
MARCH 2022 EDITION

The Scholars Newsletter

St. Thomas Aquinas Scholars Honors Program



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Mardi Gras Mask Making

Social Chairs

The Social Chairs had a great turnout of smiles for the Mardi Gras Mask Making event. There were lots of great artistic designs for this exciting holiday. We also loved seeing a different kind of mask on your faces!



Pizza with a Prof

Academic Chairs

Theology professor Dr. Paul Gavriyuk spoke to 70 scholars about the crisis in Ukraine. The program was fortunate to hear his nuanced perspective as he was born in Kyiv, Ukraine and received his undergraduate education in Moscow, Russia. Dr. Gavriyuk described his parents' recent escape from the country, emphasized the concept of hope during wartime, and detailed ways he is helping to provide aid.



Second Harvest Heartland

Service Chairs

On March 5th, sixteen scholars traveled to Second Harvest Heartland in Brooklyn Park to volunteer. These scholars spent two hours repackaging hundreds of onions. These onions were then distributed to food shelves across the Midwest. Thank you to these scholars for giving up their time to help fight hunger!

The Grass is Always Greener: A Reflection on Life Abroad

by Maggie Erpelding

When in the United States, I had always generalized life in Europe as a whole: the streets were old and gorgeous, life was more romantic, everyone was more sustainable, and Europe had fewer problems than the United States. However, after studying abroad for a few months I have realized how much I lumped all European countries and had a grass is always greener mindset. I am studying in Spain and my expectations were shaped by the media and word of mouth. There isn't a debate about vaccinations, the country has an incredibly high vaccination rate, but life isn't accessible for those with disabilities. While there is universal healthcare and it is affordable for everyone, the ancient buildings and cobblestone streets create much larger disadvantages for people with physical disabilities than in the USA. I had the expectation that Europe was the sustainable hub outside of Costa Rica... but that is only true in some countries like Denmark or the Netherlands. In Spain, composting is unheard of, and recycling bins are only present if you're lucky. Europe as a whole is not a sustainable idol as I had once made it out to be. Maybe I wasn't knowledgeable enough before leaving the USA, but living somewhere changes the perspective on challenges. I knew different challenges existed in Spain than in the USA, but I couldn't feel those different challenges until I lived here for a few months. There is so much less violence, and the streets feel much safer in Spain: it is normal to see women running alone in the dark and to see families out at 11pm in the streets. But gender roles play a much larger role; women are more likely to not work or to perform all household chores than in the States. For every part of Spain that I love, there is a challenge that I knew about but couldn't understand until living it. It is uncommon to find a job that is less than a livable wage so fewer people go to college, but unemployment rates are at 16%. Furthermore, part time jobs are not common so many students live at home because you cannot make money while in school. As cheesy as it is, the grass is just different in Spain, not greener...

Sunset on the Lake

by David Gallagher



A picture of the sunset at my cabin from early March. I went out fishing on a Sunday evening for the last time this year, and I was fortunate enough to catch this before it faded. The scene only lasted like this for a few minutes, but it was an awesome sight.

Inevitability

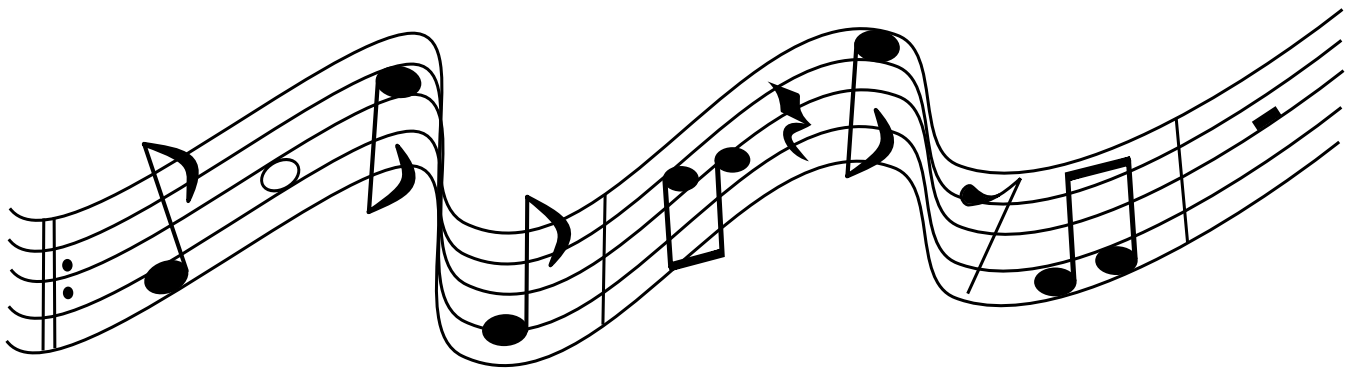
by Gabriel Bauer

In one of the best films of the last century, *The Matrix*, the principal villain Agent Smith pursues the hero Neo through time and space but never quite captures him. There is a moment, however, when it appears that Neo has finally been beaten, as Agent Smith pins him to the tracks of a subway train while the next car approaches rapidly. Smith looks down at Neo and snarls, "Do you hear that? That's the sound of *inevitability*."

