the miracle in the Mexican desert witnessed by Juan Diego and responsible for the conversion of more than nine million souls.

Taken together, it’s apparent that in many ways the “Star” of Advent is Mary, who turns over the lead role to her infant child Jesus at Christmas, with his “Star” above the Manger. I mention this because it seems increasingly difficult to properly follow the order of proceedings that surround the Church’s celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ.



When our secular world begins promoting Christmas sales prior to Halloween (another Church Holiday hopelessly untethered to its liturgical meaning), you quickly realize just how counter-cultural it is for us, as Catholics, to patiently wait four weeks for the Incarnation. Indeed, patience for anything is a rare virtue these days, but I must admit that the older I get, the more I relish letting Christmas come to me instead of me hastening its arrival.



This is especially true when one notices that, for many, the Christmas season *ends* on December 25th, instead of *just beginning*. I LOVE that Christmas is celebrated over twelve days, as if the glorious reality that God has entered human history is so momentous that it can’t be contained in just one day.

Until the late 19th century, the big celebration during Christmastide was “Twelfth Night,” when lavish dinner parties were held, with revelry, dancing, visiting, and modest gift exchanges. Decking the halls and decorating the tree only commenced on Christmas Eve, and continued throughout the twelve days, culminating with a crescendo on Epiphany, when the Church celebrated the revealing of the new King of Kings to the Gentiles. The Christmas Season was indeed a “season” which allowed families ample time to enjoy each other’s company and devote appropriate attention to its true meaning.

With this in mind, I appreciate that we don’t get ahead of ourselves here at SMA - our Advent Season here is truly special. I encourage you to celebrate Christmas with your family over all twelve days of the Season. When we return in January, I hope to re-enact some Twelfth Night traditions to convey to the students just how fun that celebration is, much in the way we have with Michaelmas here at SMA.

I wish all of you a most blessed Advent and truly joyful Christmas, and may the Incarnation of our Savior Jesus Christ fill you and your family with peace and love. God bless, Dr. Brake

**“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him
Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”**

-Matthew 1:23

Prayer Intentions

During Advent and Christmas, a time when both celebration and loss are keenly felt, we pray for all those loved ones in the families of the SMA community who have passed on to be re-united with the Lord. Let the Spirit of the Incarnation fill us all with the assurance that, indeed, “in the city of David a Savior is born, who is Christ the Lord.”

Upcoming Events

12/18 Poetry Out-Loud Contest at SMA
12/19 Mens Basketball v. Traverse City Home School (at Central Elementary)
12/20 In-School Drama Performance (at 8:15am)
12/20 Christmas Caroling at Pineview, Demmer, and McLaren
12/20 Potluck Lunch and Tree-Trimming Party
12/20 SMA Fundraising Reception at Messiah Concert at Bay Harbor
12/21 through 01/05 Christmas Break
01/06 School Resumes
01/07 Mens Basketball v. Harbor Light Christian JV (at Central Elementary)
01/09 Parent-Teacher Book Club: *Jane Eyre*
01/10 Mens Basketball at Cadillac Home School
01/14 Mens Basketball at Boyne Falls
01-20 through 01/24 Begin Mid-Term Exam Week
01/27 through 01/31 Catholic Schools Week
01/31 Student Retreat



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.