

**Headmaster's Conversation**  
**January 11, 2010**  
**Father Michael Brunner, Mrs. Hartnett, Mr. Gleich**

**Part I – Father Michael**

*Good Comments*

*11<sup>th</sup> Grade – Thank you for all you do for our sons.*

*9<sup>th</sup> Grade -- Thank you for taking time to share information with the parents, Fr. Michael! We appreciate a Conversation with the HM!*

*7<sup>th</sup> Grade - I am very pleased at the curriculum and the spiritual part – it is much better than what our son was experiencing at Wydown.*

*10<sup>th</sup> Grade --Father Michael, I hope these questions are not offensive. We love Priory and would not choose to be anywhere else! Thank you for you wonderful work. God bless.*

Thank you for the positive reinforcement. Although I am now on the north side of adulthood, I do still need that, especially at this time of year. I suffer from seasonal affective disorder, and it doesn't take much this time of year for me to fantasize about going back to the hotel business. The comments are a good antidote.

It's safe to say that the monks and faculty consider it our vocation to serve you and your sons. Fr. Paul has been slugging it out in the classroom for 51 years and done many other things, such as coaching sports he has just been introduced to, which involved walking or paddling much more than an extra mile. While no one here has been teaching as long as he has, all approach teaching with the same sense of vocation and dedication. It has been heartening to receive all the expressions of good will and wishes for Mr. Cavanaugh's speedy recovery from students of every era at Priory, all of whom Mr. Cavanaugh has served as a teacher. All of us young and old, put our heart into our teaching, coaching and the many other activities that faculty and staff members are expected to carry out for the students.

What we are truly trying to convey to students is heart stuff, a passionate love of learning of our particular subjects.

Now passion is very personal. A passionate German such as myself comes across very differently from a passionate Frenchman. And a passionate man of age 65 looks and acts somewhat differently from a passionate man of age 25; the sixty five year old is no less passionate, but perhaps a little wiser and experienced. At Priory we are fortunate to have a faculty that fully spans the possible age range for this wonderful activity of education, from the 20's through the 70's; we are fortunate to be able to draw on this whole range of wisdom, experience, enthusiasm, strength and energy.

Your questions, any questions respectfully asked, are not and never are offensive. We are all different; we know different things, expect different things, like different things and so on. So

frank questions help you to understand us, help us understand you, too, so we can all work together harmoniously in educating your sons.

So this leads us to my first area to address tonight...faculty and curriculum.

### Curriculum & Faculty

*8<sup>th</sup> Grade – We have been so pleased with our experience at Priory. The faculty has exceeded our expectations! We have no concerns and are quite sure you will be ahead of the game on concerns of others. Thank you for giving our son, a chance of a lifetime!*

*7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade - Are the Monks educated / trained to teach?*

*10<sup>th</sup> Grade – Are teachers adequately developed and mentored? I have heard a number of complaints relating to quality of classroom teachers made by both parents and students.*

So what these comments and questions show is that you can't please all the people all the time. Since they are related, I will address them together.

First, monks are educated. Monks are assigned to teach based upon their ability and the schools needs. We no longer do as once was done with Fr. Paul when he was assigned to coach basketball without having a familiarity with that sport.

However, neither the monks nor our lay teachers are required to have training or education in the science of teaching. Priory, as most independent schools, searches out persons with a strong background, both theoretical and practical, to teach in the appropriate disciplines. It so happens that about half of our teachers are in fact certified to teach in public schools and have had training in the science of education. I cannot say that there is a strong correlation between certification and effectiveness as a teacher, from the point of view of the administration or of the students. Teaching is about communication, motivation and understanding one's target not just as a group, but as individuals with differing needs, strengths, and weaknesses. This is why we are looking to keep class size as small as we can, so the teacher can know and interact with any student individually.

This is easier said than done. For example, I find it harder to communicate with students now, at almost age 60, than I did when I started teaching at age 48. There's a gap I have to run faster to fill as my ability to run faster is declining. Some people are just better at communicating than others, and that includes students. The last thing some teenage boys want is communication or anyone getting to know them; they clam up. I know you as parents know this. Some students leave Priory because they want to go to another BIG school where they can hide and be anonymous, because that's the environment in which they are most comfortable. I can tell you, those boys are hard to teach here.

Then some boys will give some teachers chances and not others. Not every teacher is cool. There are no guarantees. The only thing that makes it work is cooperation between student and teacher, their working together for the same goal of the student's learning.

That being said, can we do better? Can we as teachers learn and know more? And the answer is yes. Knowledge about teaching and learning is expanding just as every other area of knowledge. And society and the circumstances and environment in which our students live and learn is changing, too.

I have long felt that the new monks need a more formal background in education of some type. One reason is that if they persevere they will become more than teachers, they will become trustees of the school with full responsibility for its mission and future. The other is that, unlike the Algebra I learned in HS and never used again (my own fault I admit,) most of them will teach theology upon which a young man either commits to or rejects his faith. Now the monastery has been dealing with a paradigm shift in the formation new monks; the EBC recently mandated a particular regimen of training and courses for new monks, which regimen is more time consuming and structured than that under which I was trained. I have therefore made the suggestion of what I perceive to be a reasonable step in meeting the school's needs by either looking to the Archdiocesan educational institute, which forms catechists, or by bringing in one of their educators. It remains to be seen which will be more feasible.

I will say more about this at the end of my presentation, but we have this year established a new position at Priory, the Director of Faculty Evaluation and Development. He will be involved in this process of facilitating their education as well as that of the entire faculty, monastic as well as lay.

This new position is now being held by Mr. Bernard Kilcullen -- soon to be Dr Kilcullen, with a PhD in Education, and soon to be a father again. He has attended two seminars already this year on topics on which he will educate the rest of us. He will also be working with department heads and faculty on specific goal formulation for the professional development and continuing education of each faculty member.

It is our firm intention and goal that the Priory faculty be second to none.

*9 and 10<sup>th</sup> Grades - Does the faculty receive any type of performance reviews? How is this information gathered? If there are concerns about a specific teacher to whom should this be addressed assuming discussions have already taken place with the teacher?*

Indeed the faculty does received performance reviews. Now this process is in a state of flux. It will continue that a faculty member does a self assessment and then is evaluated by his or her department head.

This evaluation appraises each faculty and staff member in the following area:

- Professional and / or Technical Proficiency
- Teaching skills
- Classroom management
- Relationships with Students
- Relationships with Parents
- Relationships with Colleagues
- Contribution to the School Community

Fiscal Responsibility and Accountability  
Decision Making  
Compliance with our Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Last year I reinstated an evaluation of teachers by students, with each student completing an evaluation form for each of his teachers. This procedure had lapsed about 9 years ago. This evaluation focused on the teachers' effectiveness and skills in the classroom, in relationships with students, in grading and in communication.

This year I assigned our new Director of Faculty Evaluation and Development to redesign this process and format used, which he has almost completed. This evaluation process will be implemented in the next two months, but it would be premature to discuss details at this point since they are not finalized. At any rate, I can say that the school administration will use the information provided by this instrument and procedure to develop the knowledge and skills of the entire faculty.

I believe that parents are engaged in the ongoing evaluation of the faculty, the administration and the school. As a hotel manager, I put the highest value on those annoying comment cards hotels ask you to fill out when you leave, and I incentivized my clerks and cashiers to get a card back from each guest. Immediate feedback identified problems at an early stage and allowed me to resolve them before they became big problems. Now I can't send you a comment card every week, but I can respond immediately to anything you bring to my attention, and I can insist that every faculty and staff member likewise respond with the same level of seriousness to your concerns.