Most children in America for the last half-century have grown up watching television frequently. But in my family, we tend to be skeptical of technology, and so the only show I watched as a young boy was *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. We had one small television, which stopped playing live channels after 2008 when all TVs required a special converter box to receive over-the-air broadcasts, and from that moment our principal media entertainment came from listening to music on the radio. So, it was always a memorable occasion when my parents allowed us to watch a film at home or in a theatre, and if we discovered a movie that our parents were willing to let us see, my siblings and I would play it over and over again. One such film was Disney's *Fantasia*, which my mom liked because it exposed us to classical music while keeping us entertained. At one time, we owned at least 5 copies on VHS, and I grew to know the music and the animated stories quite well during my childhood. One of the episodes in this symphonic masterpiece portrays Mickey Mouse getting into mischief when his master, a sorcerer, leaves him alone for a while. Paul Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* serves as the score for this story, which, like all the others in *Fantasia*, has no need for dialogue between the characters and uses only orchestral music for sound. When Mickey is all alone, he begins to try out some of the magic he has witnessed the sorcerer perform, in order to lessen his workload (which consists of lugging jugs of water for his master). He magically causes the brooms around the wizard's castle to grow hands and carry the buckets for him, a plan which works well until he gets too ambitious and creates a whole army of brooms. Before he knows it, the situation is out of control and bucket-carrying brooms are everywhere, flooding the castle with water and trampling Mickey underfoot. When the wizard returns, he cleans up the mess angrily and glares at Mickey for his misbehavior before sweeping him away with a broom once and for all.

There is a moment in this story when Mickey realizes that the brooms have now left his control, and that he will not be able to fix his situation before the sorcerer returns. I see this instant as representative of a much more serious phenomenon experienced by many adults: the midlife crisis. Mickey despairs of fixing his problem when he sees how vast the army of brooms has become, just as a middle-aged adult sometimes senses his life slipping by and worries that his best years are behind him. I was fortunate to perform *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* in high school with Minnesota Youth Symphonies, a surreal experience for someone like me who had listened to the piece so often as a child. It had been years since the last time I had seen *Fantasia*, but my memories came flooding back from the very first note. The feeling of inevitability struck me forcefully in the middle of the piece when the orchestra fell silent for an instant, only to return gradually to an even higher level of chaos than before.

The question is not whether each of us will encounter inevitability—inevitability is inevitable. We must instead focus on how to respond when we do feel trapped by time. We can reluctantly accept the inevitable, like an athlete who knows the clock will run out before his team can stage a comeback. We can fight the inevitable, like a patient who has been given weeks or days to live and pursues extreme treatment to prolong her life. Or we can embrace the inevitable and learn to be happy with the way things are.



Memories of You: A Pantoum

by Jackie Moen

My memories of you flood back,
Like a wave crashing against the shore.
I can't picture your voice anymore,
As time has pushed you farther away.

Like a wave crashing against the shore,
These memories of you are drowning some days.
As time has pushed you farther away,
I know you're gone for good, but the hope to see you again stays.

These memories of you are drowning some days,
But I know you're free now.
I know you're gone for good, but the hope to see you again stays.
I see another sunrise, and think of you.



Abroad in Sevilla

by Anna Grimsgard



Hola, Scholars! I am studying abroad this semester in Sevilla, Spain. The Giralda Bell Tower shown in this photo is an iconic reminder of Sevilla's rich history and culture. Originally built by Muslim rulers in the 12th century, the Giralda is the last standing tower of the Islamic Mosque built where the Catholic Cathedral of St. Mary stands today – the largest gothic cathedral in the world. Orange trees are another icon of Sevilla. The orange blossoms have started to flower this week, making the streets smell of springtime!

Basilica of St. John Lateran

by Elisabeth McGovern



Rome is walking through ancient ruins and standing in places of history, praying in breathtaking basilicas before the accomplishments of human architecture and the mystery of the Real Presence, and stumbling upon charming little alleyways on a slow walk to class. And with Catholic Studies, Rome is opening your ideas to the impact of the Incarnation all around you. There are churches on every block, images of Our Lady on random street corners, and the frequent inscription *DOM - Deo Optimo Maximo*, or *to the greatest and best God*, an expression once addressed to Jupiter that now offers praise to the true God. So each day, whether on a terrace overlooking the city, eating gelato in a piazza, or at Mass in the Vatican, we offer that praise to *Deo Optimo Maximo*.

Upcoming Events

Check Canvas for more information

- Seminar Showcase
 - Through March 31st
- Feed My Starving Children
 - April 9th, 11:30 am
- Pizza with a Prof
 - April 12th
- River Cleanup
 - April 23rd



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