



# MAGDALEN COLLEGE

OF THE LIBERAL ARTS



**Newsletter**  
*Spring 2022*





- grow our Arts of the Beautiful Program so as to expose our students to more orchestral concerts, plays, and museums;
- enhance our Career Pathways Program to help students learn about different fields of work and how best to enter and succeed in them.

On behalf of the students, faculty, and staff of Magdalen, I sincerely thank everyone who contributed to this campaign. You are part of something very significant in the life of the College and the new evangelization.

The investment you have made in Magdalen is an investment in the long-term trajectory of our culture. You have helped to ensure the intentional, patient training of tomorrow's artists, teachers, journalists, medical and legal professionals, clergy and men & women religious, school board members, community leaders, RCIA team members, and, perhaps most importantly, the moms and dads of the next generation.

I am deeply grateful, and I wish you all a very blessed Easter season!

## President's Spotlight: Campaign Success!

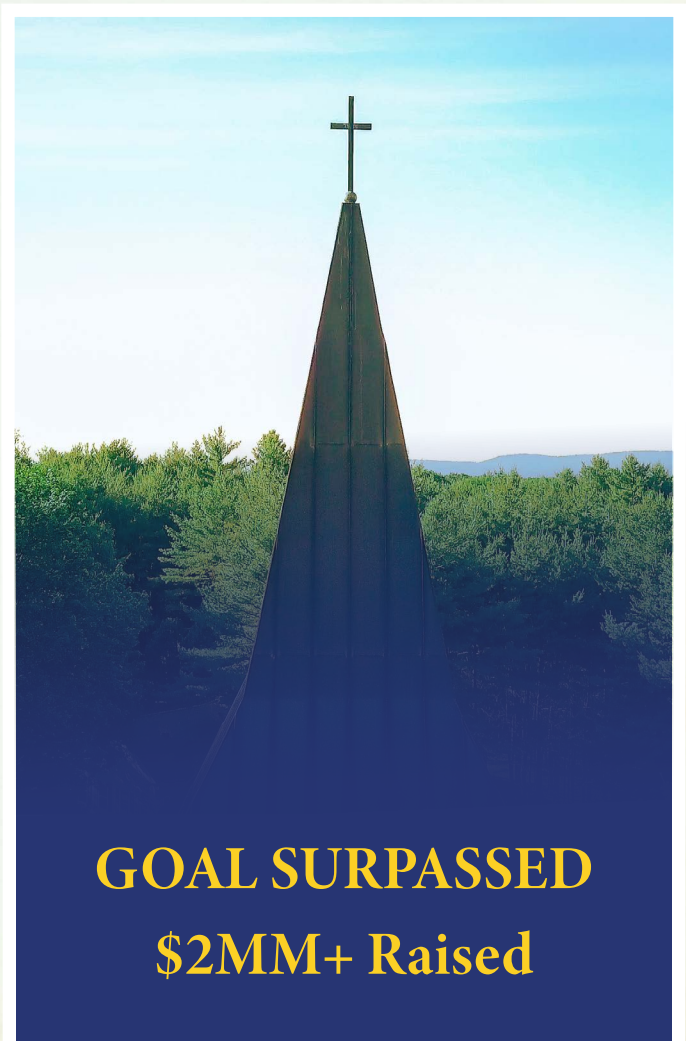
*Dr. Ryan Messmore*

In December, Magdalen College launched an audacious goal: to raise \$2 million in four months.

I am excited and humbled to announce that you did it! Thanks to your generosity, we surpassed our goal in gifts and pledges, which will enable Magdalen College to "Advance the Call" in several important ways.

A certain "call" is at the heart of our mission statement, which is to "call students in their whole person to a transformative, Catholic, liberal arts education." We launched the "Advance the Call" campaign to:

- make this sort of education affordable to more students in financial need;
- retain our top-notch faculty and attract additional, faithful scholars and teachers;
- create a more welcoming environment by renovating our facilities and beautifying our buildings;
- host more initiatives like our Welcome Weekend, Scholarship Weekend, and Collegiate Summer Program that bring prospective students to our scenic campus;





# Academic Spotlight: Studying with a World Master

*Bridget Beck, Class of '22*

A couple weeks ago, Magdalen helped my classmate Jenny and me attend an iconography workshop in New York City. It was led by Dr. George Kordis, a world master iconographer. The four days we spent training with Dr. Kordis were truly transformational.

We journeyed with this amazing teacher through the creation of Mandilion Icons, which bear the face of Christ as on a cloth like Veronica's. We first observed him at his craft and then, under his guidance, attempted to write our own icon. By insisting on the cleanness and clarity of our final lines, he taught us to focus on the fundamentals and to value going back to first things.

