



JOHN PAUL THE GREAT ACADEMY

# WITNESS TO HOPE



SPRING 2022 | VOLUME 7

Year of the  
*Family*



## FROM THE HEADMISTRESS

In his usual beautiful way, Pope St. John Paul II reminds us that if we love, nurture, and live out our vocation within our families, it will spill over to the world outside of our homes. But I wonder about the families that we actually create outside of the home. I wonder about our family of community, our family of faith, and our family of school and how they too impact the nation and the world.

The family we create in our community is as small as the group of coworkers that we see each day and as big as our fellow citizens. To be a member of this family we have to have courage and be responsible. We have to be courageous in cultivating habits outside of our home that reflect the same values we hold dear within our homes. We have to be courageous in choosing to confront fear, pain, or evil. We can consciously choose to

be the face of courage in our community family by persevering and working hard through whatever role our Father has led us to. This family's progress depends on each member striving to be responsible, striving to view one's actions, not only as they relate to one's own good, but also to the good of others. I think we must honestly ask ourselves, are we showing up for our community family

and willing to do the job that is less valued, less honored or noticed. Are we looking out for others, caring for the least or marginalized? I believe tenfold that we are living in this community at JPG. Rarely is the campus empty as someone is here working on the next project, preparing the next lesson, or participating in fellowship and formation. I am thankful for the ways that this community selflessly gives. How we could change the world if all communities lived this way!

Our family of faith is the most obvious that we would seek to best nurture outside of our home. It is our most similar set of friends, our pilgrims or companions on the journey together in this world. Because our place in this family is centered around the Father's love for us, we often more readily recognize the gifts of others from the smallest to the wisest. We work hard to remain part of this family and to not stray from our journey together, encouraging one another because although it is a journey on earth it is actually a journey to everlasting life. All of our other families depend on this one. What else will propel us to the good, the true, the beautiful? The faith I see every day reminds me of the rich heritage we are given. We see students voluntarily praying in the chapel before

school or during their lunch. The sound of childrens' voices praying a decade of the rosary, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the Confiteor communally brings a peaceful rhythm to my day, everyday. The faith I see here challenges me, encourages me, fulfills me. What a gift this family of faith.

Finally, if we wish to ensure the future for our families at home, we must support the family of our school. The balance between home and school is delicate. The values taught and practiced at school must be practiced again at home. And the love and patience given our children at home must too be honored at school. Therefore, if we are truly members of the family of our school we have to have hope and to practice justice. How do we offer hope in our family of school? We can be hopeful in the simple things - hope for the good in our teachers, in our parents- expect good in our students, help them to seek the good in their friends and to not dwell on or magnify another's shortcomings. But in order for this hope to thrive, we must practice justice in our family of school. In choosing to obey rules, respect authority, and treat others fairly we are just. It is through obedience, established rules, and expectations that we can demand the best of our students and teachers and hold them to the highest standard they

are capable of achieving, intentionally resisting the pull of mediocrity. Our students read the thoughtful words of St. Augustine and ancient stories; we learn Greek and Latin roots. We do these things not for the sake of rigor but to learn about the past. Our students study math and science to wonder about the mastery of the created world. They study the humanities to cultivate an anthropology of man that delights in man's greatness. All of these studies are integral to uniting the family of home and the family of school. I pray that all of our families thrive. I pray that our families at home, our families of community, our families of faith, and our families of school are simple, yet rich in thought; are strong, yet gentle in love; and are full, yet open to more courage, responsibility, justice, and best of all, hope.

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Angela B. Odinet

**“As the family goes,  
so goes the nation  
and so goes  
the whole world in  
which we live.”**

- Pope St. John Paul II



## WITNESS TO HOPE

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Class of 2022 on senior pilgrimage in the Chicago Basin, Colorado

*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



Candidate for accreditation



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JPG Students on pilgrimage at the National March for Life in 2018

# Raising Future Saints, Together



Here at JPG, we have always made it our mission to assist parents in the spiritual formation of their children. We know that our students need to be prepared to be the apostles of the New Evangelization. To be equipped for this mission, young people need sound catechesis, habits of prayer, and a desire to do the will of God. Our *Fides* charism highlights many of the ways that we seek to form our students to be saints.



