



WHY AN ABBEY EDUCATION IS TRANSFORMATIVE AT ITS CORE

By Dr. Bill Thierfelder

One of the most impressive qualities of our alumni is their ability to think in an ordered way which enables them to clearly analyze data, ask penetrating questions, create solutions to challenging problems and clearly articulate their ideas. They owe much to their professors, many of whom were monks, who taught and mentored them in how to search for and live in response to truth. As John Henry Newman wrote in *The Idea of a University*, “In order to have possession of the truth at all, we must have the whole truth; and no one science, no two sciences, no one family of sciences, nay, not even all secular science, is the whole truth...” Further on he wrote, “A

build upon this wise approach to educating students. By providing our students with a liberal arts education that prepares them — mind,



minds by arousing curiosity about, as Matthew Arnold put it, the best that has been thought and said. The goal of the Christian university is to arouse and direct such curiosity about the unparalleled synthesis of Athens and Jerusalem, of faith and reason, that is the Christian intellectual tradition. Faith and reason, John Paul II said in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, are the two wings by which the mind rises toward wisdom.”

The lifelong journey to search for and live in response to truth is at the heart of the liberal arts education at Belmont Abbey College. Our concern for each student is beautifully expressed in

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truly great intellect... is one which takes a connected view of the old and new, past and present, far and near, and which has an insight into the influence of all these one on another; without which there is no whole, no centre.”

The Trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy) comprise the classical understanding of the *Artes Liberales* that sought the whole truth. Liberal Arts Colleges of today seek to

body, and spirit — to pursue the good for themselves and for their communities, we embrace Cardinal Newman’s exhortation to pursue the whole truth and offer our students a powerful learning experience that lasts for a lifetime.

In an article in *First Things* magazine, “A University of a Particular Kind,” Richard John Neuhaus describes the educational institution that transforms lives when he writes, “The task of the university is to form and inform

Ex Corde Ecclesiae, “It is essential that we be convinced of the priority of the ethical over the technical, of the primacy of the person over things, of the superiority of the spirit over matter. The cause of the human person will only be served if knowledge is joined to conscience. Men and women of [learning] will truly aid humanity only if they preserve the sense of the transcendence of the human person over the world and of God over the human person.”