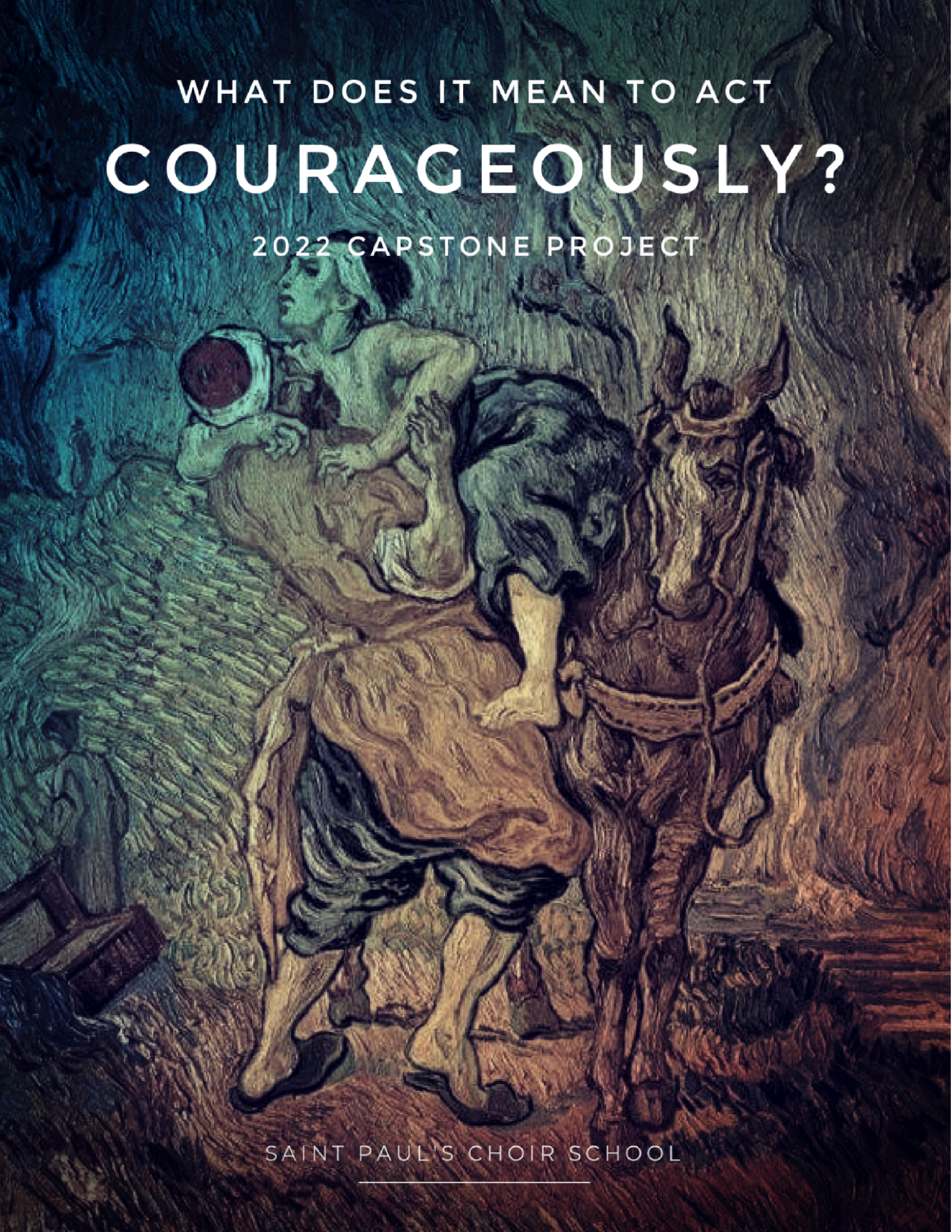


WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ACT
COURAGEOUSLY?

2022 CAPSTONE PROJECT



SAINT PAUL'S CHOIR SCHOOL



Cover Image:

The Good Samaritan, Vincent Van Gogh (1890)

Kröller-Müller Museum, The Netherlands

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Introduction

WHAT IS CAPSTONE?