Lower School students playing with sisters of the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará

JPG provides children of all ages with a robust formation in Church teaching and traditions, from the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in Lower School to our rigorous Upper School theology classes. This year, we began to implement the Ruah Woods Theology of the Body curriculum in Lower School, which integrates the principles of John Paul II's thought in age-appropriate ways for our younger students. Our hope is that their study of the Faith would produce in our students "a deep and lasting conversion of heart."

To encourage "the development of an interior prayer life" in our students, JPG offers frequent opportunities for communal and personal prayer. These include weekly Holy Mass and Confession, quarterly retreats in Upper School, and the presence of Christ in our Perpetual Adoration Chapel on campus. We want our students to be immersed in the liturgical life of the Church, so we celebrate feast days with Eucharistic processions and observe the seasons of Advent and Lent as a community. This year, Lower School has participated in the First Friday Devotion, which includes Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Litany of the Sacred Heart.

Acknowledging "the need for every person to discern God's calling in their vocation," we seek to encourage our students, particularly those in Upper School, to

view marriage as a path to holiness and to consider a possible call to the priesthood, religious life, or missionary work. We take advantage of opportunities to have a variety of religious orders visit our campus and to connect with religious brothers and sisters when we attend the March for Life in Washington, D.C. recent years, these have included the Community of Jesus Crucified, the Sisters of Life, the Order of Preachers, the Religious Family of the Incarnate Word ("Servidoras"), the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, the Poor Friars and Poor Nuns, the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, and the Franciscans of the Holy Spirit. We now host discernment prayer groups for high school boys and girls that meet monthly and offer individual on-campus spiritual direction for students.

