

The Dumb Ox

December 2024



Poster Perfect

By: Jules Shemer

To celebrate All Saints' Day, Aquinas Academy students, along with art teacher Ms. Fetchko, put together multiple saint posters to be displayed around the school. When asked what her inspiration was to create this project for students, Ms. Fetchko replied, "I wanted to spruce up the walls of the schools because they were looking a little sparse. With All Saints' Day coming up I wanted to do something different instead of doing a report card or a picture with fun facts. So, I thought it would be a good idea to bring the saints' own words to the community of Aquinas, because it is more inspirational than good old fun facts. I selected some quotes, but I also allowed the students to

pick out any prayers or quotes that they felt spoke to them." Ms. Fetchko had asked students to help step in to create some posters, and senior Ashlin Knox

was happy to help. She remarked, "I spoke to Ms. Fetchko about [the posters] and she asked some students to help. I said I was willing to do St. Martin de Porres because his mission was inspiring." Senior Ella Labate said, "I did St. Rose. Since the poster was going to hang outside the Spanish room, I wanted to choose a Spanish saint. Saint Rose was from Lima, Peru, and her quote really inspired me." Junior Lara Hainen responded, "I made the St. Maximilian Kolbe poster with Alice. We share him as our patron saint."

Students praised the art work around the school; sophomore Megan Polichicchio acclaimed, "The saint posters spice up our school." History teacher Mrs. Allen said, "I love the saint posters. I've learned about different saints by reading the quotes. It brings a Catholic ambience to the school." Another compliment came from sophomore Mary Rose Cerny who said, "I find them incredibly inspirational."

Aquinas art students were happy to help Ms. Fetchko brighten their school halls. They look forward to any other fun art projects that Ms. Fetchko prepares for them.

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A Display of Talent

By: Brynn Burnsworth

While Aquinas may be known for its academics, it has no deficiency in extracurricular talent as well. In years past, students' individual talents have been displayed during the annual talent show. On top of that, this year, I thought it would be meaningful to display the artwork year round for students to see as they walk the halls. This idea is what started the art wall.

The student art wall is located on the first floor of the high school, directly outside of the French room. So far, it covers most of the space to the right of the window. That location was chosen due to it being near the triples and the stairwell, a well traveled area by most Aquinas students. Any and all artwork is encouraged to be submitted! The type of artwork includes and is not limited to paintings, drawings, and photography.

So far, the feedback on the art wall has been positive. Students love to walk past it while trying to recognize their friends' artwork. Kay Chufo thought the wall was a great idea, with it being "a colorful addition to the hallway." On top of looks, the art wall is also giving students validation and inspiration. Annette

Bentivegna said it made her happy to have an opportunity to display her hobby of photography. Claire McMann also stated, "It encouraged me to make art just so I could display it on the wall!"

It is my hope that the wall only continues to grow. The wall will be extended to the left of the window, hopefully becoming larger as more submissions are received. Name plates and descriptions of each piece are also in the works (of course, only if the artist wishes). I anticipate that future Fine Arts prefects will continue the art wall for years to come. I also wish that students will never lose the opportunity to display their talents. If any student wishes to submit his or her artwork, please contact me!



Bouncing Back Into the Season

By: Madison Bradley



The Aquinas basketball teams have been prepping and are excited for this upcoming season. The 2024-2025 season officially started on November 18th for both teams. Both the girls and boys teams are designated as Section 1A and play teams such as St. Joseph, Hillel Academy, and Riverview. The girls' first game was December 2nd at Elizabeth Forward and the boys' first game was December 2nd at Franklin Regional. The teams have many more games ahead this season, so make sure to come out and support our Crusaders!

The girls' basketball team is full of change this year; they have a new coach and no seniors on the team. Despite this, they are feeling very confident this season. "I'm excited for a fresh start and a new season," says sophomore Katie Tarquino. Mr. Kurzawski is a new teacher here at Aquinas and is the girls' head basketball coach. He has coached before and played basketball himself in high school. Mr. Kurzawski says, "This should be an exciting year for our Aquinas Girls High School team. Although we are a young team with no seniors, we have many talented players. If we are able to stay healthy, I expect us to make a lot of noise in our section this year. As always, we really appreciate the support of our student body and faculty." The girls are also feeling great about this season. "We are going in with a positive attitude and putting in lots of hard work

in the gym to lead to a winning season,” sophomore Carly Bezila remarks. The girls’ basketball team has made it to the WPIAL championship in recent years and hopes to do so again this year.