During Capstone classes, students explore a single philosophical question. Across eight presentations from eight different presenters, each utilizing academic sources, students grapple with the ins and outs of that year's philosophical question. In doing so, students examine several artifacts selected by their teachers and other presenters. These artifacts include the works of artists, authors, philosophers, poets, theologians, musicians, scientists, and scholars who have all considered this question through the ages. The students' task is to study these artifacts and consider what these works teach them about the question or concept at hand.

After their studies, students refine their own ideas in light of what they have learned, culminating in a three-to-five page paper, which they present to their classmates, teachers, and administrators.

In 2021, students asked what is a happy life. This year, they asked *what does it mean to act courageously*.

Looking back to Aristotle, courage was understood as a “golden mean,” a carefully considered middle point between “feelings of fear (phobos) and confidence.” He further elaborates that “a courageous person not only fears rightly, but also is confident about the right things, in the right way, and at the right time.” More recently, author and thinker Brene Brown contends that the word courage means something else. It comes from the Latin root cor-, meaning heart. She defines it as an act: “to tell the story of who you are with your whole heart.” Between these two definitions are hundreds, if not thousands, of interpretations.

For their capstone project, eighth-grade students have reconciled these differences in definition, putting forward their own academic scholarship on the matter. In the pages that follow, Saint Paul's Choir School is pleased to share the answers to the question what does it mean to act courageously.

What does it mean to act courageously?

2022 CAPSTONE PROJECT



The Good Samaritan Vincent Van Gogh

1890

WHAT WE LEARNED ALONG THE WAY

1. **Aristotle** Courage is the virtuous mean between fear and confidence. *Presented by Mr. Moran*
2. **Max Warburg** Courage can take the form of steadfast determination and heartfelt hope in the face of difficulty or fear. *Presented by Ms. Liz Watson, the Max Warburg Courage Curriculum*
3. **The Story of the Good Samaritan** For an act to be courageous, it must be rooted in the fear of the Lord. *Presented by Chris Cottrell*
4. **Albert Brooks** It is more courageous to practice gratitude than satisfaction. *Presented by Dr. Haferd*
5. **Edward Sri & Thomas Aquinas** Christ demonstrates courage and teaches us that it can be acting or enduring, taking the form of magnanimity, patience, or perseverance. *Presented by Ms. Amburn*
6. **Marcus Aurelius & Seneca** Stoicism helps us to live courageously. *Presented by Madame Greiner*
7. **Dante** Courage is necessary to overcome sin and become a saint. *Presented by Mrs. Barilleaux & Mr. Davis*
8. **Desmond Doss & Nightbirde** Courage is focused on the wellbeing of others. *Presented by Father Kelly*
9. **Pope Francis & C.S. Lewis** There are four types of love (affection, friendship, eros, charity); it is courageous to love authentically. *Presented by Mrs. Maricich*

On courage

The Capstone Project is nothing short of a journey. It is quite fitting that it was paired in English class with a reading of *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J.R.R. Tolkien, the first of the *Lord of the Rings* series.

As with that lauded series, it is more than fair to say that though the lessons learned are remarkable and important, the process that brought us to this destination is just as beautiful.

Since February, the eighth-graders of Saint Paul's Choir School have learned from sources both Classical and modern, unfamiliar and familiar. Each presentation was given by an esteemed member of our community who shared knowledge and insights from the likes of Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Thomas Aquinas, Pope Francis, and C.S. Lewis, to name a few. These young men then excised from those presentations what these figures were sharing with us about courage.

Our journey was the question *what does it mean to act courageously*. Our destination is what is before you now: the answer, given to us by the young men of Saint Paul's Choir School.

On numerous occasions, I was pleased to see these young men act courageously. When studying Dante, they learned that courage is an essential ingredient in overcoming sin and becoming a saint. Only a few short weeks later, two of our students were baptized and confirmed into the Church.

On another occasion, they grappled with C.S. Lewis's four types of love, learning that authentic friendship is an act of both love and courage. Not long after, they were in New York City, a class of five exploring a city of millions. They were there

specifically to celebrate their friendship to one another and their service to Saint Paul's.

On that very same trip, they proved that Edward Sri and Thomas Aquinas's notion of courage as a pattern of endurance, rather than a single act, is true. They did this while reconnecting with Mr. Adach in Time Square's loudest (if not its least liturgical) show-tune themed diner, unable to catch him up on all that he has missed over the belting out of *New York, New York* by a caffeinated grad student.