In most such matters, I am the Supreme Court. Mr. Gleich and Mrs. Hartnett are the Court of Appeals, and the Department Head is the District Court. Because the department head is the primary evaluator of a teacher, you can see why it is important for parents to communicate unresolved problems to the department head. This procedure is outlined in our handbook on page 43.

As it reads there, please first do attempt to resolve any problem, express any concern directly to the teacher or coach involved. Please give the person immediately concerned the opportunity to resolve the matter, and in the same way that I insist that teachers and coaches seriously consider that YOU may be right, I ask you also to seriously consider that the TEACHER may be right. They are not always as heartless as your sons may make them out to be. If the matter is not resolved or explained to your satisfaction, bring it to the next level. You may seriously wish to consult your son's advisor before going to the department head or even before going to the teacher. The advisor is there to be your son's advocate.

Now and then we hear it said that a parents is seriously concerned that a teacher will retaliate against their son if they complain, ask questions and so forth. All I can say is that if I learn of a teacher that retaliates against a student because of a parent's concerns, I will facilitate that teacher's transition to another career path.

*8<sup>th</sup> Grade - Thoughts about broadening the curriculum, Business, Accounting etc.*

As part of our accreditation cycle, we thoroughly review our curriculum in advance of the self study, which will occur next year. We furthermore have a curriculum committee which is engaged in constant review of our curriculum and meets on a monthly basis.

Adding to our curriculum presents great challenges. If I can reuse a metaphor I used in late Spring when we decided to add some more students. Then I said the school was full like suitcase. We could rearrange, repack, compress a bit and make room for a few more. However I think with the curriculum, and I know your sons would agree, it's more like the glass full of water. There is no more room in the day or terms. Never mind that adding courses means adding faculty and expense without adding revenue to cover the expense. To add to our curriculum would require us subtracting from our curriculum and there is nothing subtractable at this point.

There are two curricular changes under serious consideration. One I will speak of at the conclusion of the evening. Presently there is a Senior Elective which rotates each term through Psychology, Philosophy and Economics. We are seriously considering making Economics a full 3-term course. That of course means sacrificing Psychology and Philosophy.

In considering this matter, our recent graduates (last two years) at Rebel Rendezvous suggested academic changes focus on adding MORE rigor to our existing curriculum. I might say this thought never occurred to them while they were students here. No one ever came to my office and said "Fr. Michael, please make Priority harder."

At any rate, this is the voice of their wisdom and experience.

Their typical suggestions include:

- offer more AP's (economics and psychology came up more than once)
- more emphasis on very scholarly literature - how to read critically.
- students should take more AP's.
- put more emphasis on the languages.
- stress a harder work ethic even to those in B set as this will pay off in the end.

We take our students comments seriously. And we are working with our teachers to be sure an A is a real A, meaning outstanding exceptional achievement. B means very good achievement. C means good, acceptable achievement. D means substandard achievement and F means failure to achieve the minimum standard of achievement. We do our students no favors by over-rewarding them. Life is not like that.

*7<sup>th</sup> Grade – The JS theology Dept's stance on teaching that scripture is the divine revelation of God but that not all scripture should necessarily be taken literally (e.g., the creation story). (We were somewhat concerned to find out our son 's theology instructor said that Adam and Eve were real people.) How can we teach our boys to reverence the Word of God yet help them to think critically for themselves? It seems to me that there is a delicate balance that should be sought for.*

Oh my. I have never had to get involved in a Theological controversy in this forum before. Hopefully the English Inquisition isn't listening as I try to jump in the middle of this one.

Keep in mind that I am not privy to the precise facts of the matter, nor am I sure these parents are either, since sometimes boys lose some things in the translation from classroom to home.

The first part of the book of Genesis is a marvelous piece of literature which communicates a great deal of theological truth. One of these truths is the most unpleasant, about sin and who is responsible. What it makes clear is that God is not responsible for sin; everything he created was good. The forbidden fruit wasn't responsible, it was just hanging around. So that leaves us human beings being fully responsible for sin and the brokenness of creation which has been transmitted to all human beings through the ages.

So the indisputable truth is that human beings sinned, freely, and somebody or body's had to be first.

Whether the first sinners were simply two individuals, or a whole family or tribe, we cannot know the details, which are not terribly important. What is important is the fact of sin and it's human origin. It is interesting to note, however, that last I heard...modern science has demonstrated through mitochondrial DNA that all living human beings did have a single female ancestor. The Hebrew word for Eve (Havvah) literally means "source of life" and therefore mother of the living. The Hebrew word Adam means earth, like the clay Adam was made from. There is a lot going on in those stories of the Book of Genesis that does not meet the modern or English speaking eye.

Now we go over this in quite a bit of detail in my Junior class on Moral Theology. What is the right emphasis for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, where boys are coming from a variety of backgrounds, some churched, some un-churched, some literal creationists and some not. Our main thrust is the 7<sup>th</sup> grade is to try to get everyone on the same page, and that is a challenge. We do seek balance. Our Theology courses become progressively deeper over the six-year program, keeping pace with the average boy's physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual and religious development and growth.

How can we teach our boys to reverence the Word of God yet help them to think critically for themselves? My first suggestion is to dialog with the teacher so you can completely understand what is being said, and then express your concerns to the teacher.

Secondly my suggestion is to dialog with and teach your son along with us. The church teaches that the primary educator of a child in the faith are the parents. It was the parents who presented their child for baptism and who made baptismal promises on his behalf and who assumed the responsibility of educating him. Thirdly is to convey your concerns to me, which you have done, so I and Mrs. Hartnett can watch more carefully from our end.

Now that I have waxed philosophical, I would like to turn the podium over to Mrs Hartnett, and then Mr. Gleich, who will address some thorny technical issues, after which I will return and wax again.

## **Part II – Mrs. Hartnett**

*Form I – What are the intentions and thinking behind limiting foreign languages to French and Spanish vs. Chinese, for example.*

I appreciate very much having an opportunity to respond to this question. Given that I am a French teacher and a member of the Priory Modern Languages Department, I have, for many years, discussed and analyzed language offering questions.

The philosophy of our department is one of assimilation of the language. Each course of each year is designed with the goal of helping a student to achieve speaking fluency, grammatical literacy, and cultural comprehension. These rather weighty goals can be accomplished only with a multi year progression through the language. Reading Albert Camus' *L'Etranger*, for example, and then discussing the philosophy of existentialism can be accomplished only through a preceding solid foundation of vocabulary, grammar, speaking practice, listening comprehension, and cultural history, aspects of the language and of the culture which take time to absorb and to live. It is the feeling of our department that it is wiser to pursue a single modern language intently than to study two languages, perhaps less effectively. Initially in Priory's history, our only modern language choice was French. However, in the past 10-15 years, Spanish was added. Given, however, the fact that Priory is a relatively small school (according us many, many benefits, by the way), we are not currently in the position to offer additional languages to our present student body without significant and detailed analysis, analysis that we are currently gathering.

The questioner inquires as to the viability of offering perhaps Chinese as one of our languages. In the past several years, much study and many discussions have centered on the possible addition of Mandarin Chinese to our modern language department offerings. It is an exciting possibility but, as with any other curricular addition, must be well thought out and researched. Surveys have been taken and meetings have been held. I, myself, was part of a committee which visited Saint Louis University High School to talk about the what, how, when, and why of Chinese. Mr. Kevin O'Connell, the Chairman of the Priory Modern Languages Department, has gone to workshops and seminars in California on the teaching of Chinese at the Junior High and High School level. Chinese has been offered in our summer program.

I want to assure the questioner, and all other listeners, that this suggestion of enlarging and / or including another modern language choice is one that we are studying.