The boys’ basketball team is looking good as well. The boys, led by Coach Yokitis, are very excited for this season. Senior Jacob Guillen states “I’m confident this year. We have a solid team and we should go far.” Junior Sam Duer says, “I feel for the first time that I am fully confident that we can win the WPIAL; the team’s relationship is better than ever.” The boys team is ready for this season and hopes to win the WPIAL this year.

Basketball season is exciting for the players and the many fans that show up to support the teams. These games are a great bonding experience for students. Senior Brynn Burnsworth says “I love going to the basketball games and feeling the school spirit.” Another senior Claire McMann states, “Basketball games are the highlight of my year.” Please come out and support the teams this season and bring some friends. Go Crusaders!



In The Water and On the Strip

By: Abigail Irvin

Since her sophomore year, senior Clara Yuo has represented Aquinas Academy in swimming. She practices with a club team at the Hampton high school pool but attends all of her meets with the Mars/North Catholic team. Clara does not score points for Mars or participate in their relays, but she warms up and cheers them on at their meets. She has also established a good relationship with the Mars coach who gives her feedback after her races. She says that “It’s a little weird to be the only Aquinas swimmer since Sara Sokolski graduated. However, now that North Catholic has merged with the Mars team, I’ve made a lot of new friends with the North Catholic swimmers.”

Clara’s primary goal this year is to qualify for the WPIAL championships in her strongest event, the 100 Butterfly. At her first meet, which was on December 3rd, she was already faster than she was last year, so she is hopeful that she will be able to achieve the WPIAL qualifying time. Clara is looking forward to attending the rest of her meets and cheering on the other swimmers.

Since 2015, the Aquinas fencing team has proved to be mighty, embodying virtue and perseverance through wins and losses. The team has a bright season ahead. The founder of the fencing team, alumnus Harry Hardman, is back at Aquinas to co-coach. Hardman graduated in 2019 and fenced at Cleveland State University at the Division 1 level. He is very enthusiastic about his position and will be taking on the role of head coach of the team next year when Coach Carroll retires.

One of the main objectives of the season is to acclimate the team to Hardman’s coaching. For this season, Coach Carroll says that it is “hard to predict the outcome, but we have a strong team because of returning lettermen on the boys and girls team. Harry Hardman’s skill set will have a significant impact on the team and coaching. He brings with him all the newest coaching techniques. There are still very good fencers on the other teams. Strength comes from core values, accountability, self discipline, and adversity.” The team will work on mental toughness and have leadership opportunities which will help them attain these qualities.

High school team members are also looking forward to mentoring the middle schoolers. This will help to bridge the age gap between middle and high school fencers. Coach Carroll’s main goal is not to win all the time but to have the team give 110% on the strip and put in the best effort possible. He communicates the message, “The more you fail the more you succeed,” to the team so they will be able to rise from failure. No matter the outcome of upcoming fencing meets or the season as a whole, fencers are bound to grow both athletically and personally.



Let's Go Clubbing - Part Two

By: Jack Hoerster

With the second quarter underway, Aquinas students are taking this time to be creative and start new and exciting clubs. As always, these clubs represent excitement and ingenuity among the student body. There is a stunning amount of variety in these clubs, with some clubs carrying over from the first quarter and a few new clubs as well.

The ever-popular Football Club is continuing into the second quarter. Run by junior Louis Bentivegna, this club serves as a way to promote football in the midst of the NFL season. Dreary, winter weather can do nothing to stop the juggernaut that is football. Louis mentioned that when there is unfortunate weather, the players "take a vote that determines whether [the club] stays inside or just goes outside anyway," because football is better in six inches of snow.

While not nearly as prominent as the football club, there is a promising club starting up this quarter. The Dead Rappers Society, named in honor of the 1989 film "Dead Poets Society," was started by junior Lara Hainan. Its focus lies in creating and presenting raps and rhymes on a variety of topics, bringing a new form of lyrical creativity to the Aquinas student body. Even the teachers are taking part in the rap club. Mr. Malchano was recently challenged to an epic rap battle by senior Alice Rothus in an attempt for extra-credit.

Another club the teachers are taking part in is the conspiracy theory club. This club promotes the humorous and philosophical analysis of anomalies in our universe. From the "Birds Aren't Real" campaign to Flat Earth, this club covers every topic imaginable. Started by seniors Sam McGowan and Clara Yuo, they mentioned it was "a good way to both learn something you're interested in, but also share it with the people around you." If you are looking for a relaxing environment in which disturbing theories are discussed in extraordinary detail, then conspiracy theory club is a perfect fit.