Perhaps more importantly, these young men have a lifetime of courage ahead of them.

The future is a place of wonder, and what a virtue to celebrate in connection with courage! The world these young men will encounter is big and beautiful. The people in it are smart, exciting, and, at their heart, loving. The places are celebrations of God's design and the achievements of man. It will, however, take courage to see a world of wonder.

In a world where it is all too easy to fear the things we haven't encountered, the people we haven't met, or the places we haven't been, the most courageous thing may just be to see a world of wonder, to find Aristotle's virtuous mean between fear and confidence when we encounter, meet, and visit those things that require our courage.

In other words, the most courageous act of all may be to know that though we are small, with God we are mighty.

.....

All the very best,

Mr. Moran

Our many thanks!

Thank you **Ms. Liz Watson and Ms. Carrie Coughlin** from the Max Warburg Courage Curriculum for sharing with us the everyday courage of students just like those at Saint Paul's Choir School.

Thank you Chris Cottrell for sharing with us stories from Iraq, his Israeli shofar, and for putting the lesson of the good Samaritan into a contemporary context.

Thank you Dr. Haferd for sharing with us the wisdom of Albert Brooks and instilling in us the lesson that life is better lived when seeking gratitude rather than satisfaction.

Thank you Ms. Amburn for helping us understand that courage isn't just a momentary action, but rather a pattern of enduring and the practice of both patience and perseverance.

Thank you Madame Greiner for the primer in Stoicism and for asking us to find quotes that most inspire us. Like Marcus Aurelius, we find ourselves grateful to our teacher!

Thank you Mrs. Barilleaux and Mr. Davis for making Dante an allegorical and practical guide

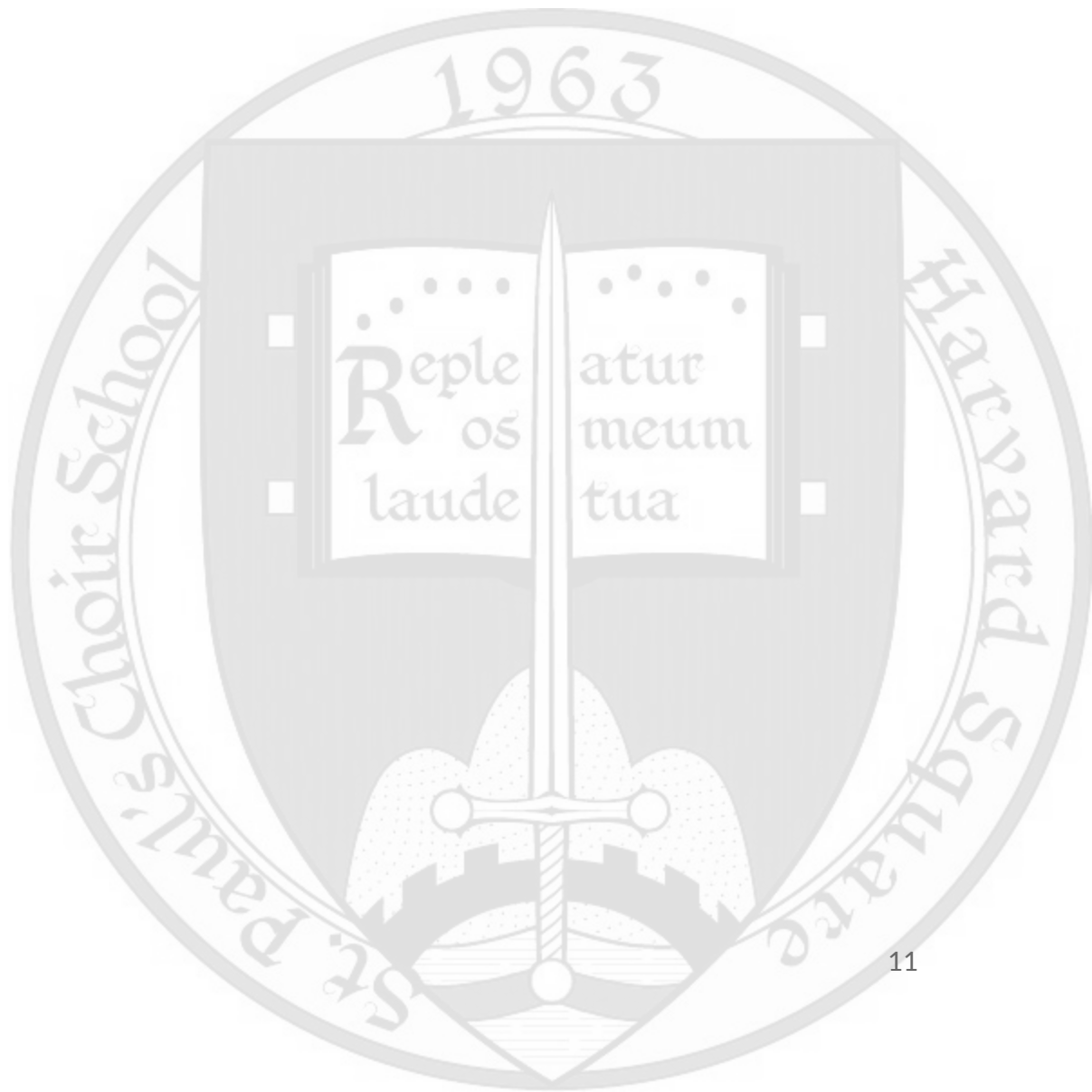
to living courageously. We'll never forget Thomas Aquinas is on the moon.

