



JOHN PAUL THE GREAT ACADEMY

WITNESS TO HOPE



Pursuing the
good

SPRING 2021 | VOLUME 6



“Going to school means opening one’s mind and heart to reality, in the wealth of its aspects, of its dimensions. School teaches us to understand reality. AND THIS IS SO VERY BEAUTIFUL!”

- Address of Pope Francis to Students and Teachers from Schools Across Italy, 2014

Drive down our historic oak alley and discover something truly unique in Acadiana: a school, small by design, bringing together families who are eager for their children to be educated in a time-tested tradition that seeks to discover the Good, defend the True, and delight in the Beautiful. Just as those stately oaks began as seeds planted by a previous generation, John Paul the Great Academy offers a Catholic, classical education that seeks to plant seeds of wisdom and virtue that will bear fruit in the next generation, living lives witnessing to Jesus Christ and faithful to the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

Here, students take the time to engage with the great ideas and texts of Western Civilization and to explore the book of nature in the expanses of our campus. They are invited “to open their minds and hearts to reality”—the reality of God, the reality of their identity in Him, the reality of the work He is calling them to accomplish in the world.

John Paul the Great Academy, with its foundation in Jesus Christ, strives to fulfill our mission of education and formation to graduate students who: think critically and creatively; write with eloquence and persuasion; listen with wisdom and patience; speak with conviction and clarity; and pursue all learning with dedication and excellence.

Omnia in excellentia. Ad maiorem Dei gloriam.



WITNESS TO HOPE

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Witness to Hope magazine receives its name from George Weigel’s biography on Pope St. John Paul II entitled *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*.



John Paul the Great Academy is proud to receive the following awards from the Cardinal Newman Society:

- Newman Society Catholic Honor Roll Award
- Elementary School Catholic Honor Roll Award
- Newman Society National Ambassador School Award



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eLEARNING

by Emma Landaiache, '21, Head Prefect

Beginning on March 13, 2020 and in the days following, the world around me seemed to be falling apart. I could not go to school, see my friends, perform in our spring play, or attend Mass. As our time in quarantine grew, we were constantly adapting to what seemed to be our new way of life. Amidst the chaos of quarantine, I found comfort in JPG's continuous effort to keep us together as a community, no matter how separated we were. One way we did this was by still having morning prayer every day over Zoom. Teachers like Ms. Byers and Mr. Cortese were committed to encouraging us to pray with them every morning. For the first time, I led the Liturgy of the Hours for other students in our community. In this way, I felt more engaged with and connected to the prayers we prayed in the Liturgy of the Hours. This also gave more structure and routine to our days, in an effort to normalize this situation as much as possible.



"While many are glad to see 2020 in the past, I think overcoming these challenges the way we did is an indication of our growth as individuals, as a school, and in our community as a whole."

- EMMA LANDAICHE

Individually, each teacher strove to keep us connected and learning by adapting their ways of teaching to be completely virtual. Through the use of Google Classroom and Zoom, teachers ensured that students were keeping up with virtual learning and continuously pursuing excellence, while also being flexible and recognizing the strain that this situation was placing on all of us. Our teachers were committed to us as people, not just in teaching us their lesson plans. Teachers checked in on us frequently to see how we were doing. In Mrs. Stout's class, we completed a weekly "Quaran-teen Journal" sharing our struggles of each week. Ms. Byers sent us sweet letters of encouragement and prayer cards in the mail. Each teacher made a special effort to make this transition as smooth as possible and to help us through those strange times. Although these times were certainly unfortunate in many ways, many blessings abounded from our time in quarantine. While many are glad to see 2020 in the past, I think overcoming these challenges the way we did is an indication of our growth as individuals, as a school, and in our community as a whole.