One of Aquinas' more festive clubs is this year's Book Club, where the members pick, read, and discuss one book before winter break. According to senior Anne

Dolan, the club is having a Book Club Secret Santa in which "club members buy a book for their Secret Santa after hearing about their preferred genres. They can choose to annotate the book if they'd like." The book club offers a fun and creative way to both promote the Christmas spirit and create a sense of community among students.

These clubs are just a small handful of what is really out there. They act as a way to enrich the school culture and allow students to express themselves among friend groups with similar interests. These clubs centralize the variety of special interests at Aquinas without forming oppressive cliques. If you have an idea for a club, then it is only one sheet of paper away from becoming a real group. Clubs are a fantastic way to hang out with friends and spend forty minutes doing whatever suits your fancy. Life is about risks; take a risk and think about starting a club third quarter.



Stocking the Seniors

By: Ashlin Knox

Every year Mr. Malchano ends the last 11 weeks of his first semester Economics class with a final project called "Virtual Stock Exchange." The project focuses on the students acting as portfolio managers, allowing students to invest \$500,000 of "fake money" into a simulation of the stock market. The student who "wins" the overall game through having the highest return on their investments will be rewarded. Mr. Malchano promotes this project because it is a "life skill, and most people don't get to practice investing and learn how to use the stock market before their first job."

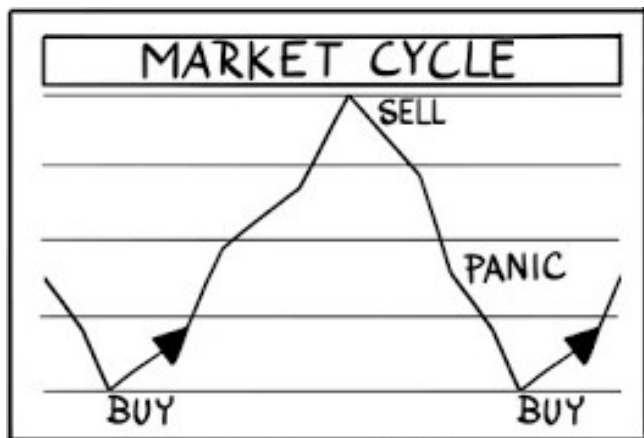
The reason Mr. Malchano enjoys teaching Economics is because "financial literacy is important to the seniors' futures, and it is very practical." People can make serious profit off of investments by knowing how to use the stock market, but it all comes with a risk. His favorite memory of this project through the years was when a girl made a 50K short, and it was the "most amazing thing ever."

There are multiple strategies students have for the project. One is the strategy of investing their money into stocks and then not touching any of them until the end. There is a high risk when doing this because when the market fluctuates there is a high chance the loss will be greater than the gain in the end. According to senior Will Scioscia, he believes that he "invested enough, and it will go up in the future." On the other hand, day trading, which is "Sigma style," to senior Enzo Flati, is a common strategy where investors buy, sell, and trade stocks all in the same day, gaining money from the price difference throughout the day. Senior David Zaharko is one of the students who day trades, and he "shorts things (looks to borrow the stock when it isn't high then sells) to keep profits."

The stock market project is a great way for students to familiarize themselves in the economic realm through investments, and senior Nolan Thiel believes that the project is good for students because in the future, “it will be a really good way to make money, and will help with knowing how your retirement funds will work.” Although Nolan believes it is a good skill to have, he would not practice it for a living because it is “too boring.”

Currently the rankings for the game include a wide range of students fluctuating as low as \$480,000 with a loss of 20K, all the way to \$508,000 with a 8K profit. A steady rank of first place belongs to senior Nadine Hokaj. Her method to her success involves having “certain stocks that I am keeping an eye on and when they go down, which is when I buy them.” Nolan believes Nadine will win because “she is winning now.” Mr. Malchano added that “she has been a dark horse since day one.” Despite lots of kids believing that Nadine will win, Enzo believes he will win “because I make the best trades at the best time, and there is no one better than me, I’m the GOAT.”

Although some kids might be stressed about how the project is going, collectively everyone is enjoying the whole experiment.