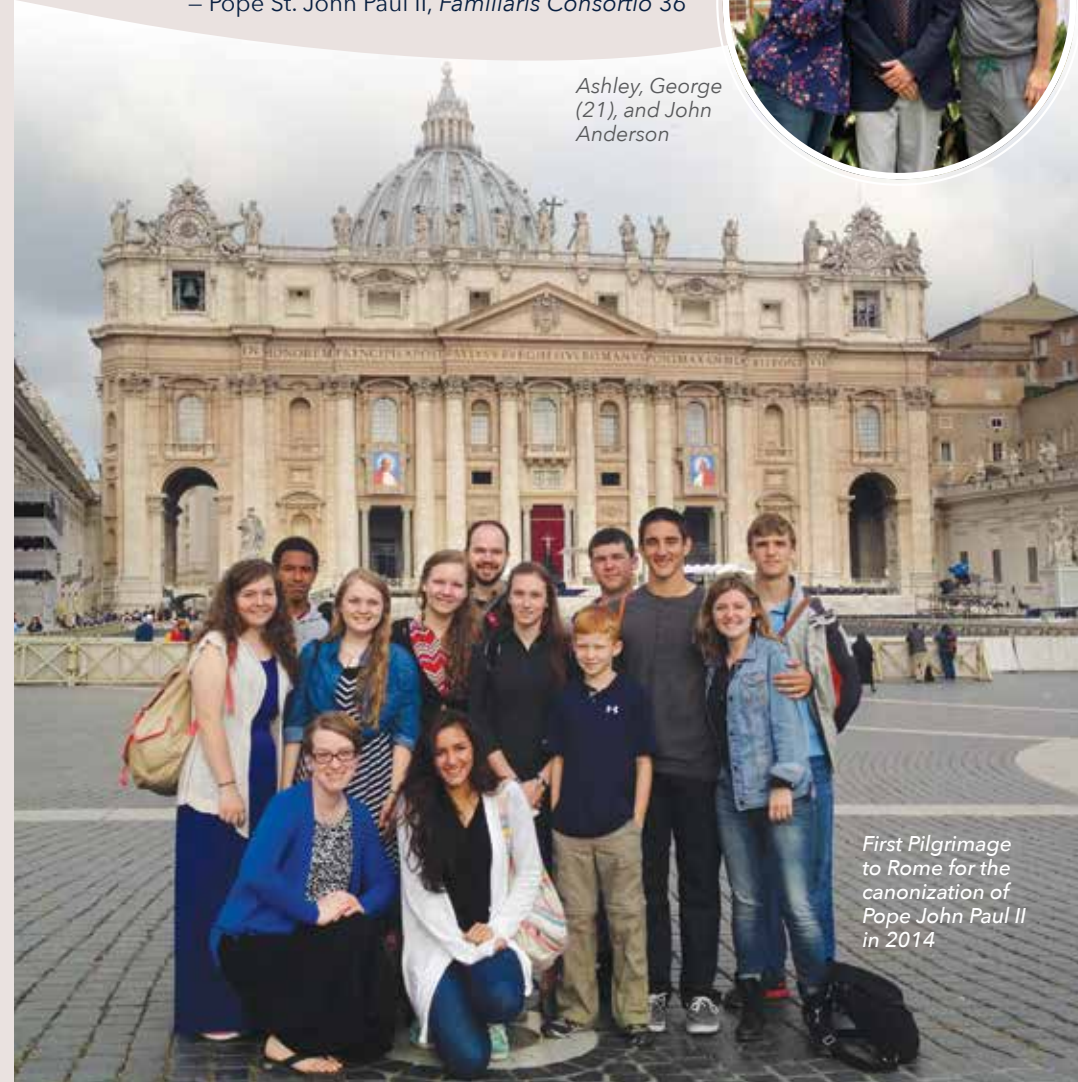
"In addition to these characteristics, it cannot be forgotten that the most basic element, so basic that it qualifies the educational role of parents, is parental love, which finds fulfillment in the task of education as it completes and perfects its service of life: as well as being a source, the parents' love is also the animating principle and therefore the norm inspiring and guiding all concrete educational activity, enriching it with the values of kindness, constancy, goodness, service, disinterestedness and self-sacrifice that are the most precious fruit of love."

— Pope St. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 36

Mr. Anson, Upper School Faculty, with his son, future Guardian Oliver, at a JP II Feast Day Celebration



Ashley, George (21), and John Anderson



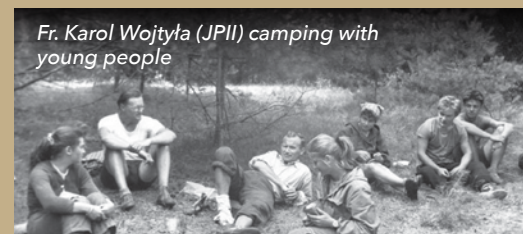
First Pilgrimage to Rome for the canonization of Pope John Paul II in 2014

JPG seniors camping on their class pilgrimage in Colorado

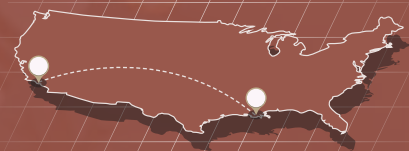


Inspired by the vision of our patron, Pope St. John Paul the Great, who mentored young people by accompanying them on kayaking and camping trips, we implemented a Pilgrimage Program for Upper School students that began with the canonization of Sts. John Paul II and John XXIII in 2014. These pilgrimages take our 7th-12th grade students out of the classroom for one week each fall for an experience of adventure, learning, community, service, prayer, and personal growth. The junior pilgrimage to Rome and the senior hiking expedition to the Rocky Mountains represent the culmination of our students' experience of pilgrimage.