Our professor Keri Wiederspahn, who teaches an iconography course at Magdalen, prepared us well to learn from a master like Dr. Kordis. "Watching him is like watching Michelangelo paint" is something Mrs. Wiederspahn has said of Dr. Kordis multiple times, but now we can vouch for it—we've seen the wonder of his skill in real life, though it seemed to pass into something beyond.



An icon has immense spiritual and meditative power—it is meant to speak of the Divine to those who behold it. Standing before the presence of the depicted figure, one cannot help but be moved. The process of writing

an icon is one of trust and surrender. You must trust that the work will turn out even when you are in the thick of the ugly underpaintings. You must also surrender to the fact that this work is neither



a showcase of your talent nor an affirmation of your spiritual prowess. Rather, it has power through the grace of God who condescends to work through our physical world and humble human mediums.

Studying iconography is such a vivid and rewarding endeavor for me because it seems to embody our core studies at Magdalen. Such studies bring the reality of God into vivid relief before us and connect us to a tradition of visionary sacred artists and communities who were sustained by their faith in Christ. After spending four days at the iconography workshop hosted at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, I have come to possess a deep respect for the Orthodox. I also developed a great affection for their hilarious young people, such as the wise-cracking Orthodox nun and her (literal) sister from England who took the class with us, or the seminary's choir members who repeatedly fell prostrate during their elaborate Lenten prayers and then joined us for dinner with laughter.

The centerpiece of our experience, though, was getting to know Dr. Kordis. Although we received plenty of critical feedback, Jenny also got a brush. That's right, a blessed paintbrush from Dr. Kordis—one of his very own! His merciful heart and surrender to the greater glory of God is present in every aspect of his person. Dr. Kordis lives out his vocation of serving the Church through Sacred Art with grace, wit, and a commitment to passing on the tradition to young artists. The opportunity to learn from him felt like a pilgrimage, a precious gift.





## Spiritual Life Spotlight: Holy Week at Magdalen

*Anna Rose Maj, Class of '24*

At Magdalen College, the heart of student life is Holy Week, the liturgies of which encapsulate the college's life of worship. With beautiful services and traditions that foster an appropriate rhythm of fasting and feasting, mourning and rejoicing, the experience of Easter at Magdalen is rare and wonderful.

Holy Week officially began on Palm Sunday, when Magdalen welcomed back retired chaplain Rev. Father Roger Boucher to lead the campus in celebrating the Holy Week liturgies.

Wednesday night, Father Boucher led the community in Tenebrae. This is an ancient practice of the Catholic Church, and it involves reading a selection of Scripture passages by the light of a candelabra. Much of the passages focus on God's love for Jerusalem, as well as the prophecies of Christ's suffering that are found in the Old Testament. As each passage was read, a candle on the candelabra was extinguished. After the final reading (Luke 23:44-48), which described Jesus's last moments on the cross, Father Boucher knelt with the last candle behind the altar, signifying Christ's enduring presence in the world, even when hidden from his disciples' eyes.

Thursday was the Feast of the Institution of the Holy Eucharist. 11 students and Dr. Messmore participated in the Washing of the Feet, signifying the twelve

apostles whose feet Christ washed. Holy Thursday Mass was not concluded with the usual prayers, signifying its continuation throughout all of Good Friday and Holy Saturday until the Saturday night Vigil.

On Friday, from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm (the hours in which Christ hung on the cross) the Great Silence was observed. The men of the college carried a large wooden cross up Kearsarge Mountain Road together, and the women of the college prayed the Stations of the Cross in the main chapel, while awaiting their return. At 3:00 pm, the Good Friday Liturgy was celebrated. That night, Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* was played in the lounge for students to watch.

Holy Saturday was a day of quiet, rest, and anticipation. While many maintained the recollected spirit they had attained through the Good Friday traditions and service, students were also involved in preparations for that night's Vigil Mass and subsequent feast. Students prepared special foods, tidied up the campus grounds, adorned the chapel with flowers, and rehearsed exultant chants and hymns.

At 8:00 pm Saturday night, the Easter Vigil began. Students sang Handel's famous Hallelujah chorus, which they had been rehearsing all semester, with pomp and glee. At the end of Mass, the chapel bells, which had been silent all Holy Week, rang out Easter hymns, and the community feasted on ham, chicken, figs rolled in bacon, potatoes, pasta, cheese, puddings, and cake. Certain students stayed awake to depart at 3:00 am for the Easter morning hike to the top of Mount Kearsarge to say morning prayer as the sun rose.

Sunday morning brought even more pleasant celebrations. After morning Mass, there was an Easter egg hunt and a brunch. A supreme gladness and satisfaction reigned on campus.

