

# BELMONT ABBEY

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In less than a year our benefactors have shown us they believe. They believe in our mission, our strategy, our hope for the future.

They believe in Belmont Abbey College.

Because of overwhelming generosity, this small Catholic college has secured \$100 million in commitments. We exist in such exclusive company. We profoundly thank those who gave such extraordinary support and sacrifice to the Abbey.

### HELP ENSURE THE ABBEY LEGACY

as we extend our goal and honor the vision of our founders. Help us reach **\$150 million by our 150th anniversary** in 2026, and join us in the mission to see our country, our future, and our next generation Made True in the light of God's grace.

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Belmont Abbey  
COLLEGE

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Made True has many meanings

DR. BILL THIERFELDER

*President*

**IT IS THE HUMBLE ACT OF MAKING BRICKS FROM CLAY** to build a place of worship, living, and learning that endures for generations. It is God's grace manifested in work and prayers, education and formation, and sacrifice and stability that ensures every graduate is made true.

It is "the splendour of truth shining forth in all the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in man, created in the image and likeness of God" (*Veritatis Splendor*).

May 11, 2024, marked the celebration of Belmont Abbey College's 146th commencement ceremony. It was a sight to behold and a day to always remember. The day was beautiful. The crowd of nearly 4,000 was overcome with joy as they filled the lawn in front of the Basilica to overflowing, and our graduates exuded hope in the future and happiness that could not be contained. Every speech made with love, every diploma gratefully received, every aspect of commencement shouted, "Made True." And it wasn't just commencement; the entire school year, the life here, all rang out with "Made True."

Therefore, Made True is the perfect name for our capital campaign, which aims to secure the necessary resources to fulfill our mission and bring our BAC 2030 Love in Truth Strategic Plan to full flowering. With over \$100 million already committed, we are

well on our way to guaranteeing the future of Belmont Abbey College in perpetuity. The expanded goal of \$150 million will further strengthen our faculty by providing 10 endowed academic chairs, supporting our students with 150 endowed honors scholarships, and making possible the construction of a new monastery for our monks.

I am forever grateful for all you have done and continue to do to ensure that every generation is made true. It is only with your love, prayers, and support that we will make true Abbot Leo Haid's prayer that the work and prayers here shall spread God's blessing over this beautiful country in the years to come when perhaps few of you are listening to me now shall be among the living.

I hope to see you on campus soon. Until then, you, your family, and all of your good work will remain in my daily thoughts and prayers.

*God bless,*



# BELMONT ABBEY MAGAZINE

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ABBEY COLLEGE**

## **MISSION STATEMENT** of **BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE:**

Our mission is to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified. In this endeavor, we are guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Benedictine spirit of prayer and learning. Exemplifying Benedictine hospitality, we welcome a diverse body of students and provide them with an education that will enable them to lead lives of integrity, to succeed professionally, to become responsible citizens, and to be a blessing to themselves and to others.

## SUMMER 2024 ISSUE FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY

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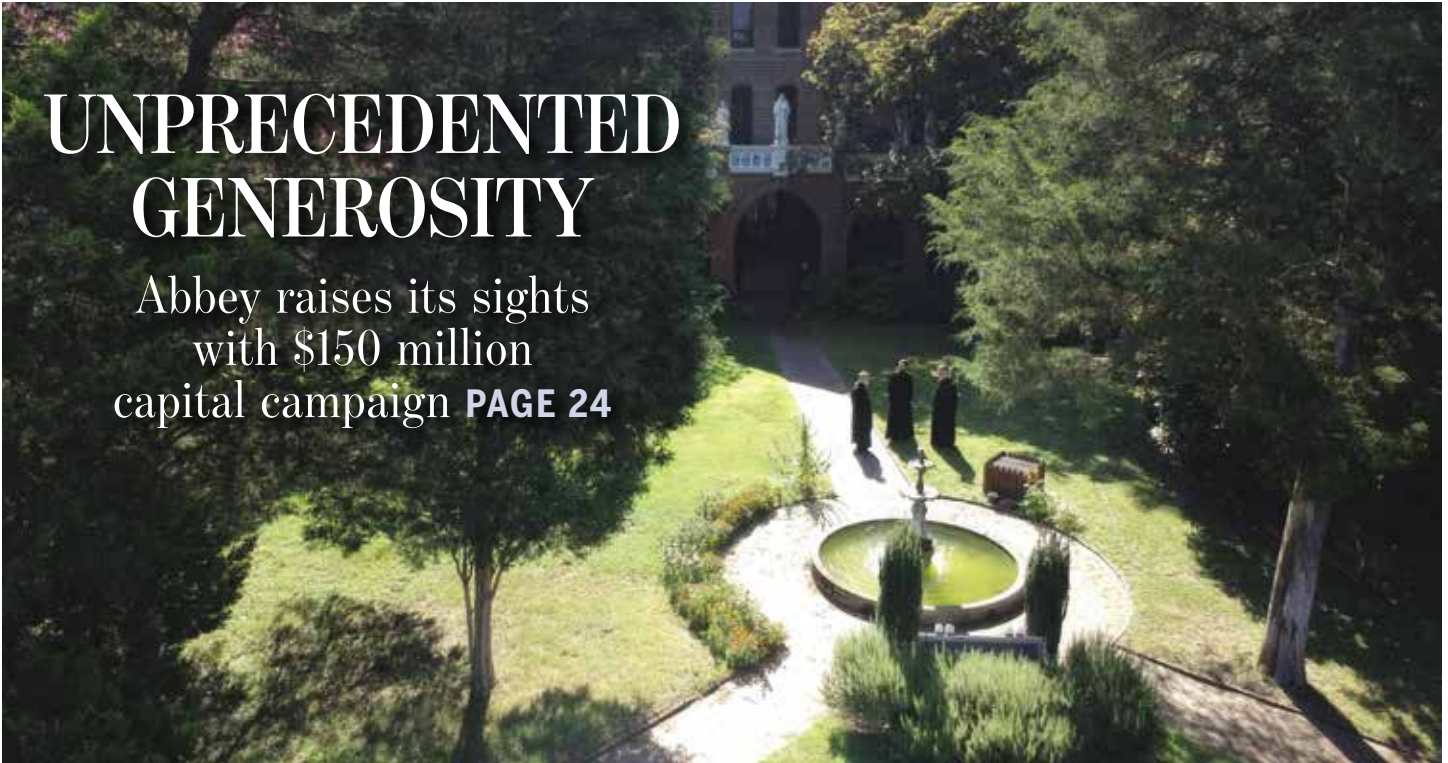
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Belmont Abbey College has extended its capital campaign to \$150 million to fund physical and academic improvements on campus. Read more on page 24. Cover Photography by Nicholas Willey.

## FROM THE FACULTY

# What the Abbey's founding can teach us today

DR. TOM VARACALLI '11

*Assistant Professor, Honors College*

**FOR SIX YEARS AFTER EARNING MY PHD**, I taught at Texas State and had great success there. Yet something was missing: *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the Benedictine intellectual tradition, the monks, the open integration of faith and reason in the classroom, and, to be candid, academic freedom.

There is something more. Abbot Placid and Dr. Thierfelder often invoke Abbey history. You know these stories. On April 21, 1876, Fr. Herman Wolfe and two students got off the train from Richmond, arrived at the largely undeveloped plot of land that is now the Abbey, and held class that very day. The monks themselves made the bricks for many of the original buildings.

Political science pays significant attention to the study of founding – a regime, institution, or religious order. Once the Founding Fathers established the U.S. Constitution, Abraham Lincoln and the Radical Republicans may have been able to add new amendments, but they could only add to what was already built. Once St. Benedict writes the Rule, the Benedictine Order is set on a particular path. Much has been added to the Benedictine tradition, but its essential core belongs to how St. Benedict manifested the Gospels.

Stories of the Abbey's founding deserve to be told to every new cohort. The Abbey was founded well, and we are its beneficiaries.



The Abbey's history is not purposeless antiquarianism. These stories instruct. They have a moral message. Why did those students have class the very day they arrived? Because St. Benedict teaches *ora et labora*: prayer and work. By having class that very day, those two students

learned more than just academic efficiency; they were taught that both learning and work are intrinsic parts of life. Why did those monks make the bricks? Because they loved God. They love us. Just as the monks were willing to build actual buildings, they now build within the minds and souls of their students a foundation through which to study and examine the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.

*Dr. Varacalli received the 2024 Adrian Award for Teaching Excellence.*

FROM THE CHANCELLOR

# Made True's eternal perspective

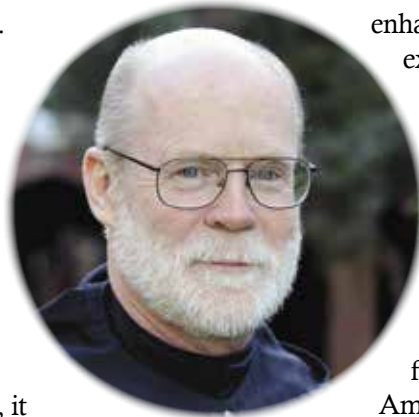
ABBOT PLACID SOLARI, OSB

*Chancellor*

**PLEASE ACCEPT MY SINCERE THANKS** on behalf of all the monks to everyone who has contributed to our capital campaign. Your generous support has been instrumental in the growth and success of our college. We cannot adequately express our monastic community's gratitude for your continuous support. Be assured that you, our benefactors, are regularly remembered in our prayers.

From its very first day, the school's principal challenge has been the lack of financial resources. Your support is crucial in ensuring the college thrives and provides quality education. The Abbey began in a state that was less than 0.5% Catholic for most of our history. There was, therefore, no basis for local support for the new Abbey and school. Rather, it was the hard work and sacrifices of the pioneer monks and benefactors' generosity that allowed the school to grow.

"Made True" expresses the hope that this campaign will provide a sound basis for the college to continue its mission far into the future. As it is, the college has enjoyed steady growth over the past 20 years. The undergraduate enrollment is now at a record number, and new graduate programs have started. The Honors College and the new nursing program are only two new programs attracting excellent students. We've added new and talented faculty



— and new and renovated facilities — to accommodate the growth and to enhance students' educational experience.

The monastic community is generously supporting this campaign, and we invite you to join us.

Your continued support is crucial in assuring an Abbey education for generations to come.

Among the campaign's goals are funds for a new monastery, not only to better configure living space for the needs of a monastic community but to serve as a testament to our commitment to the Abbey's future. It will also provide the college with much-needed classroom and office space through the renovation of the current monastery building. Be assured, however, that our first priority is the long-term flourishing of Belmont Abbey College. Even if it should last for more than a century, a new monastery is here only for a time. The lives that are formed by the college last unto everlasting life.

## Abbey Players mark 140 years

*Theatre company's evolution  
from humble beginnings in 1883*

**I CAME TO THE HAID THEATRE WHEN I WAS ABOUT** three weeks old. The Abbey girls who were in Follies used to watch me. There was no “backstage” then, so the chorus would pass me around like a collection plate.

**BY CHRISTOPHER DONOGHUE '10** Five years later, I made my stage debut as Astyanax in “The Trojan Women.” I had no lines, but the Greek soldiers threw me from the walls of Troy. They brought me to my grandmother Hecuba, covered in blood and lying on top of my father Hector’s shield. I had to be completely still while she lamented over me.



Unfortunately, my real grandmother was down from Virginia and went to the show. She almost had a heart attack when they carried me in. The stage crew may have overdone the blood, and she let us all know in no uncertain terms that she was not amused. But it was the beginning of my career as a doomed child on The Haid stage. I played the ghost of Jimmy Sullivan in “The Miracle Worker.” I played Tiny Tim in “A Christmas Carol.” My signature talent was making motherly audience members cry.

*Christopher Donoghue is  
Director of Abbey Players  
& Assistant Professor*



I love The Haid Theatre. I was blessed to grow up in it, watching my father, Simon Donoghue, direct remarkably talented actors who inspired me. Since returning at the start of the pandemic, I, too, have had the chance to direct our gifted students and community members.

Father John Oetgen first brought off-campus actors into the Abbey Players in 1973, making it possible for students, faculty, staff and even monastic actors to work with talented locals and Charlotte professionals, all of whom have been drawn to The Haid by the plays we offer.

Belmont Abbey’s first abbot, Leo Haid, founded The Abbey Players in 1883. He had just arrived from St. Vincent Archabbey in Pennsylvania. Abbot Haid rolled up to the campus in a wagon from the Garibaldi train station with the St. Vincent monks who had elected and accompanied him to the newly independent monastery. They hit the ground running. Throughout his tenure as Abbot, and as Bishop of North Carolina, the monks built the monastery, Stowe Hall, St. Leo Hall, and the Abbey Church — the





**Townfolk  
contemplate  
trouble in River  
City during the  
Abbey Players’  
2019 performance  
of ‘The Music  
Man.’**

heart of the Abbey community.

Abbot Haid was also a playwright and loved drama, so he formed the first drama group as the St. Benedict Players. They briefly changed the name to the Piedmont Players, but settled on the Abbey Players around 1930. By then, Abbot Haid was gone but the Players continued. At first, the company was housed in Jubilee Hall, which was torn down in the early 1990s. Haid had replaced it with the St. Leo Hall Theatre in 1906.

The Abbey Players worked there steadily throughout the 20th century until the need for roof repairs sent them downstairs to what are now the college and Catholic bookstores. Gene Kusterer served as theatre director, and Fr. John succeeded him after he left the office of college president. The Abbey Players moved into this building in 1979. At the time, the college used The Haid for campus dances and parties. The Wheeler Center replaced it as the campus gymnasium in 1970, and it suffered from neglect for the next 17 years.

In the meantime, Fr. Paschal

Baumstein had arrived. When my father became theatre director in 1976, he pushed for the theatre to become a part of the academic division of the college.

Among his duties, Fr. Paschal was the campus archivist, and during the 1980s, he also lobbied the government to designate this part of the campus as a National Historic District. President John Dempsey aided his efforts by renovating both St. Leo’s and The Haid. He had been impressed by the students in rehearsal while walking around during his interview. But the “theatre” at this point was a platform with temporary seats dragged into the space for performances. The light board dated from 1904, and the lights themselves were 100-watt bulbs screwed into paint cans, along with some instruments from the 1910s.

Four years later, The Haid renovation gave us the current theatre. In the meantime, my father created the Shakespeare Series to produce the entire canon. He recruited Gary Sivak from Charlotte as the theatre’s technical director. In 1999, he and Dad

received a \$100,000 grant from the Community Foundation that allowed significant upgrades to our lighting and sound. Gary curated our growth in these areas until we had a tremendous collection of instruments. He has trained generations of students to serve as board operators.

They brought Jill Bloede on board after an acclaimed stint as a director at the Children’s Theatre of Charlotte. Since then, she has trained generations of actors and directors through her classwork and directed two productions a year. Blake Williams returned as an adjunct after earning his MFA from the University of Alabama. He now teaches voice and theatre history, as well as directing. Thanks to my training as a certified stuntman, I have been able to add courses in stage combat. All of these additions have helped fuel the college’s Theatre Minor.

When my father left the position last December, the Abbey Players were recognized as one of the area’s leading theatre companies. Although each group retains its own charism, the theatre has partnered with the Abbey Dancers and the Abbey Chorus to create the Performing Arts Department. This past year has seen an influx of Oetgen Scholars, who receive a scholarship for their work. Dr. Thierfelder created this scholarship in 2005, shortly after his arrival.

