Christmas Fellowship

The Christmas Open House was scheduled to be a weekend event. It turned out to be more, and it turned out to be less. More, because the preparations took three weeks; less, because we pretty much had the school to ourselves the first day of the Open House. We were quite busy those three weeks. Practicing Christmas carols, baking cookies, decorating the Christmas tree, making a 12' x 5' European-style Nativity scene, and setting up a sound and light show of the Christmas story were just some of the preparations.

We could have given ourselves another day for the work. Our expected guests were busier than usual that last Saturday before Christmas, and most decided to come on Sunday. So on Saturday we put on a preview for those who had come, fine-tuning our performance and making sure that the foods and drinks would meet everyone's expectations. (Our consumption of about half of the Christmas baking gave us a solid assurance on this point.)

The next day, the family baking and shopping done, parents, relatives and friends turned out in strength. After Mass, the students had waited excitedly for the first cars to come up the driveway. They did not wait long. One arrived, then two, and soon the Academy was bustling with people.

Every half hour, the sound and light show was presented. Some visitors liked it so much, they saw it three or four times! Others nearly did not see it all; they were having such a good time conversing over the Christmas delectables.

Meanwhile, students were showing guests around the school, the property and, of course, the Classical Arts workshop, where our artists explained how they make their beautiful statues and other religious articles.

Later in the day, the choir sang next to the Nativity scene. Guests joined in as we sang Silent Night, Oh Come All Ye Faithful, the Little Drummer Boy, and other carols. Then, with the music still echoing in our minds, everybody
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gathered in the dining hall for one last snack and a little surprise. There the students presented gifts to the teachers and wished them the best for the coming year.

Our gratitude also extended to our visitors, who had helped to make the Open House so blessed and enjoyable. As a remembrance, each family or individual received a little statue of the Christ Child in the manger. Though the Holy Family had not found room in the inn, it had certainly found it in the hearts of all our guests.

Louis Toenjes
10th Grade

A Visit to Winterthur

The Academy's December fieldtrip took us to Winterthur, The home of a vast collection of American crafts, Winterthur is an old estate of the famous Du Pont family in Wilmington, Delaware. Because of the season, it was all decorated to give visitors an idea of how Americans have celebrated Christmas since the seventeenth century. We got the idea.

The day began early. After saying good-bye to the students who were leaving to represent us at the anti-blasphemy protest in Los Angeles, we set out on a four-hour drive. Perhaps because of the topography, no highway runs from our area to Wilmington. We traveled busy secondary roads a good part of the way, occasionally wondering if the roads were built when Pennsylvania was still a colony. The frequent stoplights did not help. By the time we made it to Wilmington, we felt like we had visited many of Pennsylvania's oldest villages and towns. Thank goodness, we had brought music sheets and were able to use some of the time practicing carols for our Christmas open house. There had been hopes of a quick visit to the Brandywine Battlefield on the way to Winterthur, but these died along the way. Our tour was scheduled for 2 p.m. and we still had to fit in lunch.

We did so very quickly and started our tour. The smells and sights of a secular Christmas were all around us. Pine, holly, red ribbon, and spice were everywhere. Split into groups, we entered rooms set up for Christmas as celebrated, say, by a Pennsylvania Dutch family, an early 19th-century aristocratic New York City family, a Yankee merchant family at the time of the China trade, a Victorian family, a Southern plantation family. Though some of the rooms were elegant and all were dignified and Christmasy, they would have benefited from a Nativity scene. (We saw only one creche that day.) A few of the rooms overlooked a courtyard where a stall offered meats, including opossum.

After touring the period rooms, we visited exhibits on American craftsmanship. With varying degrees of interest, we saw old furniture, dishes and tools galore. One display was undeniably superb, and by itself would have justified the trip:

Winterthur's historical Christmas ambience delights students.

the Campbell Collection of Soup Tureens. Gold, silver, porcelain tureens of royal and aristocratic households lined artistically-lit shelves that looked like crystal. The materials and the designs—some tureens had the form of sailing ships or castles—gave the tureens a fairy-tale quality.

It was almost closing time when we left. We drove by Longwood Gardens, another old Du Pont estate, famous for its enormous greenhouses and its Christmas trees. We saw the trees from a distance and promised to return, and then began our search for a dinner place. There were about 25 of us and it was Friday, and we wanted some local or ethnic cuisine, not McDonald's or Burger King. However, most restaurants were full. Some were too expensive. Finally, a pleased customer at a Pennsylvania Dutch diner that was about to close (at 8:45) recommended an Irish restaurant down the road. There we joyfully topped off our day away from school, with the like of shrimp and crab cakes, all for a very reasonable price.

