

VOL. 2, ISSUE 1 | OCTOBER 2022

# CLASSICAL TIMES

A monthly newsletter for the parents and benefactors of St. Thomas More Academy



## IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2

Called to Excellence: A Reflection from  
STMA President Kirk Doran

Page 3

Virtue at the Heart of Learning

Page 4

Student Spotlight: Junior High on  
Fortitude

Page 5

Faculty Spotlight: Jason Baxter

Page 6

Coach's Corner: Griffin Soccer

Page 7

Fall Athletics Photos

Photo: The first STMA all-school Exposition of the  
Blessed Sacrament and Adoration at St. Hedwig's  
Church, Friday, September 30, 2022.

## Dear Parents and Benefactors...

It is both easy and difficult to believe that October is already here! Each week brings new and unexpected joys and challenges, but our school of 140 students (!) has settled into a peaceful, steady rhythm of prayer, study, and play. As Head, I consider my job to be like that of an orchestra conductor, helping each teacher and staff member play his or her part in the symphony. The music that we create is the act of educating your children in truth, wisdom, and authentic freedom.

The year is young and the work is immense, but I can say with confidence that STMA has a magnanimous, hard-working, talented group of faculty and staff members, and we are all joyfully committed to the promises made to you and your children when you enrolled at STMA. I continue to be astounded by how clearly God shows that St. Thomas More Academy is primarily His work, and sustains each of us in it by His grace.

Saint Thomas More, pray for us!

Margaret Freddoso  
Interim Head of School

# Called to Excellence



What is God calling us to do today? Every student, parent, faculty, and staff member of Saint Thomas More Academy has been given unique gifts by God, our Heavenly Father. He wants us to use these gifts not for ourselves, but to help each other; specifically, to help each other to know, love, and serve Him in this life, so that all of us can be happy together with Him in the next. But how can our gifts help each other to do this? After all, when we look at our own talents and tendencies, mostly we see limitations: the many things each of us cannot do. Won't our limitations mean we will just drag each other down?

But here is where God's goodness really shines. God creates creatures like us that are determinate, diverse, and unequivocal. But precisely through the way in which we make up for each other's limitations, we help each other realize our proper perfection, and in this way the whole universe participates more perfectly in God's goodness. Indeed, God himself orders and arranges limited creatures like us so that through our interactions, each of us contributes to the common good and shares more perfectly in the divine goodness. This is the divine economy! Through the creation and ordering of limited things and their interactions, God realizes His goal – He brings about the most perfect finite image of His goodness. And when we do serve each other in this way, we end up showing one of God's greatest miracles: the whole is much bigger than the sum of the parts.

Some of us have talents in math, some in literature, some in music or athletics. Some of us give energy to raise people's spirits; some of us listen with compassion. These talents demand two things of us: nurturing and sharing. If we fail to nurture these talents, or if we fail to use them to serve others, then they will wither and die. But if we do nurture these talents each day, and if we nurture them for the purpose of sharing them with our friends, then an amazing miracle will happen. We will end up building, together, something that never could be built by one of us alone: a community of love.

Here at STMA, when we pursue excellence in a community of love, we do so with the help of our friends and for the sake of these friendships, inspiring each other, discovering hidden potentials, rejoicing in each other's victories, and encouraging each other through hardship and difficulty. We then offer the fruits of these friendships to God, for the sake of his glory. This is the only way of life that will give us meaning, excitement, and integrity. This is what our patron, Saint Thomas More, did among his family, his friends, his coworkers, and his community throughout his life. Friends, inspired by his witness, let us ask God to do the same with us: Saint Thomas More, pray for us!

Kirk Doran  
President, St. Thomas More Academy

## COMMUNITY INTENTIONS

- In thanksgiving for the births of Charlie Freddoso, Grace Korson, Luisa McDaniel, Peter Girgis, Leo Waldstein, Willa Baxter, and Jude Stroik.
- For the repose of the soul of Matthew Tormey, uncle of STMA students James (5) and Brendan (2).
- For all priests and religious, especially those who preside at STMA daily school Masses: Fr. Bill, Fr. Jason, Fr. Chris, Fr. Aquinas, and Fr. Marty.

# Virtue at the Heart of Learning

The practice of virtue is at the very heart of the STMA community. The study and practice of virtue is integrated seamlessly into every academic, athletic, and social aspect of the school.