I’m eternally grateful for my mother, Debbie Donoghue. Between my father and me, she deals with a lot. Thank you to those no longer with us: Fr. Paschal Baumstein and Fr. John Oetgen. I don’t know how I would have gotten into this position without their support and education. My father’s work over 40 years has laid a foundation for our fantastic program. Thank you to the Abbey Players. Nothing we do in this building is possible without you. Your dedication and support have kept us going for 140 years! **BAC**



Belmont Abbey's Performing Arts Department hosted its first annual Celebration of the Arts Gala on May 2, 2024. Offering a remarkable evening of fellowship, punctuated by exceptional student performances from throughout the season, the event raised awareness for The Haid Theatre's renovation.

# Cultural beacon

*The Haid Theatre is a testament to Belmont Abbey's vibrant community spirit*

**ANYONE WHO'S EVER** experienced an Abbey Players or Abbey Dance production knows just how much heart and energy course across the stage of The Haid Theatre with each rehearsal, each play, and each showcase.

The Abbey Players typically offer six shows every year, not counting special events. In the 140 years since its founding, the company has produced hundreds of shows and entertained thousands.

While every season renews the joy that performers share with the community in an impressive repertoire of drama, comedy, and musicals, it also increases the wear and tear on a nearly century-old structure.

For over four decades, The Haid Theatre has been more than just a building. It has been a cultural beacon and a testament to the vibrant community spirit of Belmont Abbey. As the home of the Abbey Players, the facility

plays a pivotal role in enriching countless lives and fostering a deep sense of pride in our community.

The next stage in the history of the performing arts on Belmont Abbey's campus has already begun. The North Carolina General Assembly's generous \$9 million grant toward a new visual and performing arts center on campus has brought the project nearly halfway to its anticipated cost of \$25+ million.

Since this new center will transform the local arts community, the Abbey has assembled a committee of stakeholders from across Gaston and Mecklenburg Counties to explore and develop the new venue. Representatives of the arts and art education programs and institutions across the region have met to visit and discuss comparable venues, evaluating their features in relation to the needs of our own community.

While we eagerly anticipate the new visual and performing arts center, which will extend the reach of our arts programming far beyond campus, we must not overlook the urgent need to restore The Haid Theatre. Preserving the existing theatre is crucial to meeting the community needs and preserving a historic structure, even as we look to an exceptional future.

We trust our valued supporters and community members to help fund The Haid's renovation. Your generosity can make a significant difference, allowing us to refurbish the stage and replace the main curtain, lights, and carpet — all crucial investments in the future of our creative collaboration and steadfast community in the arts. Your gift is not just a financial contribution but a symbol of your belief in the power of the arts and your commitment to preserving our shared history and culture. **BAC**



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[bac.edu/  
haidrenovations](http://bac.edu/haidrenovations)



# Sweet sorrow *Abbey Players' Romeo and Juliet wows audiences*

The Capulet party dazzles, thanks to choreographer Whitney Yancey '23 (front left) and the ensemble cast.

**IT MAY NOT SEEM** like the typical opening to a Shakespearean tragedy, but when The Haid Theatre curtain rose to a cheeky and beautifully choreographed dance party, the audience found itself quickly swept off to a Verona both gloriously reimagined and satisfyingly true to the original.

Moreover, throughout its three-hour run time, the Abbey Players' "Romeo and Juliet" continued to deliver on its early promise, wonderfully interweaving dance and song and carrying the audience along in a poignant spiral from the playful to the wrenching.

Director Christopher Donoghue and the entire cast of Abbey Players masterfully embraced this delicate balance between comedy and tragedy, skillfully conveying the way characters' choices unsettle this equilibrium. Dennis Graveline's '25 (Benvolio) and Emma Ribadeneira '24 (Mercutio) delivered brilliantly humorous Act 1 performances that, in the play's climactic turn — and with Mercutio's well-staged plummet from view — only intensified the mounting tragedy.

The set design, too, was a standout, as it pivoted a cube to

reveal faces evoking home, friary, garden, and tomb — none ever far removed from any other. During these scene changes, snippets of Prince songs further underscored thematic connections, confirming Christopher Donoghue's belief that the Minneapolis-born pop star, as "a master of perfectly describing love in both the romantic and friendship realms," could help to remind us that Romeo and Juliet's tragedy involves much more than "a pair of star-crossed lovers."

In fact, even beyond the ways that humor played to sharper tragedy, the Abbey Players excelled in revealing a dynamic range of human suffering. Not only did David Cornwell's '25 (Romeo) and Charlotte Wearne's '27 (Juliet) draw us all too effectively into the beautifully horrifying folly of their deaths, but the entire cast developed a web of relationships beyond the titular characters, heightening the tragic conclusion. In particular, the cast powerfully developed Lord and Lady Capulet's devastating relationship, Benvolio and Mercutio's affection, Paris' hapless good intentions, and the often unacknowledged losses

## The Abbey Players Season Schedule

- MISERY:** September 6-15
- DANCE IN THE LIGHT:** October 13
- 1776:** November 8-17
- 24 HOUR THEATRE PROJECT:** January 25
- THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST:** February 14-23
- TWELFTH NIGHT:** March 21-29
- THE DANCE SHOWCASE:** April 4-6

the Prince himself endures. It seems particularly appropriate that the Abbey Performing Arts Department should so deftly highlight the interwoven bonds within a community. The Benedictine hallmark of community, after all, shows not only in the thriving and creative family they embody but also in the ways they invite us to experience the human condition through art. If you missed the opportunity to catch The Abbey Players' "Romeo and Juliet" this spring, be sure to add the upcoming 141st season to your calendars now! **BAC**



SCAN TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR VISIT bac.edu/abbeyplayers

# Fertile ground for God's work

*Father James Raber  
is already bearing  
fruit for the Kingdom*

**FATHER JAMES RABER, OSB, IS HOME.** He returned to the Abbey after his final semester at seminary. The fruit of many years spent in study and discernment, this homecoming anticipates

**BY LAURA  
SCHAFER**  
*Editor*

an August ordination to the priesthood — and a future rooted in monastic stability, community, and joyful service to God. In fact, Fr. James' vocation story is a kind of odyssey: a story about literal and figurative journeys, all leading home.

## Restless

Growing up admiring his father's naval career, Fr. James decided early on that he would follow in his dad's footsteps. He graduated from the Maine Maritime Academy in 2006 and spent the next several years sailing around the world from Japan to Greece to India. He experienced a diverse range of landscapes, peoples, and cultures, encountering the vivid particularity of each place. Yet he grew restless. Something was missing. He was seeing the world as he had always hoped to do, but he still couldn't shake the conviction that there was something more.

This sense of something unfulfilled increasingly drew him to the rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet. Standing on the bridge wing of a ship late at night, alone, he would sing the chaplet out over the ocean, almost shouting it. No one heard him but the One who had formed the depths above and the depths below. Had he not had the rosary during this time, he says, "I would have been adrift." As it was, wandering around the world, he finally thought, "Well, Lord, I've tried everything else to be happy. I guess I'll try You."

Soon after, the future priest stayed in Charleston, South Carolina, for a period and connected with a group for young adult Catholics. He joined Bible studies, attended daily Mass, and worked to grow in his prayer life. Still, he hungered for more. So Fr. James decided to make a pilgrimage, flying to Paris and making his way south to the Camino de Santiago, then walking the storied route.

Early in the journey, a fellow pilgrim asked why he was walking the Camino. He startled himself by replying, "I'm discerning the priesthood." As soon as he said it, he recognized this as the overwhelming, unarguable truth. "Oh... I'm discerning the priesthood!"



Br. Bede McKeon, Br. Leo Young, and Fr. James Raber (left to right) walk the halls of the historic monastery.

### Sharper focus

In the days that followed, as he traveled and prayed, Fr. James decided to explore the possibility of a vocation within the vows of a religious order. When he investigated the Dominicans and the Jesuits in the coming months, however, he realized that he didn't know his faith as well as he had assumed. So instead, he paused to search for Catholic colleges, finding Belmont Abbey in the process. Something fell into place when he realized that Belmont Abbey College was attached to a monastery.

This "something" found sharper focus during a one-hour phone call with Abbot Placid Solari not long after. Speaking to the Abbot from aboard a ship near Long Beach, California, he admitted his unfamiliarity with Benedictine monasticism, aside from what he had read about the hallmark of hospitality: that the community welcomes each person as Christ.

But this was more than enough. At the end of the conversation, the future priest asked to discern with the monks of Belmont Abbey, recognizing that Abbot Placid had already welcomed him as Christ, even at a distance of thousands of miles. His initial discernment

at the Abbey began in Advent of 2013. In less than six months, he had moved in.

Praying with his confreres, living in the community toward which he'd been traveling without knowing it, Fr. James discovered peace and stability. In fact, being away from communal prayer — even by occasional necessity — delivers him near physical pain. He experienced homesickness for the first time in his life when he traveled to St. Meinrad's Archabbey to begin his seminary studies in 2019. Today, he still feels the comfort of profound continuity and the guidance of Mary, Help of Christians, the patroness of the Abbey, for whom he has a special devotion.

"When you find what you're looking for," Fr. James urges students, you have to allow yourself to "recognize that you've found it." It's deceptively simple advice, drawn from a joyful heart, finally at home.

After his ordination this fall, Fr. James assumes the role of Campus Chaplain, ministering to students and doing everything in his power to nourish their faith lives. Already, he eagerly anticipates increasing the availability of sacraments by

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*As a novice, Fr. James planted two American Chestnut trees in sight of the basilica. Today, their roots embrace the same soil from which the original Belmont Abbey monks formed the bricks of Stowe Hall and the monastery almost 150 years ago.*

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adding Masses, Confessions, and Solemn Benediction.

He also looks forward to sponsoring camping trips, playing board games, and ultimately welcoming all members of the college community to his office in the Abbot Walter Coggin Student Center, extending the home and the Benedictine hospitality that has been central to his journey.

The Abbey is a "wonderful ground for God's work," he says. It's a place where he seeks to "work with others on their way to heaven," always with the contagious joy of homecoming. **BAC**

**As chaplain, Fr. James provides prayerful support in all aspects of campus community.**





Chrysostom (right) and Timothy Sica (left) join the ranks of Abbey alumni on May 11, 2024.

# Brotherly love *How the Sica brothers found their vocations at the Abbey*

**BROTHER CHRYSOSTOM SICA** and his brother, Timothy, not only graduated from the Abbey this past May, but they are also embarking on unique vocational paths, each with its own set of challenges and rewards.

Timothy Sica married Maura Martin '24 on June 1, a few weeks after graduation. Brother Chrysostom is preparing to make his Solemn Vows as a Belmont Abbey monk at year's end. And both men credit the Abbey for playing a pivotal role in their vocational journeys.

Timothy met his wife during their freshman year in the Honors College. He says the experience of "growing together in the pursuit of the Good... through studying the same things and then coming together in prayer" ultimately led them to marriage.

"The Abbey taught me to take joy in friendship and discipline

[in] "the pursuit of the Good" and in "recognizing the Good that is present in each task." He adds that the Abbey's monks model "how to serve the common good and be of service to others," which led Timothy to consider his own calling. In the vocation of marriage, he found a fullness of service, joyful sacrifice, and a reflection of "the Trinity and of God's relationship with the Church."

Halfway through his own undergraduate career — and in the same year that Timothy enrolled as a freshman — Br. Chrysostom entered the novitiate, making temporary vows as a member of the monastic community. He recalls first attending the Liturgy of the Hours out of curiosity, only to be drawn more and more powerfully to monastic life.

"Praying the psalms repeatedly, slowly, and intentionally in community — and having them sink into my bones made me much

more aware of who I am, much more aware of what I desire, what I'm afraid of, how I stand before God, how I stand in communion with other people."

As Br. Chrysostom grew to know his brother monks, he found in them "a faith that's very personal, very deep, but at the same time very unassuming and very practical." His undergraduate formation in philosophy further influenced his discernment. "Learning to seek Truth, learning to pursue wisdom and excellence, learning discipline, learning to write and think clearly and with precision" left him "a profoundly different person."

When they crossed the stage at their shared 2024 commencement, the Sica brothers moved with joy toward the particular vocations they had discerned at Belmont Abbey. May God continue to bless them as their lifelong callings unfold! **BAC**

**BY LAURA  
SCHAFFER**  
*Editor*

*New graduate degree reflects Belmont Abbey's  
commitment to classical and liberal education*

# Classical education on the rise

**LATE LAST YEAR**, Belmont Abbey College launched a new Master of Arts in Classical and Liberal Education, and the results are already showing.

Dr. Joseph Wysocki, newly appointed Provost, said the new program is in keeping with the college's values and commitment to the renaissance of classical and liberal education.

"Belmont Abbey College believes in the development of the whole person — mind, body, and soul," he explained.

**BY JULIA  
LONG**

*Director of  
Enrollment  
Marketing*

The new master of arts program will provide the formation that is necessary for graduates to flourish as educators and

administrators in classical K-12 school settings. Through the study of classical pedagogy, the great books, the liberal arts, and the Christian intellectual tradition, students will examine life's fundamental questions and explore how practically to apply these principles in forming students for the True, the Good, and the Beautiful in this secular world.

The program is in step with a rise in classical education. The John Locke Foundation reports that from 2020 to 2023, the classical homeschooling network has seen a 20 percent increase in student enrollment. This trend is sparked by parents who are seeking alternative learning environments for their children, focusing on the liberal arts and the pursuit of beauty, goodness, and truth.

Belmont Abbey College has a storied history of educating students in the liberal arts so that in all things, God may be glorified.



**Classical education forms students as ethical and critical thinkers, well-equipped to pursue the Good throughout their lives.**

The Honors College at Belmont Abbey is an example of a thriving classical and liberal environment, with students engrossed in the study of the Great Books and what it means to live a good life.

During the undergraduate years, the college helps instill a foundation of critical thinking in students so they can lead virtuous lives. At the graduate level, individuals come to Belmont with career and industry experience and a desire to lead.

"The new Master of Arts in Classical and Liberal Education takes this idea of educating the whole person and edifies educators on how to implement this approach so they can form future generations," said Wysocki.

Serving as an alternative to state licensure, current or aspiring educators can pursue the knowledge and skills needed to make an impact on future generations.

Developed with administrators, educators, and non-profit leaders in mind, the new master's program follows an

online, synchronous format with 30 credit hours required for graduation. The program is designed intentionally with a pathway for students to earn up to 12 graduate credits for prior learning through their completion of teaching apprenticeships at the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education (ICLE) and the Center for Independent Research on Classical Education (CiRCE).

"The overwhelming support for the college's launch of this degree has us filled with hope for the revival of classical and liberal education," Wysocki said.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Laszlo Pallos, the college has appointed an endowed Vilma György Pallos Chair in Classical Education (See page 30). Dr. Christine Boor '11 will oversee the new master of arts program, through which the college will form a new generation of educators and, by extension, students seeking the freedom of education that is oriented toward the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. **BAC**



**SCAN TO LEARN**  
more about the  
Master of Arts  
in Classical and  
Liberal Education

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bac.edu/  
ma-classical



# A Beacon *The Belmont House affirms the college's tradition* on Capitol Hill

**LOCATED A BLOCK EAST OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS** and a seven-iron drive from the U.S. Capitol and the Supreme Court, The Belmont House on Capitol Hill exists in service to the Belmont community.

**BY EMMETT  
MCGROARTY**  
*Executive Director  
of Belmont House*

As it does with all its activities, the College launched Belmont House to further its mission to “educate in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified.”

In advancing that mission, we are guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition, the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the Benedictine spirit of prayer and work — *ora et labora* — and its charism of hospitality (collectively, the Benedictine gifts).

**Blocks from  
the Capitol,  
Belmont  
House brings  
Benedictine  
hospitality  
and stability  
to the defense  
of religious  
liberty.**



The Belmont House is a necessary affirmation or, in a certain sense, a defense of the College's tradition dating to its founding in 1876. Through their gifts, the Abbey founders have given the wider community the benefit of over 1,500 years of the order's lessons in spirituality and human dignity.

