



MAGDALEN COLLEGE

OF THE LIBERAL ARTS



Newsletter
February 2022



25th wedding anniversary. Do you take your girlfriend or wife to McDonald's?

Those who answer “no” probably don’t base their decision solely on the content (the food). They also sense that the goal of such a dinner doesn’t fit with the way food is experienced at the Golden Arches—that is, it’s form. (After all, if you called ahead and arranged for McDonald’s to bring in filet mignon and crème brûlée from a five-star chef—would that change your answer?)

Music

You’re a church music director arranging a song about the heartbreak of Jesus’ followers and mother during his crucifixion. Do you set it to a fast, upbeat tempo? Or does some content simply not lend itself to being conveyed through certain musical styles?



If you’re unsure, check out the striking results when guests on the show “I’m Sorry I Haven’t a Clue” sing familiar songs to different tunes. My favorite is “Meet the Flintstones” sung to Sinatra’s “My Way”! (Listen and see if you process the words any differently.)

Political Debate

You’re an undecided voter trying to determine which party’s policies are better for the country. Are you helped much by the modern format of televised debates—one that allows candidates only 2 minutes to articulate their positions? Does winning a modern televised debate seem to depend more on explaining policies in a more logical way than one’s opponent or looking more confident and committing less gaffes? Does this form encourage the viewing audience to seek knowledge or entertainment?

Attending to Form and Content

These are only a few examples demonstrating McLuhan’s point that “the medium is the message.” Sadly, though, many people fail to attend critically to the inherent power of a particular medium. Well-meaning Christians, for example, can focus so much

President’s Spotlight: Sinatra Sings the Flintstones

Dr. Ryan Messmore

Have you ever heard the phrase “the medium is the message”? It’s a phrase coined by Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan to emphasize the important relationship between a message and the way it’s delivered or experienced. This relationship often goes unnoticed, but there’s plenty of evidence in our everyday lives that some forms are less appropriate than others for delivering certain content.



Dinner Date

You’re a young man hoping to impress a romantic interest ... or a grateful husband celebrating your

curse words or sex scenes?) that they ignore the influence the form itself might have.



(The Christian Broadcasting Network once created a Christian soap opera called *Another Life*, which essentially copied the genre—camera angles, music, etc.—but substituted Christian characters talking about the importance of their faith when facing crises!)

At Magdalen College, we believe the same is true in education. If you want to teach what is true, good, and beautiful, the way you go about it isn't neutral. When contemplating beauty, it helps to

have a wide-open vista of the New Hampshire mountains spread out below you! When discussing the Kingdom of God, it is fitting to do so among a fellowship of disciples living in community. When exploring what it means to be a human person, engaging in personal conversation seems more appropriate than lecturing from a textbook.

In other words, a transformative, Catholic, liberal arts education depends on more than just teaching the right ideas. At Magdalen, we also take seriously the way that a beautiful environment, a vibrant community, a discussion-based pedagogy, and a worshipful culture can shape how one experiences those ideas. In short, our students' learning is formed by their form of learning.

Dr. Ryan Messmore serves as the fifth President of Magdalen College. He holds a DPhil in Theology from the University of Oxford and an MPhil in Theology from the University of Cambridge. He also received an MTS from Duke Divinity School upon completing an AB in Public Policy and Religion from Duke University. Messmore has been a public advocate on issues related to religion, culture, and education.



Spiritual Life Spotlight: In Harmony with the Faith

Tristan J. Smith, Director of Collegiate Choirs

On February 2, Magdalen College celebrated the feast day known as Candlemas. On this day, the Church solemnly blesses all candles which will be burned throughout the year. As has been customary for centuries, the faithful receive lighted, newly-blessed candles and bear them in procession. The Mass of the day follows -- in the new calendar, the Solemnity of the Presentation of the Lord, and in the old calendar, the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