*Forms 9 and 10 - Is there a review of the quality, content, and quantity of food provided to the boys at lunch? My boys and their friends often state that the cafeteria runs out of food or the quality is going down.*

Each year, the Facilities Department of Saint Louis Priory has an annual review with the Food Service personnel to discuss the quality, the choices, and the quantity of the food being served at lunch. Our Food Service follows a Wellness Plan, meaning that all food served must meet governmental nutritional guidelines. (An example would be the use of skim milk, whole wheat breads and rolls, and multiple offerings of fresh fruit, as well as several types of fresh vegetables for salads or served alone). The High School Student Council officers are welcomed to, and have,

met with the Food Service personnel to discuss meals that they would like to see and meals that need to be eliminated. If students have suggestions about meals, they need to submit them to their Student Council representatives.

Regarding the quantity of the food being served, boys and parents should know that the Food Service plans for every boy to have two servings (the original serving plus a second serving, if desired) of every hot item main entrée, and every attempt is made to ensure that the hot entrée is available to every student regardless of when he eats. If a student has eaten his two helpings and is still hungry, he is welcomed to help himself to homemade soup, a salad with any of 20 toppings, something from the deli bar, which includes over 20 items, he can use the pita bread to make himself a pizza, there is ample fresh fruit, bagels, and cold cereal.

Should there be any issues with the quantity of the food at lunch, the Dean of Students should be alerted.

*Form III - Sometimes the boys need to study at school because they have a game, sports is canceled, etc. The library is not always open until 5:00 and there is no specific quiet room to study. Could the library stay open for the boys to study at least until 5:00 pm?*

The library at Priory is open to the students each day at 6:30 am and closes at 4:30 pm, a period of 10 hours. Some years ago, boys were asked whether have the library open *earlier* during the day, as opposed to *later*, would be more helpful, and the overwhelming response was *earlier*. Thus these hours were created to meet their needs.

If boys are in the library at 4:30 and would like to stay at school to continue to study, they need only ask the librarian to open a classroom for them. This happens frequently. Too, any boy may ask the late-afternoon hall supervisor to open a classroom if he needs one. Faculty are happy to accommodate students in this regard.

Parents should be aware that at least one teacher plays a supervisory role in the lobby and hallways after school each day until 5:30.

### **Part III – Mr. Gleich**

*8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Grade --Is Lacrosse still a possibility?*

Lacrosse has been a sport that has fast gained popularity in the Midwest. It is not yet recognized by MSHSAA but there are more than 30 teams that play this sport. In the past, we have allowed students with an interest and a talent in this sport to be exempt from our sports requirement in the spring season during which it is played. With the growing interest in this sport beyond the small number of Priory boys who have played it in the past, the school has been approached by a group of parents, representing mostly junior school boys, to consider implementing a lacrosse program at Priory. We will have a second meeting with this group this Friday morning, January 15. We have considered the level of interest in this sport, the slightly larger student body in the junior school and eventually in the high school, our field availability in the spring, and lacrosse's fit with our overall sports program. Our decision, which is as of yet unannounced to either our coaches or our faculty members, is that we will work towards building and implementing lacrosse within our

athletic program at Priory. The details related to adding this sport will be worked out between representatives of the athletic department (Mr. Genoni, Mr. Finan, Mr. Combs and me) and members of the concerned parent group. This program will begin in the junior school within our sports period in the spring of 2011. This spring (2010) Mr. Combs, as junior school AD, will oversee the “club” lacrosse team that will be playing outside the school day. It is expected that lacrosse will move to the high school as a JV program after that, and later result in a JV and a varsity team, if numbers allow. The plan is to have a Priory faculty member coach lacrosse once the junior school program is implemented in 2011.

*9<sup>th</sup> Grade – With an appreciation of the fact that honors classes are not weighted differently than non-honors classes in determining GPA, is it the impression of the college counseling staff that college admissions decisions reflect an understanding of the degree of difficulty of the classes? The level of communication to parents with regard to scheduled events (particularly sports events) could be improved, what efforts are being made in this area?*

*11<sup>th</sup> Grade – Why aren't “A set” courses weighted more in the GPA? What incentive is there for the boys to challenge themselves and do extra work? It's misleading when comparing students at the school. With such an emphasis on guarding against grade inflation, shouldn't this be evaluated?*

Our mission states that we are “to provide ...a college preparatory program of the highest excellence....” The over 3000 colleges in this country are called upon to assess transcripts from tens of thousands of high schools, each with a unique grading and weighting system. Our extensive contact with colleges over the past two decades convinced us that weighting our Honors and AP courses was not called for. We are told by college admission personnel that the vast majority of colleges unweight grades and calculate their own “core” GPA. Internally, this does mean that students in several Honors classes could have the same GPA as a student taking no Honors or AP classes and yet have a radically different course profile and rigor of program.

It is clearly the opinion of our college counseling staff, Mrs. Sams and Mrs. Collier, that college admission personnel and their offices are aware of the degree of difficulty of our program. Both Mrs. Sams and Mrs. Collier are on Regional and National committees, attend Regional and National meetings, take the time to make personal contact with several hundred college representatives annually, including about 100 of whom come to visit Priory each year, and also make personal visits to colleges (over 30 colleges last year alone) throughout the school year and the summer. Personal contact allows us to clarify for each college the rigor of our program. The profile that we send with each application, and which is given to each visitor and is taken to each college visit, notes the spread of our grades in each course as well as our AP performance and our testing averages. In addition, our counselors speak with admission officers individually about all applications our students submit. What we have repeatedly heard is that Priory does not appear to be suffering from grade inflation as many other schools are, that the colleges value this personal contact, and that the rigor of Priory's program is well understood. This is not universal, mind you, since we are challenged to stay on top of this matter as admission personnel change.

Colleges are also clear about the rigor of our program when they are presented with the transcripts of multiple students. This year alone we have had more than a dozen colleges (among these are Washington University, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Vanderbilt, University of Chicago, Villanova,

and Boston College) receive 9 or more applications from the class of 2010. It is very clear to colleges which of these students have taken the most rigorous course of studies. This is knowledge that puts “GPA” in context of “rigor of program.”

The vast majority of our students apply to the top two tiers or the top 160 colleges and universities across the country. These schools suggest to us that weighted / inflated grading scales are of no use -- they look at the student within their individual school’s context, the rigor that was available to that student, and how the student took advantage of or managed that rigor. They actively discourage weighting.

In the recent alumni survey completed last week, our alums encouraged us to urge students to “put as much rigor as they can in their curriculum” and “to work even harder because this is what gives them the advantage in colleges.” The two most common quotes in this vein were, “they should take more APs” and “even B set kids need to take more rigorous courses.” Their view was that success in college depended on how much they had challenged themselves while at Priory.

Regarding the level of communication, things change a little when boys come into the high school. I can use my sport as an example. First, there is the general assumption that boys have more responsibility in contributing to the lines of communication. This fall I gave each boy a written copy of the competition schedule for the entire season and posted this list on the web site and the cross-country sports bulletin board. The practices for the entire week are posted on this board every Monday morning and the timing of each race is also noted. Transportation to the meet is discussed later in the week, closer to the event, so that boys “do not forget.” A brief summary of the competition results is also posted on Monday on the athletic web site in a link. My conversations with some parents revealed that their sons were the ones who were falling down in the communication area. They were unaware of the sports boards and their sons had clearly failed to read what had been communicated.

We can always do a better job of fleshing out the communication from the school and the coaches, but we have posted, over the past two years, the CC course maps of the various meets where we compete as well as directions to those courses. Coaches write summer letters, provide schedules, and post information on the sports boards. We do rely on, and expect, the high school athletes to read what we post and communicate this information to their parents. If you have specific recommendations as to how to further improve communication about sporting events, without taking away responsibility from your sons, please make the head coach of each sport aware of these recommendations. We may be able to act on them.