### Why now?

Last October, Belmont Abbey College announced the establishment of a permanent residence in Washington with the purchase of a property for its thriving Belmont House, made possible with a \$1.7 million gift from alumnus Dr. Maximo Alvarez. The college established the original Belmont House in 2021. Since then, it has helped to return Christian voices to the public square, promote Judeo-Christian values, and prepare young professionals to engage with our culture and politics in fruitful and ethical ways.

Belmont offers the antidote to modernity's greatest problem — a crisis in the meaning of the human person. Elitists seek to deprive the human person of the freedom to build the Body of Christ, diminishing man to servile status. Elitists cannot abide by individuals and families building their own faith and civic communities. Rather, they arrogate to themselves the power to judge the acceptability of a practice or belief. They disparage eternal truths because even the mere search for such truth undermines their power.

Today, discord pervades civil society. Rather than building unity, elitist dogma purveys conflict, exercising power by pitting one person against another. The government holds the citizenry in contempt. Bit by bit, it confines religious practice to an ever-more-narrow sphere, painting it at best as quaint superstition and at worst as imbued with hate. The



legislature is besieged by infighting and alienation, and its relationship with the executive branch is marked by distrust.

### On Capitol Hill

Our Catholic and Benedictine tradition offers the way forward. That tradition teaches us how to encounter the human person with the hospitality due the *Imago Dei*. It counsels us in forming community, having formed instantiations of democratic society and economic freedom for centuries. The Benedictine charism of hospitality brings persons into proper relationship with each other. The moral imperative of our tradition — to build the Body of Christ — requires making a world that welcomes human flourishing, one *made true* to God's providence.

We are on the verge of a new Catholic moment in the Republic's civic life. With each passing day, prominent social commentators are forming narratives on the significance of Catholic social teaching. This presents a special opportunity to harness the Benedictine tradition to advance the common good and ameliorate the alienation spawned by the crisis of modernity. The human person is oriented to seeking the

Divine and creating community with other persons who, like him, are endowed with liberty. The human person's earthly task is to draw on his gifts to be of service to others and to recognize in others their gifts, and the Benedictine charism teaches how to do this.

Belmont House is on Capitol Hill because politics has a foundational role in our culture. The political apparatus affects virtually every aspect of society — academics, economics, entertainment, education, scientific pursuits, moral formation, environmental stewardship, healthcare, human rights, transportation, urban and rural policy, the arts, and more. Politics cannot be conducted in spiritless alienation. It thus craves the Benedictine gifts and needs those formed in them.

### Why a House?

The designation of our outpost as a house carries symbolic meaning. In his book, *The Architecture of Democracy*, Allan Greenberg contends that the designation of a common building as a house holds profound significance in the United States. "American architecture

**Fr. Elias  
Correa-Torres  
celebrates  
Mass for  
Belmont Abbey  
students  
attending the  
March for Life.**

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embodies the precepts outlined in the founding documents of the Republic.” Viewing the American Experiment through the lens of a professional architect, Greenberg offers warm insight into his adopted country. “Because ‘We the People’ constituted the government, the citizen’s house became the equivalent of the king’s palace, which made the private house our primary expression of civic architecture.”

This led to what Greenberg characterizes as another radical idea: “affixing the suffix -house to public buildings suggests that those structures serve as the citizens’ symbolic home.” That practice gives us names for a slew of public buildings such as the President’s House (the White House), the meetinghouse, the schoolhouse, the courthouse, the statehouse, the firehouse, and the early designation of city hall—the townhouse.

Our house captures the most sacred meaning of real property ownership as a place where a person or community can retreat in privacy to reflect, pray, and socialize. There, the person can have a secure sense of self and of

his gifts toward building the Body of Christ. With that, he is also better able to appreciate others as *Imago Dei* and thus regard them as having divine gifts for others. This prepares the person for engagement with a wider community.

### Day-to-Day Activities

Belmont House propagates the college’s scholarship among national influencers and publicizes the college’s growing success among those influencers. It builds the Belmont network in Washington for the benefit of the college’s students and faculty and engages in scholarship and policy studies in furtherance of the Belmont mission and Catholic social doctrine. Belmont House also convenes thought leaders to search for truth and develop policy solutions. It serves as the home-away-from-home for visiting Belmont clergy, faculty, and students. Some of our scholarly and policy activities include:

- Launching a speaker series co-sponsored by the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast on “The Political Thought of Michael Novak: An Inquiry into the Spiritual Wealth of Nations.”

The series examines Novak’s work in light of society’s current challenges.

- Authoring an invited scholarly paper: Emmett McGroarty and Brendan McGroarty, “Privacy, Property, and Third-Party Esteem in Arendt’s Constitutionalism” *Laws* 12, no. 5: 75 (2023).

- Hosting multiple events during the annual International Religious Freedom Summit on Capitol Hill.

- Sponsoring a speech at the Capitol Visitors Center by Princeton Professor Robert P. George entitled, “Unborn Children and Equal Protection.”

- In coordination with Belmont’s Office of College Relations, developing an online course entitled *Rights and Freedoms*.

- Sponsoring an event this fall to promote Catholics and Political Parties in *The Future of the Catholic Church in the American Public Order*, edited by Dr. Kenneth L. Grasso and Belmont Abbey’s Dr. Thomas Varacalli.

- Authoring a white paper suggesting legislative and regulatory process reforms to pull government practice back to constitutional order. Due to be published in July 2024 by Pioneer Institute.

- Developing professional and scholastic opportunities for Belmont’s students and recent alumni.

The Belmont House hosts new encounters between our community and civil society. Its underlying premise is that the College and the Benedictine gifts offer civil society the antidote to the conflict and alienation underlying the disordered philosophies that threaten it. We are indeed on the cusp of a Catholic moment and the Belmont community, a repository of Benedictine gifts for nearly 150 years, can lead the way. And, in charity, we must. **BAC**



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**Sr. Mary Elizabeth  
Wusinich, Sister  
of Life and Board  
member of the  
Given Institute,  
speaks at the  
Belmont House  
in preparation for  
the 2022 March  
for Life.**



*Money the Abbey Way continues to enrich BAC students and faculty*

# Taking risks, learning lessons

**I'VE BEEN THINKING** a lot about stewardship since the college launched its Money the Abbey Way financial literacy program in the fall of 2019.

**BY DR. NATHALIE COTÉ**  
*Director of the QEP and Professor of Psychology*

We often think of stewardship as referring to tangible goods such as money, furniture, or land.

But as Brother Leo Young points out in the Abbey's online course on the Benedictine Hallmarks course, stewardship also refers to intentionally making the best use of "intangible gifts such as our own interior talents and abilities."

He notes that awareness of

one's own talents and abilities is an important starting point. As a faculty member, I regularly notice students blossoming with that awareness. As director of the Financial Literacy Program, I also witness the generosity of college alumni and friends who use their own intangible gifts to provide opportunities for students to develop their talents.

Here's an example: Richard Sotell, a retirement plan consultant and financial



planner, spent many years developing his talents and abilities to serve clients. Now, he's making good use of those talents by mentoring Abbey students.

Not only did he make the initial gift that funded the portfolio managed by the BAC Investment Club. Not only does he fly down from Massachusetts several times a year to show students how to evaluate companies, judge the best time to buy stock, and determine when it's time to sell an investment. But in collaboration with the Department of Business, the Department of Biology and Biochemistry, and Money the Abbey Way, he has also taken three groups of Abbey students on field trips to meet investment professionals in New York City and Boston.

"That white paper on an energy company that Rich challenged me to write was a great gift," said Nelson Stafford, Class of 2023, BU major and Finance minor.

"I learned to pay attention to the impact of geopolitics on investments, how to do research and evaluate what is true, and

to construct an argument," said Nelson, now an investment analyst on an asset management and trust team at Cadence Bank in Dallas, Texas.

"He pushed me to take risks. Then, he let me pitch my ideas in those meetings with portfolio managers in New York. That paper gave me something interesting to talk about in my job interviews. I learned a lot about energy distribution, and I continue to read about it."

Sotell intentionally models for students how to network professionally. He draws on his extensive social and professional Rolodex to introduce students to experts in the fields they are interested in. For the Business and Biology field trip last October, he took students Tommy Baird, Jackson Guntharp, Molly Ridler, and Savannah Willis, as well as Dr. Abi Cousino, assistant professor of biochemistry, to visit two prestigious Boston-based investment management firms specializing in investing in healthcare and life science companies.

They also visited the MIT Museum and met Professor John Quelch at Harvard Business School. Now, to build on those connections, a group of students and faculty is intentionally learning some fundraising skills to be able to take another group of biology, biochemistry, and business students back to Boston in the fall.

Our students and faculty continue to learn thoughtful and intentional stewardship of tangible and intangible resources, thanks to Rich Sotell and all those friends and alumni who support Money the Abbey Way. **BAC**



**Rich Sotell (center) challenges students Molly Ridler, Savannah Willis, Jackson Guntharp, and Tommy Baird (left to right) to explore Business and Biotech.**



# Flannery O'Connor: Enduring icon

*Reflections on her work,  
legacy, and connections to  
Belmont Abbey*

**NINETY-NINE YEARS AFTER HER BIRTH,** Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964) remains one of the most distinct and powerful writers ever to come out of this country. While she was able

**BY DR. FARRELL  
O'GORMAN**  
*English  
Department Chair*

to create only a small body of work before she died at age 39 due to complications from lupus, other prominent writers of her era immediately recognized her genius.

Trappist monk Thomas Merton wrote that O'Connor would ultimately best be compared not with her contemporaries but rather with "someone like Sophocles, for all the truth and all the craft with which she shows man's fall and dishonor."

Like Sophocles' *Oedipus*, O'Connor's characters move from confident moral blindness to ego-shattering confrontation

with their own flaws. Those characters inhabit the rural South in which O'Connor lived out most of her own life and which, she insisted, sustained her work via its peculiarly "Christ-haunted" culture.

From this particular soil, O'Connor—a devout Catholic—created characters who fall prey to the universal temptation of idolatry. They worship anything

but God, including their region's fading manners and mores; their nation's narratives of independence, self-reliance, and innocence; their presumed places in local hierarchies of class and race; and, most fundamentally, their own intellects.

These characters are frequently liberated from such idols by violence that goes hand-in-hand with humor, irony, and — as O'Connor saw it — God's grace.

Her comic fixation on human flaws and divine redemption alike places her in a line of modern Christian satirists running from Jonathan Swift to Evelyn Waugh. O'Connor also mirrored the Irish writer James Joyce in her tendency to concentrate the short story on a final epiphany, as the narrative builds stealthily but steadily toward

unveiling a previously unseen reality.

O'Connor's work restores the term "epiphany" to its original Greek and Christian context, in which it referred specifically to a manifestation or revelation of the divine.

Only a few of her stories — including the aptly named *Revelation* — render the divine source of such epiphanies fully explicit. Epiphanies in her fiction vary in other respects as well. In some stories, the narrative voice makes clear the ultimately spiritual dimensions of a character's journey. In others, those dimensions are suggested only in dialogue between characters themselves.

Some revelations unfold in a sudden moment. Others take hours, months, or half a lifetime. In some cases, the reader, not a character, may be the one to experience a revelation — and even that requires time. O'Connor would not have it any other way. Any good story, she affirmed, "successfully resists paraphrase," lingering with the reader as it "hangs on and expands in the mind."

O'Connor crafted her fiction to provide a glimpse or intimation of something infinitely larger than the mind. She affirmed that even lives as seemingly small and obscure as those of her country characters provide an inexhaustible source of the story — narrow as they may initially appear to be, they open onto eternity. Those lives cannot be reduced to formulae or placed into limiting categories of any kind. The more one looks at them, the more there is to see.

### Telling O'Connor's story today

O'Connor would be the first to say, "Let my writing speak for itself." However, others have spoken about it from the beginning, including major authors who have admired and sought to emulate her — a number of

accomplished filmmakers have as well. The 2019 documentary "Flannery" and this year's biopic "Wildcat" have helped to set the stage for even wider popular engagement with her work. The most important tools for such engagement are widely available, as O'Connor's major works have been in print for half a century or more. More recently, smaller pieces stored in archives have been published in book form, including her brief "Prayer Journal" in 2013.

Permission to publish such materials is the responsibility of O'Connor's literary estate, which is overseen by the same trustees responsible for the associated Mary Flannery O'Connor Charitable Trust. The longest-serving trustee was O'Connor's first cousin, Louise Florencourt, who assumed her role at the Trust's founding in 1995. Last year, she appointed me as her successor.

In this role, I have the pleasure of supporting specific ongoing projects related to O'Connor's legacy. These include the Fordham University Press book series "Studies in the Catholic Imagination" and a new interpretive center at O'Connor's home at Andalusia Farm in Milledgeville, Georgia. In 2022, the National Park Service designated her home a National Historic Landmark. Other projects that have received support from the Trust include dramatic performances of O'Connor stories across the U.S. and O'Connor conferences in Europe.

One such project is the Abbot Leo Haid Symposium on Catholicism in the South, which Belmont Abbey College will host in October to celebrate Belmont Abbey's founding abbot and his enduring legacy for the region.

O'Connor herself believed that Catholic writers and Catholics generally need to pay attention to place. Place matters in a faith founded on the Incarnation and



**Dr. Farrell O'Gorman with Flannery O'Connor's cousin, Louise Florencourt.**

the sacraments. She worked to promote Catholicism in her own place. She would doubtlessly be pleased to see the growth of the faith in Georgia and the Carolinas — in what the Church calls the Ecclesiastical Province of Atlanta. The symposium will, in part, allow all of us an opportunity to reflect on the deeper history of this province.

That history includes vital connections between Belmont Abbey and O'Connor herself. Her father, Edward, was a graduate of Savannah's Benedictine High School, which recognized Abbot Leo Haid as its "president" from its founding in 1902 until his death in 1924.

O'Connor's father graduated

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**Maya Hawke portrays Flannery O'Connor in the 2023 film, 'Wildcat.'**





## Conference probes Flannery O'Connor's political thought

**DOZENS OF STUDENTS**, faculty, staff, and visitors from four East Coast colleges and universities were privileged to gather in the Haid Ballroom Feb. 23-24 for a unique conference on “The Political Thought of Flannery O'Connor.”

Dr. Joe Wysocki '04, then Dean of the Honors College and now Provost, presented a stimulating challenge to the attendees, urging them to consider the topic's significance to our contemporary political understanding. Scholars typically don't consider O'Connor's stories or essays from a political angle, but Wysocki pointed to the broader, more classical sense of “the political,” rather than the narrower sense often dominant in thoughts and conversations about the public sphere.

Broadly speaking, “the political” involves human action, with its implications for prudence, justice, and the reality of our natural and cultural limitations. A narrow conception of politics deals with practical justice, implemented via laws, policies, and institutions. A broader conception explores the nature of reality and human experience.

Attendees were divided into four seminar groups guided by Abbey professors and conference partners. Seminars explored short stories and essays, including “Parker's Back,” “Everything

that Rises Must Converge,” and “The Fiction Writer and His Country,” delving into issues of vision, relationship, identity, and barriers to understanding — all of which directly and critically affect politics and community.

In his keynote address that evening, Dr. Jerome Foss, a professor of politics at Saint Vincent College, brought the day's conversations into focus by exploring O'Connor's moral vision, drawn from a faith that expanded rather than narrowed her authentic, complex, and courageous experience of this reality.

As Dr. Farrell O'Gorman further examined this vision, its implications for the human community became even more apparent. “One must have a sense of community,” O'Gorman said, “which entails some appreciation of difference in order to recognize the value of individuals.”