Luis Berrizbeitia
10th Grade

Visitors enjoy Christmas delectables and conversation.
Demonstration in Washington

On October 27, a group of us went to Washington D.C. to protest the U.S. visit of Communist China’s dictator Jiang Zemin. In Lafayette Park, right across from the White House, we joined other anti-communists upset with Communist China’s persecution of Catholics. During the rally, Congressmen and others spoke against the visit. We were honored to hold a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe next to them. At the end, a priest led us in a Rosary rally. After dinner at the TFP Washington Bureau, we returned to the Academy.

Father Svea’s Visit

It was a great pleasure for us to have Father Timothy Svea, a priest of the Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest, at the Academy. The apex of his visit was a traditional Latin Mass in our chapel. However, before Mass he gave us a special treat by explaining the symbolism and history of the vestments and the significance of each prayer said when donning them. After Mass, we had a dinner followed by a meeting in which Father spoke about the attributes of the Church and his priestly vocation. Father did an excellent job in transmitting his joy in being a Catholic, and his words inspired us more enthusiasm and love for the Church. Unfortunately, it was getting late and Father had to go. Mr. Richard Lyon, our principal, took him to a local hotel. A few of us were able to accompany him. Arriving there, we walked with Father to his room and bade him farewell, expressing our hope to see him again soon.

Father Kevin’s Visit

Father Kevin Beaton, a Maronite priest, had the generosity to come and visit us at the Academy for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. On arriving, he was greeted by everyone and held a brief conversation before getting ready to hear confessions. While Father heard confessions, the altar in our chapel was prepared for the Mass which Father would be saying in the Maronite rite, which uses some Aramaic, Our Lord’s language. Confessions finished, Father Kevin vested for Mass. Mass was said with all the members of the Academy present. After Mass, all went to the dining hall for a delicious dinner that satisfied everyone. Soon though, dinner finished and it was time for Father to depart. We heartily thanked him for coming and he thanked us for the company and dinner. Getting into the car took another twenty minutes, but Father finally declared that he must leave, for it was already very late, and drove off with a cheerful “Hasta la vista.”
Pilgrim Statue at Erie

In November, we visited the International Pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima in Erie, Pennsylvania. When we arrived at the Church of St. Anne, all of us went and knelt down before the beautiful image. Praying there, each to himself, we felt a special grace in her presence. We then greeted Mr. John Haffert, co-founder of the Blue Army, and presented him with an ornate crucifix made at the Academy.

In the course of our conversation, he asked us to help lead the procession of Our Lady around the church, which of course we did enthusiastically. Four older students of the Academy carried the float upon which Our Lady was placed at the head of the procession. After the procession, during the enrollment of over 800 people into the Brown Scapular, we sang some invigorating songs, one of them being We Want God, by St. Louis de Montfort. The ceremonies over, all went and prayed before the statue. After our final farewells to the Queen of Queens, we proceeded to the vans where we had a quick bite before making the five-hour trip back to the Academy.

March for Life

The students and faculty of St. Louis de Montfort Academy had the joy of participating in the January 22 annual March for Life in Washington D.C. We left for Washington, a three-hour drive, around 9 a.m. Arriving, we drove through the milling crowd finally reaching the Ellipse, a spacious expanse of lawn behind the White House. This is where the anti-abortion speeches are given and it is here that we disembarked and unfurled the Academy banner. Given anti-abortion flyers, we were asked to go throughout the crowd handing them out. While we did so, people questioned us about our school’s whereabouts, activities and standards, obliging us to have our replies on the tip of our tongues. A little later, the march began, and the Academy fell into step behind the TFP band. We continued giving flyers to people as we walked all the way to the Supreme Court. When the marching reached the end, they dispersed. We headed to the front of the Capitol building and there had lunch before driving home for a good night’s sleep and the next day’s school.

Protest in Los Angeles

In December, we received news of a blasphemous art display at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. We could not let this pass without saying a word in protest. The display included a statue of Our Lady of Grace lanced through the womb with a drainage pipe and mounted on a sewer grate, it was a parody of the Virgin Birth. Realizing that the Academy should express its indignation, the few of us who had the money traveled to California to participate in a rally organized by the American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property (TFP). The rally was held right in front of the museum on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception. On the speaking platform, a statue of Our Lady of Fatima was mounted on a pedestal. Next to this flew the American flag, flanked by the red and gold standards of the TFP. An estimated 1500 people came to the protest, including Congressman Robert K. Dornan and Mr. Joseph Scheidler. Very surprisingly just a few miles away from the rally it was pouring but only a few drops fell where we were. The rally continued with prayers and speeches, until dusk. We hoped that in some way this would be an act of reparation to God and Our Lady for the blasphemy done against them.
No Pain, No Gain!