As President Dr. Messmore noted, it is appropriate that Magdalen college, named after the first disciple to see the Risen Christ, celebrates Holy Week and Easter together as a community. Holy Week at Magdalen immerses students in the mystery of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and it is hoped that they will later carry the fruits of this experience back to their families and communities after they graduate.







# Student Life Spotlight: Shakespeare and *Chopped* Come to Magdalen

*Mazel Belt, Dean of Students*

During the first weekend of April, the St. Genesius Players performed Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with artistry, joy, and a focus on being a gift to the audience. Patrons came from as far away as Ohio and helped created an electric atmosphere that invigorated the performance of each player.

When interviewed about what makes acting at Magdalen unique, the director of this year's play, Therese Snyder (Class of '22), commented on both the diversity of the actors and the caliber of their skill. "[The actors] are not necessarily the people you would expect; they are students who auditioned for the play just because they thought it would be fun to be a part of something bigger than themselves. At the same time, the actors, because of the curriculum, have an intimate understanding of the complex scripts and

the high sensitivity to Shakespeare's style of writing."

Anyone who sat in the audience would have felt the joy of the players emanating through the room as they laughed at the comedy brought to life by subtle facial expressions and body movements. One student commented, "Everyone was so happy with it! I had a lot of people comment that they hadn't laughed this hard at a show in a while."

Another exciting event that took place this April was the first-ever Magdalen College version of *Chopped*. Teams of students were given 45 minutes to create culinary dishes out of a surprise list of ingredients. This event was a way to challenge the student chefs to think on their feet. Magdalen's full-time Chef, Daja Gombojav, hosted the competition and commented on why it was one of the best events of the whole year: "Food is so much more than fuel; it can lift your spirits and bring people together in community."

Months of time poured into enhancing cooking skills and rehearsing for the play have culminated in celebratory April events that drew parents, siblings, peers, and strangers into a sense of belonging at Magdalen College.











## Highlights from Scholarship Weekend

Earlier this month Magdalen College was excited to host its first Scholarship Weekend. We brought finalists for a range of scholarships to campus to participate in a full day of activities. Hailing from Montana to England, the prospective students took part in a seminar discussion, conducted interviews with faculty and staff, attended an alumni panel discussion, observed a philosophy class, engaged in a Student Club Fair, enjoyed a night of Shakespeare skits, sang around the bonfire, and participated in a beautiful Palm Sunday Procession and Mass. We also hosted potential applicants and their parents for an Open House during the day. Congratulations to all those who participated in this special weekend!





# Go Deep this Summer

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



LIMITED SPACES



## Alpha Session

Engage a variety of liberal arts fields.

June 19 - July 2, 2022

LIMITED SPACES



## 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](https://magdalen.edu/summer)

limited spots available - register now





## Curriculum Spotlight: Science and Math within the Liberal Arts

*John Klucinec, Professor of Humanities  
and Sciences*

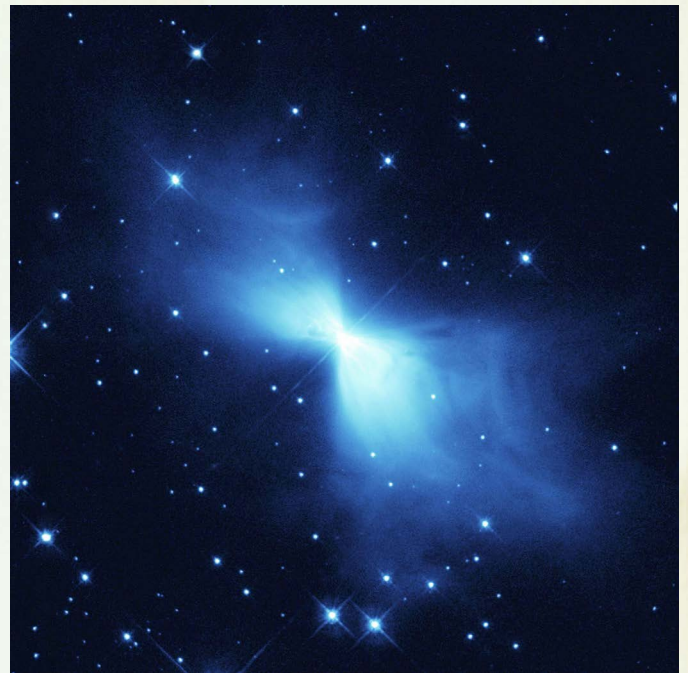
At Magdalen College, science is a liberal arts discipline. As such, it is an investigation into the nature of things founded upon observation, experimentation, and contemplation – in conversation with fellow learners and the natural world. Situated upon a 135-acre campus away from the lights and din of urban distractions, our students are especially enabled to cultivate a love of the natural order and to contemplate the connectedness of things. In this setting, we study geometry, astronomy, physics, and biology.