In keeping with the spirit of Benedictine liberal arts education, the conference fostered a strong sense of community and shared purpose. It embraced the necessity of honest and creative engagement as a community — the dignity of the individual and the importance of a vision rooted in love and Truth. Participants' takeaway was a reminder of what it means to cultivate authentic academic discourse and why it is essential to do so. **BAC**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

around 1913. An occasional writer himself, Edward O'Connor later became a tremendous supporter of his daughter's creative gifts as she grew from girlhood into adolescence — and he himself had initially been shaped in part by the work of Leo Haid. To a degree, so was O'Connor herself. From 1936-38, she attended Sacred Heart School in Savannah, a coed lower school attached to a parish staffed by monks of Belmont Abbey at that time. Savannah's Benedictine priory was adjacent to the parish church.

Two boys attending Sacred Heart School in the same years as Flannery O'Connor grew up to become monks of Belmont Abbey — Oscar Burnett, who served as abbot from 1991-99, and John Oetgen, who, as Father John, taught English for over five decades.

Before becoming monks, both — like O'Connor's father — graduated from Benedictine High School. Father John mentored my own father when he was a student at Belmont Abbey and later when he was a coach. That was over half a century before O'Connor's cousin asked me to step into her place with the Trust. She did so without knowing all of these connections but with a full appreciation for the fact that I — like my father — am a Catholic whose family has lived in the Carolinas since before the Civil War. As such, I shared O'Connor's experience of growing up Catholic in a region that, until the 21st century, had very few Catholics at all. My father's generation, like her own, was deeply indebted to Belmont Abbey for doing so much to help plant and sustain the faith here.

Flannery O'Connor, then, has connections to the Abbey's past but also to its present and future. The woman who is internationally recognized as America's greatest Catholic writer knew her roots in her native soil and — I have no doubt — would want to see Leo Haid's legacy thrive here today. **BAC**

# 2024 Benedict Leadership Award

*The Benedict Leadership Institute honors Robert Luddy*

**ROBERT LUDDY RECEIVED** the Benedict Leadership Award in the Haid Ballroom on March 14, 2024. Luddy is president and founder of CaptiveAire Systems; chairman and founder of Franklin Academy, St. Thomas More Academy, and Thales Academy; and founder of Thales College. He has received numerous awards, including the Benemerenti Medal for exemplary service to the Church and community and the Ludwig von Mises Entrepreneurship

Award for “entrepreneurial success and devotion to the free-market ideal.”

**BY CONOR GALLAGHER**

CEO, *Tan Books*

Great leaders do not shy away from the shadows. Instead, they discern within them the silhouettes of opportunities. Great leaders see not just the darkness all around but gleaming vistas far beyond the horizon.

Great Catholic leaders and visionaries have emerged throughout history, particularly in times of darkness. Their vision is born from this incredibly rare combination of leadership and faith.

This fusion of leadership and faith is the heartbeat of the Benedict Leadership Award. This annual award is a pulsing reminder that the seeds of renewal lie amidst the darkness. Leaders know how to look past the difficulty of the moment and find a reason to have hope.

The esteemed recipients of this award are embodiments of this combination of leadership and faith. Leonard Leo’s often unseen work led to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and many other pivotal Supreme Court cases. Justice Clarence Thomas, a stalwart in the public square, is leaving a legacy for the future of our nation. Carl Anderson of the Knights of



**Robert Luddy receives the 2024 BLI award. Left to right: Abbot Placid, President Thierfelder, Robert Luddy, Maria Luddy, Chuck Cornelio, Conor Gallagher.**

Columbus and Michael Warsaw of EWTN have led two of the most important Catholic institutions in the world. Archbishop Charles Chaput has shown us how the faithful must live in the public square. Nina Shea, our recipient last year, has provided behind-the-scenes protection for persecuted Christians throughout the world in heroic and humble fashion.

Robert Luddy captures the very essence of leadership, particularly in his life of entrepreneurship. The entrepreneur, a term elegantly defined as one who converts something of lesser value into greater value, mirrors the alchemist of lore, transmuting base metals into gold. This is what saints do, by the way. They toil, temper, and elevate the mundane to the divine through grace. They harness this divine grace to transform the lukewarm into the fervent, the scattered into the unified, the natural into the supernatural. Consider Saint Benedict, who gathered the solitary monks of the desert and forged an order that has stood the test of time. His Rule, an entrepreneurial masterpiece, turned

disparate zeal into a symphony of order, prayer, and work.

Our awardee, Robert Luddy, is a modern-day reflection of this Benedictine enterprise. His career, blossoming from a modest investment into the flourishing CaptiveAire, illustrates the essence of entrepreneurial spirit. Through the schools he has founded, such as Thales Academy and Thales College, he shows his vision for transforming the raw promise of youth into the refined gold of educated, character-formed leaders. With the skilled craftsmanship of a business genius, he has made first-rate education and character formation affordable.

Through all this, Robert Luddy never hides his deep faith, prayer life, or commitment to Holy Mother Church. Due to his humility, however, he does not wear it on his sleeve either. In his endeavors, we witness his vision, his leadership, and his virtue, a testament that aligns with the criteria for the Benedict Leadership Award. Thank you, Mr. Luddy, for reminding us of what faith-based leadership is. **BAC**

Mauro and Katie Ruggieri met at Belmont Abbey, and this summer they celebrate 50 years of marriage.



# Finding a home *away* from home

*The Ruggieri Scholarship commemorates dreams come true*

**BELMONT ABBEY IS A SPECIAL PLACE** and has been since its founding in 1876 as Saint Mary's College. So many dreams have been born here at the only Catholic college in North Carolina.

**BY MIKE WATSON**  
*Special to BAC  
Magazine*

The college's impact is felt most profoundly in the alumni who discovered here a founding touchstone for the beginning of their lives — and sometimes their lives together. “The Abbey allows students the freedom, intellectually and spiritually, to explore the riches of the Catholic tradition. It provides them with a home. It is a place where people can make something good happen if they choose to.”

Mauro Ruggieri '72 chose to, as did Catherine “Katie” Kirk '72. Both found a true home at Belmont Abbey. Mauro, a first-generation Italian student from New Jersey, was the first in his family to consider college. Katie, who has Irish roots, came to Belmont from Salisbury, North Carolina. She was the first female in her family of seven to go to college. The Abbey drew them

both in similar ways — a personal invitation from friends who knew they belonged at the Abbey.

The nuns at Katie's Catholic school in Salisbury told her about Belmont Abbey and Sacred Heart College. “I loved those nuns,” she said. They helped her with her application and the financial aid process, leading to her acceptance. She was excited at the prospect



of continuing her education at a school run by the Sisters of Mercy, so she decided Sacred Heart was the place for her without even making a visit!

Mauro was planning on attending college in Connecticut, even though his guidance counselor told him that he “wasn't college material.” Anyone who knows Mauro will say that the easiest way to get him to do anything is to tell him he can't.

“I wasn't supposed to go to Belmont Abbey,” he said. “A friend at work, who was also a teacher at a Catholic high school, knew of the Abbey because his nephews went there. ‘You need to check out this school in North Carolina called Belmont Abbey!’ But he warned me that if I visit the school, I'll end up going there.”

Mauro wrote to Belmont Abbey and got a letter inviting him to





**The Ruggieri family continues to grow and thrive, enjoying a beautiful legacy through the love of Mauro and Katie.**

visit. “At that time,” he recalled, “schools were very impersonal; you were just a number.”

The personal invitation enticed him, and he visited at Easter. “It was warm and beautiful driving down Abbey Lane; everyone made me feel at home.” He returned to the car and told his dad he was going to Belmont as they headed back to New Jersey. The whole trip was accomplished in a single day!

Like most places that live in our hearts, it’s the people that make Belmont Abbey unique. “In New Jersey,” Mauro said, “they pigeon-holed you. They guided you in the college path or not, and I was never really taught how to write an essay. In freshman English, they said, ‘We are doing a composition.’ I was confused. I think I got an F on that assignment.”

Someone told Mauro to see Brother Robert, who could help

him. Brother Robert discovered that Mauro played the saxophone. “If you play the saxophone in my band,” the brother said, “I’ll teach you how to write an essay and get you through that class.” So Mauro played in the band and passed freshman English.

Mauro also found a mentor in Professor Jack Hanahan. As a freshman, Mauro took Spanish II even though he didn’t take Spanish in high school. “I signed up for Spanish II because I didn’t want to take two semesters of Spanish. It probably was a mistake to take it,” he explained.

Hanahan challenged him, but Mauro struggled through the course. “He helped me get a scholarship and a job on campus, and we became friends. It paid off to take the course in the end.”

Katie, who took classes at Belmont Abbey as a Sacred Heart

## THE RUGGIERI FAMILY

**SCHOLARSHIP** is granted to a rising junior or senior Accounting major from New Jersey or North Carolina. The student must be in good academic standing with a GPA of 3.0 or higher and must reapply for consideration each year. The scholarship awardees are determined by the Office of Financial Aid.

student, was thrilled for Mauro. “The professors cared and helped whenever they could. Belmont Abbey took a kid who couldn’t even write an essay and turned him around, and he graduated *magna cum laude*” — much to Mauro’s chagrin!

The Abbey provided a place for Katie and Mauro to find a “home away from home,” where they felt comfortable and able to find their path, passion . . . and each other. They met at a fraternity function and became friends, sharing an occasional phone call. It wasn’t until their senior year that they began dating — “the stars began to align.”

Mauro and Katie celebrated 50 years of marriage in June. Marking that milestone is only done by recognizing where it all began. The Ruggieris’ four children and eight grandchildren initiated the Ruggieri Family Scholarship to commemorate how Belmont Abbey has blessed their family.

Belmont is not just the place where Mauro and Katie met, but it’s the home where they found their lives together. The faculty inspired and instructed them. More importantly, they cared for them and their success.

That made their children want to honor their parents’ “home away from home” with this scholarship. The Abbey embraces their call to “provide you with a home . . . a place where people can make something good happen if they choose to!” **BAC**



# *Unprecedented Generosity*





The extended Made True Campaign seeks to restore the Abbey's historic core, beginning with a new monastery for our beloved monks.

## *Belmont Abbey raises its sights with \$150 million capital campaign*

**BY LAURA SCHAFFER**

*Editor*

### **A LITTLE MORE THAN A YEAR AGO,**

Belmont Abbey College announced a historic \$100 million campaign, Made True, by which we hoped not only to honor 150 years of Benedictine liberal arts education in the South but also to catalyze new growth and new ways of embracing our most essential mission to glorify God in all things.

Your response was overwhelming!

An unprecedented wave of generosity has already raised over \$100 million and set in motion a series of blessings and initiatives even beyond what we could have anticipated. Over the last year, your gifts have helped to:

- Transform our science programs with new high-tech, state-of-the-art labs.
- Lay the groundwork for future growth with an enlarged, upgraded dining hall.
- Solidify our faithful, authentic voice with a new, permanent home for the Belmont House in Washington, D.C. (See page 14 for more.)
- Secure commitments that will grow our endowment fivefold and help secure the college's future.
- Establish the foundation for a new performing arts center that will serve our college and community. (See page 8 for more.)

In the last few months alone, such generosity has even brought a new master's degree program in Classical and Liberal Education from conception to living reality with the announcement of the Vilma György Pallos Endowed Chair. (See page 30 for more.)



**Even beyond the prayerful presence so central to campus life, the monks continue to serve the college as faculty, staff, and faithful mentors.**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

A program that existed only as a distant possibility mere months ago is receiving Fall applications and preparing, over the coming years, to engage and transform American education with an infusion of classical educators in the Benedictine liberal arts tradition.

Witnessing your remarkable generosity has been a joyous and profoundly humbling experience. So many of you have already risen to the challenge and the inspiration embodied by the words Made True. We are deeply grateful not only for the faithful kindness of alums and longtime benefactors but also for the enthusiastic support of new friends and partners in mission. You inspire our confidence and our hope that

God’s grace will accomplish more through this mission than we could ever have foreseen even 12 short months ago.

**Campaign Expansion**

Thanks to you, we have expanded our campaign goal to \$150 million by the Abbey’s 150th anniversary in 2026. This new goal allows us to respond to our society’s ever-increasing challenges with three new and heightened emphases:

**10 Endowed Chairs (\$15 million).** Endowed chairs maintain and fortify the expertise that supports our core values. Help sustain excellence and virtue in programs across the arts and sciences and embrace a future Made Secure.

**150 Scholarships for Honors College Students (\$15 million).**

The epitome of the Belmont Abbey College experience, the Honors College engages students in pursuing Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, forming the ethical, creative, and critical thinkers our culture needs. Help revitalize society with young leaders and embrace a future Made Free.

**New Monastery (\$20 million).**

A new monastery offers the chance to celebrate and renew the Benedictine commitment to stability, which lies at the heart of Belmont Abbey’s campus, mission, and history. Help provide a new home for our beloved monks’ growing community and embrace a future Made Strong. (See page 32 for more.)

Here, on the eve of our 150th anniversary, we ask for your support to continue this momentum and ensure the future of Belmont Abbey College.

It is with joyful hope that we invite you to take this next step with us. With you, we are forever Made True.

### Endowed chairs

Inspired by your generous response to Made True, Belmont Abbey College hopes to establish 10 endowed across a range of fields and disciplines, maintaining and further cultivating our community of demonstrably exceptional faculty.

Endowed chairs attract and retain the highest caliber of faculty excellence. They draw gifted scholars who will contribute to essential student formation and the rich intellectual and community life among faculty. The entire Belmont Abbey College community thrives when students encounter superlative expertise in a given discipline, while colleagues encourage and challenge one another in the fruitful dynamics of academic culture.

*U.S. News and World Report* named Belmont Abbey No. 1 in undergraduate teaching among all southern colleges last year. We celebrated this recognition on behalf of those who give their time, intellect, and energy to educate the next generation of young leaders. However, well before any announcement, we knew that the excellence and virtue at the heart of an Abbey education have always depended on the excellence and virtue of our professors.

By helping to establish endowed chairs, you will initiate new stability within this excellence and virtue. Your gift can maintain in perpetuity the expertise and wisdom by which world-class professors form and inspire young



Each new class of Abbey students carries on a tradition of excellence and virtue begun in 1876.

men and women across academic disciplines.

### Honors College scholarships

The extension of Made True creates an opportunity to engage Belmont Abbey's mission in other profound and innovative ways as well, supporting essential programs and initiatives by responding to the needs that follow their thriving expansion. As the liberal arts cornerstone of campus life, the Honors College's growth and success embody the vitality of Benedictine and classical education and the growing recognition that our society desperately needs authentically educated men and women.

A great books program in the

tradition of Benedictine liberal arts and classical education, Belmont Abbey's Honors College engages students in the riches of the Western canon, forming a thriving community of creative, principled, and critical thinkers who establish lifelong friendships in the shared pursuit of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

As one of the three goals enlivening the decision to extend Made True, the Abbey hopes to extend 150 endowed scholarships to Honors College students, creating a culture of responsive generosity by which Honors graduates would be encouraged to give to the next class of students the same riches of education they received.

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In addition to supporting the continued growth of the Honors College, this community-centered approach to philanthropy seeks to cultivate a profound sense of gratitude and generosity among students and alumni, modeling the kind of shared life that embraces human flourishing and unites in the stewardship of a valued tradition.

Help our students embrace the Benedictine hallmarks of community and stewardship by creating new, meaningful ways of inviting them into their lives. Your gift will provide a formative education in the Great Books

tradition and catalyze the vivid chain reaction by which generosity begets generosity and blessings beget blessings.

### **New Monastery**

Since its founding, Belmont Abbey College has depended on the monastic community for essential strength, support, and leadership.