A call to heroism was the theme for the Academy's winter program from January 2 - 5. The boys who came learned that heroes — those who offer their lives up for ideals — always lead and change the world.

A game of charades commences the treasure hunt.

A member of the TFP, Mr. John Tucker, gave a meeting on this great goal of ours, heroism, and the boys themselves thought of illustrative examples from the past like St. Joan of Arc and St. Ferdinand of Castile and Leon. Then Mr. Tucker told an exciting episode in the life of Carlos Hathcock, a Marine sniper. Hathcock, who completed every mission assigned to him, was the best sniper during the Vietnam War. One time he spent three days crawling on his stomach through a field to reach an enemy camp. While waiting for a clear shot at his target, a Communist general, he patiently prepared his sights. Just before the general stepped into his car to leave the camp, Hathcock pulled the trigger and the unfortunate general died instantly. The sniper then had to escape from guards who immediately combed the field. He made it out of the predicament by the skin of his teeth. Carlos Hathcock's heroism is certainly a model for us.

Inspired by Mr. Tucker's meeting, we re-enacted the Battle of Gettysburg with snowballs. Not one participant escaped being hit by at least one snowball. A game of capture the flag, also played with snowballs, followed. Two teams had to defend their flags by throwing snowballs at their opponents.

In the evenings we gathered around the fireplace to hear an exciting story of a race between Russia and the United States to develop a highly sophisticated weapon during the Cold War. The Americans, of course, won the race. In the mornings we discussed the decline in music since the Middle Ages. We learned how most modern music can easily lead us to sensuality.

Our traditional treasure hunt on the last day of the program began with a game of charades. The team that finished first immediately started searching for the treasure. Once found, the treasure chest was promptly relieved of its load of candy and other prizes.

The climax of the program, the Medieval Banquet, consisted of turkey, lamb with mint jelly, and many delicious side dishes. The Academy dining room took on a medieval atmosphere with the banners and shields along its walls. A lively chatter filled the room during the course of the meal. Afterwards, all of the participants received a memento, a small figure of the Infant Jesus asleep in His manger.

We look forward to having many more boys join us for our next program.

Gerard Toenjes
9th Grade

The winning team displays the booty.
Claire Lee Chennault: The Greatest Tiger of Them All

Claire Chennault was born in 1890 and raised on a farm in Louisiana. In his youth, he learned many things which would help his long military career. He was an excellent shot, he was used to a hard life, and he knew how to get by alone. He was very lively and aggressive by nature, though rather small and thin.

When only a boy, he heard about the first successful flight by the Wright brothers in their fragile little plane. From then on, he had an unquenchable thirst for flying. As he would experience so often in his later life, he was laughed at by those around him, who declared that such machines could never be trusted. However, as soon as he was old enough, Chennault went to college, fulfilled all the other requirements for flying at the time, and became a pilot.

His mastery of airplanes stunned all who saw it and actually caused him more problems than it solved, since the jealousy of his officers often grounded him. At the time (the twenties and early thirties) there were several theories being spread about air war in the future. The prevailing one was that big, high-flying bombers would be the only planes to fly in wars and that fighters would soon be obsolete. Chennault saw that this theory was unrealistic and, after much study, wrote some books on the importance of the fighter. Once again, he was scorned because he did not agree with everyone else. Despite the consequent friction with his commanders, he was considered a leader with a remarkable capacity to arouse the spirits of his men.

Though his ideas were not accepted in his own country, they were in others. The Germans studied his books and used his tactics. China, invaded by Japan, asked Chennault to come and put their air force in order. Chennault enthusiastically accepted,

anxious to see some action and prove his points.

He saw plenty of action and work as soon as he arrived. The Chinese “air force” consisted of a few outdated airplanes some countries had tricked China into buying. Even worse, Chinese pilots often did not have sufficient training and killed themselves trying to perform simple maneuvers. Chennault taught the Chinese his tactics and personally led them against the Japanese. With them, he fought off Japanese bombing raids and destroyed several bombers while losing practically nothing. After the first raid, the Japanese were so furious that they sent a message to the American Embassy saying, “All American airmen must leave China NOW!” When the Ambassador conveyed this message to Chennault, he replied that he would leave if the Japanese could prove he was not Chinese! Chennault realized that the sheer weight of Japanese numbers would never allow him to gain total victory unless he obtained support from the U.S. With this in mind, he went to the U.S. to ask for volunteers and planes from air schools and factories. “All you can expect is tough fighting or death,” he told the volunteers.

His requests were met with enthusiasm. He returned to China with 100 American pilots and 200 ground crew. He also received 55 P-40 Warhawks on loan from the Government. These planes were almost obsolete, but Chennault found them to be good enough.

