



MAGDALEN COLLEGE

OF THE LIBERAL ARTS



Newsletter
October 2021



President's Spotlight: Dr. Ryan Messmore

Said No One at the Gym – Ever!

It's funny how you don't often hear the same questions asked about gym exercises that you do about choosing college courses.

Many students in America today seem to choose their college courses based almost entirely on what job they want to pursue. When faced with the opportunity to study a broader range of subjects than their preferred career—subjects like geometry, music, or the humanities, for instance—the typical student responds, “When would I use that in my job?”

Yet we don't hear people asking that sort of question in the gym. “Why are you lifting those pieces of metal? When will you ever need to do that in the workplace?” or “Why are you running on a conveyor belt that takes you nowhere? What job requires you to become good at that?”

In the gym, we intuit that some things are worth doing because of how they shape and affect us, even if they do not correspond directly to our jobs. Their benefits stretch wider than career preparation. Ironically, these activities can actually help us, indirectly, do better in our careers. This is because strength, stamina, and fitness in general are “transferable” goods—they are beneficial across different contexts. And they are just plain good.

Why, then, do we encourage young people to study only college courses that correspond directly to a particular career? By doing so, they can miss the opportunity to develop transferable skills like critical thinking, effective writing, persuasive speaking, and problem-solving. Such skills are valuable in almost any job context. In fact, in a recent survey, 93 percent of employers reported that “a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than [a candidate's] undergraduate major.” Moreover, like wisdom and discernment, these capacities are just plain good.

At Magdalen, we believe the liberal arts are essential disciplines to pursue at the college level. Moreover, we believe they are essential disciplines to study from the vantage point of the Catholic intellectual tradition. What it means to be human, what it means to be the body of Christ, how God relates to His people, and how we discern and live in accord with the norms of His creation—all of this is illuminated by the Catholic faith. The Catholic faith helps us to identify and overcome confusion, error, and vice to achieve our true ends as persons. In other words, a good Catholic education is liberating in a similar way in which geometry, music, and the humanities are liberating. The liberal arts are at home in—and enriched by—the Catholic faith.



And the beneficiaries are not just those who feel called to be priests or missionaries, just as geometry is not valuable only for those who desire to be math teachers. A Catholic liberal arts education is valuable for all students wanting to become more “fit” as human beings—i.e., more discerning, more virtuous members of the human family.

“Don't spend your time on what you won't directly earn money doing in the future,” said no one ever at the gym. “Strengthen your capacities and improve your health,” however, is sound workout advice. Similarly, a liberal arts education has tremendous benefits—humanly and occupationally—but we'll only recognize them if we first free ourselves from the utilitarian shackles of “When would I directly use that in my job?”



with many others whose names are listed as secondary patrons of Canada. For the feast day on October 19, our students have learned his famous Huron Carol, which we sing at mass. On this special day we also use an original collapsible silver chalice that belonged to the French-Canadian missionaries going up and down the Mississippi and across the plains serving the Native Indians.

One of my favorite saints is the Franciscan John of Capistrano, patron of Military Chaplains who helped assemble an army to resist the Turks at the Battle of Belgrade (where a statue of him still stands in the public square). He helped lead his men while on horseback, with cross in hand, at age 70.

Filling out the color display is St. Luke, who was a Syrian physician from Antioch and a companion of St. Paul. Luke's Gospel is characterized by mercy, prayer, and joy, and has been given subtitles including "The Gospel of the Marginalized" and "The Gospel of the Poor."

All of these figures are the strong oaks and maples among the birches and ash trees that show the love of God on the landscape of this passing world. They encourage us on the path to sanctity that leads to the throne of the Lamb.

Celebrating Fall & Our Saints: Rev. Fr. Roger Boucher, Chaplain

Everyone loves the fall color display of the mountain and hills around us. The trees are in bouquet mode all about the campus. I can't help thinking that the accumulation of saints on the daily mass calendar is similar to the beautiful display of God's love for the world. Leading up to the celebration of All Saints and All Souls, the saints are an inspiration of faith in different colors.