Riding in Style: The New Bus

By: Alexa Risdon

With growing sports teams and the lack of space in the old bus, Aquinas purchased a new bus for the 2024-2025 school year. Mr. Blume, Aquinas president, noted that we have “spent years buying heavily-used school buses that we end up needing to put a lot of money into.” Mr. Blume and the Aquinas board decided that a new bus would be worth the investment. The pros of getting a new bus include a longer warranty and fewer renovations. He also “didn’t want to keep worrying about Mr. Richtammer driving a bus that could potentially break down on the side of Route 8.” The school acquired the bus on October

15th and it is the largest bus available with seating up to 84 students. Mr. Blume added that based on the price of the bus, “it should have massaging seats and a hot tub for Mr. Richtammer.” The bus bears the number “1996” in recognition of the year Aquinas was founded.

Mr. Richtammer, our go-to bus driver, is also excited about the new bus. He says, “It is like driving a Mercedes, and every teacher should get their CDL to experience what it is like to drive such a beautiful vehicle.” This bus is clean, fresh, and not yet dirtied by little kids’ cleats and garbage. The goal is to keep it in great shape to ensure it endures for many years. Mr. Richtammer also mentioned, “It is actually easier to drive than the other one because you can see more easily and there are not as many blind spots.” In speaking about the move from the old to new bus, he states, “It was definitely time for an upgrade. It was just too small for the bigger sports teams, and this one is more comfortable and offers more space.”

The volleyball team, with 24 players, had many opportunities to ride on the old bus. Most players would have to double up on the seats and found it annoying, uncomfortable, and stuffy. When news of the new bus hit the team, Jules Shemer was excited, saying, “Thank goodness we won’t have to share seats again, no offense to anyone.”

This new bus is going to be beneficial to all sports teams and for school trips. With its size and slick exterior, Aquinas students will be riding in style.



Question:

What is Gaudete Sunday?

Answer:

Gaudete Sunday is the third Sunday in Advent, when we take a step back from penitential reflection and rejoice in the hope of Jesus' upcoming birth. Like its counterpart, Lent, Advent is a liturgical season of penance, preparing us for the coming of Christ in two ways. In the first two weeks, we reflect on Christ's second coming and the final judgement. It's a little bit weighty, but Gaudete Sunday shifts the focus from end times to the upcoming celebration of Jesus' birth.

During Mass on Gaudete Sunday, we light the rose-coloured candle in the Advent wreath, which is known as the candle of joy. and The priest also wears rose-coloured vestments, one of the two times a year these vestments are used The other is Laetare Sunday, the third Sunday in Lent. In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI revived an old Vatican tradition, which Pope Francis has continued. Gaudete Sunday has also been known as Bambellini Sunday; children from all over Rome travel to the Vatican with the infant Jesus from their Nativity scene, and Pope Francis blesses all the babies.

Gaudete Sunday is also around the time when Mary and St. Joseph would have left Nazareth for the census count. The journey is about 100 miles, but they walked on foot, and Mary was nine months pregnant! It would be safe to assume that it took them between eight and ten days to make it to Bethlehem.

In essence, Gaudete Sunday captures the dual nature of Advent; it is a time of both reflection and penitence, but also joy and excitement in the promise of redemption. It's a beautiful reminder of the reality of God's love that we see in the Incarnation.



December Prefect Events

By: Katherine Repasky

The December prefect events brought festive cheer this holiday season! With plenty of exciting activities happening, students were sure to find a fun way to get involved! Events such as the annual gingerbread house competition were usual highlights, as well as new events like a chance to get crafty with Christmas decorations.



The annual gingerbread house competition was a night filled with fun and laughter. During the planning stages, Fine Arts prefect Brynn Burnsworth said, "I had so much fun at last year's competition and I am beyond excited to be able to host this year's competition!" Held on December 7th, the night was a great opportunity for students to show off their creative skills while sharing in some yummy treats and fun spirit with their fellow classmates.

Along with the gingerbread houses, there was also a Christmas-decoration making session on Friday, December 6th. This fun and creative event took place between the boys and girls' basketball games of the Tip-Off Basketball Tournament in the art room. This event offered a great opportunity to become part of the school community's efforts to spread holiday cheer. Students had the opportunity to create paper snowflakes and stars, garlands, and other unique Christmas decor.

Whether students were competing in the gingerbread house competition or helping to make decorations, their participation added to the festive atmosphere of the school! December at Aquinas has certainly been full of cheer!

More Than Just a Ball

By: Claire McMann

While most people recovered from Thanksgiving dinner and Black Friday shopping on the night of November 29th, a group of Aquinas girls and their families attended the 61st annual St. Lucy's Auxiliary Ball, which honors young women who have completed the Medallion Ball program. St. Lucy's Auxiliary is a Catholic volunteer organization founded in 1957 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with the vision to instill the importance of service to others in young women, and to recognize them for their efforts.