Fr. Karol Wojtyła (JP II) camping with young people



# LA to LA



## DID YOU EVER SEE YOURSELF MOVING YOUR FAMILY ACROSS THE COUNTRY FOR A SCHOOL?

In October 2020, Jeff and Mary Heimbald made a phone call that would start a new adventure for their family. "Our vocation, as parents, is to make sure our children are brought up properly in the Church. We can't do that in where we are right now."

The Heimbalds' route to Catholic, classical education began in Montrose, California at St. Monica Academy. Their two sons, Matthew and Joseph, now aged eleven and thirteen, enrolled at St. Monica's for the 2020-2021 school year amidst the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to St. Monica's, the Heimbalds were in a diocesan school for six years ending with the shut-down in March of 2020. "We weren't expecting to make a change," says Mary, "but we found our way to an independent, Catholic, classical school while researching the best options for educating and forming our children during what were very strict restrictions in Los Angeles County. When we toured [St. Monica Academy] we realized we would have chosen that for our family from the beginning had we known it existed."

Although Matthew and Joseph were limited to attending school in person to just two days a week in the early fall of 2020, the family began to experience the beauty of a Catholic, classical education. "We saw the benefits in faith formation, academics and engaged learning for our children, not to mention the tremendous community of families." Jeff and Mary were thrilled with their new school. Because the boys spent three school days a week at home, both Jeff and Mary were able to dive into the schoolwork with their sons, resulting in a widened understanding and deepened love of a classical curriculum. There seemed to be a perfect storm in the Heimbald house of hybrid learning, meaningful studies, extra family time, and Jeff's work permanently moving to virtual that inspired him to begin researching classical, Catholic schools across the country.

"We were blessed with the opportunity to live anywhere because of Jeff's ability to work remotely on a permanent basis," Mary says. "While this was tremendous, it came with a good deal of responsibility. I mean, gosh, what if you choose wrong? What if you uproot and move to the wrong place? Where do you go? We had found Catholic, classical

education. Because of this, we knew that choosing where to live would be based primarily on finding the right school for our boys. Jeff created a comprehensive spreadsheet of Catholic, classical schools that met our criteria: a Catholic, classical academy from Pre-K to 12th grade, private and independent, and in an area of the country where we would be more at home. From there, we narrowed it down to three, one of which was John Paul the Great Academy. In the end, our visit to JPG sealed the deal. In fact, we canceled our third and final school tour which had been scheduled for the following month in Florida and instead asked if we could be admitted to JPG mid-year. What can I say, the campus is filled with the Holy Spirit! You can feel it. The Mass we attended during our visit which was presided by a JPG alumnus blew our socks off. The clincher was how happy our boys came home from their shadow day."

"The school is rigorous but it meets the kids where they are," Jeff remarks now after being enrolled at JPG for a full year. "No matter where the students are academically, JPG expects excellence without placing pressure on the students. Our boys move along and are led to their best not only from outside motivations, but they are being compelled inwardly. The effort that the teachers put in is not cursory. The teachers have really gotten to know Matthew and Joseph, and they can love them and teach them better because of it."

When asked if, when the boys were little, they had ever thought they'd move across the country for a school, Jeff responds, "Never! We were such creatures of habit. House, church parish, school, friends. The Heimbalds were the one constant in an ever changing world. No one saw this coming." Mary adds, "One thing that became crystal clear to us living through the lockdowns of 2020 in California was that our initial priorities for our children were all wrong. Material accomplishments can all be taken away at any time. Life will have its trials. The only way to have true joy and accomplish a fulfilled soul is through a strong relationship with our Lord. Period. End of story. No matter what happens in this world, we want our boys to be able to know peace and happiness through Him. It's a bonus that we found that tremendous faith formation wrapped up in an incredible academic curriculum that's giving our boys and family exactly what we all need here in Lafayette, Louisiana at John Paul the Great Academy. Thank you God!"



Joseph and Matthew Heimbald



### What's your favorite thing about JPG after one year?

**Matthew:** "It's the teachers. I just love Ms. Parks and Mr. Wilson. They don't just give you something to do, they teach you, they help you."