In fact, throughout the college's 148-year life, the monks have offered prayer, sacrifice, and sacramental nourishment to all members of the Belmont Abbey family. Welcoming each person with hospitality, love, and prayerful humility is central to the

Benedictine way of life. The monks have served Belmont Abbey as professors, administrators, spiritual directors, friends, and stewards, dedicating their entire lives to God in the Abbey's particular needs and realities. Consequently, they have quietly changed the lives of thousands of students — and the countless thousands of lives our students have touched.

Without the monks, there would be no college. It's also true that without them, the very face of the Catholic Church in the South could not be what it is today. When the first monks arrived in 1876, North Carolina contained an estimated 800 Catholic

**Benedictine liberal arts education engages students in pursuit of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful throughout the Western intellectual tradition.**



families, making the area “mission territory” and ultimately placing the monastery, the college, and the entire region under Bishop (Abbot) Leo Haid’s pastoral care.

Even after the Vatican established the North Carolina diocese in 1924, Belmont Abbey priests continued to serve as pastors at St. Michael’s Parish. To this day, the Abbey maintains fraternal relationships with local parishes while helping to educate seminarians and train deacons for the diocese. (See page 46.)

Despite the monks’ essential role in the life of the college and even the Catholic South, the monastery’s growing maintenance and repair concerns have remained—at the monks’ insistence—the last priority for many years, always postponed in deference to the college’s needs. Yet, as the nearly 150-year-old building continues to age, its facilities, especially for the elderly and infirm, have become woefully inadequate.

So, as part of the Made True Campaign, we invite you to help us build a new monastery here on campus. This new home will provide the necessary space and



facilities for incoming vocations and aging community members while freeing up the historic monastery for renovation as much-needed classroom and office space.

Any member of the Belmont Abbey community can point to some concrete service the monks have performed and the roles they’ve played in individual and collective lives, not to mention the education they have offered. But, ultimately, the monastic impact on our college, our diocese, and our culture transcends what we can

know, much less quantify. By their daily faithfulness to God in and through this place, their presence becomes a prayer. We cannot fully understand or sufficiently appreciate that influence on the good of our community.

Help us renew the Benedictine commitment to stability, which lies at the heart of Belmont Abbey’s mission, history, and campus.

Help us build a home for our beloved monks and celebrate all that God continues to do in and through this remarkable place. **BAC**

**Monastery renderings embrace monastic stability and anticipate with joyful hope another 150 years of Benedictine life at Belmont Abbey.**

## A vision rooted in Truth and Love

**EVEN BEFORE THE** start of Made True: the Campaign for Belmont Abbey College, Abbey leadership had discussed and discerned a 10-year strategic plan grounded in Love and Truth.

While the generous response to **Made True** has sparked unprecedented progress toward the goals of this strategic plan, it remains a guiding vision, informing the campaign pillars and undergirding the vision that has elicited such an overwhelming response from benefactors throughout the country.

*Our vision is to provide every student with the knowledge, understanding,*

*and wisdom conducive to a happy life of genuine flourishing, rooted in objective truth and animated by authentic love.*

By 2030, Belmont Abbey aspires to offer ever more meaningful leadership among small Catholic colleges in the United States. Through rejoicing in Truth and Love, securing financial freedom, restoring the public square, and protecting religious liberty, the Abbey continues to embrace its mission “to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified.”

### How you can help

A wave of exceptional generosity has already set in motion countless blessings not only for our students and monastic community but also for our Church, our country, and our culture.

Galvanized by your enthusiastic response and profoundly grateful for the good you continue to accomplish, we invite you to join us in this new phase of Made True: the Campaign for Belmont Abbey College.

Embrace the future you have brought within sight and reach with us toward all that our \$150 million goal can achieve as we mark 150 years of excellence and virtue in the Benedictine tradition.



**SCAN TO EXPLORE** how you can help make the Abbey Secure, Strong, and Free

**OR VISIT**  
[bac.edu/made-true](http://bac.edu/made-true)

# Endowed chair in Classical Education marks a college first

*Dr. and Mrs. Laszlo Pallos fund new program honoring his mother*

**BY LAURA  
SCHAFFER**  
*Editor*

**THE OXIDIZED COPPER** dome of Pannonhalma Archabbey overlooks a forested slope less than two hours from Budapest, Hungary. The UNESCO World Heritage Site was spared when communists seized power in 1948. Today, it stands as a graceful, living monument to Benedictine tradition.

That quiet Benedictine presence in Hungary embraces the Pallos family at its roots. Dr. Laszlo Pallos recalls that his uncle, who was de facto orphaned while a teen, was educated at the Archabbey's high school, where he received formation from the monks. Though Laszlo himself grew up in the United States, he has fond memories of attending Mass at Tihany, the only other Benedictine Abbey in Hungary. His mother's family owns a cottage only a quarter mile from Lake Balaton, a few hundred yards below the Abbey.

Laszlo first encountered Belmont Abbey when he pulled off the highway to visit the Adoration Chapel, which was located just behind Mary Help of Christians Basilica. Brief as the encounter was, the quiet monastic space resonated with his own

experience. When he continued his drive, he carried a piece of the Abbey with him.

Today, Dr. and Mrs. Pallos embrace Benedictine liberal arts education in America by endowing The Vilma György Pallos Chair in Classical Education — the first endowed chair in Belmont Abbey College's history and an unprecedented step toward the Made Free goal of retaining and recruiting exceptional faculty.



This endowed chair honors Laszlo's late mother, Vilma Mária Pallos, née György. A survivor of both World War II and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Vilma's courage, generosity, and resilience surfaced time and again: when she huddled with her sister and parents in hiding from embroiled waves of Soviet and Nazi armies, when she and her husband Loránt trekked almost nine miles overnight to a refugee camp outside Vienna — and when they fled across the Atlantic only to suffer severe economic hardship as new immigrants in America.

Perhaps most of all, Vilma's tenacious spirit showed when she took on the role of primary caregiver for her beloved husband during the last 17 years of his life following a debilitating stroke. Vilma had earned her teaching credentials early in

life. However, turbulent times complicated the possibility of a career in education. Ultimately, the only direct beneficiaries of her gift for teaching were her own children, one of whom was homeschooled by her to read and write Hungarian. He is now proud to dedicate this endowed chair in Classical Education to the memory of his extraordinary mother.

"Kids," Laszlo hears his mother saying, "I don't care if you are a trash collector when you grow up, as long as you're being good."

A woman of profound faith in God's plan — and in the gift that each of her children would be by pursuing the Good — Vilma Pallos understood the most essential purpose of education: developing our gifts and abilities so that we may become authentically our created selves, made free to glorify God in all things.

Thanks to the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Pallos — and Vilma Pallos' legacy — not only will Belmont Abbey begin a dynamic era of ever-greater excellence in liberal education, but young professionals who share Vilma's sacrificial dedication and love of education will gain the requisite skills to instruct and inspire others in turn.

Building on the good work begun in the Belmont Abbey Honors College, where students practice intellectual honesty, critical analysis, empathy and generosity by engaging together in the "Great Conversation" of Western culture, The Vilma

**The legacy of Vilma Gyorgy Pallos will continue to inspire and form future educators for generations to come.**





**By their profound generosity, Dr. and Mrs. Laszlo Pallos have opened unprecedented, new possibilities for Belmont Abbey College and the lives of its students.**

György Pallos Chair in Classical Education will enable educators to offer transformative riches to new generations of students.

“I had long been aware,” Dr. Pallos said, “of BAC’s staunch stand for true, Christian, moral truths — even when confronted by strong, secularist cultural trends — and I wanted to support BAC in light of this. With my background in academia [GTA at Georgia Tech and Assistant Professor at Georgia State], I was aware that an endowed chair is a great honor not only for the faculty member but also for the college as well.”

A program that existed only as a distant possibility a few months ago, the Master of Arts in Classical and Liberal Education, is now preparing for its first semester. Over the coming years, it is ready to engage and transform American education with an infusion of classical educators in the Benedictine liberal arts tradition.

Consequently, the Pallos family’s gift helps to Make Free not just the future of Belmont Abbey College but also the lives and futures of alumni, their students, and all those whose lives they touch. **BAC**



**SCAN TO LEARN**  
more about our  
endowed chair

**OR VISIT**  
[bac.edu/  
appointment](http://bac.edu/appointment)

# Meet Dr. Christine (Basil) Boor ’11

*First Endowed Chair at Belmont Abbey College*

**THE FIRST APPOINTEE** to The Vilma György Pallos Endowed Chair is Dr. Christine Boor ’11, an Belmont Abbey alumna and Honors College professor.

Boor will oversee the development of the new Master of Arts in Classical and Liberal Education (MACLE) program, which aims to provide students with a strong formation

**BY SARAH  
BOLTON**  
*Marketing  
Project Manager*

in classical pedagogy, the Great Books, the liberal arts, and the Catholic intellectual tradition.

“I am honored to continue my time at Belmont Abbey, building upon the foundation of Classical Education that began with the Honors College. I’m excited to witness MACLE graduates’ growth, accomplishments, and contributions for years to come,” she said.

This program will enlighten classical educators on how to form their students in moral, intellectual, and theological virtues.

Dr. Joseph Wysocki, Dean of the Honors College and Provost of Belmont Abbey College expressed his enthusiasm for the establishment of The Vilma György Pallos Endowed Chair and the new program. “This chair and program will enable us to offer transformative riches to new generations of students. We are grateful to Vilma Pallos for her inspiring legacy and to Dr. and Mrs. Pallos for their generous support. Dr. Boor is a faithful advocate of classical education, and I am thrilled to watch her



**Dr. Boor, beloved Honors professor, will bring her joyful passion for the True, the Good, and the Beautiful to her new position as The Vilma György Pallos Chair in Classical Education.**

assume this role.”

Belmont Abbey College welcomes its first cohort for the Master of Arts in Classical and Liberal Education program this fall. Tailored for individuals deeply passionate about classical education, this degree aims to equip young professionals with the essential formation required to flourish as educators and administrators within the classical K-12 settings. (See page 13 for more.)

Endowed chairs like The Vilma György Pallos Chair in Classical Education are instrumental in maintaining and fortifying the expertise that supports the college’s core values. With Boor’s involvement, Belmont Abbey College will continue to shape the future of classical education and empower educators to make a lasting impact on their students. **BAC**



The monastery's back porch is a favorite space for morning and evening quiet.



# Abbey's aging monastery reflects beauty

*Capital campaign will raise \$20M for a new monastery*

**BROTHER CHRYSOSTOM SICA**, a monk of Belmont Abbey, is preparing to make his final vows in January 2025. Join him as he reflects on some of his favorite spaces in the historic monastery, celebrating the community life that will flourish and deepen in the coming years with the advent of new vocations and the building of a new monastery.

**THE BACK PORCH OVERLOOKS THE GROTTA**, the path from the basilica to O'Connell, and the monastery's driveway.

**BY BR. CHRYSOSTOM SICA**

I often sit here in the evenings before vespers with some of my confreres to chat and process the day.

It's a great place to read in the early morning as the birds wake up and the sun rises.



*Br. Chrysostom Sica*

Father Francis Forster, who died last summer, often spent happy hours sitting here, watching the planes and animals and providing a witness to monastic peace and joy to students walking by. He counted how many planes he saw and talked to squirrels, birds, bees, and geckos. His sharp observational skills — he often noticed critters in places nobody else did — never ceased to amaze me. This place unites me to him — and to everyone who's sat here before me.

Seasonal change is noticeable here. In the spring, the azaleas bloom and the whole path to the road becomes bright and colorful. In fall, the porch is a place to observe and keep track of changing leaves. The changing lengths of the day are noticeable — in the shortest parts of the year, it's already twilight when one sits on the porch before vespers. While the porch connects us to the outside world, it's also a place filled with the mindfulness, peace, and communal spirit of monasticism.

**The house chapel** is a small, simple room. In the early morning or late evening, when it's dark outside, the red glow of the sanctuary lamp makes it a warm, calming place to sit and pray. In the afternoon, when the sun is low enough in the western sky, the light filters through the stained glass windows in bright, beautiful patterns on the floor. One of the hallmarks of the Abbey's architecture, particularly in our Basilica and the house chapel, is the use of simple, relatively unfinished surfaces, which brings out the beauty inherent in light. Light enlivens these spaces, makes them change with the seasons, and reflects Christ, the true light.

Sometimes when a trip takes me or a group of us from the monastery's Conventual Mass, we have a private Mass in the house chapel. The more intimate setting makes those gathered around the altar sense Christ's presence in a



**The chapel and the refectory offer places to share spiritual and physical nourishment in community.**

new way as we eat and drink at the table of the Lord.

When one prays privately in this space made holy by the divine presence and the celebration of Mass, one recognizes that one's private prayer is inextricably bound up with the liturgical, communal prayer of the Church concretized in one's community.

**The refectory** is one of the centers for community life. Eating is connected to praying. Our highest form of prayer, the Mass, is a meal. Eating is also a communal activity. According to Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann, eating reveals the sacrificial nature of life — the life of one thing, whether a plant or an animal, must be sacrificed for the life of another. The monastic refectory aims to bring out this

supernatural dimension to our ordinary activity of sustaining ourselves, particularly by the crucifix on the wall, the hand-carved image of the Last Supper, and the painting of St. Benedict.

The lectern at the end is for table reading. On weekdays, during dinner, instead of conversation, a book is read. Sometimes it's spiritual literature, sometimes not. It provides a way for the community to learn or experience a story together.

In the Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), one of the Collects given for night prayer asks God to "grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other's toil." Eating without speaking is an opportunity for this kind of

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reflection: This food was grown, harvested, packaged, shipped, and prepared by others. Each of the people who came in contact with this food is loved by God, created for Him, and one of the links that enables me to live my life as I do. I owe gratitude to and prayer for each of them. So, the refectory is also a place to recognize the interconnectedness of the whole human family and reflect that, ultimately, nobody is saved on their own.

**The tool room** can be overwhelming. That was my experience the first few times I had to enter for work assignments in my postulancy. Trying to find one specific item among all the tools and gadgets was intimidating, even despite Br. Tobiah Abbot’s careful ordering of everything. But that was also a lesson for me. I’m not the most organized person, so learning to put everything in its own place helped me “treat the goods of the monastery like sacred vessels of the altar,” as St. Benedict teaches. Each thing has its place and value — just like each member of the community. For me, the tool room is a beautiful reflection of Benedictine life.

**The community room** is where we gather for *Haustus* — recreation. The room’s windows look out over the basilica, and Fr. Francis used to like to watch the sky through them. There’s also a cabinet for board games, and when *Haustus* is in session, the table is for snacks. We put up our Christmas tree in the community room. We also have special recreation for New Year’s and Halloween. One of the highlights is a framed picture of Babe Ruth with one of our Benedictine priests. The New York Yankees used to stop at Belmont on their way to spring training in Florida. There’s a story told of St.



**The community room provides space for joyful recreation.**

Anthony of Egypt. When a hunter found him and his monks relaxing, he was scandalized. Anthony asked him to draw his bow and fire an arrow, which he did. He then repeated the request. Eventually, the hunter stated that if the bow were repeatedly fired without being allowed to lose its tautness, it would break. Anthony responded that the same applied to monks.

**Vacant rooms** dot the monastery. Often, they house guests. When new community members move in, they receive a name on the door. Cleaning these rooms is one of the novitiate

duties. Sometimes they need significant repair—broken air conditioners, cracked ceilings, or water damage are some of the fixes I’ve helped deal with. They can also collect odds and ends. In early spring, we sprouted seeds in one of the south-facing rooms.

