



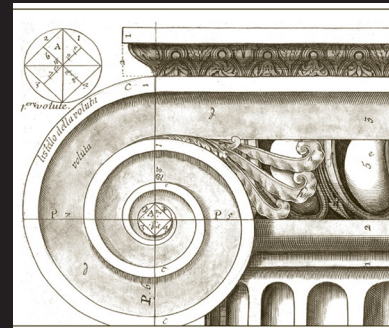
# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Jan. 11-13 ..... Mid-Term Oral Exams for Rhetoric Students
- Jan. 8, 15, 22, 29 ..... Youth Basketball Clinic @ 9:00-10:30AM;  
Bay Area Community Church
- Jan. 8 ..... Junior Soiree Training @ 9:00AM-1:30PM; Manor House
- Jan. 15 ..... Senior Soiree Training @ 9:00AM-1:30PM; Manor House
- Jan. 17 ..... Intention to Re-enroll forms & Tuition Deposits Due  
(remember: no tuition payments due in January)  
Faculty Debate @ 7:30pm at historic Baldwin Hall
- Jan. 21 ..... 5th Grade Colonial Ball  
School Spirit Day!  
Grammar Open House for Grades K-3 @ 8:30AM-2:00PM  
& 7:00-9:00PM; GIBC campus
- Jan. 28 ..... SCHOOL CLOSED – Teacher In-service Day
- Feb. 4 ..... 1st Grade Indian Feast at the GIBC campus
- Feb. 9 ..... Bagels with the Headmaster @ 8:30AM; main campus
- Feb. 12 ..... Student Music Competition Auditions at the GIBC Campus
- Feb. 16 ..... Class Picture Day; both campuses
- Feb. 18 ..... Basketball Season Finale @ 3:30PM; Bay Area  
Community Church
- Feb. 19 ..... Debate Tournament @ 8:00AM; main campus

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*"The only people  
who achieve much are  
those who want knowledge  
so badly that they  
seek it while conditions  
are still unfavourable.  
Favourable conditions  
never come."*

- C.S. LEWIS



# ROCKBRIDGE REPORTER

A Newsletter for Rockbridge Academy

January 2011

## ARX AXIOM: THE FORTRESS OF FIRST PRINCIPLES

by Michael J. McKenna, headmaster

By the middle of the 5th century the once indomitable Roman army was little more than a shadow of its former self. Nevertheless, it exulted in its traditional role as the caretaker of the Roman civilization and cultural heritage. Particularly along the barbarian frontier, the garrisoned troops saw their role as more than maintaining a mere military presence. They were both the guardians and the exemplars of a particular way of life. They were thus to be the very sentinels of their once-glorious civilization. Yes, the troops were there to protect the Roman Empire. But, more importantly than just defending, their job was to extend and apply their civilization to those who had not yet experienced its glories.



Ryan as Apollo &  
Ruth as Artemis at  
the History Program

great destiny of the Roman ideal would only be realized as her best men engaged in the propagation of her culture as well as in the extension of her administration. It was upon the principles of civilization as well as the precepts of conquest that the fate of the Republic hinged."

In the years, and even the centuries that followed Caesar's concept of both defending and extending Rome's glory became

part of the warp and woof of Roman existence: the army was responsible to simultaneously protect and epitomize the integrity of the Empire. It was to stand apart as both a partisan in the enforcement of Pax Romana—Roman Peace—and as a paragon in the establishment of Probitas Romana—Roman virtue—for both of these spoke to Imperium Romana—Roman Supremacy.

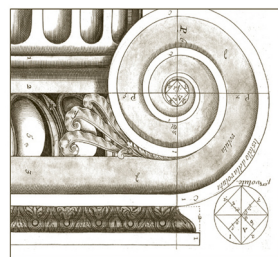
Eventually the phrase Arx Axiom, Latin for "Fortress of First Principles," emerged to describe this two-fold military tradition. The citadels of valor and might which the Empire had established all along the frontier and out into the hinterlands were not simply to serve as a buffer against the dangers of the wider world, they were to be vanguards of its very way of life.