*9<sup>th</sup> Grade – Performing for PSAT / SAT / ACT, etc.*

I am not certain what the question actually is here but I will take a stab at a response. Testing of this nature begins with practice tests in fall of the sophomore year. These are the PLAN (preliminary ACT test) and the PSAT (preliminary SAT). Teachers in selected classes have students take practice sections of these tests so that they will know the timing and the structure of them. How these tests are structured, is also covered by the college counseling department in form meetings. The class results of these tests are presented in an evening parent / student meeting in December. Boys have their tests returned and the intent is that they act as a diagnostic, pointing out strengths and weaknesses, as well as areas that need to be addressed. A second round of

testing occurs in the fall of the junior year when the PSAT / NMSQT is administered. Math and English teachers provide practice tests for preparation and students also use outside preparation resources based on their individual needs. Sometimes in the past the school has been able to assist in this regard. This junior year practice SAT test forms the selection index that is used for the National Merit Scholarship programs. Individual and class results of this test are presented in a December form meeting with all the juniors. Advisors are asked to review the test results with their advisees in January.

Between mid winter and early spring, boys take the ACT test and the SAT test. These data are used during meetings with the college admission counselors looking ahead to college applications. Both the PLAN and the PSAT have predicative power and indicate to students and parents what the likely results of the ACT and SAT tests will be, if nothing exceptional is done to change that. Almost all students will retake the ACT and / or the SAT in either early summer or the early fall of their senior year. More of our students are showing a preference for retaking the ACT since our students tend to perform better on it, and since it is now almost universally accepted by colleges and universities.

Performance on all of these tests is tracked by the school, included in the profile that we send to colleges, and reported to the Board of the school in the winter Benchmarks report. Our students do well on these tests. Regularly we have 25% - 30% of the junior class earning National Merit Commended or Semifinalist status, compared to 3% nationally, and our SAT and ACT averages are closely correlated if you were to use an equivalency table. The Critical Reading and Mathematics sections typically sum to 1290-1310 (out of 1600 where the National average runs about 1020) and the ACT class average runs just at 30 (out of 36 where the National average runs near 21) by the time boys have completed the testing cycle. These results place the average Priory graduate in the top 4% of students nationally.

This form of testing is one of several factors used to assess student Ability (rather than Performance) in the college application process.

*10<sup>th</sup> Grade --Why do so many boys require tutoring? It seems to be in the same subjects. I have had a very hard time getting a Chemistry tutor and now I am paying \$50.00 an hour. If teachers offered this service it would be much more convenient for the parents and students. Could Priory hire tutors for certain subjects? I know this might sound outlandish but many Private Schools offer tutoring. I don't think Priory need to be so frugal in this area. The tutoring need not be private and could be offered at certain times on the weekend or the evening, since that is what the boys who are tutoring do anyway.*

This is a multipart question that necessitates answers on several levels. The breadth and depth of our program requires all boys to carry all of the subjects with no study halls for the first four years. The regular courses are demanding and the honors and AP courses even more so. Our mission calls for an "...education of the highest excellence..." and this places demands both on our faculty and our students. While boys who are admitted to the program are talented, they are not equally talented in all areas yet are expected to show a minimum level of proficiency in all areas. Our diagnostic exam in mathematics reveals a broad spectrum of abilities in this area even before boys enter our program. Historically, boys have struggled both in those courses that show the greatest need for cumulative knowledge and in those courses related to knowledge that ought to have been

gained in other areas. As the Director of Studies the past 20 years I have tried to arrange tutoring services between upperclassmen and underclassmen. These services have largely been in Latin, Spanish and Mathematics as well as the related fields of Chemistry and Physics. Rarely have students sought help in History, Theology, Computer Science, Fine Arts or English on a regular basis. In addition to struggling in a subject, students and parents seek tutoring when they are unhappy with the level of performance. Some seek to turn C's into B's or B's into A's. They are looking for the extra edge, especially in the high school.

In addition to matching up student tutors, which relies largely on student availability and student willingness to commit to this endeavor (last year's seniors seemed to have a greater interest in doing this and more time for it than this year's seniors), many faculty members do tutor students on either a formal or informal basis. Remember that many faculty members also coach or sponsor activities that demand weekend or evening time commitments, and almost all teachers are serving as thesis advisors. The classical language department has scheduled Latin help sessions at lunch and the math department has also run such sessions in the past. Many teachers are available for individual or small group help in the morning before school because most of us arrive at school well in advance of the start of school. Speaking as a Chemistry teacher, I do offer my services to sophomores and seniors three or four days a week before school. For some students I, like other teachers, have a standing arrangement, while others come on an "as needed" basis. Four or five sophomores see me regularly and I am meeting weekly after school with about the same number of seniors in my AP class where I have 28 seniors. The demanding nature of these courses does require additional help on the part of some boys who want to take these courses. By no means am I unique in giving boys extra help. Few faculty members are comfortable tutoring students for pay since this clearly presents the appearance of a conflict of interest. In addition to their tutoring sessions, many faculty provide extra help sessions before exams.

We do refer students to tutoring agencies, such as Varsity Tutors or Simply Mathematics and Reading, when a more formal arrangement is desired. Some students and parents want tutoring in the evening or the weekend and faculty are not generally available to do this. The school has chosen to stay out of the tutoring business, but rather to refer students to subject area tutors when we know of a suitable one. Staffing such a service with Priory teachers is really not possible given the demands we are presently placing on our teachers. Many of our upper level students are open to doing some a.m. tutoring, which fits in with their schedules but boys have their own classes to prepare in the evening and varying sports competitions work against evening tutorials. We have found that the boys will choose to cancel a tutoring session if either the tutor or the boy has a test the next day.

I can do a better job of trying to develop a bank of subject area tutors. I do encourage boys and parents, however, first to avail themselves of their teachers after they have done their part in the classroom. For younger boys it is often very helpful to have an older boy doing the tutoring since he, himself, has either been in the same course or has had the same teacher.

*12<sup>th</sup> Grade – The senior thesis is an outstanding part of the Priory program. My son learned so much. When he received his final feedback I was surprised that there was hardly any written feedback. The grade was told to him verbally. There was no grade written on the document. He hasn't even been given a copy of his report / thesis. It could enhance the program if students were given the grading criteria before they complete the project and the same grading criteria were*

*provided at the end of the paper / project. For example: pts or grade in Bibliography / Table of Contents / Abstract / References / Quotes / Organization / Time Management / Creativity / Proof Reading – with a Final grade – and comments detailing strengths and development areas. It is possible that theses could be available online so students and parents could read them. I have read my son's friends' theses. They are fascinating. Faculty could likely help some of the students publish their thesis. Thanks for your considering these ideas.*

For decades now the feedback that we receive from our graduates is that “Thesis was one of the most collegiate and most helpful things I did while I was at Priory.” It is rare among college prep programs both locally and across the country. It provides the opportunity to work one-on-one with a faculty member in order to produce a college level argumentative paper. It is not, however, a perfect process. Having almost every faculty member involved in the process, either as advisor, reader or both, means that faculty members will have different advising styles. Some relentlessly pursue their advisees, while many rely on the senior student to take the bulk of the initiative. Several drafts are expected and faculty members generally comment on each draft. If a student has effectively engaged in the process, then there will not be as much written on the final draft. All advisors do write a full subject report at the end of the fall or winter terms. Grades are not normally written on the final thesis document because these grade sheets are submitted to the thesis advisor. Advisor and reader, who grade independently, then agree on a final grade. In the vast majority of cases reader and advisor agree within a tick of each other, and the advisor communicates the final grade to his / her advisee.