Most of our personal rooms (cells) are fairly similar to these. But the empty rooms provide a reminder of our simplicity, both in terms of personal possessions and in terms of creating an undivided heart, empty of dirt, fixed and prepared, and ready to welcome the presence of the divine guest. **BAC**

**THE \$50 MILLION EXTENSION OF THE MADE TRUE** campaign includes \$20 million to build a new monastery. The existing monastery, with a history spanning nearly 150 years, has supported the college through the daily sacrifices, prayers, and leadership of the monks. A new monastery will offer a more energy-efficient structure, enrich the community life of the monks, attract new vocations, and serve as a testament to the monks’ enduring stability and commitment to remain in this place. The existing historic monastery, constructed with bricks handmade by the monks, will be carefully refurbished and put to a new use by the college.



**SCAN TO EXPLORE** how more about the campaign

**OR VISIT** [bac.edu/made-true](http://bac.edu/made-true)

# Learning virtue through soccer

## THE BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE

men's soccer program aims to do more than just train soccer players to compete and win at a collegiate level. It gives players the tools to be men of virtue and excellence.

Three exemplary soccer alums — Sean Trompeter '17, Mark Trompeter '19, and Patrick Kibler '18 — returned to the Abbey to play some soccer and reflect on how the discipline, sportsmanship, and camaraderie of playing soccer at the Abbey translates to living out their vocations. The soccer alumni shared how the “core values” of the soccer program became a personal philosophy in their lives.

“Whenever you are wondering what you should do or how you should act, you should



Sean Trompeter '17, Patrick Kibler '18, and Mark Trompeter '19 (left to right) reflect on the ways Abbey Men's Soccer led them to excellence and virtue.

think through, ‘What are our values? What did we say we were going to do? How are we going to behave?’” Trompeter explained. “Consistency, resilience,

selflessness, learning from your mistakes, perspective, class...even as I get further away from college, the more I realize how applicable they are.” **BAC**



**SCAN TO WATCH** the interview to find out more about the Men's Soccer program at Belmont Abbey College

## Donor-Centric Philanthropy

Have you considered your family and philanthropic goals? Now is the time to create or update your will or estate plan in order to:

- Provide for your family and cherished causes.
- Increase your income through philanthropic planning.
- Ensure your legacy and impact.

Learn about the most tax efficient way to give now and through your estate plan, and discover how donors like you benefit from thoughtful planning.



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*Renowned family marks more than a century of support for abbey and college*

# Gallagher roots run deep *at* Belmont Abbey

**FOR THE GALLAGHER FAMILY,**  
Belmont Abbey is in the blood.

**BY LAURA  
SCHAFFER**  
*Editor*

Thinking back over a lifetime of intimate connection with the Abbey — and before that, a family connection spanning a century — Dr. Robert (Bob) Gallagher '72 jokes that “if they had a DNA test for the Benedictine influence... it would be close to 100 percent.”

The Gallagher name is well-known on Belmont Abbey’s campus.

Traversing the ground floor of Stowe Hall, you’ll find Bob looking out from the Alumni Wall of Fame over an impressive list of accomplishments, including an honorary doctorate in 1995. Pausing at the main entrance, where stained glass images of the Benedictine medal overlook Abbey Lane, you’ll notice a brass plate dedicating the beautiful doors to the memory of Iva Lea Gallagher, Bob’s mother, for her loving faith and generosity to both college and monastery. And further down the hallway, the entrance to the Gallagher Room bears a plaque honoring his father:

*Dedicated to the memory of E.F. “Bud” Gallagher, Jr., a man who never refused his beloved Alma Mater.*

Facing the courtyard between Stowe, the monastery, and the basilica, the Gallagher Room plays host — in true Benedictine fashion — to all members of the Abbey community who require a comfortable and formal space for convening: from monks and board members to visiting lecturers, benefactors, professors, staff, and students. One wall reveals the original, exposed brick, formed by the hands of the first Belmont Abbey monks, and it seems particularly appropriate that a space so attuned to the vision, history, and daily workings of the

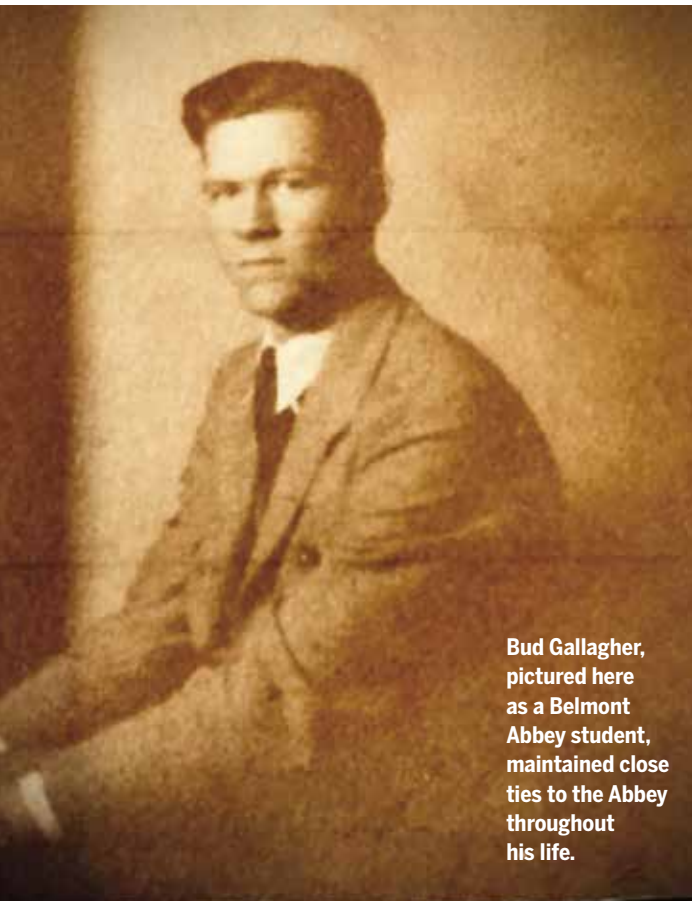
college should be named in honor of a family so generously and thoroughly rooted in the life of this place.

## **The move to Charlotte**

It all began in the mid-1920s when 13-year-old Bud Gallagher, Jr., first came to stay with the monks of Belmont Abbey. His mother had recently passed away, and his father had moved Bud and his three siblings to Corbin, Kentucky, to be near their Cincinnati family. However, when the local public school expelled young Bud for responding to the class bully in a particularly decisive fashion, his mother’s family drove up from Charlotte and brought him and his siblings back to North Carolina. They dropped Bud off with the monks at Belmont Abbey and his younger brother and sisters with the nuns at Sacred Heart Convent.

Bud quickly proved himself to the other boys at the Abbey Preparatory School. When a handful decided to “initiate him” by threatening to kick him down a set of steps, he quickly set them straight in a way that led one monk to remark to his brothers, “That new Gallagher kid is as Irish as Patty’s pig.” From that day on, the monks called him Pat so that years later, in naming his sons, two could be said to be named after him: Edward (called Buddy) and Patrick.

As if there had been any need to



Bud Gallagher, pictured here as a Belmont Abbey student, maintained close ties to the Abbey throughout his life.

solidify the Gallagher legend, Bud also became a key player on Coach Humpy Wheeler, Sr.'s baseball and football teams. Once, during an exhibition game with the New York Yankees, who were on their way home from spring training in Florida, Bud even caught Babe Ruth out on a pop fly ball to third base. Playing football, moreover, Bud established a lifelong friendship with teammate (and later Abbot) Walter Coggin, who would reputedly “knock you on your butt and then help you up and say, ‘God bless you!’”

After graduation, Bud moved to Johnson City, Tennessee, where he worked in a textile mill while completing his law degree at East Tennessee State University. There, he met and married Iva Graybeal before returning to the Charlotte area to join his father in co-founding Tri-State Mercantile Company in 1938, a successful business that would later become Good Will, Inc.

### Abbey ties

Bud's relationship with Belmont Abbey only strengthened over the years. In addition to Abbot Walter, Bud and his family counted many Abbey monks and priests among their closest friends. Father Cuthbert Allen often visited their home and even borrowed Mrs. Gallagher's car to go on his vacations.

Father John Bradley, a teacher who came to the Abbey from Archbishop Fulton Sheen's staff — and who later became president of the college — not only proved a fast friend to Bud but also a “surrogate father, a mentor, and a spiritual director” to his son, Bob. Abbot (at that time Deacon) Oscar kept a 12-year-old Bob Gallagher from being sent home from Boy Scout Camp for fighting. And, years later, Abbot Oscar also regularly rounded up Bob and his teammates from their Abbey dorms to go play baseball with the



minimum security prison inmates in Gastonia.

“My father used to always say that Belmont Abbey was his spiritual mother,” Bob reflected. “So that makes Belmont Abbey my spiritual grandmother. That’s how I’ve always viewed it. Our family, ever since those days...has had a very close relationship with the Abbey.” Growing up, Bob even remembers an oil portrait of Abbot Vincent Taylor hanging in the upstairs hallway of their home.

“I was baptized by a monk, my first communion was from a monk, and I will be buried in that monastery’s cemetery when the time comes,” Bob noted. “Hopefully, I’ll have several more years, but at some point in time, I know that I’m going to be out there with those guys I’ve known all my life, and that’s a great comfort to me.”

It’s a comfort rooted in the very stability at the heart of the Benedictine way. Bob may not have grown up in the monastery himself, but the monks of Belmont Abbey have remained an essential part of his life.

Bob Gallagher and each of his four siblings either attended

Belmont Abbey College or taught there. His son, Sean, daughter, Kelly, and son-in-law all graduated from Belmont Abbey. His sons, Conor and Brian, have both taught classes at the Abbey. Conor is also the executive director of the Benedict Leadership Institute.

“I’ve had two grandchildren graduate from Belmont Abbey,” Bob added, as well as two others who are currently enrolled, one of them through St. Joseph’s Seminary. Bob Gallagher himself has served as chairman of the Board of Trustees, and his exceptionally generous support has remained a steadfast model of Benedictine stewardship, love, and stability.

The Gallagher family has been rooted in the Belmont Abbey family for a century now, proving to each new generation what it means to embrace the life of a community. Just as Bud Gallagher is fondly memorialized as the man who “never refused his beloved alma mater,” Bob Gallagher and his family have continued to respond with wholehearted generosity and unfailing love to Belmont Abbey. It would not be the place it is today without them. **BAC**

**Bud Gallagher (back row, third from left) and the Abbey baseball team under Coach Humpy Wheeler, Sr.**



*Belmont Abbey helps raise the ceiling for women in motorsports*



# What glass ceiling?

**IN 1949, CHARLOTTE SPEEDWAY HOSTED** the world’s first-ever professional stock car race. After decades of amateur racing that began during Prohibition, stock car racing took the first step in becoming what we now know as modern-day NASCAR.

**BY DR. LINDSAY HOFFERBERTH**

*Assistant Professor of Sport Management*

Just 10 years after that first race, Charlotte Motor Speedway was constructed, becoming a cultural beacon for the racing community. These two events were watershed moments for the sport of racing locally and across the country.

At the same time, another watershed moment was happening. A coach at a small Catholic college just outside of Charlotte was raising a family. Howard “Humpy” Wheeler was a legendary coach and athletic director at Belmont Abbey College. His legacy has been felt for generations, and his name even adorns the Wheeler Center on campus.

His son, Humpy Wheeler, Jr., 1956 graduate of the Belmont Abbey Prep School, went on to become a legend in the racing

community, serving as president of Charlotte Motor Speedway for 33 years, beginning in 1975. As an alum of Belmont Abbey and racing industry legend, Wheeler helped launch an academic program in 2007 focusing on the motorsports business. He saw the need to have qualified, trained professionals who could effectively grow the sport.

### Family legacy

The Wheeler family’s motorsports legacy continued with

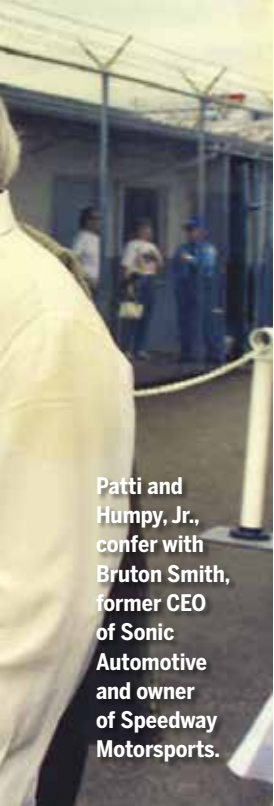
Humpy, Jr.’s daughter, Patti ’86. Humpy managed Robinwood Speedway and Firestone’s Racing Program during her childhood before moving on to leadership at Charlotte Motor Speedway. Patti and her siblings would pile into the car every Saturday and take long drives with their dad, inevitably ending up at some short track in North Carolina, South Carolina, or Virginia. It was a routine they didn’t enjoy.

However, Patti speaks very fondly of her father and his philosophy on life. She said that he “wanted to put the technicolor in people’s black and white lives,” including her own. Everything was to be an adventure. His philosophy proved to be important in Patti’s life. She went on to pursue a career in television and was instrumental in broadcasting motorsports across a variety of networks.

Before attending Belmont Abbey, Patti worked for media companies as a runner for the major networks at Charlotte Motor Speedway, Talladega, and

**ABOVE: Patti Wheeler looks back on her family, her career, and her Abbey beginnings.**





Patti and Humpy, Jr., confer with Bruton Smith, former CEO of Sonic Automotive and owner of Speedway Motorsports.

Daytona. She was fascinated by broadcast production, which led to a career in television. While working at Charlotte Motor Speedway, legendary broadcaster Ken Squier advised her to get hands-on experience while pursuing her education. Her mentors at CBS also told her that a degree in English would serve her well.

Heeding that advice, Patti enrolled at Belmont Abbey, where her grandfather had been a legendary coach and athletic director. As a student, she worked at the local CBS affiliate WBTV in Charlotte and was hired full-time even before graduating.

She soon moved to Los Angeles to work on movies but ultimately ended up in Atlanta to work for a motorsports production company. The company covered every type of racing and produced documentaries, live shows, taped shows and a weekly news program. She said that working for the production company was the perfect “master’s degree” in motorsports television because she covered every genre and every kind of motorsport.

Patti’s journey has not been easy as a woman in a male-dominated industry. During her teen years, women were not allowed in racetrack garages. However, as a

runner for CBS, she was required to be there. She played an integral role, assisting commentators with identifying drivers and clarifying specific details. When NASCAR officials called her father to complain, Humpy sided with his daughter. Patti has seen the industry change a great deal since those days. NASCAR evolved from a small “mom and pop” style organization to the multi-billion-dollar enterprise it is today.

### The Abbey’s contribution

Humpy Jr. knew that college graduates should be skilled and educated and should have tangible industry experience before entering the job market. With its proximity to North Carolina racetracks and NASCAR, Patti and her father knew that Belmont Abbey was the perfect place to launch the Motorsport Management program. Patti helped develop the program by creating a board of directors and working with the college’s administration before its launch in 2007.

Patti’s work and legacy have helped pave the way for women like Kinzie Wilson, who graduated with a degree in Motorsport Management in 2023. The Texas native began drag racing as a teen. At 13, she and her father purchased a car and began modifying it to race. Kinzie fell in love with competition and saw success early in her career. As she got older, many of her male competitors would intentionally race in different heats, so they wouldn’t have to face her.

Despite her success, finances became an issue. Kinzie began to realize that racing might not be a feasible career path, but she still wanted to stay in motorsports. Then she found Belmont Abbey. Admittedly, she had no idea that working on the business side of racing was a potential career path. She was accepted and began participating in the program’s

experiential opportunities.

During her tenure, she met industry professionals and learned about different facets of the industry. She discovered the importance of networking as a key component to success. In 2022, she attended the Women with Drive summit at Charlotte Motor Speedway, where she met one of her idols, driver Lyn St. James, and connected with female power players in the industry. That’s when she decided to pursue working in Formula One.