This seemingly disparate two-fold task was apparently first enunciated by Julius Caesar during the earliest days of Rome's imperial ambitions. According to Scottish historian John Buchan, it was during the Gallic Wars that Caesar charged his men with the task of not only defining and defending Roman borders against the encroachment of its barbarian neighbors, but also of spreading abroad the essential elements of Roman civilization. Buchan wrote, "Caesar believed fully that the

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## ARX AXIOM: THE FORTRESS OF FIRST PRINCIPLES ... *continued*

During the waning years of the Roman Empire when it seemed that the notion of Arx Axiom was losing its efficacy, the great African patriarch Augustine revived its popularity. But instead of applying the tradition to the task of advancing the Roman Empire, Augustine applied it to the task of advancing the Church of Christ. Instead of positing a fiercely fought culture war between Romans and barbarians that necessitated a kind of strategic military posture, he posited an even more fiercely fought spiritual war between the City of God and the City of Man.

Augustine began to put together a new academy in Hippo for a small number of young students that he desired to disciple. He wanted to provide a kind of a fortress in which to train these young acolytes; a school, or, a citadel of first principles. The idea that came to Augustine as he read Proverbs 1-3 is that the Christian community, the covenantal family, has a responsibility to create a training ground where children may be trained and sequestered for a time. He believed that the church was to create this fortress so that the children may be trained as warriors of Truth, who would become equipped to take that Truth to the lost and crumbling world outside the fortress walls; where they may be taught the first principles of the faith in a logical, orderly progression, moving from knowledge (grammar), to understanding (logic), ultimately to the place of wisdom and discernment (rhetoric). The final years of Augustine's life were devoted to the development of this academy.

Eventually, those three categories of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, which he drew from Proverbs, became stages of developmental learning for a new kind of curriculum, the Trivium, which was really not so new after all.

Historian Christopher Dawson has described the beginnings of Classical Christian Education:

"From the time of Plato the Hellenic paideia was a humanism in search of a theology, and the religious traditions of Greek culture were neither too deep nor wide enough to prepare the answer. The new Christian culture was therefore built from the beginning on a double foundation. The old classical education in the liberal arts was maintained without any interruption, and since this education was inseparable from the study of classical authors, the old classical education continued to be studied. But alongside of—and above—all this, there was now a specifically Christian learning which was biblical and theological and which produced its own prolific literature."

What Augustine was accomplishing was a "plundering of the Egyptians" of a sort. The pagan Greek culture had

developed the educational model of the Trivium, and the Roman culture carried it forward. Augustine was raised in that culture. He was a teacher of rhetoric before he moved to Rome and Milan where he was eventually converted through the ministry St. Ambrose. Augustine was not so foolish as to think that anything devised by a pagan culture wasn't worth a second look. So what Augustine did as he searched for a model of Christian education was to realize that the biblical pattern of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom coincided with the three stages of the Trivium, grammar, logic, and rhetoric. What Augustine envisioned was a new kind of Christian curriculum that encompassed every discipline and every arena of academic concern.

Thus, for Augustine, Arx Axiom was the essential posture of the Christian worldview. It was bearing witness to the lost world as a fortress of first principles and a citadel of truth.

This is essentially the posture of Rockbridge Academy. We exist certainly

to provide children with the essentials of a quality education. That goes without saying. But that's just a small portion of our *raison d'être*. We exist to function as an Arx Axiom within Anne Arundel County: a place where children and young adults enter to be trained in the essentials of the faith and a thorough understanding of their Creator's world, and from which they go to broadcast that glorious heritage to a world which desperately needs it.

At Rockbridge Academy, this word picture, Arx Axiom, serves as a powerful motivation to keep us on track—not just defending the faith and the faithful from the attacks of the barbarian hordes of modern secular-humanist society, but also broadcasting the good news that there is a resplendent covenant community where any and all may find sanctuary and refuge. Arx Axiom is thus much more than an archaic, outmoded expression for us—it is the essence of our mission statement.