St. Lucy is the patron saint to the blind, so in the planning of the first ball it was decided that the funds raised at the time would benefit the visually impaired. These funds are raised through fundraising events throughout the year, the highlight of which is the annual Medallion Ball. The Ball recognizes young women for completing a required number of volunteer hours in the community during their high school years.

Rhodora Jacob Donahue, one of the original foundresses, had a dedication to helping the blind, and she set out with friends to raise money for The Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind while also promoting volunteerism among young women. Patricia Dolan, grandmother of Anne Dolan and past president of St. Lucy's shared, "It was decided that a black tie ball would make the evening special, along with the current bishop presenting each senior in high school a Joan of Arc medallion. The Friday after Thanksgiving was selected, hoping to capture most of the family members in the city." She also commented on the two saints represented saying, "St. Lucy was strong and coped courageously with losing her sight; while St. Joan's courage was seen on the battlefield long before women were able to be involved in wars."

This year's Aquinas Medallion Ball candidates included Anne Dolan, escorted by her brother John Dolan, Brynn Burnsworth, escorted by Nolan Thiel, Alice Rothfus, escorted by Rocky Ligouri, and Claire McMann, escorted by John Ortiz. Candidates were required to complete 150 hours of community service. Brynn Burnsworth and Claire McMann completed almost all of their service hours at St. Barnabas, working in the kitchen. Anne Dolan worked at Red Door, and Alice Rothfus volunteered at a lot of local church vacation Bible schools and helped out at her church's food bank. Senior Brynn Burnsworth, when asked about the Medallion Ball, said, "I was so happy to finish my hours in my sophomore year because I didn't have to worry about it junior and senior year. It was so much fun to get our pictures done and I couldn't wait for the night of the ball!"

The ball is held downtown at the Wyndham Hotel. After guests arrive, there is a cocktail hour where they are given the chance to meet with Bishop David Zubik. Once guests are escorted into the dining room, there are several presentations and speeches by board members of the St. Lucy's Auxiliary. This is followed by the presentation of the candidates, who are each given a Joan of Arc medallion by the Bishop. After this, the girls perform a waltz with their escorts. The rest of the night includes dinner and dancing with live music. John Ortiz remarked, "Despite not knowing what I was getting into, the ball was a pretty fun night. Learning the different dances was a little time consuming, but it was worth it for the experience." If you see this year's candidates in the hallway make sure to congratulate them!



Santa Tell Me Once and for All: When Can I Listen to Christmas Music?

By: Felicity Koble

As December rolls around again, the Aquinas community is buzzing with one of the most polarizing controversies of all time: just when is the appropriate time to listen to Christmas music? To settle the debate, the Dumb Ox initiated an extensive research investigation. Such research placed responders in one of three categories: the *Holiday Season Lasts From Halloween to New Year's* group, the *Christmas is Limited to December* group, and another group of outliers commonly known as the *Extremists*.

The first category believed it perfectly reasonable to rock around the Christmas tree in October and November, mainly since so many major holidays occur within the span of the three months. Senior Maddy Bradley asserted that the perfect date was “the day before Halloween, October 30th,” thus initiating the holiday season. Sophomore Grace Chrobak agreed (in mid-November) that Christmas music was for “right now, like right after Halloween is over.” Others acknowledged the holiday season’s length, but advocated for separate periods for each celebration. “Show appreciation for Thanksgiving,”

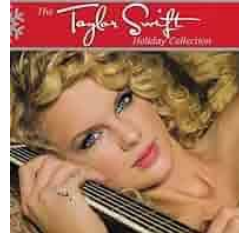
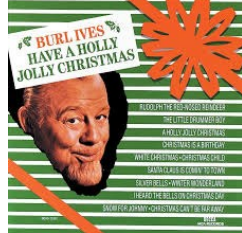
Sophomore Brigid Mercer insisted, “it’s an underrated holiday.”

The second category believed that December, the month of both Advent and Christmas, would be the *most wonderful time of the year* for carols. In fact, freshman Mark Rounding favored starting “December 1st,” and freshman Tim Crawford supported beginning “a couple weeks before Christmas.” Sophomore Anna Hoerster agreed that the “second week of December” was the optimal start date. “Not until December,” Savannah Deschamps declared, but went on to claim, “You listen to it in December and that’s it. Only December.” Savannah said she would not listen to Christmas music even in January.