Saint John Paul II, one of our patrons, is part of the 'bouquet'. In these days we remember him as the most travelled Pope in history. His exceptional apostolic zeal focused particularly on families, young people, and the sick. He promulgated the Catechism of the Catholic Church and left a rich Magisterium for us, a kind of personal vase of saintly gifts. Saint John Paul II had a special love for the Eastern Churches and yearned to bring them together. In a competition with other Newman Guide Colleges, Magdalen won a chalice designed to reflect his inspiration. It bears his Coat of Arms and "Totus Tuus", his motto of dedication to the Blessed Mother. The College uses the chalice for communion on his feast day, October 22.

We should also mention Saints John de Brebeuf and Isaac Jogues and their companions: Jesuits and Oblate missionaries to the Hurons and Iroquois of North America between 1642-1649. Isaac was tomahawked to death by Iroquois near Albany; John was mutilated

CONSECRATION
of
Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts
to the **BLESSED TRINITY**

Sunday, October 31st
1:00 PM
Our Lady Queen of Apostles Chapel
Part of Welcome Weekend 2021

livestreamed at magdalen.edu

A Day in the Life of the Polyphony Choir

Matthias Raes, Class of '25

When I enter the doors of Saint John the Guardian of Our Lady Church in Clinton, Massachusetts, my breath forever will catch in my throat. The beautiful church, with its soaring and magnificently painted ceilings, ornate sanctuary, and gold accent crowning, accompanied by the ebb and flow of a well-rehearsed choir, captured my attention when I stepped inside. From the first instant, I knew my experience would be one I would never forget.

This past month, the Polyphony Choir of Magdalen College was invited to participate in a completely sung Mass at Saint John's under the direction of Paul Jernberg. Mr. Jernberg is an acclaimed composer and conductor, and the setting of the Mass that we learned

was his original composition. It was an honor to be able to learn from this master of sacred music and to praise Our Lord in this special way together with our community of friends. Mr. Jernberg is an incredible teacher and director.

The abundance of musical opportunities in combination with a solid, Catholic foundation of academics drew me to Magdalen College this year as a freshman. My experience has brought me joy as both a student and lover of music. At Magdalen, every student participates in the Collegiate Choir as part of the core curriculum, and a smaller group of students audition to sing in the polyphony choir. Magdalen's musical community and rich tradition of choral music have empowered me to grow as a musician. The polyphony choir in particular has enabled me to grow closer to my fellow choristers, not just in the context of the ensemble, but also as friends. I am tremendously excited for the upcoming liturgies, concerts, and tour for which we are preparing currently. Stay tuned!





before it as an idol. This was his profound talent: to see through the shallowness of false gods. Because of what he has taught us, we are proud of our culture at Magdalen College in which words such as “virtue,” “morality,” and “goodness” are restored to an honored place.

JPII exhorted us to stand as a spiritual weapon against the false spirit of the world and to take up the struggle for the world’s soul each day. This call is larger than our own small troubles which weigh us down because we neglect to obey the commandments. Religion calls us past the selfish miseries of our own choices and prompts us to take up the weapons of righteousness instead. We do not follow this course to become an elite world or family. We follow it to become young people who understand our generation -- one that is sadly distant from wholesomeness, Christ, and his Church.

Make no mistake: we are the weapons who go forth to meet new generations. Consider the youth who assemble to meet the popes. They wish to see, hear, and be enlivened with the strength and energy of Christ and the saints. Despite all the losses the Church suffers, she never ceases to look toward the future with hope.

Why is that?

It is because of the power of the Holy Spirit. John Paul II urgently calls us to share the faith we believe in so strongly. He emboldens us to evangelize, to serve, and to step beyond mere tolerance. This leads to freedom; it sways our contemporaries from paths of sin and disorder to live as God’s children.



Pope Saint John Paul II: Rev. Fr. Roger Boucher, Chaplain

Pope Saint John Paul II has been co-patron of Magdalen College for the past decade. Since then, our community has encountered growth, change, and emerging opportunities. In response, we have encouraged each other to follow our patron’s call to be marked by both faith and reason. JPII reminds us, “Let your faith be refreshed, let your hope increase, and let your charity exert itself still more.”

JPII lived out these words with zeal. He made 104 apostolic journeys outside Italy while writing the Catechism. He inaugurated World Youth Day as well as the World Meeting of Families. To encourage young people, he articulated: “It’s Jesus whom you seek when you dream of happiness. He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are attracted. It is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices: the choices that others try to stifle.”

