



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- APR 26 .....Rose Uniform Measuring—3 PM @ Rockbridge
- APR 27 .....3rd Grade Field Trip to “The Magic Flute” @ MD Hall
- APR 28 .....Concert Choir at State Competition
- MAY 1 .....1st Grade Field Trip to St. Mary’s
- May 6 .....Senior Soirée
- MAY 10 .....2nd Grade Field Trip to Walters Art Gallery
- MAY 11 ....Celebration Dinner at the Newton White Mansion @ 6:30 PM
- MAY 12.....2-Hour Delayed Opening for School  
Begin at 10:05 AM (main campus), No AM Kindergarten  
Senior Theses at Baldwin Hall @ 7 PM

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

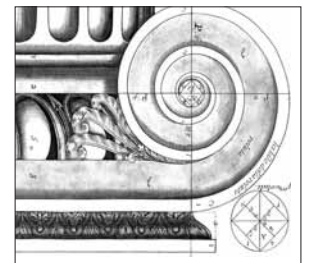
*When men yield  
up the privilege of  
thinking, the last shadow  
of liberty quits  
the horizon.”*

—THOMAS PAINE

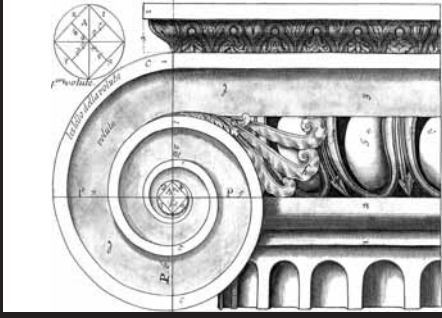
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ROCKBRIDGE  
ACADEMY



A CLASSICAL &  
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL  
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# ROCKBRIDGE REPORTER

A Newsletter for Rockbridge Academy

April 2006

## THE TRIVIUM—IT'S WORKING...BUT WHY?

by Michael J. McKenna

educators, however, often overlook memory once the students learn to read and write well. Yet, as the old saw goes, if you don't use it, you'll lose it.

### **Dialectic**

Early adolescent children become argumentative. Their ability to draw conclusions from a series of factual items begins to develop, and they enjoy finding the "holes" in others' reasoning. This is called the dialectic, or logic, phase. Again, not to pick on modernity, but only to point out the differences, most modern pedagogical practices overlook the distinctives of this phase, with perhaps the exception of math. Children in modern schools

continue to be taught to memorize, even though developmentally, they've moved beyond that stage. Classical Christian schools teach formal logic, logical fallacies, and reasoning skills through such tools as the Socratic method and Aristotelian logic. These subjects are foreign to most of us who were not educated in this way, unless we learned these things in college. This phase practices students in the art of accurate thinking. In this phase, the

subject matter, while important from a Christian perspective, is not as important as what conclusions the students may draw from their knowledge.

### **Rhetoric**

In high school, students begin to develop a sense of how others perceive them. They become self-conscious about fashion, vocabulary, mannerisms, and

We've crossed the watershed. It's official. The majority of our parents and students in eighth grade are staying put, and continuing on into ninth grade at Rockbridge Academy. Up to this point, we lost a good deal of our students in the break from eighth to ninth grade, as parents would place their children in other schools for a variety of reasons. This year, that is not the case. Virtually all of them are staying put! And if experience tells me anything, this will be the trend from now on, and once a student stays for ninth grade, the chances are almost certain that they'll stay through twelfth grade.

That's right...the confirmation and trust of Rockbridge Academy's high school program has happened right before your very eyes.

But why is that? Why is our program successful, as parents both here and across the country at other classical Christian schools are beginning to discover? Certainly God is blessing our work, but there has to be some *mundane* reason as well. Let me try to explain.

### **The Foundation**

The pedagogical model of classical education was developed over two millennia with the goal of teaching young minds to be wise. The foundation of this model is the Trivium. The Trivium's three phases of learning are adapted to three phases of development in children—grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric.



