



JOHN PAUL THE GREAT ACADEMY

# WITNESS TO HOPE



ROOTED IN  
*Hope*

# ROOTED IN *Hope*

From the Desk of Nathanael Rea, Headmaster

Each of us is summoned by a perfect call to live in an imperfect world. Our young people have been called and planted in this place and time. As at other times in history, the soil can be loose and unstable. In the face of this, the desire to shield our children is overwhelming, but our call is not solely to shield. Instead, our urgent and timeless work is to help them anchor their hearts in hope. For only hope will sustain them. It is not only for their sake but for others that they must be rooted in hope.

Through the rigors of a classical education and the passionate formation in the faith, John Paul the Great Academy works to give students the hope that truth can be known, the hope that there is a God who knows them and desires to be known, and the hope that God made them good and for greatness. They can live into that greatness by choosing again and again to follow Him, to pursue truth, no matter the cost.

In this valley of tears, where fear and doubt assault us on every side, I have found few more hopeful words than this challenging and consoling benediction of Pope St. John Paul the Great:

"The way Jesus shows you is not easy. Rather, it is like a path winding up a mountain. Do not lose heart! The steeper the road, the faster it rises towards ever wider horizons.

May Mary, Star of Evangelization, guide you! Docile like her to the Father's will, take the stages of history as mature and convincing witnesses."



Mature and convincing witnesses know the difficulties of the road, see the reasons for doubt, and yet live from a place of profound hope. Only when we are rooted in hope will we have the strength to face the world and grow as Guardians, doing all things in excellence for the greater glory of God.

*Omnia in Excellentia, Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam!*

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# The DOISE Family



**Our story** begins in February 1998 the day before Ash Wednesday. After dating for a few years, we were married in 2001.

**Jared:** The first time I met Rachel, I knew she was special and would be an important part of the rest of my life. As time went on, Rachel became more than a mere attraction and became my best friend. Rachel is my world, and I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her, so I asked her to marry me.

**Rachel:** I thought Jared was cute and well, why not – I didn't have anything else to do at the time (This is how Jared thinks it was, haha). Really after getting to know him, I realized he was my soulmate. I feel like we complement each other and bring each other balance. I feel like being with him makes me a better person.

Faith has played an extremely big part in our relationship as we experienced many trials and tribulations trying to start a family for 12 years. At times it stressed our relationship to the breaking point. Sometimes the very things that test our faith can also help it to grow.

After much prayer and once we let go of what we thought we wanted, a family by traditional means, we really began to trust and listen to Jesus, and then everything changed. We felt called to adopt a child. Having such a long time before starting a family, we had lots of free time and enjoyed traveling the world and visited many beautiful places. Therefore, once we began the adoption process, it seemed like a natural option to pursue international adoption as suggested by our family advocate. Seeing one picture of Isaac, we knew Jesus was calling us to go halfway around the world to Ukraine to get him.

The process was long and extremely difficult. With the hope that our Maker would show us the way, we returned home with what we thought would be our only child, Isaac. Then, despite the opinions of medical professionals that we would not have biological children, I conceived our son Ian nine months later. A year later we would get the wonderful news that we were blessed again to be pregnant with our daughter Ivy. We continue to trust and have faith and hope in God's plan.



Jared, Ivy, Isaac, Ian and Rachel

## Q & A



### How has hope shaped your family?

**Rachel:** Hope has helped us to love in the midst of heartache. By never giving up faith and letting go of what we thought we wanted, hope has changed us from a family of two to five.

**Jared:** Once we decided that Jesus wanted us to start a family regardless of a traditional or non-traditional route - we were called to travel halfway around the world to adopt our oldest child from Ukraine. Only after this sacrifice and giving up our 'earthly control' we felt, did an undying hope expand our family by two more children after the adoption process in the next three years. Once we really trusted Jesus, everything changed for our family.

### Do you have any advice as to how to cultivate hope in daily life?

**Rachel:** Let go of how you think things should be and have trust. Surround yourself with positive people that are like-minded. Look for the good in people and the world. Be the good! Daily self-reflection helps cultivate hope also.