The intellectual beauty of mathematics is sufficient reason for its study. The primary goal of the Euclidean geometry tutorial is to introduce students to this beauty. The tutorial benefits students in other ways as well. Students must demonstrate Euclidean propositions in class; thus, they learn to value understanding over mere memorization, to express themselves clearly in public, and to be comfortable before an audience. Finally, the rhythm and order of Euclid instills the appreciation and habit of orderly thought.

After this grounding in mathematics, astronomy is studied as “geometry in motion.” Since astronomy

played a dominant role in the rise of modern science, the tutorial begins with the study of the high point of ancient astronomy, Ptolemy’s *Almagest*. This reading is coupled with contemplating the nighttime sky, drinking in its beauty, and learning the relationship between the celestial phenomena with such correlating terrestrial notions as latitude and longitude and the cycle of seasons.

In contrast to Ptolemy, Copernicus desires to understand the cosmos as a harmonious whole that reflects the perfect plan of its Creator. Thus, he demands that astronomy not only account for astronomical appearances but explain them as well. One of the results of the Copernican revolution is that the study of celestial objects shifts to the study of terrestrial objects. This latter study is taken up in the sophomore science tutorial by reading Galileo’s *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*.



This leads directly to the physics tutorial, which presents the Newtonian view of the universe, and, thus, provides the foundation for the study of the philosophical outlook of the modern world. In this tutorial, integrated presentations of physical problems and their mathematical solutions gives the student a natural view of the discovery and application of mathematics. This not only integrates the mathematics and science tutorials, but actually models the only way to understand fully the mathematical methods discovered by Newton and still used in physics today.

Students engage in “recreational physics.” Questions that arise in seminar discussions are only answered by carefully observing the surprising motion of a racquetball, the dynamics of the circular motion of a bicycle wheel, and the actual flight pattern of a



boomerang. If a student can really see Newton's three laws in such objects, that student has learned some physics.

Time is also spent in the study of special relativity, reading Einstein's own presentation for the non-specialist. Finally, quantum theory is presented in a non-mathematical way, and its precarious balancing act between seemingly contradictory theoretical elements is faced. To protect the knowledge gained by physics, contemporary physicists were forced to postulate that knowledge is, in essence, limited to a certain degree and that the physical universe cannot be mechanistically determined as was claimed by classical physics. This principle raises deep questions about the nature of truth, about the nature of material objects, and, thus, about the nature of man.

Modern notions of living organisms spring primarily from nineteenth-century physics and the scientists who applied the outlook of Newtonian physics to biology. Hence, the biology tutorial at Magdalen College seeks to introduce students into a lifelong contact with nature. The tutorial seeks to reawaken the student to see and wonder about the vast diversity of life that surrounds him. The diversity of living things is presented by Aristotle, and actively investigated and journaled by the students. The question of the origin of life is debated by Augustine and Darwin. The tutorial then goes deeper into the lives of living things by studying animal behavior with renowned naturalists such as Lorenz and Fabre.

At this point, the tutorial raises the general philosophical question, "What is life?" Loren Eiseley frames the question eloquently in *The Judgment of the Birds* and *The Bird and the Machine*. Aristotle and Thomas Huxley supply two possible answers. This discussion naturally leads to the nature of man's life and the question, "Is man different from the animals?" *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins gives the answer of scientific materialism, but this is challenged by neuroscientists Oliver Sacks and Wilder Penfield's *Mystery of the Mind*, and questions about the eternal destiny of the human person.



## Overheard on Our Podcast

These quotes were overheard on the "From the Summit" podcast this month. Visit [magdalen.edu/podcasts/](http://magdalen.edu/podcasts/) to hear the full episodes!

### Episode 31: How the Church Has Changed the World: an Interview with Anthony Esolen

- "The first public hospital and infirmary ever founded was by St. Basil the Great. For centuries the Greeks had physicians who knew what they were doing, but it never occurred to anybody to build an infirmary for the poor...the Church invented it."
- "I don't know what the Middle English word for loneliness is because I don't think there is one."
- "You're a relativist until your auto mechanic overcharges you \$25 on the transmission job. Then moral truth shines out bright and clear in the heavens!"

### Episode 32: Twelve Things That Stood Out About Holy Week

- "Magdalen is one of the few Catholic colleges that keeps its students on campus during Holy Week, specifically to celebrate the Triduum together. ... It's an amazing context in which to worship."
- "All of a sudden from the choir loft above us the entire choir started stomping their feet, representing the earthquake that struck at the moment of Christ's death. It makes you realize that this is something with real implications for the planet."
- "How many college students do you know stand silently guarding the altar of repose on their Easter break? Our students do, and it's such a beautiful thing."

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