## STMA 2022-23 VIRTUES OF THE MONTH

August / Sept: Fortitude

Oct: Reverence / Piety

Nov: Kindness

Dec: Cheerfulness

Jan: Obedience

Feb: Self-Control / Temperance

March: Order

April: Humility

May: Magnanimity



"Why virtue? It is very simple: being a disciple of Christ is a way of life that must be taught, nurtured and practiced daily; we must strive to love Jesus Christ and thereby imitate him. The culture teaches us that we must be successful at what we do... sports, education, our jobs and even our ministries, often times without attaching importance to our interior disposition. Being a disciple of Christ means following him, imitating him; a disciple of Christ lives virtuously not only in what he does, but who he is..."

God gifts us with all that we need to follow him, the rest, through the grace of God, is up to us. The theological virtues are gifts that must be nurtured. The cardinal virtues must be learned and practiced daily, at home and in school..."

-The Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist

# Student Spotlight: Junior High on the Virtue of Fortitude

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Julia Nagy  
8th Grade

"STMA is a great environment because everyone is trying to do better - striving for the ideal. Fortitude gives us the ability to keep striving and to make sure that no one is left behind."

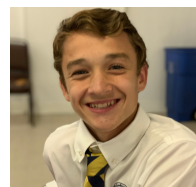


Evie Baxter  
8th Grade

"When I'm doing a math test and come to a tricky part I think 'fortitude.' Teachers remind us to practice the virtue and it helps us to focus. The study of one virtue for the month is a good way to practice and become better at it."

"This gift of fortitude prevents man's heart from fainting through fear of lacking necessities, and makes him trust without wavering that God will provide him with whatever he needs. For this reason the Holy Spirit, the giver of fortitude, teaches us to pray to God to give us this day our daily bread."

St. Thomas Aquinas



Noah Kloska  
8th Grade

"If you have an answer to give but you're not sure of yourself, fortitude helps you keep your hand raised. Fortitude also helps me have the strength to grow more virtuous like people I admire. I would like to be more like Mr. Ganahl. He's so patient!"



Joey Downey  
7th Grade

"It's easier to have fortitude when those around you do. As a community we make each other stronger."



Olivia MacDonald  
7th Grade

"Fortitude has helped reach out and make new friends. We have learned how to be stronger and have a stronger will."

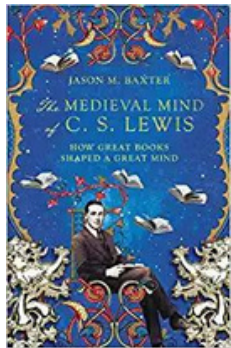


# Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Jason Baxter



Dr. Jason Baxter joined the STMA faculty this August in the role of upper school curriculum consultant and instructor of humanities, Greek mythology, and Latin. Prior to returning to South Bend Dr. Baxter was a professor of humanities at Wyoming Catholic College. In addition to his roles at STMA, Dr. Baxter teaches in the Program of Liberal Studies at Notre Dame. He is also a speaker and author who writes on the relevance of medieval thought, literature, and art, especially as it relates to medieval mysticism, Dante, and C.S. Lewis.

Dr. Baxter and his wife, Jodi, have six children, four of whom attend STMA.



## What is your favorite book?

It varies by the month and by the year. A single book might be difficult, but I can say books: Dante's *Comedy*, Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamozov*, Plato's *Republic*, and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

## When did you first read Dante's *Comedy*?

When I was 18 years old at Augustine College and it was so boring I didn't even finish. The second time I read it I thought it had some moments but I still wasn't impressed. It wasn't until the third time I read it with a really good teacher that I discovered that it was a work of brilliance. In some sense my whole teaching career is informed by that very experience of initially being turned off by beautiful things because of their difficulty. I try to enable my students and my readers to perceive the beauty despite the difficulty.