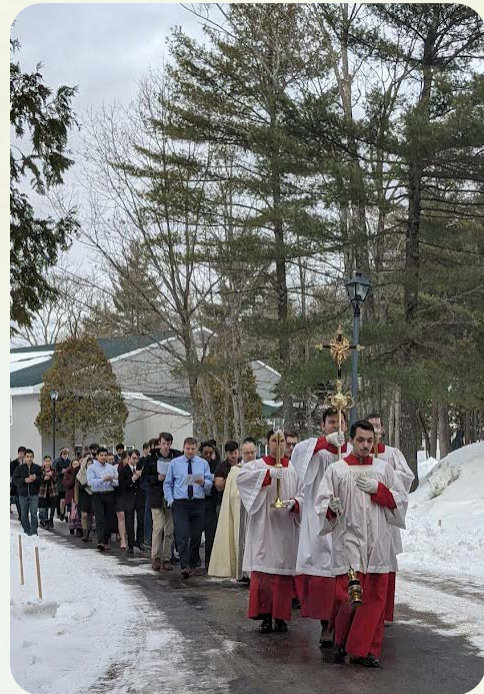
Candlemas recalls the event in which Mary and Joseph first took the baby Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem 40 days after his birth, according to Jewish custom. This fulfilled Malachi's prophecy that one day, the Lord would return to the Temple in Jerusalem, from which His presence had departed prior to the Temple's destruction in 587 BC. Today, the Church celebrates this long-awaited return 40 days after Christmas, which falls on February 2.



The men's and women's Gregorian chant scholae prepared assiduously for the occasion, learning over a dozen elaborate and often melismatic chants. The first chant of the day, the famous antiphon *Lumen ad revelationem gentium*, is translated, "A light to the revelation of the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." The candles received by the Faithful during this antiphon are not only borne in procession, but are kept lit through the chanting of the Gospel and are rekindled during the Canon of the Mass.

The procession itself wended throughout Magdalen's entire campus while beautiful chants such as the *Adorna thalamum Sion* were sung. The schola proclaimed, "Deck thy bridal chamber, O Sion, and receive Christ, thy King; embrace Mary, who is the gate of heaven; for she carries the King of glory of the new light..." Upon returning to Our Lady Queen of Apostles Chapel, Rev. Fr. David Wong offered High

Mass. In addition to the full complement of Propers, the scholae chanted *Missa cum jubilo*, the beloved Gregorian Mass setting for Marian feasts.



Later in the month, both the polyphony choir and chant schola travelled to Saint Stanislaus Parish in Nashua, NH. The parish is entrusted to the priests of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter who also serve Magdalen College weekly. The polyphony choir sang several motets and Fr. Cherion's *Messe de Ste. Cecile*. Meanwhile, the chant schola presented the notoriously difficult Proper for Septuagesima Sunday. In the old calendar, Septuagesima is the season of "pre-Lent" in which the faithful are tasked with preparing for their Lenten journey of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Magdalen College is grateful to the pastor, Rev. Fr. John Brancich, and the director of sacred music, Mr. Eric Dolch, for inviting the college to sing as a guest choir. Mr. Eric Dolch accompanied the choir on the parish's 19th century pipe organ.



Academic Spotlight: A Lecture Lineup of Poetry, Classics, and Philosophy

Dr. Brian FitzGerald, Academic Dean

In compelling fashion, on January 28th, professor and writer-in-residence Anthony Esolen opened the College's regular Friday Night Lecture series for the spring term. His lecture, "The Art of the Dramatic Monologue," sought to remind us of – and encourage us to cherish – a vanishing cultural treasure, that eponymous poetic form. Reading examples from literary giants such as Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson, Dr. Esolen highlighted the ways in which the dramatic monologue can stir not only our aesthetic sensibility but also our moral imagination. Dr. Esolen concluded the lecture by offering the audience a sample of his own foray into this form, a stirring poem entitled "Father and Son." The centrality of beauty and the imagination to true liberal learning was clearly on display.

The remaining lectures slated for the term will cultivate other themes close to the heart of a Magdalen education. In mid-February, Prof. Matthew McGowan, a classicist at Fordham University, highlighted the power of our ancient cultural inheritance to speak to and indeed to transform us today. He addressed the college on the subject of "Catholic Conversion and the Classics: The Spiritual Aeneid of Ronald Knox (1888-1957)."