**Jared:** With hope, sometimes the things that test our faith can also help grow it.

# HOPING Hands

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“ Man remains forever made ‘in the image of God’ (cf. Gen 1:26), and each stage of life has its own beauty and its own tasks. ”

- Pope St. John Paul II in a Letter to the Elderly, 1999



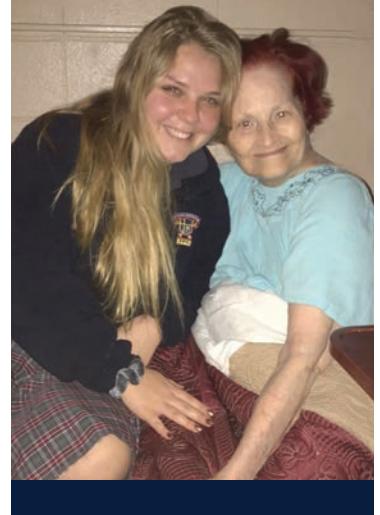
Once a month, students in the senior class of John Paul the Great Academy dedicate a morning to community service. The Senior Service Apostolate began in 2013. Since then, it has been the hope of the Academy to graduate students who have encountered the face of Christ in His most vulnerable people. The class takes turns visiting St. Joseph Diner, a local soup kitchen, and Amelia Manor Nursing Home. Seniors Caleb Dinnat and Mary Grace Yarborough and JPG alumna Hope Lewis reflect on their experiences participating in the apostolate.



### *Mary Grace Yarborough, Class of 2020*

An unexpected gift from serving monthly at Amelia Manor this year has been getting to know Ms. Barbara, one of the residents there. Ms. Barbara is a woman who is just so grateful to have people visit with her and love her. She is a woman of courage, who has helped me grow just from sitting at her bedside. When I leave her, I often think how blessed I am to have the life I have and to have met such a beautiful soul to learn and grow from. Through Ms. Barbara, I see Christ. When I sit next to Ms. Barbara, holding her hand, I have hope for my own future. In the midst of the worries that senior year brings, I am comforted when I realize that Ms. Barbara has lived so much life past high school, and I will, too. I realize from her wisdom that life and growth is a process and that we must be patient with ourselves. I think it is important that as faithful Catholics we move past our fears and anxieties to encounter those who are

most in need. When we do this, not only do we show them that they are loved and seen, but we also receive genuine human connection from learning who they are and how they have grown as people. As human beings, we experience God through recognizing each other's goodness, and through having authentic, vulnerable conversations. I think we often believe that we can only grow spiritually through a direct relationship with God, when in actuality we see Christ most through the less fortunate.



### *Hope Lewis, Class of 2019*



I met Ms. Barbara at the beginning of my senior year. My friends had told me, "Hope, you have to meet this lady. She likes to talk about the news. You'd love her."

I began to visit her every time we went to the nursing home and on the weekends.

Ms. Barbara listened to my stories and told me her own. Our friendship is one that I never expected but am very grateful for. This woman, who keeps her hair bright red and prefers a diet of Coca Cola and NBC, has shown me a kind of strength and enthusiasm that is both rare and inspiring. The students who get to visit her this year more often than I do have shown me pictures of her holding the book about Russian politics that I lent her. I'm excited to discuss it with her the next time I'm in town.

### *Caleb Dinnat, Class of 2020*

Nearly all of the people experiencing poverty and homelessness who enter St. Joseph Diner to eat a hot meal seem to have a smile on their faces. Despite the difficulties of their current situation, they desire real human interaction. Whatever their situation, which none of us can really know, they show love right back to us. I'm a pretty shy person when it comes to meeting new people, so I was scared of being forced to have conversations with people at the Diner. After my first time serving, I realized it was not only easy, but fun to work at St. Joe's. The staff there are hilarious, the people coming in show genuine gratitude, and working the line doesn't even feel like

work when you're being goofy with your classmates. I think it is important to remember that each and every person is a person with the same dignity. Life can be tricky, and we have no idea what these people have been through. However, since they're people just like us, they enjoy a good conversation as much as anyone else. It could make their day! I'd say I have rediscovered my hope that God will be with me no matter what circumstances I find myself in from witnessing the joy of the people in St. Joe's. To me, St. Joe's presented me with a reminder that I can constantly love others around me with a positive attitude through any time.