Thank you Father Kelly for showing videos that come from our timeline! We learned that courage is not limited to the past, but is admirably and beautifully on display here in the present.

Thank you Mrs. Maricich for sharing such concrete examples of Pope Francis's *Fratelli Tutti* and for linking it to C.S. Lewis, whose *Narnia* series we all love so much.

Lastly, an extra special thank you Mrs. Barilleaux for devoting such time and care to the drafting and editing of these essays. We couldn't have done it without you!

Essays
answering
what does it
mean to act
courageously?



Felix Anderson



...joined Saint Paul's Choir School at the start of his seventh-grade year. He is one of Saint Paul's most recent entrants. Regardless, he fit right in and is an inseparable part of this graduating class.

Felix is consistently courageous because he is unabashedly himself everyday at school.

He is unafraid to share his original, critical thoughts in conversation or to ask big, meaningful questions. Nor is he afraid to share his dyslexia with the world. In fact, he would consistently disarm recruiters from area high schools by introducing himself as “Felix, dyslexic, what can your school do for me?”

Felix is known in the classroom for his incredible memory, his unending curiosity, and the indelible mark his critical thinking and commentary make on classroom conversation.

Felix departs Saint Paul's as a scholar and junior philosopher of high renown. Next year, he joins the prestigious Lang School in New York City.

“ only you can have your
perfect definition of courage and
try not to change it ”

Felix Anderson



Is There a Definition?

BY FELIX ANDERSON

How do you define courage? In fact, can you define courage? In my opinion, no, not without making it very specific to you. You will always end up putting it through your own mental lens. Courage isn't always just one coherent thing.

No one actually knows what courage is. People will tell you, "Oh, courage is this. Courage is that." No definition is right for everyone. We all have this thing where we want to win. Everyone hated Napoleon, but we all behave like him sometimes. It's definitely much more often than we realize. It's why we argue. I'm going to try and dismantle that imagined thing that courage is: that one thing that everyone thinks they're right and everyone else should follow their definition of courage. What I learned from the capstone teaching is that you can't have just one definition of courage. And I get that it's a paradox that if I truly believe this it would mean that *any* definition of courage is wrong. So how could *any* definition be right, even one that allows for a bunch of different definitions? Because no definition is right for everyone.

Aristotle's definition of courage says courage is the balance between fear and confidence where courage is not a rising above but a balance between, which is also not like what most people think about it. And then we come to Max Warburg where courage is to maintain and not break down. Think about this difference: you don't really have an evident similarity. It is very difficult to see how you are

dealing with the same concept. One says it is not to go too far one way or the other, and the other one is to stay composed even when it is hopeless. The differences are evident. Max Warburg's definition could actually be uncourageous according to Aristotle. Second, Aristotle's definition is much broader.