Finally comes the Extremists. Case one: “Christmas all year long,” senior Alice Rothfus proclaimed, “I beef with the people who start November 1st and end December 25th.” Her reasoning was that since secular culture holds the opposite idea of the Christmas season from the Church’s, Christmas music should stretch way beyond December. Thus, “The time does not define what I listen to.” Case

two: “Christmas music should only be played from the end of the 24th until the end of the 25th,” junior Jack Hoerster announced, “You get 36 hours, at most.” Jack admitted that “Christian Christmas music can be played for the whole [liturgical] season” but stressed that “Mariah Carey should be outlawed.”

To find definitive answers, this Dumb Ox reporter recruited non-student sources to answer the burning question. Chat GPT, reputable for unbiased responses, generated a response that included the exact three categories already noted before concluding, “Ultimately, it’s about when you feel ready to immerse yourself in the holiday spirit.” Mrs. Meland, the Aquinas Academy Chair of Theology, had a unifying view on the subject: “I see no problem with listening to secular Christmas music anytime. However, there is a treasury of beautiful Advent music that you should be listening to in Advent... Then there are all those wonderful Christmas carols to celebrate with throughout the Christmas season.”



Coffee Corner: Fa La La Lattes

By: Alice Rothfus

It is December, and the need for coffee has been combined with the need for Christmas. Whether heading on a road trip to see family, doing last minute Christmas shopping, or baking some cookies at home, people want to be fully caffeinated in order to savor this holiday season. Here are some holiday beverages being sold December 2024.

Starbucks: This year they introduced the Cran-Merry Refresher. This iced, caffeinated refresher with tart cranberry and orange flavors was very sweet. There was an essence of spice in the drink, which was appreciated. I also was able to try their Chocolate Peppermint Cold Foam. The cold foam is perfect for those who want a hint of Christmas cheer in their drink without getting a sugar rush.



Dunkin': Out of all the seasonal offerings at Dunkin I got the White Hazelnut Bark Iced Coffee. It definitely had that artificial hazelnut taste that is slightly sickening. However, the drink was not too sweet and had a good balance between the amount of milk and coffee. I would recommend this drink to those who are already fans of Dunkin drinks.

Mediterra: Their Iced Peppermint Mocha was so delicious that I got it a second time. The flavors of chocolate, peppermint, and coffee go so well together. Plus, they put crushed candy canes in it. Senior JJ Ortiz tried the Iced Peppermint Matcha. “I at first was disappointed because I ordered a 16. oz size and there was about 1 inch from the lid of space that could’ve been filled. I was skeptical because it was a weird combination, but the two flavors actually complimented each other well. I was sad when the whole drink was gone after only a couple sips. Overall 8/10.”



Chick-Fil-A: The Peppermint Iced Coffee from Chick-Fil-A was an inferior beverage. The drink was way too pepperminty and had no sweetness or creaminess to supplement it. However, their Peppermint Chip Milkshake is fantastic. "Mixing peppermint in a milkshake sounded kind of weird, but it was delicious. It got me ready for the holiday season," senior Mary Osburg shared after trying the shake.

It can be hard to get that perfect holiday drink at any coffee shop. It is my hope that this article helps you find your favorite festive coffee. Moreover, I wish that you can spend time with your family and friends over coffee this holiday season!



It's the Most Wonderful Time at Aquinas!

By: Lucy Flynn

Christmas is just around the corner and Aquinas celebrates in many different ways. One of the oldest Aquinas traditions is the lower school's Christmas pageant. This year's pageant was performed on December 13th. Mrs. Repasky, the director of the lower school, helps to organize the Christmas pageant. She explains "Each grade has a special role and sings a different Christmas carol." The kindergarteners and first graders get to be prophets and angels. In the second grade the students perform the nativity scene and sing a French Christmas carol "Patapan." The third graders sing a Catalan carol called "El December Dongelat" which means "Frozen December." The fourth graders perform a Canadian Christmas carol called "Twas in the Cold of Wintertime." The fifth graders sing the German carol "Silent Night" and another song called "Ring, Bells" which includes handbells.

For many years the pageant was held at St. Catherine's church, but this year it was moved to the Aquinas Rhodora. Mrs. Heagy teaches the lower school students all the Christmas carols and has been an integral part of this pageant for many years. Mrs. Repasky says, "The pageant is a beautiful reminder about the liturgical season of Advent and Christmas as it points to the birth of Jesus, Our Lord."