# THE *Gift* OF HOPE

*The Anderson Family*



“When **God** sends you a **gift** that you didn’t expect or don’t even view as a gift at that moment, there is so much **joy** and **freedom** in accepting it.”

- Ashley Anderson



# *As human beings,*

our greatest hope is a hope in eternal life with our Creator. Though eternal life in heaven may seem far away and a stretch of the imagination, Christ invites us to participate in eternal life right now, today, as we are, here on earth. This is a gift! There are countless ways we can accept this invitation. One highly ordinary, yet often challenging way is to choose to live in the present. So many struggle with this. The world convinces us that success and happiness will only come if we are in control, plan our lives, and avoid failure. When we avoid the gift of the present, even unintentionally, we are missing out on the gift of hope, hope that God will provide exactly what we need to gain eternal happiness.

John and Ashley Anderson's family have been given a very tangible gift that reminds them to live in the present and receive the gift of hope: their youngest son, Blaise.



Blaise was officially diagnosed with Down Syndrome about three weeks after his birth. Recounting that time in their lives, Ashley says, "We were pretty desperate for him to not have it, to be honest. We cried and prayed more in those few weeks than we ever have in our whole life. It's hard to explain that you are devastated, but also that

you love this child. To think about him or our other children suffering was the hardest thing for me."

During those first three weeks waiting on the diagnosis, Ashley and John prayed unceasingly: "At first, I prayed for the courage of Abraham. Abraham knew that God was asking him to sacrifice his child when he climbed up that mountain, and still he trusted God enough to walk up there and do that. I was praying for that trust."

The day after John and Ashley received the news of Blaise's diagnosis, they attended a daily Mass together with Blaise. In that Mass was when things really began to change for them. "I remember during that mass feeling like we were giving our child back to God. 'This is Your child, and we know and accept whatever Your plan is.' We felt a crazy amount of freedom in saying that prayer." A new freedom came to the Andersons then. They gave God total responsibility for Blaise: "In that choice, in Him allowing us to choose Blaise and not fight it, it was a great gift."

Just as any child is loved because they are part of a family, Blaise would be the same way. "We're going to love him,



Gus, Caroline, Blaise, Madeline and George Anderson

and the people around us are going to love him because he's our child." In these two years of Blaise's life, he has been so loved: "He lives so in the moment, even as a baby still. The joy that comes across his face is unabashed. The biggest gift that Blaise gives us is the choice to focus on what's happening here, right now, in our family." Ashley and John first thought that it would be hard on their other children: George, Caroline, Gus, and Madeline. But, overall, the benefit that they receive from Blaise far outweighs whatever they might miss out on: "They get love from Blaise in a way that I could not give them. With Blaise, there's no holding back!" This is one of the gifts of Blaise that the Andersons never saw coming. Seeing what Blaise brings out in each of their children is a gift.

"When you fully accept the cross, the sweetness of it is so sweet that you are willing to accept more. Now, we feel that we have much more faith and trust in God that the sweetness of any future cross will make it ok, bearable, and worth it to accept those crosses."

The Andersons reflect on what hope means to them: "One day, God willing, we will get to heaven and be able to see that by accepting these things in a very blind way, even though we have no clue what His plan will amount to, that we will be able to stand with God and say 'We accepted what you asked of us,' and God will show us the beauty that our acceptance created."





# VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

By Philip Cortese, Dean of Students

One of the reasons that I love teaching at JPG is that students in high school and younger are filled with hope – hope about their own futures and, as the character Hermes in the recent Tony-winner *Hadestown* spins it, “how the world could be / In spite of the way that it is.” The classical education we offer these students helps to sustain this hope by grounding them in the world as it *really* is, offering the best and truest and most beautiful texts from a tradition that seeks to show them humanity in all its messy reality. The twentieth century writer C. S. Lewis, no stranger to the attempt to reclaim the best of classical and Christian education, reminds us of the value of reading the classics: “Every age has its own outlook. It is especially good at seeing certain truths and specially

liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books.” So, when we read the Homeric epics, we can easily look past the gods disguising themselves and taking claim for the action of the Trojan War, a mistaken presumption accepted by all the characters in the epic. At the same time, we can be struck by the hospitality those same characters show one another to challenge our mistaken individualism. And when we wonder why we should continue to reread these same texts, we can recall the wise words of Italo Calvino: “Every rereading of a classic is as much a voyage of discovery as the first reading.” How can the *Odyssey* still feel fresh year after year? Because each reading is a voyage, an exciting



# *Jesus With Us*

By Amy Stout, JPG mother and teacher



As Catholics, we believe this (seemingly crazy) thing: that in the Mass, God changes bread and wine to make himself present to us. Jesus Christ, body, blood, soul and divinity, is there before us in a tiny white host. Because Christ has given us this unfathomable and unique presence of Himself, we extend this miraculous moment by offering times and places outside of the Mass where the faithful can come and sit in the presence of the Lord in this Blessed Sacrament and pray, reflect, listen; simply be with Him. To this time, we give the very appropriate name: adoration.

I'm lucky enough to teach at a school where adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is available perpetually. My dedicated holy hour is at noon every Wednesday—smack dab in the middle of the week. For most people, an hour of adoration is a time of silence and peace, free from outside distractions and noise. My holy hour is a little different. You see, the students have their lunch break during this time. For 35 minutes a day, they can take a break from classes, socialize with their friends, eat lunch and just rest. After having class for four hours straight, they can't wait for this break. I teach all morning until noon. I usually come rushing into my holy hour with an armful of books, hungry, tired of standing, and ready to not answer questions for a while. Yet, without fail, I always find students already in the chapel before I can even get there. It makes me smile every time. It's here that they freely choose to be for their break. For those first 35 minutes, the soundtrack of my "peaceful, free from distraction" time with Jesus is the opening and closing of doors, zipping and unzipping of backpacks, small children whispering at a quiet roar, teenagers getting the giggles, or sometimes crying. I wouldn't have it any other way. Then after a moment or two of settling themselves, they bow reverently and for maybe the first (and last) time of the day, they get very, very still. They sit with the Lord, and they give him their trials and their joys.

Somehow, somewhere along the course of these days, the students feel a tug, an invitation, to go and be with the only one who really brings peace to their restless hearts, and maybe even more surprising, they listen to it! They respond! But what witnesses to this teacher (and mamma) heart the most is that here in the middle of the day in their only free time, they choose Jesus for a bit over food, over friends, over everything. These are 100% typical kids in every other way. They have struggles, they aren't perfect, but this place offers a formation of their heart and their mind that not only opens them up to the intellectual truths of the faith but invites them to a personal relationship with Christ. It connects them to who they really are and who they were created to be, and in a world of confusion and anxiety, that is great hope for the future. The incredible blessing of having Jesus 'with us' in the Eucharist at the heart of our campus is a convergence of formation, opportunity, and invitation. It leads to kids who choose Jesus; and the sound of that is anything but distracting.



question about what this group of students will see and hear and think, how they will relate it to their lives, and how the changes in my life change the way I see

Odysseus' travels and reunion with Penelope. What makes a hero? How do our own memories shape our experiences? The "peaceful, reflective academic environment" of our Veritas charism describes the space we provide to ask important questions about how we should live, how society should be. And the classics offer a lens to those questions that is just strange enough to provoke a genuine answer.