At the end of the month, the lecture series will take a more explicitly philosophical turn. Magdalen will welcome Prof. Mark Shiffman of Villanova University, whose lecture, "What is Catholic Political Philosophy?", will help us think through perennial questions about the nature of politics, particularly in relation to the Catholic faith. This stimulating topic will bring the college's Friday Night Lectures to a close for the current academic year.



Overheard on Our Podcast

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

Episode 26: Reading Big Books — A Conversation with Dr. Mary Mumbach

"I tell my students to read fast ... because there is a kind of musical quality to the novel—to literature in general—and if you stop to analyze too often, you miss the flow of the story."

"'Carnivale' for us occurs right before Lent. ... The root meaning is 'farewell meat,' so it's the celebration you have before entering the period of penance. ... How is the celebration that precedes it related to that penitential season?"

"You don't have to finish a whole bowl of blanchmange to know that you're eating a blanchmange!"

Episode 27: JP II and Education — How the Pope Would've 'Made Himself at Home' at Magdalen

"John Paul II would have enjoyed hiking Mt. Kearsarge, kayaking on the Contoocook River, and he would have been on every shuttle van we run to the nearby ski slope. He would have been thrilled with the free lift passes our students receive!"

"JP II loved adoration. He did a lot of his writing in front of the Blessed Sacrament."

"That small community fellowship is what Magdalen's size and location make possible in a unique way. ... Our 'way of being' is small group conversation, whether it's in the classroom or dining room or ski lodge around a cup of hot cocoa. ... We love having a small context in which you can know and be known personally."

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

A Night of Enchantment and Dancing

Anna Rose Maj, Class of '24

This past month the sophomores hosted Magdalen College's Annual Sophomore Dinner. Each year, the sophomores choose a theme for this formal affair, fundraise for the event, plan the menu, decorate the dining room, rehearse the entertainment, and cook the food. Sophomores from previous years remember the weeks leading up to their Sophomore Dinner as an exciting time of preparation and class bonding.

The theme for this year's event was "Beauty and the Beast". Sophomores decorated the dining room with large pieces of whiteboard painted to look like stained glass windows. They also draped other parts of the dining room with white tulle and fairy lights. The centerpieces were glass bowls filled with water, with marbles sunk to the bottom and tealight candles floating on top.

Dinner was a five-course meal. Bruschetta was laid out before the guests arrived. Then sophomores brought out a fish course as Michael Bates, dressed as Lumiere from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, sang "Be Our Guest". Boeuf Bourguignon and a charcuterie board (with slices of salami arranged to look like roses!) followed, and the final course consisted of a dessert of profiteroles arranged conically and held together by chocolate sauce.

As the guests dined, sophomores Rachel Heise, Elise Muldoon, Mary Grace Klucinec, and Michael Bates performed "The L'Allemande" and "Mr. Beveridge's Maggot", two dances from France's baroque period. Sophomore Samuel Milliken, playing the Beast, sang "Non Piu Andrai" from Mozart's 1786 opera *The Marriage of Figaro*. Lightening things up, "Gaston", a comical number from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, was also performed.

After dessert and coffee were served, sophomore Samuel Milliken shed his furry, "beastly" attire and joined "Belle", played by Elise Muldoon, on stage. Narrator Michael Bates explained that the Beast's love for Belle had changed him back into a handsome prince. Then, the nostalgic song "Tale as Old as Time" played on the loudspeakers as guests were directed into the gym for a swing dance, with live music provided by the East Bay Jazz Band.

As sophomore Naya Del Val reflected, "Hosting Sophomore Dinner is just one of the ways in which students can immerse themselves in the sense of continuation and tradition at Magdalen. We not only collaborated within our own class, but we also drew inspiration from the classes above us, made use of their resources and advice, and did our best to improve upon what had been done in the past, hopefully adding something to the tradition for next year's sophomores to take up."