WORKING TOGETHER, APART

by Craig Baker, Upper School Math & Science, Technology

I began my career teaching fourteen years ago in schools that were just starting to go one-to-one with technology. It did not take long to realize that as "cool" as it is for every student to walk around with their own laptop, persistent access to technology in the classroom more often than not undermined our goals to educate and form the human beings before us. Coming to JPG, with its minimalist approach to the use of technology, was a breath of fresh air. I came to JPG in part because of the limits on technology and thought I had gotten away from persistent access to technology in the classroom. God had other plans.

We spend our time at JPG developing ideas, great and small, through relationships, conversations, and hands-on experiences with the Great Texts of Western Civilization. This is no different in our Math and Science courses. Our "text" just happens to be the natural world. So when the lockdown began, I immediately questioned how we would help our students engage in a book that I could not share physically with them.

Physics and Calculus are hard disciplines in themselves. We had spent the year developing a language and a technique for communicating it through discussions, labs, and the "old school" technology of markers and whiteboards. Moving online meant that we were going to have to start much of that over again.

Provisionally, a little over a month before the lockdown I began taking an online continuing education course on utilizing programming concepts to help freshmen engage with mathematically challenging topics in Physics. I quickly realized that I had been doing the very thing I was unsure we would be able to do.

Teachers spent the first week online demonstrating new tools and helping each other get used to our new medium. Helping my students understand that just having your Zoom screen on did not constitute learning was more



challenging than I would have expected, especially with the endless amounts of distractions students have below and above their screens. Using online whiteboards and interactive spreadsheets helped students to engage with the ideas and each other in ways that were analogous to our previous experiences.

While it was challenging to help students who were going through all sorts of difficulties to focus on the task at hand, I could not help but see the Lord's hand in my formation, helping us to navigate this unwanted but present reality.



"I'm impressed with the lengths teachers and parents have been going to help students learn!"

- CRAIG BAKER



CLASS OF 2020



"I believe that part of living life well is to seek the best of every circumstance, seeking the Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in every interaction. I believe that because life is a gift to each and every one of us, it is our job to use it well and seek holiness."

- Luc Hebert, Valetorian

AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

St. John Chrysostom Capstone Award

Named for the patron saint of public speaking, who was given the Greek epithet "Chrysostom," which means "golden-tongued," because of his eloquence in preaching. This is given to honor the student whose capstone presentation was delivered with exemplary rhetoric.

Ann-Ayrise Salvatierra

St. Guy of Anderlecht Award

Given to a student who demonstrates an outstanding academic work ethic, this award is named for a saint who lived a humble life dedicated to work and prayer. The recipient of this award is not necessarily the student who has the highest grades; rather, it is given to someone whose dedication and integrity as a student are worthy of imitation. This student does not view learning as a chore but as an opportunity to grow in holiness.

Abigail Stansbury

St. Josemaria Escrivá Award

Named after one of the secondary patrons of our school, this award is the highest honor that an Upper School Student at John Paul the Great Academy can receive. It is given each year to a student who pursues excellence and demonstrates virtue in every area of his or her life: from academics to athletics, friendships to the practice of the Faith, and everything in-between.