Another example of a definition of courage is the song "Can't Get No Satisfaction" by the Rolling Stones. That song said that being brave was to reject money and I doubt that most people at this school have thought about that as an actual definition. And in *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016 film), the definition says that the protagonist Desmond Doss was courageous. Basically, the character goes out to save the lives of the people who teased him so much earlier and knowing full well that it could cost him his life. So one means basically Aristotle without the stopper and one is striving for something besides just worldly things. Again, they aren't really similar. In fact, these two are even more different than the other two. They are barely similar. Though they both have something to do with being better, in *Hacksaw Ridge* that motivation is barely visible until the very end and in the song *Can't Get No Satisfaction*, it is evident but only in little, material ways.

Defining courage is a lot like defining the word *love*. Our word love in most languages is split apart. (Which makes sense when you think about it.) How many of you have thought about the fact that you can love someone in two very different ways? If I have a friend who I love like a sibling and I say that I love them I'll be teased for it. But in most other languages it would make more sense and most wouldn't probably find it weird, because there are more words for different kinds of love, like friendship. Again, in my opinion, it isn't something I can do to find one definition of courage that sums them all up in any way that is neat. Just like we can't with the definition of the word love in English.

In the end though I could be completely wrong and maybe Andy, Ben, David, or Phillip could have found the answer. Or maybe someone who no one remembers any more found the answer. What I really want you to remember is that only you can have your perfect definition of courage and try not to change it. Especially not with something as ever-changing as courage, which not everyone is going to agree with. But that doesn't mean you should just roll over and let someone change your opinion to their opinion. Your mind is your mind and your definition of courage works for you and only you.

And that's pretty much it. I'm sorry if that got very boring. This whole paper could have been shorter if I hadn't had to go through three pages and a story about realizing my definition of courage. As I previously stated, I am only human and for all I know someone out there could have the exact definition of courage and I just spent I don't know how long yammering about something that is completely wrong. It's still your choice if you do or don't want to listen to me and I am probably just as wrong about this as anyone else could be.

There goes my speech and the last thing at this school that I will work on effectively this year.

Philip Chamian



...joined Saint Paul's Choir School at the start of his fourth-grade year. Since then he has been charming faculty and peers alike with his humor – even, at times, his legendary stand-up comedy routines.

Philip shows courage every time he takes the stage, whether as a public speaker or as a chorister. In these roles, as in his friendships,

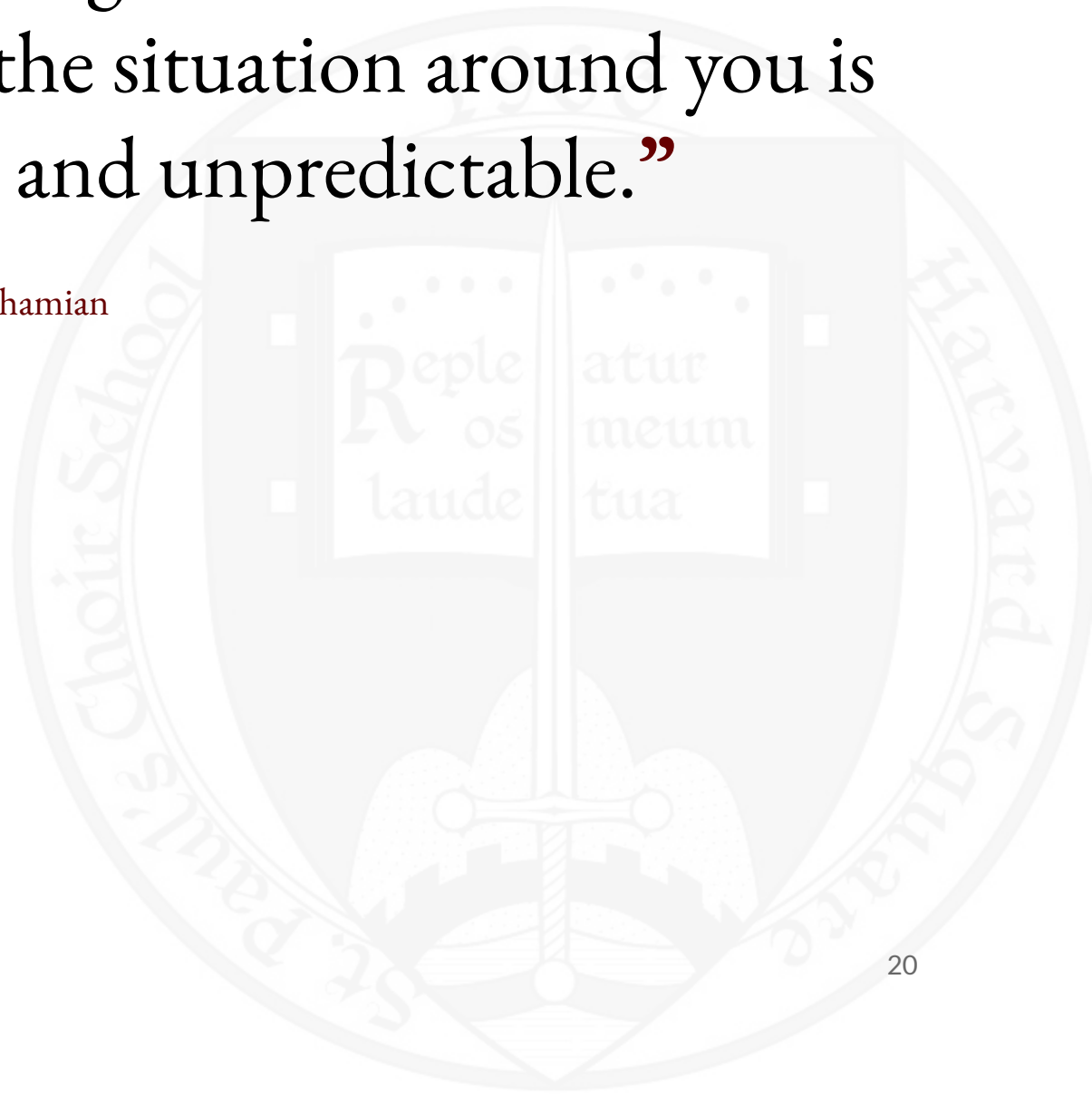
he always possesses the courage to be honest, delivering truths with warmth and humor.