## How did your experience first reading Dante influence the way you teach today?

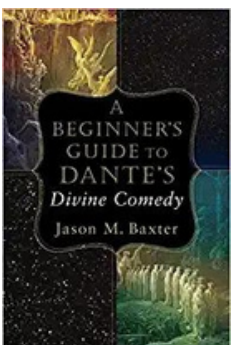
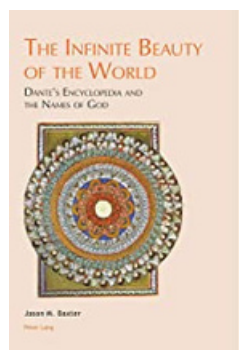
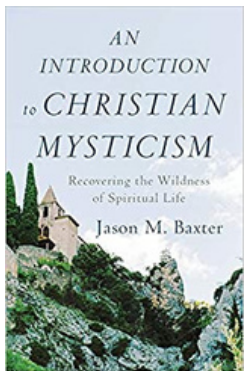
My approach to teaching is holistic. I am a whole-brain learner. I don't consider that I know something until I can break it down into component parts and rebuild it back and let people know what that feels like. I find myself doing that with my students. I feel the duty to communicate to them what a thing should feel like when it's all together, as well as the individual pieces that make it up. When you are teaching someone how to build something in a workshop you are not going to do it by describing it to them. They actually have to turn the wrench so they can feel the pressure in their own fingers. Education is the analogy of actually getting knowledge into their hands.

## Can you explain the philosophy of the curriculum development for the upper school?

It's a unique approach to building out a high school curriculum. It's like building, to borrow from film, a point of view shot. It's not just what books and ideas can we give to students but what will it actually feel like for the students to encounter them. What are the wholes and parts and what will they actually need in order to understand them? There are enough good schools out there that I suppose we could just copy and paste from a reading list. But the secret to the success of this program will be not just what we want students to know but what does it feel like for them to come to know it.

## Are you enjoying teaching younger students again?

It's completely exhausting but I do love it. I had a really great Latin class today with the 6th graders and I just wanted to hug those little guys afterwards. They are getting good at doing it and they are enjoying the process of doing it. I feel their goodwill and their eagerness and their delight. The children, somehow, someway, have absorbed from their parents the feeling that this is a tremendous privilege and they love it for that reason. Parents can communicate to their kids, in incalculably subtle ways, that what they are getting to do is a gift and the kids absorb that. They seem to use their minutes precious when they feel that it is a gift. I think that is the reason why I am enjoying teaching younger students so much.



# Coach's Corner: Griffins Soccer

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What a joy it has been to begin our sports programs at St. Thomas More Academy! Sports are an important and necessary space to begin cultivating virtues that our students will need for the rest of their lives. I think it apt that our first virtue of the month at STMA was Fortitude – for that is exactly the virtue I believe our student-athletes most embodied during this soccer season.

It is not particularly easy to be a part of a brand-new sports program. Our soccer teams faced plenty of adversity throughout this season. Many of our players had never played soccer before in their lives yet had the courage to take on a new challenge and adventure alongside their friends and classmates. All our teams faced opponents who were much older and much more experienced. All our teams not only faced defeats on the field but also the challenge of time management and how to balance soccer responsibilities with new school responsibilities and other extracurricular responsibilities (as did our parents and coaches).

And yet, our students persevered. They kept showing up, and they kept learning. They cultivated a growth mindset (“I am going to get better at this!”), and then they did. All our soccer teams showed incredible improvement throughout the season, not only resulting in hard-earned victories on the field of play, but also in increased teamwork, trust and camaraderie with each other. At the end of the day, that’s what our sports program is all about.

I am so grateful to our coaches — who poured their time, talents, patience, and generosity into the formation of our young people. I am grateful to the parents, who gave of themselves to donate time, energy and resources to this great cause. Most of all, I am grateful to our students and players, who consistently gave their gifts to the glory of God and strove to compete well in all things. It is a truly an honor to coach them and help them continue to become the best version of themselves.

This is the foundation. This is where we start from. We have so much more to look forward to with our sports programs in the near and far future, but for now, I am simply grateful for this first season and for this great community. May God continue to bless us all.

Go Griffins!

Joe Everett

Athletic Director and Assistant Head of School



Sophomore Tommy Harold gets his head in the game.



# Griffins Soccer



Jr/High Team. Coach Ali Kloska not pictured.



Girls 4/5/6 Team with coach John Schwenkler after their first win.



Boys 4/5/6 Team with coach Peter McAuliff before a game.



Girls Jr/High Team after a victory over Trinity at Greenlawn.



Boys 4/5/6 Team after their first (and STMA's first ever) victory with coaches Joe Everett and Philip Munoz.