In China, he taught his men his tactics eight hours a day. His training sessions were so tough that of the original 100 pilots (who considered themselves experts), only 69 remained. These formed a deadly efficient elite: the Flying Tigers.

The day after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese air force
attacked the Americans in China. Confident of easy victory, they sent 10 bombers against the Flying Tigers. Chennault sent out 24 Tigers, which dived on the bombers from the direction of the sun. In the first dive, they shot down 6. The rest turned for home but only one made it.

Chennault spent the war fighting against heavy odds. Some estimate that Chennault’s band (now part of the U.S. Air Force) never had more than about 200 planes, whereas the Japanese in China never had less than about 500. He usually had more pilots than planes and, when an air-siren went off, there was a rush and a scuffle to see who would get to fly and fight.

Nevertheless, Chennault managed to almost perform miracles in the sky. His Tigers fought 50+ engagements and never lost one. He himself scored 63 confirmed kills. In one battle, his men shot down 250 Japanese planes while losing 16. When the Japanese were too afraid to face him, he hunted them down, attacking their airfields, their harbors or their armies. By the end of the war, his men, all aces now, had shot down 2,600 Japanese planes and claimed another 1,500. They had sunk 2,000,000 tons of Japanese merchant shipping besides 44 military vessels. They had destroyed 600 bridges and killed 67,000 Japanese troops.

The Americans became flying legends. They painted shark mouths on the noses of their planes to frighten the Japanese, who had a superstitious fear of sharks. To the Japanese they became a signal for panic. Whenever a Tiger flew over, troops would scream and scamper for cover. After the first engagements, most Japanese planes simply tried to get back to their bases as fast as possible whenever they were confronted by the Tigers.

Chennault’s first mission was fulfilled: China was saved from the Japanese. Nevertheless, he was calumniated by his enemies in the U.S. to such a degree that, when Japan surrendered, he was not allowed to participate in any ceremonies or victory celebrations. But he did not despair or revolt. He braced himself to fight an enemy even worse than the Japanese: the Communists.

(To be continued in the next issue.)

Paul Slobodnik
12th Grade

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**RADIO’S OVERLOOKED GENIUS**

Encyclopedias and history books talk extensively about Marconi, but was he a greater wireless pioneer than Father Joseph Murgas? Surprisingly, he was not. He simply took Fr. Murgas’s ideas, combined them with his own, and applied them, while the Slovakian priest was forgotten.

Fr. Murgas came to the United States in 1896 as an exile for having disagreed with the Hungarian government. Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania was soon the site of his experimentation with wireless communication. His method was to send out signals via rotary spark, with the signals fed into a single pole antenna. This was a practical way of sending signals long distances over land. As Lt. Cdr. Samuel, USN, wrote, “Murgas had the best system of wireless transmission — one that threatened to revolutionize world communications.”

All seemed well for our pioneering priest, but God had other plans for him. The Government realized that Fr. Murgas’s method, which sent 50 words per minute in comparison to Marconi’s 15, was superior, but they had already invested in the latter’s method and to switch from it would have been very costly. In 1907, Fr. Murgas was even able to send speech over the air, but soon after, a storm destroyed his station. Marconi and Fessenden, another radio inventor, stepped in. They took the priest’s ideas, built stations, and received the credit.

The good priest accepted this and continued as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Wilkes-Barre until his death in 1929. Who has heard of him since? Very few people. He is truly Radio’s Overlooked Genius.

(From *Popular Communications*, April 1997)
St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort

Priest, preacher, prophet, apostle, confessor, founder, writer, missionary: These are some of the titles given to this eighteenth-century French saint. However, he is best remembered as the apostle of True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Inspired by his example and his writings, the directors and faculty of this Academy volunteer their time and efforts to giving youth a Mary-centered formation. We pray that Our Blessed Mother bless our humble and imperfect endeavors, so that these young men may be part of the spiritual conversion of our country and the world, which we see as the only true solution to the contemporary crisis.

St. Louis de Montfort Academy admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

Our Special Thanks...

- to Mr. and Mrs. Nestor Escaro for their investment towards the production of religious articles.
- to Mr. and Mrs. Schriver for donating an electric piano.
- to Mr. and Mrs. William Korbich for their donation of clothing.
- to Mrs. Vera McLaughlin from Catholic Charities in Shamokin for providing us with some sweaters.
- to Mr. Richard Jaurigui for donating framed pictures.
- to all our monthly donors, especially those who have kept up their support even though they rarely hear from us.

Most importantly, we would like to thank all of you whose prayers and sacrifices provide us with the spiritual strength to keep on going.