Today, Kinzie is pursuing a Global MBA in Supercar at Bologna University in Italy. She began classes with a Supercar concentration of the Global MBA program. She is the youngest student in the program and the only female. Though she is in the minority, Kinzie uses the skills she learned at the Abbey to build her network and career opportunities.

She’s even networked with professionals from Penske Automotive Italy, drawing on those undergraduate experiences that taught her not to be afraid to just start a conversation. Kinzie admits that her generation often has trouble with face-to-face communication, so she works hard at starting conversations and developing relationships. As a result, she has already been invited to networking events through that one interaction. She no longer fears limitations and knows that a career in Formula One is well within her grasp.

Both Patti Wheeler and Kinzie Wilson have proven that women can be an asset to motorsports. Patti faced many challenges as a young female and helped pave the way for future generations. Kinzie believes that being in the minority can be advantageous, with women offering a unique perspective. Both women hope that future generations will progress even further and the industry can move to be a more equitable space. **BAC**

Kinzie Wilson meets motorsports legend Roger Penske, founder and CEO of Penske Automotive Group and former racecar driver.





LEFT: The legendary Humpy Wheeler, Sr., in his office under the old Haid Gym. RIGHT: Patti (center) celebrates with mother Pat Dell Wheeler (left), daughter Adele Marchant (held), and grandmother Kathleen Dobbins Wheeler (right), as Kathleen receives her honorary doctorate in 1999.

# Patti Wheeler's *deep* Abbey roots

**THE ABBEY IS** “an intricate part of the core of this whole family,” reflects Patti Wheeler ’86, with both sides “so connected to the Abbey [that] it’s hard to... unravel.”

**BY LAURA SCHAFFER**  
*Editor*

Other Abbey alumni in her family include her sister, uncles, her maternal grandfather, and her father, Humpy Wheeler. Patti Wheeler looks back on her family, her career, and her Abbey beginnings. Her aunt was a counselor during Patti’s undergraduate years, and her paternal grandfather, Humpy Wheeler, Sr., was the beloved coach and athletic director who gave his name to the Wheeler Center on campus.

Incidentally, Humpy Sr., who is buried with his wife Kathleen

## *A third generation of Wheeler draws from Belmont Abbey experience*

in the Abbey cemetery, was also the first layperson ever hired at the Abbey. His office in the Haid’s basement would later become headquarters to Patti’s Little Sisters of Pi Kappa Phi. These Abbey roots, however, were only the beginning of a profound influence on Patti’s life.

An English major, Patti received a “wonderful liberal arts education, [which] made all the difference in the world” to her formation and success. “I am a much better writer because I went to the Abbey.”

Yet even beyond this essential foundation, Patti continues to draw on her Abbey experience through the kind of lasting and nourishing community so true to Benedictine life. Patti still cherishes fond memories of Fr. Chris, Abbot Walter, and her Pi Kappa Phi brother, Br. Paul. To this day, she keeps up with her beloved English professor, Dr. Herndl, and her nearest alumni friends, who share warm and regular communication.

“If I needed any of them, they would all drop what they’re doing and be here... whether they’re in upstate New York or in Belmont.” Building on her roots, Patti has embraced an extended community and a legacy of excellence that demonstrates just how much it means to be a Belmont Abbey alumna. **BAC**



**SCAN TO WATCH**  
an interview with Patti

**OR VISIT**  
bac.edu/wheeler



# Born for this

## *Abbey alumna brings hospitality par excellence to CMS*

**JESSICA FICKENSCHER'S** career is on track for success.

As Chief Experience Officer with Speedway Motorsports — the Charlotte Motor Speedway’s parent company — Fickenscher (whose maiden name is Gallela) ’98 brings a sense of Benedictine hospitality that enthusiastically attends to every aspect of the guest experience.

In more than a dozen major races across the United States each year — from Charlotte and North Wilkesboro to Sonoma, New Hampshire, and Nashville — the Belmont alumna oversees everything fans encounter, beginning with the online ticket portal. She monitors fan experience from parking to entering the gates and buying concessions or merchandise. Fickenscher ensures that every detail contributes to a welcoming atmosphere and to

immersing fans as fully as possible in the thrill of the race.

Growing up in South Jersey, Fickenscher knew little about racing — and she certainly hadn’t planned a career in motorsports. Drawn to Belmont Abbey in the footsteps of her father and several other family members, she recognized both the value of a liberal arts formation and the joy of a community that builds and persists long after graduation. But her Abbey experience also catalyzed a remarkable career in unforeseen ways.

Seeking an internship that would meet the requirements of her Sports Management major, Fickenscher approached her advisor, Mike Reidy, who suggested she meet with Humpy Wheeler at the Speedway down the road. Fickenscher couldn’t have guessed how quickly she would fall in love with the

business or the racing culture. “When I stepped foot in the door,” she reflected, “that’s when I knew: Yes, this is where I want to be!”

Fickenscher dove into motorsports entertainment with joyful and determined energy. Bringing her Abbey training to bear on such challenges as the economic crash of 2008 and the global pandemic in recent years, she has helped ensure that Speedway Motorsports continues to thrive and offer fans a unique experience.

“We were the first sport back on TV” after the pandemic, and “we were the first sport to have fans back at the races.”

Despite the appeal and availability of so much in-home entertainment, Speedway races continue to sell out and irresistibly draw a new generation of young people into the stands.

As the first woman in a C-level position with Speedway Motorsports, Fickenscher has continued the Abbey tradition of steadfast and pioneering excellence. In 2022, when CEO Marcus Smith proposed reviving the NASCAR All-Star race within eight months — and on a 40-year dormant track — Fickenscher was the executive director who made it happen. Moreover, she also serves as the managing director of Speedway Children’s Charities, through which the company embraces stewardship and builds community at each of its race tracks, raising millions of dollars for local charities each year.

Fickenscher has never lost her dedication to the community or her Benedictine roots throughout her exceptional career. To Belmont Abbey students, Fickenscher offers a few words of advice: “Don’t be afraid of failure. It’s okay to fail! Failure eventually brings success because you learn from your mistakes. Don’t be afraid to take on new opportunities, and don’t take yourself too seriously. Life is short.” **BAC**

**Jessica Fickenscher's role in reviving a defunct track in North Wilkesboro earns the Speedway a Motorsports Industry Award from the North Carolina Motorsports Association.**

# Buen Camino!

*Camino de Santiago helps  
alumnus embrace the  
reality of home*



Luis Lobo reaches  
"Kilometer 0"  
at Finisterre.

Those familiar with romance languages can surmise that “Buen Camino” wishes the traveler a “good” pilgrimage, just as “bon voyage” extends the hope of a pleasant trip. In fact, the greeting runs much deeper.

Calling out, “Buen Camino!” recognizes a fellow pilgrim and extends the warmth of community across age, class, culture, and even the vagaries of personal experience. During the 35 days he spent trekking the Camino de Santiago last October and November, Luis heard the greeting many times — and many times returned it, grinning buoyantly, knowing that “Buen Camino” was a celebration of the shared journey and a verbal marker as real as any of the yellow arrows pointing his way.

As a Belmont Abbey College alumnus, Luis’ understanding of community has long embraced his Benedictine background’s rich and rooted vantage. Growing up in Lincolnton, North Carolina, where he attended Mass at the then-mission parish of St. Dorothy’s, Luis and his brother Carlos quickly grew familiar with the Abbey monks who staffed the mission. Abbot Oscar Burnett was close friends with their father before he was elected Abbot. So, when it came time for the boys to attend college, they knew they had one choice: Belmont Abbey. Smiling at the recollection, Luis added simply, “The Abbey, to us, is a home.”

Even before boarding his transatlantic flight on his way to the Camino last fall, Luis had received a warm reminder of belonging. He carried with him a letter of introduction from Abbot Placid Solari to the Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, through which he hoped to establish the necessary approvals to facilitate student pilgrimages in future years. “It was my passport,” he smiled. A bit of paper, yes, but something that spoke to identity, community,

**LUIS LOBO '83 ASSURES ME THAT**, whether or not you speak Spanish, there is one phrase you’ll absolutely need as you begin the Way of St. James: “Buen Camino!”

**BY LAURA  
SCHAFFER**  
*Editor*

You won’t find it in your “Intro to Spanish” textbook, but the phrase forms a universal greeting between pilgrims, regardless of culture, language, or homeland, on the Way of St. James or Camino de Santiago, the 500-mile, 800-year-old pilgrimage traversing northern Spain and ending in Santiago de Compostela.



At the end of his pilgrimage, Luis encounters Ignacio, a friend from the first leg of his journey, in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

and the stability of home.

The letter, in English and Spanish duplicate, traveled with him along the hundreds of miles of Spanish country to the end of his journey. Luis arrived at the Cathedral de Santiago de Compostela just in time for Mass. With the graceful serendipity of pilgrimage, he even encountered a friend who had walked with him for a few early days. When he tried to locate the archbishop's offices later that afternoon, however, Luis found himself wandering among buildings, uncertain where to go until a tiny nun behind a desk asked him to sit for a moment. She then went to find the priest who served as Dean of the Cathedral de Santiago.

When the Dean arrived, he greeted Luis and accepted the letter, reading it quickly before looking up to say, "But you don't want anything from us." Luis nodded, explaining that he asked only for acknowledgement — and for the archdiocese's blessing, in a sense, on the students who would make the pilgrimage in future years.

The priest smiled, pulled out a pen, and wrote simply, "and they will all be welcome," signing his



Whether or not you begin the Camino alone, the blessings of friendship and community become an essential part of the journey.

name and handing the letter back. In the weeks since his return, Luis has remained in touch with the Dean, forming a friendship with one foot planted in Abbey soil and one in Spain. As he recounted the story, he had to marvel at "the hand of God," not only in blessing his own experience but also in preparing for the future journeys of Abbey students.

Luis' own travels surprised him as only extended journeys can — one day a river kept pace alongside him and another an inquisitive herd of sheep surrounded him on the path. In and out of towns, the dogs of the Camino greeted his arrival as if acknowledging a good-humored kinship in the fact that "lobo" is the Spanish word for "wolf."

But in all the glorious, footsore miles winding through lovely countryside, distinctive towns, and vibrant city streets, Luis

found nothing so constant as the ubiquitous kindness he encountered — not only the camaraderie among his fellow travelers but also the gregarious hospitality of those living along "the way." Crossing into a town covered in dust, he told me each pilgrim receives a thorough and unfailing welcome, revealing again and again that there are no strangers on the Camino.

One day early in his journey, Luis briefly lost his trail among the forested Pyrenees. Stumbling out of the woods, he pulled up short at the edge of a freshly plowed field, the turned earth stretching rich and furrowed toward a distant combine, which approached as Luis raised a hand in greeting. The farmer called out to ask where he was going. When the man found that Luis had lost the thread of the Camino, he cheerfully waved Luis

CONTINUES ON PAGE 44



One of many quiet cemeteries along the Camino, where those pilgrims who have gone before us rest.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

up beside him for a ride back to the path.

“There was no epiphany,” Luis said of experiences like this one, just a profound “reassurance of the kindness of people.” The Camino “opens your heart and your eyes to the experiences of other people,” to the “beauty of God’s hand” in the world around us, and to the freshness and vividness of life itself.

From marker to marker, yellow arrow to scallop shell, the pilgrim learns “how little you need in this earth” and how great are the gifts in life. In comparison with consumerism and the materialist anxiety hounding contemporary culture, Camino travelers require only shelter and food, and Luis laughed as he added, “and a good pair of shoes.”

They say “the Camino sustains,” by which Luis understands much

more than the economic benefits it has brought to the regions of northern Spain. “I always felt at home wherever I stayed,” he said. The Camino sustains by reminding us of the home we share, the human community so well understood by Benedictines the world over and so easily shuffled out of sight amid the distractions of our daily lives.

From the Abbey to the Camino, Luis Lobo understands what it means to embrace the reality of home: to give and receive hospitality and to welcome the other as Christ, just as the Benedictines seek to do. And as remarkable a journey as he enjoyed last fall, Luis would be the first to insist that you don’t have to fly to Spain in order to appreciate community or extend a welcome to those who walk beside you.

Wherever you walk, may you find yourself at home — and wherever you are, “Buen Camino!” **BAC**

# Save the Date

## ABBHEY COCKTAIL RECEPTION

Hosted by  
RICHARD '69 & JULE SALEM

Friday, November 22nd  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM



Palma Ceia  
1601 S Macdill Ave.  
Tampa, FL, 33629



Belmont Abbey  
COLLEGE



## CHRISTMAS IN THE CITY

Hosted by  
SARAH '83 & RANA MUKERJI

Saturday, December 7  
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM



The Harvard Club  
35 West 44th Street  
New York, NY, 10036



# RIGHTS

AND

# Freedom

## Do you know your rights and freedoms?

It's not just about what we can say or do—it's about understanding the more profound principles that protect our liberties and ensure social harmony. Belmont Abbey's new online course, "Rights and Freedoms," explores these crucial topics through six comprehensive lessons.

Along the way, you will learn from renowned historians, esteemed theologians, and active political commentators who will help you understand your rights, engage with political philosophy, and better understand what makes you an American.

This course isn't just for students—it's for lifelong learners, legal professionals, religious leaders, and anyone passionate about social justice and human rights. It will help you understand your rights, engage with political philosophy, and better understand what makes you an American.

You will receive lessons from:

- **Hadley Arkes**, Founder and Co-Director of the James Wilson Institute on Natural Rights and the American Founding and the Edward Ney Professor of Jurisprudence at Amherst College
- **Chris Bedford**, Vice Chairman of Young Americans for Freedom, a Board Member at the National Journalism Center, and Senior Editor for Politics and Washington Correspondent for Blaze Media
- **Br. Chrysostom Sica**, O.S.B.
- **Dr. Tom Varacalli**, Assistant Professor of Great Books, Honors College
- **Nina Shea**, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Religious Freedom at Hudson Institute and former Commissioner of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.
- **Robert Smith**, President of the Thomas More Society of America and Deputy Chief Counsel, Oversight of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee

There are no course fees or waiting lists. This online course allows you to explore these lessons at your own pace.

Enroll today and empower yourself!



Gain access to this free online course by scanning the QR code or visiting the link below:

[bac.edu/rights](https://bac.edu/rights)



At the start of 2024, permanent deacons of the Charlotte Diocese renewed their ordination at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

# Serving the Church *at* home and beyond

*The Abbey's Diaconal Formation Program honors two millennia of service*

**DR. ALESSANDRO ROVATI** became a theologian to serve the Church. He lives out this vocation as Chair of Belmont Abbey's Theology Department — and through active service to the Diocese. Rovati combines his vocation and joyfully notes that “there’s nothing more beautiful for a theology program than to put its expertise at the service of the life and needs of the local church.”

**BY LAURA  
SCHAFER**  
*Editor*



PHOTOS COURTESY CATHOLIC NEWS HERALD



For the past 2,000 years, deacons have assisted priests in their pastoral ministry, serving the liturgy and performing acts of mercy. Deacons are called to “attend the table and the Word,” Rovati explains.

Deacons baptize, catechize, and preach. They minister to their parishes in ways that model and embrace community stewardship and self-giving. For a time, the diaconal vocation, originally distinct from that of the priest, was subsumed into the stages of priestly discernment. The Second Vatican Council, however, reinstated the practice of ordaining permanent deacons while preserving the diaconal stage on the path to priesthood.

### Heralds of the Gospel

Since then, the Charlotte diocese has embraced the formation of permanent deacons differently. In recent years, diocesan leadership determined to create a more rigorous and substantive program. To this end, they reached out to Rovati at Belmont Abbey College, having already established a relationship with the college through its education of seminarians.