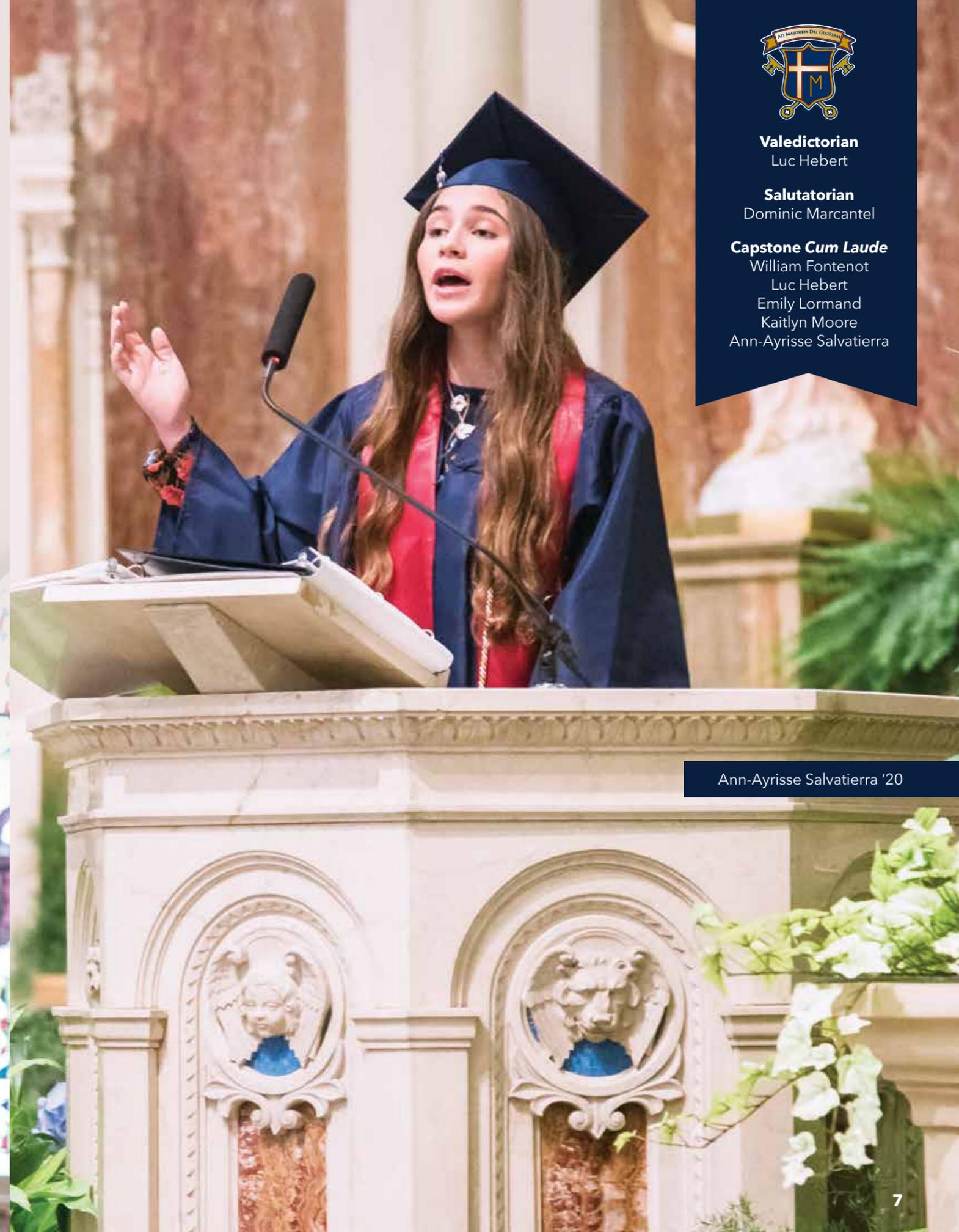
Matthew Ronkartz



Valedictorian
Luc Hebert

Salutatorian
Dominic Marcantel

Capstone Cum Laude
William Fontenot
Luc Hebert
Emily Lormand
Kaitlyn Moore
Ann-Ayrise Salvatierra



Ann-Ayrise Salvatierra '20



John Paul the Great Academy's first Headmistress,

Angela Odinet

Seven years ago, my family began a process well known to many parents - the search for the perfect school. We were leaving a good school because we really needed something more. Thankfully, we did not find perfection. Thankfully, we found John Paul the Great Academy.

In our first few months with the school, JPG offered us better than perfection. We found what we truly needed – a renewed vision of our faith and of Catholic education. Through Catholic, classical education, JPG taught us to explore in wonder and toward wisdom in ways I had only hoped possible.

My children's school quickly became *my school, our school*, through the direction of the Holy Spirit. I heard a podcast one morning that moved me to reach out and begin a journey to share this beautiful education with all children, all families. That first year, I taught two classes in the upper school, Rhetoric and Civics. Every year after that first conversation, the door opened a little wider, offering me the opportunity to spend more time at JPG. Eventually, I found myself in administration, teaching and serving beyond my wildest dreams.