Another Aquinas tradition is the appearance of the Jesse Tree in the chapel. Each grade in the lower school selects students to read a summary about the ornament and place it on the tree before Mass. This tradition has been a fixture at Aquinas since the days of Mrs. Kachmar and Mrs. Mutschler around 2009.

The door decorating contest is a festive tradition in the high school. Each grade is assigned two doors to decorate. One popular technique is for students to incorporate photos of their classmates onto the door. Freshman Maggie Koenig says "I am really excited to be a part of this tradition. It's fun for every grade and I can't wait!" The grades take the door decorating seriously and enjoy the competitive spirit. Faculty members judge the doors based on appearance and originality. Aquinas offers a variety of traditions to celebrate and spread holiday cheer.



'Tis The Season

By: Caitlyn Abbett

It's the most wonderful time of the year, and Aquinas families are beginning to celebrate the Advent and Christmas season. While anticipation for the holiday builds, the students partake in some of their favorite traditions. From creating traditional Advent wreaths to baking gingerbread cookies, many students share in interesting Advent activities.

Most Aquinas families celebrate the Advent season through worship and decorating their homes. Sophomore Mary Rose Cerny's family has a fun tradition with their Nativity scene. "Every time we do a good deed during Advent, we add a piece of straw to the manger!" Freshman Lily O'Neill celebrates the season with a more musical approach. "During Advent my family and I sing Christmas songs from my uncle's band in preparation for Christmas. I sing, my dad plays guitar, and my mom and brother play the piano."



Many students spend the Christmas break with their families and enjoy different games and activities. Junior Owen Mckernan goes to his grandma's house and competes in a scaven-

ger hunt with all of the grandchildren. He shares, "I love playing the game every year, and I always try to beat my cousin, Alexa Risdon." Junior Marielle Dillner participates in a white elephant gift exchange with her extended family. Junior Tess Duer receives special ornaments from her parents each year based on particular events or accomplishments achieved that year.

While Christmas is best celebrated with family, students also have fun with their friends over the long break. Sophomore Megan Policicchio enjoys a secret Santa with her close friends during the Christmas season. This year she also started a new personal tradition of decorating a Christmas tree in her room with ornaments of special people in her life, including her friends.

Aside from activities outside of school, Aquinas always hosts some type of Christmas-themed event in December that many students look forward to attending. This year the prefect board hosted a gingerbread and karaoke night that brought quite a crowd. Junior Francesca Hite exclaimed, "I really enjoyed working with my friends to make a gingerbread house even though it ended up not being a house. The karaoke by the junior boys was definitely a highlight!"

The Christmas season is the perfect time of the year to share in traditions while also starting new ones! They are a great way to enjoy the buildup to Christmas while honoring the birth of Jesus and spending time with the people you love!

It's Christmas Time in the City

By: Laila Tuffiash

To find fun things to do around Christmas time, one does not have to look much further than the city of Pittsburgh. From religious based activities to family-friendly activities, the city has it all.

One very notable tradition in downtown Pittsburgh is the creche (a life-size Nativity scene). Located on the outside courtyard of the U.S. Steel Tower, the creche has appeared during the few weeks around Christmas since 1999. Many people go to the creche to pray, or just to appreciate the beauty of it. Junior Caitlyn Abbett said, "I've been to the Nativity scene at night, and it was stunning!" This is also a great place to take younger family members, because kids really enjoy the life-sized aspect of the creche.

Another family-friendly downtown activity is the PPG Place Gingerbread House display. Every year since 2002, there has been a contest for the most elaborate gingerbread house. Children, teenagers, adults, families, scout troops, churches, and schools are all eligible to create a gingerbread house to be put on display inside PPG Place. Those who do not enter can still walk around and enjoy looking at all the beautiful gingerbread creations. Junior Jules Shemer recalled, "I went to PPG place when I was eight to sing. I saw the gingerbread houses, and they were really pretty." Junior Felicity Koble "loved looking at all the gingerbread houses as a kid because each one was so unique, but they all fit together into one giant display."

Those who prefer a more hands-on Christmas activity may enjoy Holiday Square. Around the Christmas season, a whole new slew of seasonal shops appears in Market Square. People can walk around, shop for Christmas presents, get a hot drink, and sometimes enjoy live music.