A grading rubric, as is suggested in the question, is really not seen as valuable in the thesis process. It is much less about assigning points than it is about determining the overall quality of the paper, where A is seen as a truly excellent paper (equivalent to an A in an AP course); B is seen as a good, but not outstanding paper; and C represents an acceptable paper of average caliber. Mr. Cavanaugh does give to students, as well as to advisors and readers, a general guideline for the grading of a paper that also takes into account whether a student has managed to follow the suggested time line. Tardiness is penalized. Strengths and weaknesses are usually communicated to students during the writing process but the questioner does point out the value of comments on the final paper. Most teachers do this.

Putting theses online would only be possible with the permission of each student. If a student wishes to share his paper, that is seen as a matter of personal preference. I can assure you that some students do not even share their paper with their parents, since I have had to send home a copy of it, on occasion, for one of my advisees. Publishing these papers is an entirely different matter. We do encourage boys to use them in the college application process where appropriate, but the standard for publication reaches an entirely different level. This is not something that the school wishes to pursue.

I do agree with the writer that this is a remarkable opportunity for both our students and our faculty. I have been involved with the process for 35 years now and have learned much about a wide variety of topics by being a thesis advisor. The intense relationships with students have also been a boon to advisors and advisees, to say nothing of the advantage that this gives our boys when they are presented with a comparable task in college. When boys return for Rebel Rendezvous, they regularly comment how helpful it was to have written an argumentative paper of this magnitude in high school, but they also confide that they did not much like it when they were

going through the process. We showcase senior thesis as a special feature of our academic program when communicating with colleges.

*7<sup>th</sup> Grade – How athletic offerings will adapt to larger enrollment in each grade? in the School?*

We already announced over the summer that we were raising the status of our rugby and hockey club programs to allow them to fulfill our sports requirement. This gives students greater flexibility in choosing sports with which to fulfill our sports requirement. In my opening remarks I mentioned that the school plans to begin a lacrosse program in the junior school that will carry over into the high school in future years. We were notified in the late fall that the covering body for rugby is requiring that rugby competitions be moved to the spring, so it is very likely that rugby will become a spring sport for grades 10-12 in 2011. While these two changes create a much broader range of choices for athletes in the spring, they also create challenges for the winter season. Some parents and students have expressed dissatisfaction over the cut policy in high school sports, especially at the freshman level. Even though some parents find this difficult to believe, coaches and the school would like to keep boys in our sports programs as long as possible. Our challenge is to balance being competitive with achieving playing time. Here are three changes we are considering within the athletic department. First, developing a racquetball “in school” program during the winter for high school athletes. Such a program might be able to accommodate up to 16 students. Second, expanding the winter indoor soccer program for ninth through eleventh graders. Third, creating additional ‘C’ teams in certain sports. Each of these options will require the school to hire additional coaches to staff these teams. The teacher / coach model will need to be implemented when hiring new faculty members, since athletics is a curricular component of our program and since many of our coaches will retire in the next ten years.

We are aware that bringing up to 10 additional students into the high school at the freshman level will put additional demands on teams, fields and space as these boys move through the high school. We hope to slowly expand our offerings beginning at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level.

*10<sup>th</sup> Grade - Are there deficiencies in classroom supervision during testing? I have heard of numerous instances of disruptive behavior, talking and cheating during testing which might be ameliorated or even eliminated through better test monitoring.*

Our school Honor Code reads, “A student’s honesty about himself and honesty in his relationships with others are the basic values on which Priory rests. This community depends on each person’s honesty if it is to develop a sense of trust and openness. A Priory student makes a commitment to honest behavior in all areas of school, formal and informal, curricular and extracurricular.” Each of your sons signed this Honor Code as a junior school student and the Code remains in effect the entire time he is a member of this community. We assume that what you teach your son is in complete alignment with this code.

As parents and teachers we are well aware that some students will cut corners, cheat, lie or steal. We hope to provide a family environment that supports individual honesty while not generating an oppressive or overly restrictive environment. Lasting honesty comes from within and is not superimposed. Having said this, it is our job to be vigilant in this process so that all students are on an equal footing when it comes to assessment.

We regularly remind faculty to be vigilant in their proctoring, to not leave students unsupervised, and to discipline students who are not honest. We will continue to set expectations for our faculty which eliminate classroom testing disruptions and we will be adamant in encouraging students to be honest. Since our environment assumes personal honesty, our actions are predicated on this assumption.

On a related note, often rumors of events are shared, either with peers or with parents, that when investigated, turn out not to be what happened in reality. This happens in many areas, including cheating. It is our fervent hope that, as parents, when your son shares an incident with you that you strongly urge him to abide by the honor code he has committed himself to. Furthermore, we urge you to help him find a way to report the alleged infraction so that it can be appropriately investigated and dealt with. In this way we are all doing our part to level the academic playing field.

Fr. Michael made it very clear to the entire student body in a general assembly that, while he understands that the virtues of honesty and integrity take time to develop, he can only go so far in his pastoral role. One mistake we can understand and forgive, as long as there is contrition. More than one offense can have dire consequences. We will continue to stress conscientious supervision with our faculty and respect and honesty on the part of our students.

*9<sup>th</sup> Grad - Vacation Calendar: Why can't this calendar be coordinated with the other Catholic Private Schools? They don't have two weeks vacation at Christmas; they don't have the same Spring Break so we could take a family vacation.*

As a representative of the office of the Headmaster, I do attend a meeting of most / all of the heads of the Catholic Private Schools held at Chaminade each year. This meeting occurs tomorrow morning, January 12. We share all aspects of our school calendars from the opening of the school year through the end of our trimesters and semesters, the timing of winter and spring / Easter breaks, to the release of seniors and the dates of graduation. The fact that we are on trimesters and most other schools are on semesters causes some differences in winter breaks. For example, many schools ended their fall term on Friday this December and did not have school on Monday and Tuesday like we did. Some schools also combine their spring and Easter breaks into one break, but this varies depending on the timing of Easter. Schools do not have the same length of the year as some are on a 175-day school year while Priory, with its longer school days, operates on a 165-day school year.

I take away all of this information from the calendar meeting and then submit my findings to Mr. Finan, Mrs. Hartnett, and Fr. Michael. We have a full administrative discussion on what would be best for the school. I then prepare different scenarios for the Abbot's approval. Since the monastic schedule and the school schedule must be synchronized, the Abbot must consider what is best for the monastery. He also has established the parameters that school not normally begin before the Monday before Labor Day and that school end by Memorial Day. Between these dates I attempt to place 165 school days. This year the Abbot did not approve the preferred calendar but did approve the alternate version. This is largely what has caused differences between Priory and other schools. Our calendar for next year (2010-2011) has already been approved by the Abbot, based on the criteria he has set.

Tomorrow, I will again listen carefully to what the other schools are doing and attempt to align our breaks, as much as possible, with those of the other Catholic schools. As in the past, I will create scenarios based on the parameters I have outlined, seek the approval of the administrative team, and then ask Fr. Michael to seek Fr. Abbot's approval. At this point the decision is beyond my control.

### Powerschool

*8<sup>th</sup> Grade - Would it be possible to produce a summary sheet with the trimester final grades and teacher comments on one page? Right now you have to go in and print out every class final sheet. Is there a way to access last years' grades and comments? There is something important about a tangible "report card" with teacher's comments that may be getting lost with PS.*

*9<sup>th</sup> Grade --Report Card - Why can't a final report card at the end of each term be sent to the parents? We can print one from Powerschool but the GPA is not on it.*

Moving to Powerschool was a conscious effort by the School to inform parents more regularly of a student's progress, and to cut down on the number of mailings from the school. It was hoped that electronic communication would replace the mailing of report cards six times each year. The complexity of our reporting process, with full subject reports, advisor reports and Director / Headmaster reports often had report cards going home a month after fall exams. Now, communication is much more immediate. A side effect of this process is that Powerschool does not allow individual report cards to be printed by parents. This is an artifact of the Powerschool software system. Parents are telling us that they would like to have the sort of report cards that we can generate using administrative privileges, which have grades, comments and GPA on them.