Now, some six years later, I am humbled to have been asked to serve as the next leader of this remarkable school. Although we are blessed with the solid foundation established by those who have come before me, I know there is more hard work to do. I want to see us continue to grow, to foster trust, and to follow the example of the cloud of witnesses. As a leader of the school, I know I need to better invest in our teachers and in training for our teachers so that they may reach all students. And as a school we need to reinvigorate our efforts and continue our journey of forming the whole

human person, forming our students for eternity. We must all work hard to be academically excellent and passionately, unapologetically Catholic. Each new day should be a new opportunity to authentically live our mission and to be who we say we are. I know this work may be difficult, but it is work for the Kingdom.

Put simply, there is joy in the Truth, Beauty, and Goodness we seek each day in each classroom, despite the chaos of the world around us. There is solace in the virtue and wisdom we cherish each day in each classroom, despite the uncertainty in the world around us. My hope is that at JPG we will continue to seek Truth, Beauty, and Goodness; we will continue to thrive in virtue and wisdom, despite how challenging it is, despite how countercultural it is, *despite all else*.

Let us put out into the deep, cast our nets as servants to all, and devoutly live the legacy of our patron.

Angela Odinet is John Paul the Great Academy's fourth head of school. She has most recently served the academy as Assistant Headmaster since 2019. Angela will move into her new role in the summer of 2021.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

1993 graduate Alexandria Senior High School

- Part of junior year, studied abroad at a Catholic school in Sigmaringen, Germany through a scholarship from BMW/Youth for Understanding

1997 graduate University of Louisiana Lafayette

- BA in English Education (Secondary) with a minor in Special Education

2001 graduate Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law School

Juris Doctorate

- One semester in Aix en Provence, France studying law

2021 participant in Leader Program with the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education

Partnered with Duc In Altum Schools Collaborative
Fellow in the Duc In Altum Schools Collaborative Fellowship for School Leaders

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

E.D.White Catholic High School

- Freshman and Junior English/Spanish I

St. Thomas More Catholic High School

- Junior AP, Honors, Regular English

John Paul the Great Academy

- Rhetoric, Civics, American Literature for 8th grade, American Studies, and Capstone



The Odinets From Left to Right
Jacques, Nicholas, Margaret, Bobby Sr.,
Teresa, Angela, Bobby Jr., Lucia



CATECHESIS OF THE **GOOD SHEPHERD**

by Katie Mouton, CGS Catechist

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a work of prayer that began with two women, a Montessorian and a Scripture scholar, in Italy in 1954. It was created to give children a space, the Atrium, where they could come to know and love the Lord. Here at JPG, Lower School children come to the Atrium each week. They spend time growing in their love and knowledge of the Lord and His Church. During my first year at JPG as a second grade teacher, I was able to go into the Atrium with my students. In this space, I entered into a deeper friendship with Jesus as I watched my students do the same. I felt a calling to become more involved. I have now been the catechist in the Atrium for three years and still feel so blessed to see children develop into the saints they are called to be. It is a gift to see the children mature in their understanding of the Church, Scripture, and who God is. The foundation they receive in Atrium is a seed that never stops growing. As Pope Saint John Paul II said, while listening to children praying in a CGS atrium, "That is the most beautiful homily I have ever witnessed. It is proof that the kingdom of Heaven belongs to the children."

"It is a gift to see the children mature in their understanding of the Church, Scripture, and who God is."