### FVF: FEENEY VS. FINKBEINER - THE GREAT DEBATE!

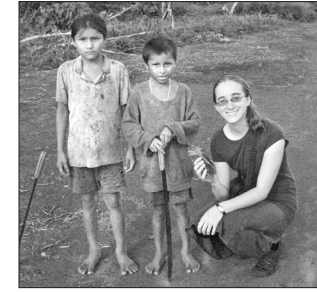
Our annual faculty debate will take place on Monday, January 17th between Tim Feeney and Brad Finkbeiner. The topic will be: **Resolved: That Christians living in democracies have the moral duty to be politically active.**

We will begin at 7:30PM at Historic Baldwin Hall (across the street from the main campus). We hope that parents, grandparents, and friends of Rockbridge Academy will join our Upper School for this afternoon of learning, fellowship, and growth in our faith.

*"Rockbridge Academy ...  
bearing witness to the lost world  
as a fortress of first principles and  
a citadel of truth."*

## ECUADOR 2010: MY MIRACLE

by *M. Noelle Meiser, Class of 2009*



My first night in Chinkianentsu, a village in the Ecuadorian rainforest, I remember there were just two light bulbs hanging in the church building—illuminating the dirt ground, swarms of flies, and a score of weary faces of my new Achuar family. My Achuar family was very kind to me although I could not speak their language or connect to their way of life in their rainforest home. In their culture, every day the men hunt fish, monkey, or pig in the forest, the women cook yuca and plantains over a fire, and the children bathe in the rivers, pick fruit, or play in the airstrip. Yet, even when culture and language separated us, Jesus and the gospel of His love united us. That night I experienced God's power to express His love for the Achuar people through someone as different from them as could be: me. I had never preached God's Word in Spanish before, but this night God gave me the ability to communicate His love in Spanish, which was translated to Achuar, and I was overjoyed to have the opportunity to share His love, truth, and purpose for each and every person in that small village hidden within the Ecuadorian rainforest.

Although the adventure of living with my Achuar family was amazing, I believe my journey to studying and serving in Ecuador for ten weeks this summer began long before I came to Chinkianentsu. In fact, it began when God put in me the desire to work on the Spanish-speaking mission field more than a year ago. I knew that God wanted me to share the gospel with Spanish speakers in my own hometown; however, I needed a strong grip on the Spanish language. So, when I discovered the Spanish Immersion Program in Ecuador offered through my college, I went to work applying, contacting a pastor in Ecuador about missions work, and dedicating time in prayer to seek God's will. However, about two weeks before I was scheduled to leave, circumstances changed. Financing studying abroad seemed impossible. My brother's unforeseen hospitalization felt overwhelming. And, the Ecuadorian pastor was not yet sure if I, being a "rich" gringa, would be a good worker. All these things together challenged the confidence I had in Ecuador being God's will for me this summer. So, I decided to give up Ecuador to God and spend the summer at home. And, I went through several days, completely at peace with not going to Ecuador. However, less than a week before the immersion program began, Ecuador kept coming up on my mind. I asked God, "Are you telling me you want me to go?" He said yes, and within a few days confirmed this decision by providing for the finances, healing my brother, and allowing the Ecuadorian pastor to approve me to teach English and Sunday school at the church. I learned that though God birthed my desire to live in Ecuador this summer, I had to come to a point where I gave up my ambition of going to Ecuador to Him, before He could allow me to fulfill my purpose there. I now realize I would never have experienced the power and love of God with my Achuar family in Jesus in that tiny rainforest church if I had not sacrificed my dreams and aspirations to God. Only then could experiencing Ecuador become my miracle.



## MEET THE NEW FACULTY

by *Peter Ramsey, 10th grade*

Daron Lee Lawing joined the Rockbridge faculty this year to teach seventh grade Ancient History and eighth grade Early European History.

Mr. Lawing is married to his wife Jennifer and they have three children: Tara (9th), Alex (3rd), and Emily (2nd). He studied psychology in college and received a Masters in Divinity from Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL. Prior to teaching at Rockbridge he applied his love of logic to a career in computer programming with PricewaterhouseCoopers, a company located in downtown Washington. He enjoys woodworking and developing skills as a handyman.



*Daron Lawing*

"I love the interaction with the students. I love the exploration of students' 'thinkings' about history," says Mr. Lawing. "I love participating in the work of learning as young minds are shaped to 'think God's thoughts after him.'"