**Joseph:** "Well, I do like Upper School a lot now. I like having a locker and so many teachers and getting to switch classes. The teachers are all really nice."



# 15 YEARS UNDER HIS PATRONAGE

JPG is in its 15th year of offering a Catholic, classical education to families in Acadiana. To celebrate this milestone, we asked the teachers who have served JPG since its earliest days to reflect on their time here. Through the years, these faculty members have witnessed everything, from a campus relocation to a school name change in anticipation of the canonization of our patron. They have served JPG in multiple capacities from administration to teaching, coaching, and so much more. They hold a wealth of knowledge of our school's history, and they truly have a deep love for John Paul the Great Academy.



**Ashley Brewer**  
Lower School: Pre-K 4  
Began 2007



**Mary Dennis**  
Lower School: 6th Grade  
Began 2007



**Dana Stromer**  
Lower School: 3rd Grade  
Began 2007



**Mindy Menard**  
Reading Specialist  
Began 2008



**Barrett Richard**  
Upper School Math  
Began 2008

## What about the mission first drew you to teach at JPG?

**Ashley Brewer:** It was more the Holy Spirit that drew me to the "school" (which didn't have a physical location yet at the time of my contract signing) rather than the mission. After hearing more about the mission and how it was to be lived out as a school community, I knew that God had blessed me more than I could have imagined with an authentically Catholic, courageous group of mentors and friends.

**Mindy Menard:** I began teaching at Pope John Paul Academy (PJPA, JPG's former name) in its second year. Our oldest daughter entered the founding year as a seventh grader. This decision was not an easy one. Our daughter was in the gifted program at one of the highest scoring schools in the area. She was thriving by the world's standards and on a road to be very

successful in high school and college. Dr. Roberts' promise and the mission statement of PJPA spoke to us of a greater success. It spoke of classes in which the children would be taught to seek the true, the good, and the beautiful, and while doing so they would learn to do all things in excellence, from picking up trash to offer up for a soul in Purgatory to looking at the opportunity to interact with younger students as an opportunity to help form them. After a year of witnessing this mission being lived out, I wanted to be a bigger part of the school and joined the faculty.

"[The mission] spoke of classes in which the children would be taught to seek the true, the good and the beautiful..." - Mindy Menard

## What has been the greatest gift you have received from being a part of the JPG community?

**Barrett Richard:** The greatest gift is seeing students realize their potential, whether it be in the classroom or on the field. Seeing an individual choose to thrive out of obedience to their current vocation and reaping the fruits of their labor is a gift to witness, and I have been blessed to witness it many times. It gives one the feeling—or at least the hope—that we are aiding Christ in the building up of his kingdom. What could be better than that?

**Dana Stromer:** The greatest gift I received from being part of the community is the long-lasting friendships that I've formed, as well as the prayers from the students and families. There have been a few instances in my fifteen years here that I've asked my students to pray for specific intentions. God answered those prayers, and we were able to witness miracles. The students take those prayer requests so seriously, and I know that the prayers of children are so powerful and beautiful.



## Personally, why do you feel it is special for our school to be under the patronage of Pope St. John Paul II?

**Ashley Brewer:** "Be not afraid!" Over the years, we've had so many circumstances in which we have found ourselves at a crossroad - fear or courage. I was blessed with the opportunity in those early years to learn by example from John Paul II's writings and from Dr. Roberts that we are called to be courageous, through no merit of our own, but because Christ allows it in His goodness, and it is all for His glory.

**Mary Dennis:** Pope St. John Paul II is a model for the Church and especially for the youth of today. His life story is inspiring, and his writings are so relevant to many of the challenges we face in our secular society today. There is much to be learned from him!