- Katie Mouton



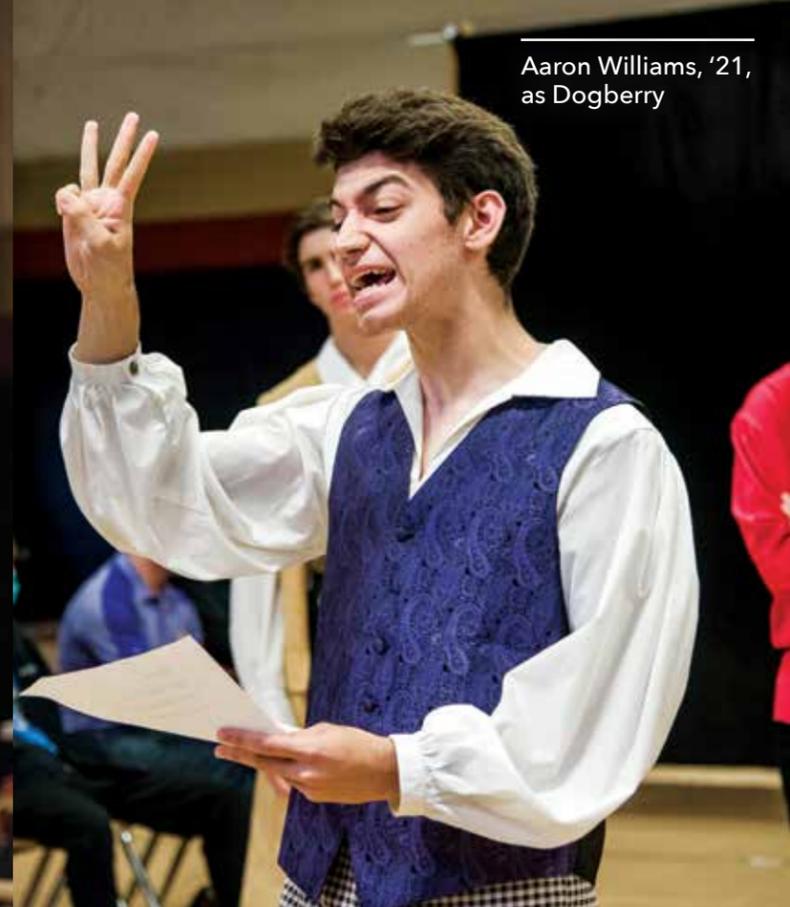


Performing Arts in a Pandemic

by Emily Byers, Upper School Humanities & Co-Sponsor of the Drama Club



Gabrielle LeBlanc, '23,
as Hero



Aaron Williams, '21,
as Dogberry

On March 13, 2020, the JPG Drama Club's scheduled performances of William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* were postponed indefinitely. Our cast, chorus, and crew had just wrapped up a week of dress rehearsals and were eager to showcase the fruits of their labor, only to have our plans change at the last minute when JPG transitioned to distance learning for the remainder of the school year.

Nine months later, on December 6, 2020, we were finally able to host a matinee of *Much Ado* for a limited audience of family members in the Blessed Frassati Gymnasium. This show was particularly memorable, thanks to appearances by a few special guests: Logan Habetz ('16), an experienced veteran of the Drama Club, stepped in to play Don Pedro, the charming Prince of Aragon; Kaitlyn Moore ('20) returned to reprise her role as the feisty heroine Beatrice; and Ms. Therese Seghers, Upper School Teacher and Co-Sponsor of the Drama Club since 2017, kept the audience in stitches in the comic role of Verges the deputy.

The JPG Drama Club has been adapting and performing Shakespearean comedies since 2013. In

2012, my first year at JPG, Alyse Spiehler ('13) asked me to become its first Faculty Sponsor. The Club is unique among the extracurricular activities offered to Upper School students in that it has always been student-led and self-funded. In 2018, the Drama Club began collaborating with Ms. Sarah Chustz and our Schola Choir to add live music to our productions, since this was a popular feature of live theater in Shakespeare's day.

The Drama Club has provided dozens of Upper School students the opportunity to hone their talents and grow in confidence as they participate in one of John Paul II's favorite pastimes. Of the 118 graduates of JPG since 2013, over 60 have been alumni of the Drama Club. Our past performances include: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Winter's Tale*. This year, we are reviving our 2016 production of *Love's Labour's Lost*, making this the first time that we've performed two full-length Shakespeare plays in one school year. Show dates are April 22-25—keep your eyes peeled for the chance to reserve tickets or to enjoy the show via livestream!