JPII is the model of a wise, rational, and faithful servant of God. He is a witness to hope who saw more than what we want to see when we look about us. He saw the surging and dying fads of every generation, the bloodshed, and the degradation of human dignity everywhere. I try to imagine what he would have said about this country’s practice of selling body parts of human children or the decision of our legislators to continue funding abortion.

The great Holy Father encouraged us to be faithful *despite* the sinful world around us. He urged us to be righteous toward our fellow human beings, using strong and gentle reason to discern good from bad, beautiful from ugly, and true from false. Following his example, we do not fear science, nor do we bow



October Student Life: Ms. Mazel Belt, Dean of Students

"What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known and loved because it is known?"
- George Eliot

The students have settled into the routine of the semester, integrating the ordinary with the extraordinary. Their studies, the liturgical life, and activities such as praying outside the abortion clinic, setting out at dawn on lake Sunapee with the rowing team, or attending an evening seminar about authentic femininity, mark their schedules with a comforting sense of regular progression toward human flourishing.

These activities, along with the celebratory Fall Formal dance, the much-anticipated Coffee House, and the delicious Polish meal on the Feast of Pope St. John Paul II have led to those most extra-ordinary moments in the students' lives. During intentional one-on-one conversations, student after student said to me that the tight-knit community at Magdalen has given them a deep sense of belonging, gratitude, and joy. They spoke of late-night conversations about the authors they are reading in class.

Their experience mirrors that which is described by C. S. Lewis when he says, "Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'" Our activities and celebrations provide an opportunity for the students to pause from the day-to-day routine and reflect on the integrated life of a student at Magdalen. After the senior sunrise celebration, I asked a student, "How was the celebration with your peers?" With profound peace and joy in her eyes, she responded, "Ms. Belt, I am beginning to realize that everything is a gift."



Overheard From Our Podcast

These quotes were overheard on the "From the Summit" podcast this month. Visit magdalen.edu/podcasts/ to hear the full episodes!

Episode 19: Freedom on a Mountain - with Anthony Esolen

"In order to teach well you have to love the author. ... There's no way you'd pay good money for a tour guide [of the Sistine Chapel] who doesn't love what he's going to show you. How is that so different from what goes on in our schools and colleges? ... If you hate something, you aren't the person to teach it. ... You will only see what you love."

"Virtue is a liberating force. It enables you to accomplish more."

"Autonomy is not the same thing as liberty. ... The real freedom that man is made for, is born for, and that God calls us to, is the freedom of the soul in perfect love."

Episode 20: Poetry and the Music of Language – with Anthony Esolen

"Plato said if you want to ruin a society, ruin the music first ... because it reaches into the depths of the human soul."

"This is the kind of thing that poetry can do that, frankly, no other form of writing can do. ... Poetry is like a door that opens and shows you a whole world and a vision of something beyond the door. I really think there's nothing quite like it."

"Robert Frost is a homeboy... he's a New Hampshire man!"

[Listen at Magdalen.edu/podcasts](https://magdalen.edu/podcasts)



Academic Spotlight: Dr. Anthony Esolen, Prof.

In our Humanities course this fall, we've been reading Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, and that has given me the rare chance to impersonate the ninety-year-old cook Fleece preaching to the sharks, as the mate Stubbs has ordered him to do. The sharks have been snapping at the whale carcass bound to the side of the ship. They don't listen.

"You is sharks, sartin," says Fleece, in his heavy African accent, leaning over and wagging his finger, "but if you govern de shark in you, why den you be angel; for all angel is not'ing more dan de shark well governed." Devastating satire against man and his pretensions to virtue! Melville was an agnostic to the end of his days, but just as we don't make bold men as we used to, so it seems we're failing also in the agnostic factory, getting the liquid plastic of soy margarine instead of rich sweet whale oil. Melville had his doubts about God, and he is merciless in expressing them, but he doubted man even more, and I appreciate the honesty.

Melville knew there was no substitute for the grace of hope. Secular optimism, in his novels – most especially in *The Confidence-Man* – is a cheat. Man's sickness strikes to the core. The blacksmith on the *Pequod* cannot smooth the wrinkles in Captain Ahab's brow. The carpenter can only give Ahab a poor imitation of the leg he has lost. We will no more be saved by technological improvements than a shark can be made into a saint by a steadier diet of whale flesh.