For the winter term, since there are few exams and no Director or Headmaster comments, we will provide a copy of the administrative version of the report card. Mrs. Hartnett will take care of distributing these to the parents of the junior school boys, and we will mail these home to the parents of high school boys. This is not, however, a long term solution to the predicament. We realize that we cannot rely on Powerschool to resolve the problem, so Mr. Nunziante, our Director of Technology, has begun to work on a solution himself. He is attempting to customize the report card so that parents can print out their own full version for their son. This patch will not likely be in place before the end of the term, but we hope to have it ready for the end-of-year report cards.

*No Grade indicated: I appreciate the opportunity to express our concerns in this forum. I hope this is received in the spirit it is intended because we love St. Louis Priory and understand the difficulty of trying to consider issues from all sides.*

*My concern is simple – the sports requirement, the burden it places on the boys, and some unintended consequences for the school as a whole.*

*In the very first meeting we attended at Priory (a meeting for kids about to enter the JS), Mr. Gleich very eloquently encouraged the boys to find their passion in life and follow it. This is something we have always encouraged our kids to do as well. This is difficult because as you know Priory is extremely demanding and most of the time is essentially spoken for.*

*When we thinking of sending our sons to Priory, we asked kids and parents already here what they liked and didn't like about the school. The sports requirement was the one negative that was most cited, and now I understand why.*

*The sports requirement in the JS seems to work well being part of the school day. Also, I suppose some kids need built-in exercise just as all middle schools require this as part of their day. In HS, kids should be given the opportunity to start to make choices about their future by what they pursue outside the classroom. For example how could a Priory student who wants to continue to play piano, learn to speak Chinese, join in church and faith activities, explore more in-depth intellectual pursuits of interest, etc. possibly fit it in while they keep their grades and fulfill the sports requirement.*

*I suppose it's reasonable to require students to play one sport a year for reasons of fitness, health, team values, school support, etc. But in no other school do they have these sports requirements nor are kids forced to commit the time Priory kids do to sport they are forced to play. This is an outdated policy that seems to be more for the coaches at Priory than the students.*

*I think it s telling that it is the number one issue with both parents and students. In addition, given the amount that Priory students are required to do academically, I would doubt if more than a very few people other than coaches would be in favor of the requirement. The kid's best interest is not being fully considered. This does affect the time the boys have for academics and rules out any time left to pursue anything outside the set curriculum. The result is that many kids regularly get unhealthy amounts of sleep.*

*This is not just an issue within the Priory community. I can tell you that it also affects the school's admissions. We have talked to a few families in the past couple of years who were considering Priory, but chose not to come to the school in part because of the sports requirement. Coupled with concern over whether he curriculum would be too much for their son, the sports requirement seemed overwhelming. As a family who loves the school and the community, we could not recommend the school unconditionally for this reason alone. It is a burden on these kids. It is hard enough to manage this commitment for the kids who love the sport they're playing.*

*We know one family chose not to send their son to Priory because he is a very serious athlete that is well aware of the issues facing similar kids now at Priory who are trying to pursue their sports interest. They felt that their son would be at a serious disadvantage athletically, and they are correct. We know another boy that will be of age in the next couple of years and given these issues I doubt very seriously whether they will consider Priory. He is an all-round great kid and would be a rue asset to the school.*

*Most people would agree that academics come before sports, but other interests are important to these kids and their interests should be considered. A few Priory athletes have gone on to play in college, but they are the exceptions. They do this in spite of the sports requirement not because of it. This policy does hold many kids back from reaching their full potential because they are not able to pursue their sport as they would like.*

*First of all, this is not about one sport against another sport. The argument that lifting this requirement would hurt Priory sports is shortsighted. All sports at Priory would probably improve if the sports requirement was lifted because the school would develop some great athletes instead of a lot of good athletes. Like learning a language, the way to get better at a sport is to play it more. Priory's system makes it very hard on the kids who are serious about one sport, and it makes it difficult for Priory to compete in all sports. Look at all other HS's, even schools in the ABC League, no school has Priory-type requirements.*

*The coaches may even find it refreshing to have all the kids on the teams wanting to be there. They may not have to cut a Freshman or Sophomore who really wants to play because they took a kid who was fulfilling their requirement only to have that same kid quit the sport the next year.*

*Most importantly, I believe this is hurting the integrity of the school and teaching the boys some terrible life lessons. Let me give some examples of what these kids face if they choose to follow their true passion of being the best they can be at their strongest sport, no matter what that sport is. First of all, they are making a true sacrifice of time to do so (which I know is their choice). Many weeknights they will go from school all day, to their sports requirement, to the sport they love (team practice), and many hours of homework to follow (leaving them very little time to sleep). Again I understand that this is their choice and they must sacrifice to play the sport they love, but this is not something kids at any other school are up against.*

*The boys in this situation are faced with no good options when faced with conflicts. One – they can give up the sport they love in the off season; a serious disadvantage if they have any hopes of playing in college (not to mention, mastering a sport that truly brings them joy). Two – they fulfill their HS sports obligation giving half an effort which allows them to skate by without the demands that would otherwise be required of them (the results of this is that their character is questioned by all coaches and rightfully so.) Three – they pick the honest approach and tell their HS coach they can't make the game or meet because they have their outside sport obligation (the result of this honesty is that they are treated like criminals and are disciplined.) Four – they lie about why they have to miss or fake an injury or illness to avoid the above mentioned treatment (this is the worst choice but they quickly learn it's the one with the consequences easiest to live with. The other result if that coaches view all legitimate injuries and / or illness with obvious suspicion). I think this is a horrible message runs contrary to what Priory is all about.*

*Frankly, if a kid hopes to have a chance to play college sports today they must devote themselves to their sport. The sport requirement for these kids is a burden. Priory already requires more than any other school in terms of academics. I am not trying to make things easy on the boys, just fair when compared to other schools.*

*Academics comes first, no question. But I don't think it's fair that kids can't follow their passion and become as good as they can be because of an outdated policy that needs to be reexamined. Just about everything these boys do is all business, and we as parents don't feel it's fair for us to make them quit the one thing that brings them the most joy (even though their life would clearly be much easier if they did).*

*The bottom line is that many serious athletes at Priory are not able to follow their passions without serious consequences. It shouldn't be this hard for them to pursue the sport of their choice and they shouldn't be put in situations where the best option is to lie.*

*Unfortunately, I don't feel comfortable signing my name to this for my sons' sake, but I truly appreciate your time and willingness to address important issues facing the school.*

Since I am correctly quoted in this question, it seems appropriate for me to address the points contained in it. We are very clear with all applicants to Priory about the comprehensive nature of our program. Athletics, like academics and fine arts, is curricular at Priory though it is extracurricular at most other schools. Also, our emphasis is on participating in team sports rather than PE. This further makes Priory fairly unique. We add to this mix that we do not believe that it is a good idea for a boy to focus all of his energies on one sport year round. In this regard, Priory comes across to some families as countercultural. While it may be true that athletes can more fully develop their potential as athletes if they are allowed to do one sport exclusively, much recent evidence, including commentary provided by the MSHSAA, supports that playing multiple sports is better for the athlete both mentally and physically in the long run.

We are in full agreement that our curriculum, of which sports is an integral part, is a demanding one. It places demands on all students who must fulfill a modern and a classical language requirement, participate in fine art classes while taking theology in addition to the traditional liberal arts courses, and at the same time compete in athletics. Our teacher / coach model, which engages 26 of our faculty members in coaching as well as teaching, is actively transmitted to students through our academic and athletic requirements. In this sense our coaches have both an academic and an athletic perspective on what they do. Several teach and coach at the highest levels within our program. Most of those who do not coach are involved in moderating clubs or various activities. They do these things precisely because they are passionate about them and they want to convey this passion to their students / athletes / participants.