# A CLASSICAL *Art* EDUCATION

To See God is to See Hope

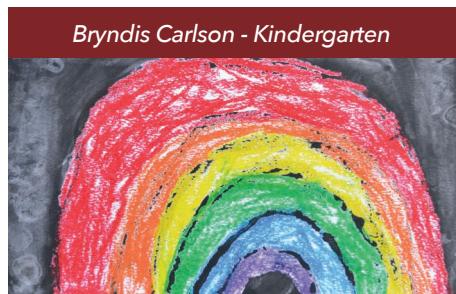
By: Erika Littell, JPG Visual Arts Teacher



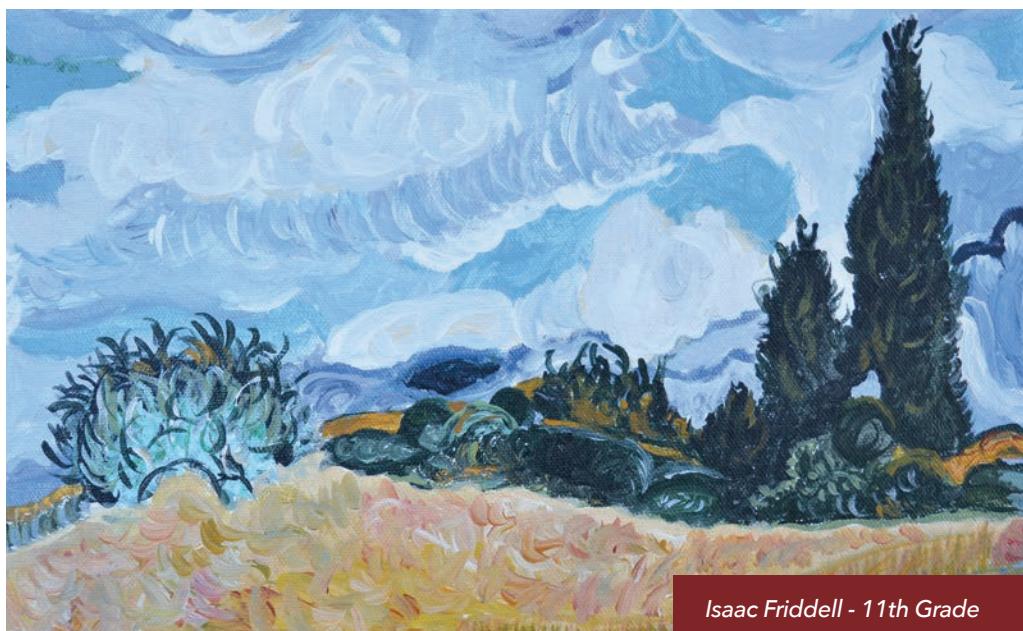
Rosie DiFabio -  
1st Grade



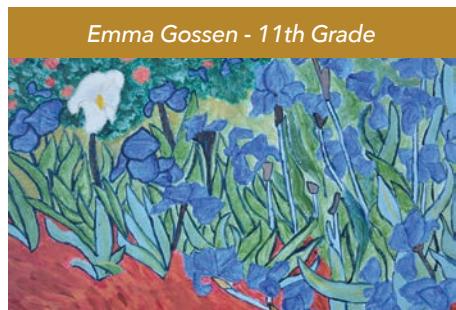
Olivia LaHaye -  
1st Grade



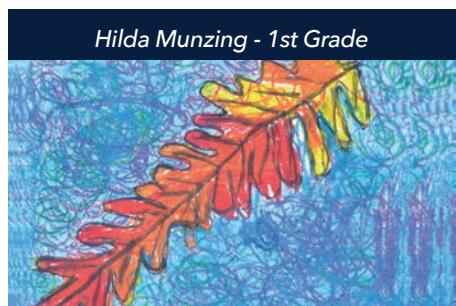
Bryndis Carlson - Kindergarten



Isaac Friddell - 11th Grade



Emma Gossen - 11th Grade



Hilda Munzing - 1st Grade

## *In his "Letter to Artists,"*

Pope St. John Paul II describes the importance of art, saying, "Humanity in every age, and even today, looks to works of art to shed light upon its path and its destiny." Art, therefore, should evoke a sense of wonder and enthusiasm, drawing us ever closer to the beauty and mystery of God. In contrast, modern American culture has emphasized that everything must be short and quick, immediately accessible for a self-imposed, busy lifestyle. At John Paul the Great Academy,

our hope is that, with the focus and investment in a classical art education, students are given the tools to encounter and participate in the visual communication of all that is good, true, and beautiful. By providing daily opportunities to explore art history and various art-making techniques, we hope to instill a confidence in our students to take a stance against the rush of society, and patiently and methodically search for their path and destiny in Christ. Ultimately, art is the hope of propelling students to encounter the divine as a bridge between that which is seen and unseen.