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### **Grammar**

Young children are uniquely adapted to memorize. They learn chants, songs, and rhythmic verse well, easily, and can be taught a tremendous amount of information, much of which is retained for life. By exercising this faculty, students remain practiced in the art of memorizing, which will be an important part of learning for the rest of their lives. Most modern

*continued on page 2*

## THE TRIVIUM— IT'S WORKING...BUT WHY?... *continued*

most other forms of expression. Classical educators call this the rhetoric phase. Rhetoric has been defined as “all the available means of persuasion,” and rhetoric students learn to speak and write beautifully, and to relate to their audiences with clarity and persuasiveness. As a Christian school, our students need to learn the art of rhetoric, especially if they are to be able to carry out the great commission, and bring the Gospel to a lost and dying world.

### **Life-long Learning**

Because the classical model cuts with the grain of the child, and not against it, the Trivium naturally appeals to students. Rather than writing on a *tabula rasa*, classical Christian education, engages the minds of its students. Creative classical teachers inspire students to investigate, contemplate, debate, and pursue knowledge. Through this method, a life long love of learning is instilled in the heart of the learner.

### **Integration**

Finally, integration of so-called “subjects” from a Christian world and life view (the only world view that can coherently tie these subjects together in the first place), creates a unified view of reality in the mind of the students in a way that no other pedagogical method can. Math, science, history, art, and music are all interwoven in a way that relates all the subjects to a unifying principle: The God Who created them all. This integration of “subjects” with theology as the Queen of the Sciences affects students deeply. The continuity between a student’s faith and his rational mind is a reward few Christians in today’s schools enjoy. Classical Christian education provides this perspective unlike any other form of education.

As a result of this time-tested methodology (and God’s faithfulness), Rockbridge has established a bit of a track record, and our parents are responding. Thank you for your trust. You will not be disappointed.

## ENCOURAGEMENT

by Michael J. McKenna

A very wise man once said to me that, if you raise your kids by giving them clear boundaries (with necessary correctives when they stray), and encouragement when they do well, they’ll thrive. How true that is for our children and our students. We’ve all seen children, perhaps our own, wither under heavy criticism when encouragement is lacking. And, likewise, we’ve also seen them shine when we tell them “Good job!”

Yet, why is it that most of us tend to “accentuate the negative”? I know this all too painfully myself. Far too many times, for example, I’ve asked my children to go clean their rooms. When they tell me they’re done, and I go to inspect, I’ll walk into an almost spotless room and say, “You missed the cobwebs up there in the corner of the ceiling. Call me when you’re *really* done.” Only to see my children wither under my failure to see anything good they’ve done. I have to learn this lesson repeatedly in my life.

However, I also have to learn it as a headmaster who oversees adults. Adults are not immune to the desire to know we’re doing a good job either. Far too often, your children’s teachers work ordinary miracles day in and day out, and yet, perhaps the only time they hear from me when in a while is when something goes wrong. God help me to be an encourager.

But let me ask you: How’s your relationship with your child’s teacher? Do they hear from you when things are going well, or only when there’s a problem? As we near the twilight of another year, is your child’s teacher shy a few words of encouragement from you (or me)? Parents and teachers, have your children or students heard from you recently what they’re doing *well*? As the writer of Proverbs said, “Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word aptly spoken.”

## ANNUAL ACCS CONFERENCE

Here’s a wonderful opportunity to learn more about classical and Christian education and it’s future. This year’s conference will be held in Covington, Kentucky from June 22-24. The featured speakers are Douglas Wilson, George Grant, and Matt Whitling. You may register online by visiting [www.accsedu.org](http://www.accsedu.org) or feel free to pick up a registration form and information from Rockbridge Academy’s main office. All Rockbridge parents are considered ACCS members and may apply for discounts offered to such. Registrations postmarked no later than April 30, are eligible for additional discounted pricing.

## Rose Uniforms Measuring Date

The Rose Uniforms company will be at Rockbridge Academy on Wednesday, April 26, to measure students for uniforms for the upcoming school year. Please meet in the Fellowship Hall promptly at 3:00 p.m. to have your children measured.