Having read all 205 pages of comments from the ISACS survey, my impression is that the vast majority of those responding, especially our students, like our sports requirement. It is true that it is easier to fit in the sports requirement in the junior school when there are fewer competitions and the school day ends at 4:30. At the high school level we readily admit that there are many more distractions as well as opportunities for our students. Managing the demands of our curriculum is a challenge. However, I would like to offer the survey comments from our two most recent graduating classes as testimony to the value of our total curricular requirements. Mrs. Sams tabulated the survey questionnaires and reported "Boys felt overwhelming well prepared for college." They indicated "our academic and our physical education programs really prepared them well both in terms of being ready to handle the course work and to manage the time commitments and stress of college." Several of these same students also openly admitted to our juniors and seniors that they did not like the full sports requirement while they were here but certainly see the value of it now. They look forward to making a workout part of their day or making time to compete on club or intramural teams.

While our athletic requirement does not support our athletes doing the same sport year round, it certainly does not appear to prevent our students from pursuing things outside the school day. Allow me to give you an example from the past weekend: play practiced on Saturday and Sunday,

Robotics worked in the junior school several hours both days, Mock Trial practiced both at the Varsity and the JV levels, TEAM+S practiced three squads on Sunday, Scholar Bowl had a Saturday competition, and TREND spent several hours out here on Sunday setting up a putt-putt golf course. These are just the things that I know about. Other boys were involved with parish youth groups, some are Eagle Scouts and use weekends for scouting, others are involved in tutorials and have weekend retreats. It is my observation that our curriculum and the example that our faculty model regarding total involvement, foster the total involvement that we see on the part of our students. In many ways boys are finding / making time to pursue their passions. And, we even have several boys each year who do pursue a sport outside of Priory throughout the year.

We do not feel called to do what other schools are doing just because they are doing it. We have felt that having our sports requirement fits well with our view of total education. We have a thesis requirement, a double language requirement, and no student leaves Priory without having taken at least one AP course. These are also unique to Priory and fit well with our curriculum which is designed to "...help talented and motivated young men develop their full human potential as children of God" as we state in our mission. I cannot deny that an athlete's desire to participate year round, or near year round, on select teams in sports like hockey, soccer, and basketball or in individual sports like tennis, golf and swimming, place added demands on some of our students. Our recent promoting of rugby and hockey to full status within our sports program recognizes the commitment that boys make to these sports. Our willingness to review individual sport situations at the upper levels within the school has allowed us to grant sports exemptions in some circumstances.

On a personal note I would like to add this comment from an AP teacher and a Varsity coach who has done both at Priory for 35 years now. The sport that I coach in the fall, cross-country, is seen by some as a catch-all sport. Some boys do not want to be in this sport and do not like the level of exercise that we demand. While this is their attitude when they begin the sport, for most it is not their attitude after they have been a part of the team for an entire season. This fall we had 39 boys willingly complete the five-day "marathon" at the end of the season and earn medals in the process. Many of these boys were not good runners at the beginning of the season and did not see themselves as runners. By being part of the team they improved as runners, found that setting and achieving goals was a rewarding experience, became a part of a winning tradition at Priory, and began to see rigorous athletic training as a life skill. We are aware that athletics takes away time that could be spent on other pursuits, but feel that it is an essential component of managing stress and learning to relate to others outside of the classroom

I do not have a good answer for the parent who wants their son to pursue a single sport his entire high school career. This goal contains built in conflicts that some students manage better than others. It does require excellent time management, but we have had several students who have been successful in doing so.

#### **Part IV – Father Michael**

*How – specifically- are we working as a school to make sure that authentic Catholic teaching is being provided to the boys, in such subjects as literature, history, current events, and science? (Faculty training, in-class reviews? Examination of classroom materials, e.g. books, syllabi, etc.?)*

Now, although I asked that questions be submitted to us by December 28, so we could have time to adequately prepare our answers, this question was hand delivered today. I was not pleased, because I have had four meetings today and two classes to teach. So I faced a quandary...do I disqualify the question because it was submitted two weeks late, or do I try to answer it? I will try, but the answer is not going to be as thought out or as articulate as it might have been with more time.

This matter is obviously of concern and the questioner appears to be worried that either heresy has or will soon appear.

Firstly I can say that Benedictines are not known for pushing the envelope on such matters. We have monks teaching English literature, and we have and will have again monks teaching history and science. In the upper levels the nationally set syllabi for AP courses do not deal with Catholic teaching. AP Physics, Chemistry, Biology, English, American and European History do not have doctrinal or moral content. We teach the boys what they need to know to master the material and pass the nationally set exams.

Most of our faculty are Catholic and loyal Catholics, so it is expected they will enrich their teaching by integrating their faith with the course material. Those who are not Catholic are asked before they are hired... can and will they uphold our mission, which includes upholding Catholic teaching.

There can be and are many possible arguments on what authentic means in terms of Catholic teaching. We do not support or have as far as I know counterfeit Catholic teaching. Again, if your student son reports to you something doctrinally suspicious or unclear to have come from a teacher, please ask the teacher for clarification. And please keep in mind we do not have a doctrine of Faculty infallibility. Teachers can make mistakes; students often point out our mistakes to us and correct us. Parents can do the same.

Textbook lists are published annually and curricula are reviewed both annually and in the accreditation and evaluation process. The Golden Compass was once on our reading list and when it was condemned it was removed.

We do not have a system to police the doctrinal authenticity, whatever that may mean, of secular subjects. We do have our eyes and ears open to insist that our outlook and values be Catholic.

### Increased Class Size

*8<sup>th</sup> Grade –We want to make sure larger class sizes have been addressed throughout the whole time at Priory. Thinking about sports, student parking, larger advisory groups, college counseling, and even graduation – room in the Church for everyone. Had this experience at our girls' school and didn't go well.*

*8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Grades - How will the increased class size in the Junior School change the High School?*

A lot of thought went into the decision to increasing the overall enrollment at Priory, despite the fact that when it tops out, the overall increase in enrollment is of the order of 9%. Prior to this year, our enrollment was hovering around 400 for about six years, fluctuating from 395 to 405. We expect to max out at 435. So the increase is not dramatic or drastic, considering the fact that we have added about 45% more space in the junior school, and significantly more space in the gym while adding one more major playing field.

Mr. Gleich has addressed some of the sports issues. We are looking at adding some additional teams at the C levels and perhaps Lacrosse as well. We have plenty of room for student parking, but we will reassign class-designated areas if needed. The advisory groups will stay the same size. We will add advisors, as we did in the junior school. We cannot increase the size of the church for graduation but there is enough room. We have had graduating classes of 66. This year's class is 59, which has been about the norm. Adding an average of 6 to the top form would make an average of 65, which we can handle. We have plenty of room in the high school for more lockers, although we don't need many more. College counseling is adaptable; once again they admirably handled the class of 2006 with 66 boys. The one full-time counselor is assisted by a part-time counselor who is flexible.

The one major change to the high school is a need for two more classrooms beginning next year. Next year there will be four sets of most subjects in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We have identified one office space to be converted into a class room and are looking at two alternatives for the other classroom.

The increase in enrollment should have no impact on the quality of education or personal attention your son receives at Priory. It does mean that Mrs. Hartnett and I have a few more reports to write, and Mr. Gleich has a few more boys' studies to direct.

### Safety Concerns

*10<sup>th</sup> Grade - I am concerned about the safety precautions taken at Priory. The School seems too accessible and security seems non-existent. I understand that it is the Benedictine way, but times have changed and I don't think that it should take a tragic event for the School to be more secured. Since my son has been at Priory many items have also gone astray. Maybe they could provide secure places to put items too large for the lockers?*

Here we have two issues -- firstly, personal safety and security of our facilities from theft and vandalism. And secondly, security of personal property.