Late in his life, in a poem called "Of Rome," Melville gave these lines to the wiser of two men visiting Rome and conversing about western man:

*Who's gained by all the sacrifice
Of Europe's revolutions? who?
The Protestant? the Liberal?
I do not think it — not at all:
Rome and the Atheist have gained:
These two shall fight it out — these two;
Protestantism being retained
For base of operations sly
By Atheism.*

Melville has in mind the liberal Protestantism that was making its peace with notions of steady human improvement, not by grace, but by better drinking water and utilitarian schools and democratic machinery, sometimes called "liberty." We know that religious doubts can lead a man to despair. So did they lead Captain Ahab. But secular optimism leads to the same place more quickly, because man-as-god is a far more foolish thing than any savage has ever worshiped. Better to be Queequeg, the brave and noble harpooner, with his little deity Yojo, benevolent but not almighty, than to put your trust in man, or, sillier still, in man's tools.

Herman Melville did not see all of the truth. No man does. But he acknowledged his blindness, and what he did see, or what he thought he saw, he gives us with all the power of his relentless honesty. How pallid, thin, and timorous, by contrast, are the political slogans of our time. They are like the tiny shells of sea-creatures clinging to the eye of an ancient whale. They float with the waves, dead as they are. The whale sounds to the deeps.



He originally wanted to become a teacher, but his myriad of interests never allowed him to stay in one career field for very long. In addition to teaching, he spent time as a police officer, a manager of Pat's Peak Ski Area, the founder of an emergency medical device company, a NH state congressman and senator, and founder and managing member of Henniker Brewing Company.

Throughout the course of the evening, Mr. Currier spoke about his different trials, successes, and achievements. In addition, he shared the stories of many great men and women that he has known – some incredible, some incredibly sad, and many convolutedly humorous. A common theme was how opportunities often come out of surprising places, and challenges and setbacks often turn out to be graces.

When talking about how to prepare for the future, Mr. Currier said, "Ironically enough, it doesn't make any difference what your degree is in. Did you learn how to think, how to reason, when you were in college? Did it prepare you to have a work ethic? Because that's really what it was all about for me."

Mr. Currier also addressed the importance of living one's faith, which is one thing he admires about the whole-person education students receive at Magdalen College. "Magdalen College is a lot different from New England College [his alma mater]," he observed. "Living with faith is very important – and there's no time to take a vacation from your faith!"

Career Pathways Spotlight: Dr. Eric M. Buck, Director

These career conversations are meant to give students a greater idea of the variety of vocations in life that a person might explore after college.

At a Thursday night Career Pathways Panel, Magdalen College trustee Dave Currier met with students to speak about his long history of business management, entrepreneurship, and how he discerned his calling.





\$2,000

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scholarship if you **enroll** for the
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We Hope You Can Join Us for These Upcoming Events!



An Advent Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols

Saturday, December 4th, 7:00 PM
Our Lady Queen of Apostles Chapel

Prepare your hearts for the joy of Christmas with a tapestry of Scripture readings and carols sung by the 70-voice Collegiate Choir. With Exposition, Adoration, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.



Friday Night Lectures

November 5th, 7:30 PM - Dr. Anthony Esolen
(streamed online only at magdalen.edu)

November 12th, 7:30 PM - Dr. Matthew McGowan
(public welcome on campus)

These are engaging opportunities for the public to interact with scholars by joining in the dialogue that animates our collegiate culture. Each seminar is complemented by Q&A and opportunity for further conversation.

Join the entire collegiate community as we enter intimately into the mystery of the passion, death, and resurrection of Our Blessed Lord. Solemn sung liturgies (featuring the Collegiate Choir, the Gregorian chant scholae, and polyphonic choir) and daily devotions culminating in the Great Easter Vigil.



2022 Collegiate Summer Program

Discover the joy of learning next summer at Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts.

High school students will experience, in miniature form, the academic community and life of Magdalen College. They will be introduced to liberal education through classic texts from philosophy, literature, theology, and political thought. Daily Mass is offered.

Stay tuned to our website and social media for more info – dates will be announced soon!



For more information or to RSVP for any of these events, contact mhoule@magdalen.edu or call (603) 456-4113. Applicants, be sure to submit applications soon to be considered for our competitive scholarships!