After years of careful collaboration, the Abbey officially began its new Diaconal Formation Program in 2023. The program offers a certificate after three-and-a-half years of study and 18 theology courses, all as part of the diocese’s five-year discernment and formation process.

The synchronous online program is designed to meet the needs of men working full-time, supporting families, and living throughout the diocese. Seventeen men are enrolled, having completed their first year this past January and been formally accepted as candidates by Emeritus Peter Jugis, during a Mass where permanent deacons renewed their promises.

The diaconal candidates will

continue to deepen their familiarity with Scripture, tradition, and Church teaching throughout their formation, exploring how these rich and vital resources can nourish their future ministry. Course assignments often ask students to explain their study topics as if to a parish, preparing them to become “heralds of the gospels.”

### New fervor

Many have told Rovati that the program has enriched their lives of faith and transformed how they participate in the Liturgy. It has opened their hearts and minds to the inexhaustible wealth of biblical and Church tradition, sparking a new fervor in their spiritual journey. This transformation is evident in the “depth and urgency” of the student discussions, all of which powerfully demonstrate their eagerness to make an “impact on the life of their local communities.”

One of Belmont Abbey’s Strategic Plan’s pillars is to “build and serve the Church, locally and beyond,” a goal with which the Diaconal Formation Program aligns and to which it significantly



contributes. Inspired by the Benedictine hallmarks of stability, community, stewardship, and love, the Abbey is particularly grateful to play a key role in the education of deacons and seminarians for the Charlotte diocese. These programs serve the the local church and hundreds of students each year, helping them realize their God-given potential in service to their families and communities.

We ask your prayer for the 17 diaconal candidates who seek to offer their gifts and energies with such generosity to our diocese. We are deeply grateful for your support and prayers as they continue their discernment and formation. **BAC**

**Bishop Emeritus Peter Jugis greets 17 newly accepted candidates to the Diocese of Charlotte’s permanent deacon program.**

**Deacons minister to their communities through service, word, and liturgy.**



# Abbey Lane Update



## Pickin' and grinnin'

» If you find yourself on Belmont Abbey's campus any Friday evening from 7-9 p.m., be sure to keep an ear out. You just might hear the playful cascade of a banjo or the fleet voice of a fiddle. And if you follow the sound of bluegrass and step inside Holy Grounds — or perhaps the Haid Patio, season and weather permitting — you'll be sure to encounter the pure pleasure of live music.

**Professor Stephen Tomlinson**, now a Board Member of the Charlotte Folk Society, first organized these jam sessions back in January 2023. For over

a year now, local musicians, Abbey faculty, monks, and students — pickers of all ages and levels of experience — have gathered on campus each week to play, sing, and generally relish a range of folk, bluegrass, and gospel music. Though participants and instruments vary from week to week, each Friday Jam brings a dynamic and heartily welcoming community into joyful collaboration.

*For more information, visit the Charlotte Folk Society website ([folksociety.org](http://folksociety.org)) or contact Professor Tomlinson ([stephentomlinson@bac.edu](mailto:stephentomlinson@bac.edu)).*

## CLASS NOTES

### 1960s

» **FLYNN WILFORD WARREN, JR. '62**

Flynn recently taught a four-part series on famous pharmacists to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Georgia and Emory University. He is also an Extraordinary Eucharistic Minister at St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Decatur, Georgia, and he provides Holy Communion to hospitalized Catholics at Emory University Hospital.

» **MATTHEW FRANCIS MAHER '65**

Matthew lost his beloved wife, Diane, in 2020.

### 1970s

» **JAMES CRAWFORD III '79**

James recently assumed the presidency of Texas Southern University. A dedicated Belmont Abbey Board of Trustees member, alumnus, and benefactor, he retired from the U.S. Navy as Judge Advocate General after more than 30 years of distinguished service. The Vice Admiral (Retired) had been president of Felician University for the past two years. He continues his contributions to our nation and higher education at Texas Southern.

» **ANTHONY FRANCIS LATRONICA '70**

Anthony retired from Eastman Kodak Company a number of years ago after 35 years of service in an executive position. This year he and his wife Debbie will celebrate 54 years of marriage. They are thrilled

to announce that two of their grandchildren will be married this year.

» **LORING JONES '72**

Loring just retired from San Diego State University as professor emeritus after a 40-year teaching career. He currently lives in San Diego and Udon Thani, Thailand.

» **MARK WILLIAM PETERSON '75**

Mark has recently retired.

## 1980s

» **DANIEL GARCIA PEÑA '80**

Daniel has been named Columbia's new Ambassador to the United States. After graduating from Belmont Abbey with a degree in Political Science, he moved back to Colombia, where he has since held various government positions.

» **JANET RAMSEY BOWEN '82**

Janet now serves as the Wellness & Business Development Director for Eagle Physicians in Greensboro, North Carolina.

» **SAM CHIAPPETTA '83**

**STEFANIE CHIAPPETTA '82**  
Sam retired in June 2023 after a 37-year career with General Motors. He has held various positions with GM over the years, from working in a plant to working as a corporate liaison. Sam is now retiring and enjoying a slower-paced life with his wife, Stefanie, and their beagle, Shyla, in South Carolina. Don't be surprised if you see Sam around campus from time to time.

» **JOHN J. MCDERMOTT '85**

Pope Francis has named Monsignor McDermott the new bishop of Burlington, Vermont, after 35 years of faithful service to the diocese. His installation date is July 15, 2024. The Political Science and Philosophy graduate is the first Abbey alumnus to be ordained to the episcopate.



## Civil servant and Abbey alumnus begins new chapter

» U.S. Congressman and Abbey alumnus **Patrick McHenry '99** served for three weeks in October 2023 as speaker pro-tempore of the U.S. House of Representatives. At the end of 2023, however, McHenry announced that, although he will complete the second half of his term, he will not pursue reelection at the end of the current cycle.

McHenry, a distinguished alumnus of Belmont Abbey College, has been a stalwart representative of the 10th North Carolina District for nearly two decades. His current role as Chair of the House Financial Services Committee is just one of the many significant positions he has held during his illustrious and diverse career. McHenry's contributions have been invaluable, from serving as the Oversight and Investigations

Subcommittee Chair to being a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Labor.

The 48-year-old congressman's enduring commitment to the values and freedoms at the heart of American democracy, a commitment nurtured during his formative years at Belmont Abbey College, continues to resonate with his constituency and the country at large, leaving a lasting imprint on the political landscape.

Belmont Abbey College is deeply grateful for McHenry's unwavering service to his country and his steadfast support for his alma mater. As he embarks on a new chapter in his life, we join together to wish him a fulfilling retirement from the House, knowing that his years of dedicated service will continue to inspire us all.

### HAVE YOU RETIRED? MARRIED?

*Traveled somewhere exciting? Taken on a new job or welcomed a new baby? We'd love to hear from you! To be featured in the next issue of Belmont Abbey College Magazine, please email your life updates to [collegerelations@bac.edu](mailto:collegerelations@bac.edu)*

# ABBEY LANE UPDATE



**ARIN MICHAEL PRICE '16**  
**FRANCESCA (TOZZI) PRICE '16**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ARIN AND FRANCESCA** who welcomed their first child, Luke Matteo Price, in January 2024.

## 1990s

» **JOSEPH MARINELLO '92**  
Joseph has been working in domestic violence education for 32 years. He enjoyed teaching at the Abbey last year and looks forward to the year ahead. He has also been working at an after-school enrichment program for children at St. Gabriel's Catholic School in Charlotte. This year he celebrates 37 years of marriage with his wife, Linda.

## 2000s

» **HANNAH BARNHORN '01**  
Hannah has transitioned from her career in a law firm to being the first Legal Operations Specialist at Pilot Chemical.

» **DR. MICHELLE PAZZULA JIMENEZ '05**  
Michelle has completed her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction at UNCC.

» **MERRICK REILAND '08 LAUREN (DICHARA) REILAND '24**  
The Reilands welcomed their daughter, Sadie, into the world in June 2023.



*Fill us in on your new arrival, and we'll send a cuddly, Abbey ambassador to welcome the future Crusader!*

Ben's hospitality group also expanded to Gastonia with The Vintage in historic downtown and is excited to continue pursuing growth in that area.

» **SR. KELLY WILLIAMS, RSM '10**  
Sister recently graduated with a Master's in Ministry with a focus on Spiritual Ministry from the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Last November, she professed

her perpetual vows as a Sister of Mercy.

## 2010s

» **BEN TORRES '10**  
Ben and his wife welcomed their second daughter, Everleigh, in May 2023. She and her big sister, Elizabeth, are bound to be future Crusaders if their dad has anything to say about it.

» **CHRISTINE (BASIL) BOOR '11**  
Christine married Kyle Boor in October 2023. She was recently awarded the first Endowed Chair in Classical and Liberal Education at Belmont Abbey.

# Brother Paul Shanley celebrates 50 years

» **Brother Paul Shanley '73** renewed his monastic vows to commemorate his Golden Jubilee on May 24, 2024, Belmont Abbey's patronal feast of Mary, Help of Christians.

The beloved monk and Abbey alumnus has served the community for 50 years. Through teaching, coaching, and the steadfast friendships he maintains with generations of students and alumni, Br. Paul has made an incalculable impact not only on his confreres but also on the



college itself. Stay tuned for more opportunities to celebrate this milestone at Homecoming 2024!

» **ROSE WAGNER HOLGUIN '11**  
Rose and her husband welcomed their second baby in October. James joins his big sister, Emilia, in making them a family of four.

» **SHARI BEATY '15**  
Shari recently accepted a leadership position. She is an NC Regional Education Specialist pursuing a Master's degree in Leadership Policy & Advocacy in Early Childhood Education.

» **SCOTT LYNCH '15**  
Scott married Rebecca in January. He has served eight years in the United States Coast Guard.

» **DAVID JOHN SALEY '15**  
David married his high school sweetheart after 13 years of dating. He was also promoted to head coach of North Brunswick Township's high school wrestling team and built his program to a state ranking of No. 9 in New Jersey, developing one wrestler into a nationally ranked athlete, No. 97, and helping others earn college scholarships. He also moved up from a substitute teacher to an industrial arts technology teacher, teaching in the woodshop.

» **LAWANNA VERNER '16**  
Lawanna is engaged to be married. She was also recently promoted to Vice President, Technical Program Manager and Change Manager/Implementer for Digital Lending at Truist.

» **VINCE GINSKI '17**  
**ALEXIS (VON SPAKOVSKY) GINSKI '17**  
The Ginskis welcomed baby Flannery in October 2023.

» **DR. TAJZE JOHNSON '18**  
Tajze earned his doctorate in occupational therapy from Methodist University.

» **BONNIE TROMPETER '18**  
Bonnie welcomed baby Isaac in November of 2023.



**LILY CONTRERAS '23**  
**LUIS MENA '23, CHRISTINA OSMERA '21**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO LILY, CHRISTINA, AND LUIS**, who graduated from Basic Law Enforcement Training and began careers with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.

## 2020s

» **KYLE ELLIOTT MILLER '20**  
Kyle and his wife have welcomed a new baby, Benjamin Graham Miller.

» **CAITLIN (BUMGARDNER) ABERNATHY '22**  
Caitlin and her husband have welcomed a new child into the world.

» **MARY MICHAELA FREY '23**  
Mary is engaged to be married.

» **MARCO GAROFALO '23**  
Marco started the year as a Private Equity Spring Analyst at Avalerian Capital.

» **TRACI BROOK GROVES '23**  
Traci recently got married.

» **DAVID MICHAEL NEWMAN '23**  
David recently just moved to the Washington, D.C., area.

» **JAMIE YUVELKY MARTEZ NUNEZ '23**  
Jamie is now working at Pace Analytical Services.

» **CHUCK SOLOMON '23**  
Chuck is engaged to be married. He has been promoted to Associate Experience Planning at Hearts and Science.

» **STACY MARIE WHITE '23**  
Stacy will begin her first year as a full-time history teacher at Hunter Huss High School this fall.

» **TIMOTHY SICA '24**  
**MAURA (MARTIN) SICA '24**  
Timothy and Maura were married on June 1, 2024.

## HAVE YOU RETIRED? MARRIED?

*Traveled somewhere exciting?  
Taken on a new job or  
welcomed a new baby?  
We'd love to hear from you!  
To be featured in the next  
issue of Belmont Abbey  
College Magazine, please  
email your life updates to  
collegerelations@  
bac.edu*

# IN MEMORIAM

## » STEVEN CHERRY, SR.

*Gastonia, NC*  
APRIL 21, 2024

Steven and his wife, Ann, have been generous Abbey benefactors for many years, helping to carry on a family legacy by helping to create and fund the James and Eunice Cherry Nursing Scholarship in honor of Steven's parents. With each new recipient of this scholarship, the Abbey continues to celebrate the Cherry family's generosity, love, and civic responsibility, which promises to leave an impact for generations to come.



## » JASIA DUDKO '63

*Belmont, NC*  
APRIL 15, 2024

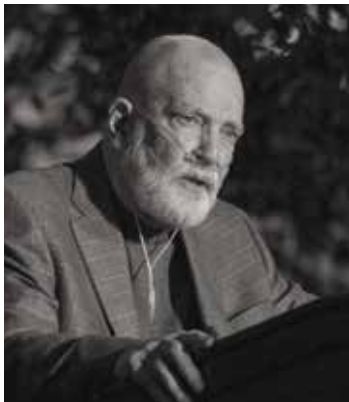
Jasia was a Sacred Heart alumna and wife of longtime Belmont Abbey professor and coach Stanley Dudko. She was an unfailingly kind and generous member of the Abbey family. Tireless in her service to others throughout the college and the wider community, including through Queen of Apostles Parish, Jasia was also a cherished friend, wife, mother, and grandmother.



## » MIKE SNYDER '62

*Albemarle, NC*  
JANUARY 13, 2024

An Alumni Wall of Fame inductee and former Board of Trustees member, Mike was one of the most exceptional benefactors and faithful supporters in Belmont Abbey's history. Instrumental in launching the Made True campaign, Mike embraced the call to free, strengthen, and secure his alma mater, his community, and his country. The Abbey is profoundly grateful, knowing that his legacy will impact students for generations.



## » KELLY (JOHNSON) ARWOOD '09

*Stanley, NC*  
FEBRUARY 5, 2024

## » GEORGE BOLTON, JR. '71

*Phoenix, AZ*  
JANUARY 4, 2024

## » GWEN BOTSON



*Southern Shores, NC*  
MARCH 2, 2024

## » JOHN CHESSER, SR. '54

*Davidson, NC*  
FEBRUARY 9, 2024

## » DAVID FLAHERTY '64

*Denver, CO*  
FEBRUARY 4, 2024

## » JIMMY LEE HOVIS '57



*Mt Holly, NC*  
MAY 19, 2024

## » JAMES MASON JAMES



*Greensboro, NC*  
APRIL 29, 2024

## » JACQUELINE (HARRISON) LIGGETT '94

*Charlotte, NC*  
FEBRUARY 18, 2024

## » RONALD LONG



*Columbia, SC*  
MAY 26, 2024

## » GEORGE MACAIRE MASON



*Charlotte, NC*  
MAY 10, 2024

## » WILLIAM MCGOOGAN '78

*Charlotte, NC*  
APRIL 3, 2024

## » FR. GUY PICHE '69

*Black Mountain, NC*  
APRIL 14, 2024

## » SR. ROSALIND PICOT



*Belmont, NC*  
MAY 25, 2024

## » RONALD UNDERWOOD '72

*Gastonia, NC*  
MAY 1, 2024

MBA  
MSN  
MHA  
MACLE  
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MAL  
MSDA



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