Soph. Dinner Class of 2024



Career Pathways and the Alumni Community

Dr. Eric M. Buck, Director

There are three student communities in the Magdalen world: the pre-campus community of prospective students, the campus community of current students, and the post-campus community of alumni and their families (which also becomes the soil for the pre-campus community). The three ideally comprise a vital wholeness. The Career Pathways program exists in part to assist the integration of the campus and the post-campus communities, thereby communicating the kind of experience that reassures the pre-campus community, especially parents, that a Magdalen degree provides a strong foundation for entering the world of meaningful, sustaining work. There are several aspects of the program that are directed to this end, of which I highlight two this month.

First, I am in the process of compiling a database of career advisors from among our alumni (and other friends) to create an Alumni Career Advisory Guide.

For this project to get off the ground, we are calling for expressions of willingness to advise current students (and the occasional pre-campus community member). Such advice would focus on the nature of certain professional or other career tracks, what is involved in the work, how to prepare to enter it, what qualities are possessed by successful people in that field, and so on. If you are willing to advise students in your field of work (past or present), please email me at ebuck@magdalen.edu.

Second, Career Pathways maintains a job board for alumni and for soon-to-be graduates of the College. The job board lists not only entry-level positions suitable to recent graduates, but also mid- and senior-level positions that older alumni may find interesting. For example, the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Boston recently posted school principal and vice-principal positions for the upcoming school year, jobs that are suitable for those with a half-dozen years of teaching experience and an abundance of willingness to learn. This job board (which also includes an internship/fellowship list) is maintained at Career Pathways - Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts.



Coffee Conversations
with the
President

*By Parents,
For Parents.*

A series to support each other on the path from high school to college.

3 Free Webinars
- Starts Feb. 17th!



Pull up your chair and grab a fresh cup of coffee!

Life is busy, and if you've got kids in high school, it can be downright chaotic. We all need a chance to sit down, grab a cup of coffee, and support each other on this journey. We invite you to join us for several conversations about issues relevant to families who are knee-deep in the college search. Why study the liberal arts in college? How is Catholic education being renewed today? How can we succeed in raising teenagers in 2022? Magdalen's President, Dr. Ryan Messmore, will talk with leading experts about these and other questions. So, put on a fresh pot of coffee, curl up with your computer, and join us for Coffee Conversations with the President.

Register Now:

magdalen.edu/coffee

Go Deep this Summer

Deepen your college preparation
journey by spending a
transformational two weeks at
Magdalen College.



Alpha Session

Engage a variety of liberal arts fields.

June 19 - July 2, 2022



Omega Session

Take a single course for credit.

July 10 - 23, 2022

Go **DEEP** into:

- the **CATHOLIC** faith
- the **JOY** of friendships
- the **BIG QUESTIONS** of life
- the **LIBERAL ARTS** tradition
- the **BEAUTY** of the mountains



magdalen.edu/summer

limited spots available - register now



The Magdalenian

Messages from the Mountains

Dr. Anthony Esolen Launches Newsletter

We're excited to announce that Dr. Anthony Esolen has launched a private newsletter—called a “sub-stack”—exclusively for subscribers.

For just \$7/month (\$70/year) you'll receive articles of wit and wisdom delivered directly to your email inbox 2-3 times per week. Commentary from Dr. Esolen will include current issues affecting the Church and society. [Click here](#) to read an introduction from Dr. Esolen and to subscribe to his newsletter entitled The Magdalenian—Messages from the Mountain.



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Make Yourself at Home – Magdalen

- Free Webinars for High School Students
- Engage with Our World-Class Faculty

March 9

Are you a student who is discerning next steps after high school? Are you looking for a college that blends enchanted learning with intimate community? If so, this series of talks is for you. Each month our professors will provide a glimpse into the unique approach to education that is Magdalen. Built to replicate a traditional New England village, Magdalen's mountain-side campus is known for its charm. From its grand, sweeping views to its Narnia-esque lampposts, Magdalen provides students with a warmth and inspiration that's hard to find at larger universities. It is, to many, a home away from home—a place of wonder and fellowship that reminds us of Rivendell. We invite you to 'make yourself at home' by joining us for this series of Wednesday evening talks and learning about our different approach to college. Talks will be 30-45 minutes with live Q&A afterwards. Register now:

magdalen.edu/make-yourself-at-home