## What is a special memory you will always carry from your years at JPG?

**Ashley Brewer:** There are so many memories that make me laugh or bring tears to my eyes all these years later. I would say one of the most memorable would be the funeral for our class pet. In the spring of the first year, our beloved class goldfish, George, died. Chris Cambre (Fr. Cambre now) was a senior at the time, and he gave a beautiful funeral for our beloved George. The boys carried his decorated shoebox casket, the girls followed behind and "wept," and we buried him behind our classroom. We like to jokingly say we were there for Fr. Cambre's "first Mass" way back when.

**Mindy Menard:** The memory that will always stay with me from my years at JPG happened on a very ordinary school day about ten years ago. It was late in the year and like every year before when all of the other teachers in the area had signed contracts for the next year and other schools were finalizing enrollment for the coming year, JPG was trying to figure out how to keep

its doors open for the next year. We had been in this situation before, but the challenges before us had never been so great. The administration worked and did more than anyone will ever know, the faculty rallied and started fundraising campaigns, the students wrote letters and made phone calls, the board did everything they could, parents did all they could, and most importantly, we prayed. "Be not afraid!" seemed to be placed in all of our hearts. Not one teacher had a "backup" plan. We were in it till the end, if that's what God's will was for our little school. But then on an ordinary Thursday a little blond-haired seven-year-old walked into my class and very humbly said, "This is for the school, Mrs. Menard." He placed well over a hundred dollars into my hands that morning. The bills were folded, and there were lots of coins mixed in. I immediately asked if he was sure he wanted to give all of his money. He could just give some. But he had made up his mind. He wanted to give it all. I called his parents to make sure they knew and were okay with him donating his money. They, without hesitation, were all for it. So with tears streaming down my face, that little seven-year-old and I walked to Dr. Roberts' office to present his gift to the school.

Then I knew without a doubt that JPG was God's school and that everything would work itself out. That little blond seven-year-old is a senior this year. He still serves the school in many ways, one of which is being the Head Perfect. Sebastian Cramer taught us that day what it looks like to have faith: that when you sacrifice, God will take care of the rest.



## What are your hopes for JPG going into the next fifteen years of giving Catholic, classical education to Acadiana?

**Dana Stromer:** I hope that we continue to form students to know the true, the good, and the beautiful. I hope that the students continue to learn with joy and the sense of wonder that I've witnessed throughout my fifteen years here.

**Mary Dennis:** My hope is that the school will continue to flourish and remain faithful to the Magisterium. I hope and pray that we continue to nurture vocations to the priesthood and religious life and that our new buildings and chapel will be stunning!

**Barrett Richard:** It is not something I think about much. I feel the community is much better served by me if I try to get a little better each day. By doing so I feel I am preparing the students and myself to overcome any challenges that we may face in the future. We are laying a spiritual, mental, and physical foundation by practicing the cardinal virtues everyday, preparing our souls for the battles that are surely to come.



# Welcome TO MY HOUSE

## Legacy

In order to support families and community outside of the school day, siblings are sorted into the same house. A dynasty has developed in Częstochowa House, where 2020-2021 Head Girl and Boy Liliana Pagán and Isaac Friddell passed on leadership to their siblings Rachel Friddell and Miguel Pagán for the 2021-2022 academic year.



Isaac Friddell & Liliana Pagán

Miguel Pagán and Rachel Friddell



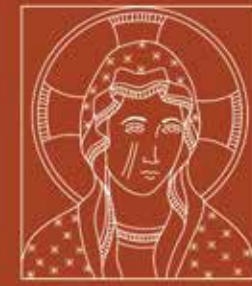
THEOTOKOS

**Theotokos**  
Greek for "God-bearer," or more commonly in English, "Mother of God," a theological title for Mary decreed by the Council of Ephesus in AD 341.  
Feast day: January 1



STELLA MARIS

**Stella Maris**  
Latin for "Star of the Sea," a title dating back to early medieval times and associated with the ancient prayer and hymn Ave Maris Stella.  
Feast day: September 27



CZESTOCHOWA

**Częstochowa**  
A title for the famous icon of Mary traditionally believed to be painted by the apostle Luke and found in the Polish city of Częstochowa.  
Feast day: August 26