Beatrice Long - 6th Grade



Cecilia Polozola - 2nd Grade



Daniel Charpentier - 5th Grade



Lillian LeCompte -  
2nd Grade



## Cultivating My Gift at JPG

By Ann-Ayrisse Salvatierra, Class of 2020

*"Artistic talent is a gift from God and whoever discovers it in himself has a certain obligation: to know that he cannot waste this talent, but must develop it."*  
Pope St. John Paul II, "Letter to Artists," 1999

I would agree with John Paul II that a talent is a gift that is meant to be developed and used. Each person is given a gift, whatever it may be, that is a part of God's plan for his life. One gift God has given me is musical talent, a talent that has been developed in my years as a student at JPG. As I grow older, I find more of an appreciation for music. Music colorfully depicts a part of who I am: an artist through my voice. Sharing this gift from God shares something that I love and care about so much. I cannot imagine my life without music. Music is moving and sometimes overwhelming, because it has so many dimensions. I share music with others in the hope that it has the same effect on them that it does on me. Joining



Joseph Sonnier -  
11th Grade



Landon Gassiot -  
4th Grade



Sebastian Cramer -  
10th Grade

the JPG liturgical choir, the *Schola Custodum*, has given me the opportunity to share this gift. As a member of the schola, I have sung at weekly Masses, contributed to a recorded CD compilation, competed in the ACEL Arts Festival, and even participated in the annual Drama Club Shakespeare productions as part of the chorus. The opportunity to serve as cantor at school Mass, to lead our community in praising God through song, has helped me grow an even greater appreciation for my gift of making music: it brings me closer to Christ. I cannot express my gratitude to God for giving me a gift that can flourish in such a way. The journey of developing my gift from God, learning from and being encouraged by teachers like Ms. Chustz and Mrs. Broussard, gives me hope that God will guide me through all the gifts that He has for me. Developing these gifts gives me the desire to explore more of what God has for me. My advice to others is to simply be open to God's plan for your life. If one recognizes a gift that is given from God, cultivate it; use it. God gives us gifts throughout life to help us grow and experience His love. Whether one is an artist or not, God has a plan for your life that will ultimately make you most happy. A part of this plan comes through his gifts for people, so cultivate your gifts and use them to the fullest.



Ann-Ayrisse singing  
the National Anthem

## ALUMNI UPDATE



### Kristen Meche

Class of 2015

Kristen recently graduated from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and is currently working as a Registered Nurse in the Emergency Department at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. One of her biggest accomplishments is graduating as valedictorian of her nursing class this past December. Outside of school, Kristen has spent time traveling to different countries such as Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Canada.

What is your advice to a current JPG student about encountering Christ in the world?

"I think the best way to encounter Christ in the world is as you come into contact with people from all different walks of life, to see Christ in them and to look at every moment as an opportunity to grow in holiness and to be a witness of love and joy to them."



### Andrew Hicks

Class of 2013

Andrew is currently a PhD student at Louisiana State University studying mathematics. His research involves using mathematics to model the physics of liquid crystals, which are a type of molecule used in many applications, including calculator displays. Andrew recently traveled to Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island to participate in a week-long conference about liquid crystals. Andrew says, "This is a major accomplishment for me because it marks the beginning of my research journey, and it helped me connect with other researchers studying the same field as I am."

"When you leave JPG, a lot of things will change. During your years at JPG, you will find it very easy to encounter Christ in your everyday lives, but outside of JPG it may not be so easy. Find a community of believers and make sure you have friends who will lead you closer to Christ. Keep your prayer life strong. Then, when you encounter those who may not believe, give them an example of Christian love by how you live your lives for Christ."



## Witness to Hope

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

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

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

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