The first item is easier so I will start there.

Having operated hotels in New York and Washington, I have been uncomfortable with our overall security. I am used to three locks on every door and a staff of security officers. In my time here we have only once had property destroyed when a mentally unhinged person drove his car through the fence around the football field and damaged the track and the field, and also knocked over one of the light bollards around the high school circle. If he had decided to, he could have driven through the doors of the high school, and neither the alarm nor locks would have stopped him.

We have never, as far as I know had an incident of violence or an outsider who posed a threat on our campus.

Once, when we thought there was an incident at Whitfield School, I locked down the high school and Junior school and that took all of three minutes. We are able to communicate instantly with every classroom to provide emergency alerts and instructions.

We require all visitors to register, so we know who is on our campus.

That being said, COULD a tragedy happen? Unfortunately yes. The recent incidents in Detroit and Newark show that even with the best intentions and systems, a determined or accidental danger can occur. The unfortunate shooting at the ABB Plant also illustrates the limitation of stopping someone who is intent on wreaking havoc and willing to sacrifice their life.

I think our precautions are reasonable at this time.

We are seriously considering enhancements to our campus security.

This includes gates at the entrances to the property, video and card access for the High School and Junior School. We have installed video / access control at the gym and if we are happy with the results will strongly consider installing it at the HS and JS.

Priory is a family and we observe and look out for each other. Intervention before an incident occurs is an important component of avoiding violence and so we have a counselor on staff. Our advisory system is also an important component of helping identify students that need professional help.

Security of personal property is more complex, because there are so many persons and so much property.

First, there is no way I can guarantee the honesty of every student, parent, employee, monk, contractor or visitor. All of these are human beings and sinners who are liable to temptation.

The gym is of particular concern, because visiting teams and other persons from outside who rent the facility come in and use it. Some boys put their wallet or cash in plain view, on the benches OUTSIDE their locker, or in their locker but UNLOCKED. This is asking for trouble.

Some boys are very cavalier about their property, its value and the trouble you go through to get it for them. We ask at the beginning of each year, and several times throughout the year, that students take responsibility for and care of their personal property, to only some avail.

In my office at night, I frequently have maintenance bring to me laptop computers they find around the school. I in fact found one laptop on the floor dead center immediately in front of the handicapped entrance. Anyone using that door, including a delivery person with a handtruck or Fr. Abbot in his wheel chair would have stepped on or crushed it before they even saw it. Mr. Finan has an office full of sophisticated calculators and cell phones found throughout the school. I checked in lost and found this lunchtime and found several portfolios, back packs and duffle bags

with all sorts of goodies, including calculators and cell phones. Never mind the beautiful leather coats, Northface fleeces and other good pieces of clothing and expensive books.

We have provided racks and cubby holes for students in and on which to place large items, and the boys are getting used to using them but are not yet perfect.

*VIDEO: Did You Know – v.5*

Before I move on to the last two points, I would like you to watch this short video, which takes 8 minutes. This video will put these last comments in perspective.

*7<sup>th</sup> Grade -- Intentions / thinking behind limiting foreign language offerings to French and Spanish vs. Chinese for example.*

5 years ago when I became Headmaster I indicated that I would like to see Chinese added to our language program. This was generally well received, although there was some objection by some, because education in the western classical tradition generally did and does not include Mandarin Chinese. I am used to the fact that someone will object to anything I say, and that some in fact will object to my very existence. So I was not deterred. My original thinking was to introduce Chinese at the time we expanded the Junior school facilities, the enrollment and hence the faculty. The unstable economy made this impossible last year, but a number of factors will coincide to make it quite possible next year.

This renewed consideration will provoke more objections. However, counter suggestions such as adding another European language like Italian are neither forward looking nor practical. Personally I'd love to see German added.

The fact is people don't study languages for the reasons they did 50 years ago, to read literature, to conduct diplomacy in French, or to be "cultured." Now it is to learn about important others, different ways of thinking and to communicate.

Chinese is the language of our main competitor in culture, business, natural resources and dominance. The Chinese are the people our students will have to compete with, communicate with and understand; it will be that way for the next generation or two at least.

SLU, MICDS & Burroughs have added Chinese to their curriculum. Chaminade has Japanese. The paradigm of an educated person for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is changing, and we must change. What does not change is our educating in values and faith.

Many details have to be worked out, but my hope and intention is that Mandarin Chinese will be phased in as a modern language option for our students beginning next fall.

*School Survey*

*7<sup>th</sup> Grade - Assume school survey results / implications will be well covered.*

*9<sup>th</sup> Grade – We would be interested in hearing the results of the Priory survey – especially the comments / suggestions that were offered.*

We have received back the raw results of the survey taken last Fall. It is interesting to note that one of the suggestions that showed up was to add Chinese to our curriculum.

When we first received the results I asked for a comparison analysis with the prior two surveys, from 1996 and 2003. It would be premature of me to give any such results now, because the Director of Accreditation Services and a statistician from the company who prepared and administered the survey, will be visiting us on February 8<sup>th</sup> and presenting the survey results with a full interpretation. After this meeting in February we will be releasing the information.

I can, however, report the following...based on my review of all the material.

The results are very and overwhelmingly positive and show no glaring deficiencies.

They show a high degree of satisfaction among students, parents, faculty, graduates, parents of graduates.

After his review, the statistician reported anecdotally to us that we have succeeded in what so many school attempt and fail at; making a thorough integration of academics, arts and athletics.

The most difficult area of the survey report is a full 225 pages of the open ended comments. They are challenging, much like the questions we receive in this exercise of the Conversation with the Headmaster.

The free-form comments take both sides of every issue. It is quite clear that a few vocal people think I am the worst thing that has ever happened to this school, that I am destroying it and will not give us a nickel until I am gone. Fortunately some think otherwise. Some think athletics here are great, others that we are the worst...likewise for math and so on. For every suggestion there is an anti-suggestion. Thus the need for a professional analysis.

You may want to know what will be done with this survey.

It will be used by me and every academic and administrative department in the course of our detailed self evaluation and study next year, which study will include target areas for action, improvement and progress in each department.

It is used by the Boards of Advisors and Directors in preparing our strategic plan to meet the challenges of our time, our market and specific circumstances of economy and demographics.

It will be used by the Visiting Accreditation Team in order to understand us and to verify that we are whom we say we are, that we are doing what we say, and that we have an accurate self understanding and appropriate goals for the future.

The future definitely holds change for us. In the next seven years, there will be 2 significant retirements each year from our faculty and staff. This includes two key persons on this stage, Mr. Gleich and Mrs. Hartnett. All these changes and retirements we are planning for. Next year we will be adding a Dean of Faculty to our administrative team and an Assistant Headmaster. During

the course of the next year we will identify a Director of Studies. More voices around the administrative table in the school will keep us responsive, fresh and forward looking.

Per the video you just saw, we live in a rapidly changing world. Although our students are used to this new environment, they still have to be prepared for it, educated to use it and its technology humanly and humanely. They need to know how to live a fully human, Christian, Catholic life facing the extreme challenges of their time, not the challenges of my time or of any times before. This is what we promise to do at Priory, and to do this means we too have to be prepared to change the way we do things, and to change some of the things we do. This is our mission.

I hate to end on so serious a note, but I think we must get serious about this. But being serious doesn't mean being unhappy, or depressed, or negative. It means being positive about our boys and helping them be totally positive about their lives. They all have so much to offer the world.

Thank you so much for coming out tonight to listen and consider what we have said here. I thank God for you and your sons every day.