GUADALUPE

**Guadalupe**  
A title associated with the apparition in Mexico to St. Juan Diego and the image of Mary given to him, invoked as Patroness of the Americas.  
Feast day: December 12

Launched in the fall of 2018, the Upper School House System at John Paul the Great Academy seeks to increase school unity, build camaraderie, promote school spirit, cultivate mentorship between classes, reinforce student ownership and accountability, and increase service opportunities. In the first year, students and faculty alike were surprised by a sorting activity during a retreat day. Each house adopts its name from a Marian title to reinforce our patron's papal motto Totus Tuus and his Marian devotion.



## Academics

Guadalupe House celebrates 8th Grade student Jonah Stout, who won the Middle School Spelling Bee and competed up to the Regional Level. 7th and 8th grade participants were selected to represent their houses in the school bee.



## Service


Houses help to coordinate service in the community and on campus, like cleaning up after lunch periods in the refectory.



## Achievement

Theotokos House gained the bragging rights for the first spot on the House Cup after earning the most house points in the 2020-2021 academic year.

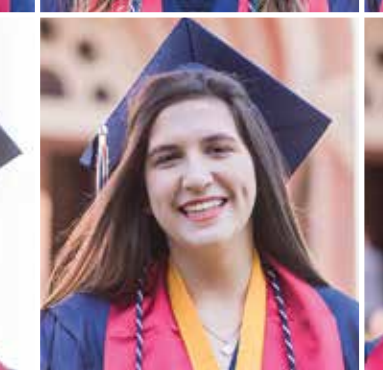
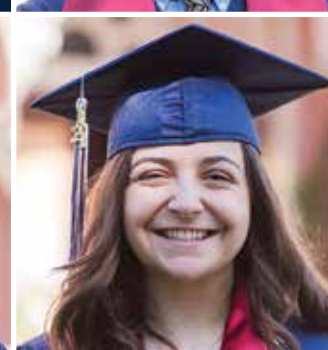
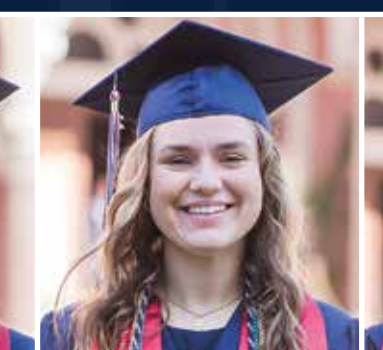




**Valedictorian**  
Emma Landaiche

**Salutatorian**  
Isaac Friddell

**Capstone Cum Laude**  
Nicholas Broussard  
Ava LeJeune  
Isaac LeJeune  
Liliana Pagán  
Kate Schexnailder



# CLASS OF 2021



"May we from this day forward choose to live out the charisms each and every day of our lives, to achieve greatness by ceaselessly pursuing the truth, striving to grow ever deeper in our faith, and cultivating virtue, and may we never settle for anything less than excellence."

- Emma Landaiche, Valedictorian

## 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.

**Ava LeJeune**

### *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.

**Daniel Johnson**

### *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.

**Liliana Pagán**





# RECENT MARRIAGES

The JPG Alumni Association was formed in 2021 in order to provide our growing alumni base with opportunities to support the work and mission of JPG and to foster their continued relationships with the Academy and with one another. Join us in congratulating these recent alumni marriages.



Adele Hicks ('15)  
& Jerome Weil ('14)  
married October 23, 2020



Kristen Meche ('15)  
& Brock Cambre ('17)  
married December 31, 2021



Noah Yarborough ('16)  
& Jordan Doiron ('16),  
married November 19, 2021



Morgan Munzing ('19)  
& Philip DeMoura ('17)  
married January 16, 2021



Madeline Hornsby ('16)  
& Jacob LeJeune ('16)  
married May 22, 2021



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**PAID**  
PALMER

# CLASS OF 2021