Philip is noted and respected in the Saint Paul's community for his angelic voice. He has been a soloist in multiple performances, including during the choir's showpiece concerts at Christmas. In addition, he has performed with the choir on the professional stage, sharing concert time with the likes of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra.

Philip departs Saint Paul's as a musician and scholar of high renown. Next year, he joins Belmont High School.

“ Most people think courage means being brave and most people think being brave means overcoming fear. Courage to me is remaining calm and collected, when the situation around you is erratic and unpredictable.”

Philip Chamian



Calm and Collected

BY PHILIP CHAMIAN

Over the past few months the eight grade class has been looking into what courage means to each of us. Many presenters with different definitions of courage came in to deliver lectures on their specific definition. Over the course of the many presentations, I learned courage means different things to different people. The speaker's definitions share some similarities and some key differences, which will be explored in the paragraphs that follow. Most people think courage means being brave and most people think being brave means overcoming fear. But as we learned in our presentations and from the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, fear is courageous as long as we have just as much confidence. In other words, fear is not bad in itself as long as you face it with courage. So what is courage? Courage to me is remaining calm and collected, when the situation around you is erratic and unpredictable.

Among the first Capstone classes was one concerning a boy named Max Warburg, who was gravely ill. He did not let his illness control him. He faced his treatment with a calm focus of energy to handle the pain. Max made other sick children in the hospital smile, one example is by throwing a Christmas party for them. In one of our last presentations Fr. Kelly introduced to us a woman known as Nightbirde, a singer from "America's Got Talent " who decided to come on the show even though she was gravely ill. She showed us that despite her terrible illness, she still kept a positive attitude,

continued her love for singing, and did not let her illness stop her. This certainly exemplifies my definition of courage. Both Max Warburg and Nightbride both remained calm and collected throughout their hard fought illnesses.

Courage is an act of perseverance and labor despite setbacks. Dr. Hafard introduced us to a man named Arthur Brooks who is an American social scientist, musician, and columnist for the atlantic. The Arthur Brooks reading tells us that being grateful is more important than to keep trying to get satisfaction, for we are not able to get it. “Money” by Barret Strong, is filled with repetitive lyrics about seeking more money. Seeking more money is seeking satisfaction, which is not a courageous act. Money does not buy happiness, and seeking more and more will not lead to satisfaction. “I can’t get no satisfaction” by the rolling stones, does not imply courage. Seeking satisfaction is not courageous, being grateful is.