The Cast & Crew of *Much Ado About Nothing* 2020



Moving Forward

LOOK AT WHAT'S NEW AND GROWING AT JPG!

John Paul the Great Academy has grown significantly over the past few years. Our enrollment has increased by 24% in the last two years, and that growth has brought us eighty new families.

Supporting Catholic, classical education in Acadiana will always be our primary goal. Since our founding, we have established a stable scholarship program, the St. Joseph Scholarship Fund. This fund provides financial assistance to families who would otherwise be unable to receive a Catholic education. At the start of the 20-21 school year, 59% of our students were on financial assistance; which includes our in-house aid, along with several state scholarships.

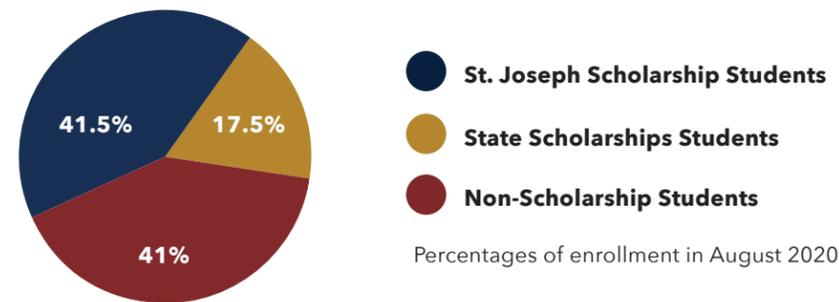
Thanks to South Louisiana Giving Day and generous community donors, we were able to raise more than \$40,000 to accomplish two big projects on campus last year. We replaced the roof of the Chapel Building, which houses the choir room, art studio, refectory, two Upper School classrooms, and the Holy Family Chapel itself. The project that will be most impactful to JPG's future campus development was the tearing down of the old "brothers' wings," which were the De La Salle Christian Brothers' place of residence in their retirement years. Since doing this, we are now able to visualize and see the future footprint of a new, permanent Lower School building.

Along with the efforts of our community, the Advancement Office seeks out grants each year to help enrich our core classes in both Lower and Upper School with much-needed supplemental material. In the past two years, we have received funds earmarked for classroom libraries, technology, a vast assortment of math manipulatives, and most recently, an abundance of new science equipment that will help engage our students in hands-on classical learning even further.

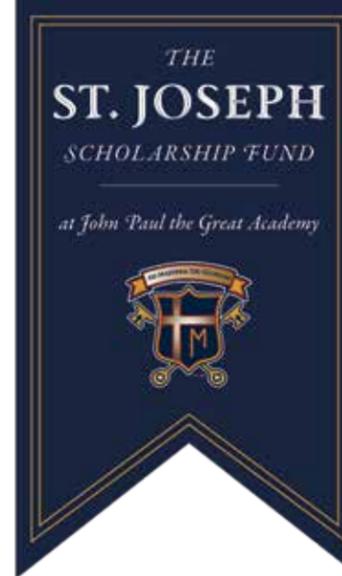
As we look ahead to the future we are eager to support our students, teachers, and families in any way that we can. We are optimistic that alongside our vibrant community, we can help to support the ongoing stability of John Paul the Great Academy in the years ahead.



Financial Assistance at JPG



This fund exists because we firmly believe that Catholic education should be accessible and affordable to families across Acadiana. We believe that, as a Catholic school, our mission lies in serving and supporting our families as much as possible, regardless of their income level. We pursue this mission in faith, trusting in God's providence and in the generosity of our benefactors.



HOW TO SUPPORT JPG!

Visit
JPGacademy.com/Donate

Venmo
 @JPGAcademy



Contact
 Christina Comeaux
 Advancement Coordinator
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 337-889-5345

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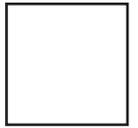


AFTER
 Demolition of the Brothers' Wings in November 2020



JOHN PAUL THE
GREAT ACADEMY

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CLASS OF 2020