Another immersive activity is the Winter Garden at Phipps Conservatory in Oakland. The beautiful displays of winter flowers and lights make for great pictures, a romantic date night spot, or a fun place to hang out with friends and family. If there are easily bored children in your family, they will really enjoy the lights as well as the hot chocolate stand. There are also children's areas throughout the conservatory where kids can climb on structures and play. Junior Meghan McGee loves visiting the Winter Garden with her family, stating that it is "one of my favorite family traditions. We go almost every year. One thing I really like is the snowflake scavenger hunt, where they put snowflake decorations among the plants and people can look for them. It's also genuinely funny to visit the rainforest and desert rooms when it's freezing outside."

The Carnegie museums have special Christmas displays as well, and are decorated with lights. Visitors can see the beautiful Carnegie trees (which have been up every Christmas since 1961) and the Neapolitan Presepio (an Italian Nativity scene displayed every Christmas since 1957) in the art museum, go to concerts in the Architecture Hall, get professionally done family photos, and shop for last minute Christmas gifts in the museum gift shops.

Many churches around the diocese have Christmas traditions that anyone from any parish can take part in. The Shrines of Pittsburgh are always beautiful to visit during Christmas, and many churches put up a beautiful Nativity scene in their sanctuary. Some churches also have musical performances. A notable Christmas concert is the Lessons and Carols concert at Regina

Coeli Parish's Assumption Church, a church about five minutes from the city in Bellevue. The concert consists of performances by the parish's youth and adult choirs and a brass orchestra, as well as the readings that depict the story of Jesus' birth. Mr. Meland, a member of Regina Coeli's adult choir, expressed that, "It is a long-standing tradition, since the late 1970's, for the music director and choir at Assumption Church to give a Lessons and Carols Christmas concert on the second or third Sunday of Advent. Attending a Lessons and Carols service is one of the loveliest ways to celebrate the hope, peace, joy, and love of the Advent/Christmas season, while keeping the Lord Jesus at the center of this busy time of year. I've been singing in these concerts since 2005. It has always been a privilege to be part of this musical offering from the people of Assumption Church." The youth choir has been working hard on a variety of pieces, and even its youngest members (third graders) look forward to singing Christmas music every year (and of course the party downstairs after)!

So if you are in a rut about what to do this Christmas, consider making a trip out to the city, and you will not be disappointed!



Writers' Favorite

Christmas Song

Abigail: "The Holly and the Ivy" by George Winston

Anne: "The Christmas Waltz" by Lauren

Alexa: "Jingle Bells"

Alice: "I'll Be Home for Christmas"

Ashlin: "Last Christmas" by WHAM!

Brynn: "Wonderful Christmastime"

Caitlyn: "Snowman" by Sia

Claire: "Chiron Beta Prime"

Felicity: "O Holy Night"

Jack: "Carol of the Bells"

Jules: "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" by Dean Martin

Katherine: "Carol of the Bells"

Laila: "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)"

Lucy: "Wonderful Christmastime"

Maddy: "Mary, Did You Know?" by Pentatonix

Sam: "Dominick the Donkey"

Snips & Quips

"We are still missing five scripts. I hope you will visit me in prison."

-Mr. Flynn

"I'm never bored. I wish I was bored."

-Ms. Dill

"What is it called when only one star is out at night?"

-Mrs. Whetzel

"The sun."

-Daniel

Referencing an economics test

"Jesus took the wheel."

-Nadine

"Well, he was driving a manual; it was rocky."

-Ashlin

"So the skirts to the knee... and the socks to the knee?"

- Claire M.

"I'm literally going to pop, lock, and break someone."

-J.J.

*While talking about the *Iliad**

"Hector is my ancient crush."

- Ms. Young

"Don't be petty,
be pretty."

-Señora

"I don't sing. I hum aggressively."

-Mr. Volkwein

"If you're cowardly, you're a..."

-Mrs. Meland

"Cow."

-J.J.

"There's a new book on Boethius."

-Mrs. Meland

"Boethius fanfiction?"

-Clara

"Throw your scrunchies at her right now!"

-Mr. Meland

Mr. Deschamps walks and sits in Mrs. Meland's class

To Mr. Deschamps: "So, what school are you from?"

-Abi

"If Savannah Deschamps says she's cooked for physics, my whole kitchen is on fire."

-Brad

Please send articles, ideas, corrections, or Snips and Quips to: thedumbbox@aquinasacademy-pittsburgh.org

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Merry Christmas

from the faculty, staff, and students
of Saint Francis University.



francis.edu/visit

Saint Francis of Assisi began the tradition of recreating the Nativity scene over 800 years ago, as a way of sharing the story of our Savior's birth with people who were not able to read the story.

So, when you see a Nativity scene, you can thank St. Francis of Assisi for helping us all to remember the reason for the season!