# COLLEGE UPDATE

## ZACHARY COCHRAN – THE KING’S COLLEGE

*Rockbridge Class of 2006 Valedictorian*

College. The word struck fear into my heart. When I was asked the question, “So are you excited to go to college?” I would hesitantly respond with an unconvincing, “Sort of...” Graduation, as of a year ago, was an intimidating prospect for me. It meant that college was around the bend and I was faced with the unsettling truth that all too soon, I would be going away from home. This meant stepping into the unknown away from my family, friends, and everything else familiar.

I started visiting colleges right out of 10th grade. I narrowed my search with the criteria that



I would go to a challenging, small Christian school that would be a good next step from Rockbridge. Initially, one place stood out above the rest. I loved the solace and natural beauty around the campus at Gordon College, near Boston, and from what I could tell, they could give me a good education. So my heart was set on Gordon.

Then I heard about a college called The King’s College. My parents looked up King’s website and were amazed with the vision of the school. The school’s goal is to graduate students who will go on to positions of leadership in the key institutions of society: government, law, business, education, media, the arts, and the Church. However, the biggest detraction in my

mind concerning the school was its location—in the heart of New York City. Classes are held in the Empire State Building. While that’s pretty neat, I didn’t think it was for me. I prefer open air and green land as opposed to being trapped like a rat in a gigantic, concrete maze.

I heard about an opportunity to visit and learn more about King’s through a trip called *Operation Airlift*. I thought that even if I didn’t like the college, I would still get to spend a fun weekend away from home, go to a Broadway show, and get to see New York City up close for the first time, for free. The offer sounded good, so I decided

to sign up. *Little did I know how my life would change because of that choice.*

It was the Airlift that made me seriously consider the college. Visiting helped me get over my fears. I found that I liked the students and could tolerate the city. The vision of the school set King’s apart from the other Christian colleges, so I applied. As I got more serious about my college search, I decided to go back several months later to visit classes. Seeing that the classes are similar to what I’ve experienced at Rockbridge made me feel much more comfortable with the college. I could see myself surviving, even thriving, in that environment. I was accepted a few weeks later. Since college is so expensive, I entered into the Founders’ competition to

try to win a \$40,000 scholarship. I wrote a five-page paper and reached the level of Semi-Finalist. Recently, I went to NYC for a third time to present a speech based on my paper. While that’s another story for another time, I can at least tell you that God has greatly blessed me, as I’m one of the winners!

So next year, I’m off to King’s. It is clear that God wants me there, as He has opened all of the doors, and has finally given me a strong sense of peace and confirmation about the college.

I’ve learned a lot of things along the way, and here’s what I recommend for those looking to go to college: Start your search early. Set guidelines up front specifying what you “must have” in a college, and what you just “want.” I would highly recommend that when visiting a school, you sit in on some classes to determine if the school meets your academic qualifications. A good way to determine the pros and cons of a college is to talk to the students and ask for both the good and the ugly. Pray that God will put you where He wants you, and for peace in your decision. Go for the scholarships (if you’ve made it to the college search and are still at Rockbridge, chances are that you’ll do well). Finally, don’t rule out a college just because of location, or you might miss out on the blessing that God has in store for you. Feel free to grab me in the halls if you have any other questions. Oh, and if you want to learn how to change the world and impact it for Christ, look into The King’s College.

## *Year-End Celebration Dinner*

Our Annual Celebration Dinner has become quite a staple on the Rockbridge Academy calendar. This event is a special evening set aside to thank the teachers for their tireless efforts on behalf of our children and families, and to also thank God for His continuing faithfulness to us. Please join us in celebrating all that the Lord has done in this past school year.

We will be celebrating at the Newton White Mansion, located at 2708 Enterprise Road, Mitchellville, MD 20716, on Thursday, May 11, beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Due to the late evening, Rockbridge Academy will have a **2-hour delayed opening on Friday, May 12** (AM-Kindergarten is cancelled). Please remember to set your alarm for the later wake-up call.