Desmond Doss from Hacksaw Ridge was a United States Army Corporal who served as a combat medic in World War One. Doss kept going into battle to save more and more people. This is another act of courage. Desmond saved as many people as he could. Whether those people respected him or harassed him for being a pacifist. C.S. Lewis says that loving someone is not easy because it takes risks. There are four types of love according to Lewis and the best to help us understand Doss is charity. At its heart charity asks us to give of what we have unselfishly to others. In the case of Desmond Doss, he saves his fellow soldiers despite their earlier insults and harassment. Doss, in the ultimate act of charity, saves his fellow man simply because he is giving of himself. “Lord let me get one more” becomes his repeated prayer and what is most telling about this prayer is his commitment to help others regardless of their attitude and actions towards him. Truly this is a courageous act.

Courage is being calm and collected, when what happens to you is erratic and unpredictable. I learned a lot throughout this project and I hope when life brings you a challenge you will be able to step up and handle it with courage.

Benjamin Choi



...joined Saint Paul's Choir School at the start of his eighth-grade year. Almost immediately, he was recognized by faculty and peers alike as a tremendous talent.

Benjamin shows courage every time he talks about music. It is not easy to express the significant role something as abstract as sound and emotion can have on one's life, but to

Benjamin it is second nature. This is especially true of pieces he has composed himself.

Benjamin is noted and respected in the Saint Paul's community for his role as an organ scholar and as an artist. He has single-handedly redecorated the organ room with beautiful portraits of composers, the likes of which include Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, and Chopin, among a dozen others. His original piano compositions, organ improvisation, and artistry will continue to distinguish him in the coming years.

Benjamin departs Saint Paul's as a pianist and scholar of high renown. Next year, he joins Boston College High School.

“ It takes courage to be vulnerable that way and to bring yourself to accept everyone regardless of class, race, opinion, circumstance, etc. ”

Benjamin Choi



Best Way to Live

BY BENJAMIN CHOI

During this year, a group of presenters shared their definitions and experiences on what courage is to our class and when we had finished listening, we took the sources that we felt most useful and relevant and constructed our own definition of courage based on that. What I have learned from the Capstone Project based on the common thread of all the presentations is that courage is putting aside one's fear and discomfort to do what is difficult but beneficial and righteous. Because when I looked deeply into how different people express courage and how I would express courage, I had begun to understand that it is not acting noble for the sake of being noble but it is acting noble because it is a heartfelt desire to serve others out of love despite any circumstance or setback.

I have been inspired to look at courage this way because of all the beautiful stories of compassion in hard situations that have been set forth to me. A famous example of having courage to serve others despite negative circumstances is the story of Desmond Doss during the Second World War. He was not an average soldier; he always stuck with what he believed was right, which meant he refused to hold or shoot a gun. He refused to be a part of the violence because he was brought up as a pacifist, so instead of fighting, he served in the medical corps. As a result, everyone in his regiment mocked and laughed at him which made him an outcast and lonely. But one night during a siege, many

soldiers were wounded and were dying on the battlefield and in a majestic act of compassion and love, he risked own life by going out to save the lives of the people who made fun of him. That night, Desmond Doss saved over 60 lives single-handedly, and he was and always will be hailed as a hero. Desmond Doss put aside not just his discomfort but his own safety just to help others even though he didn't have to, which fits my view on courage perfectly. This is also a beautiful act of charity (which is a love for all of humanity) which in itself is courageous according to C. S. Lewis (and I) because it is a giving of self. Pope Francis also expands on this idea of helping and loving all without discrimination in his encyclical letter Fratelli Tutti which means All Brothers.

Pope Francis writes in Fratelli Tutti that we should help all people of the world without choosing whom we help out of charity. It takes courage to be vulnerable that way and to bring yourself to accept everyone regardless of class, race, opinion, circumstance, etc. It supports my view of having courage as not just an act of confidence or love but as an act of confidence and love that is done despite how you feel and how uncomfortable it may be which makes it true and authentic love and courage.

Courage is not just serving others though. It is also serving ourselves to make sure that we are the best that we are and it helps us see the better side of the world. An example of how courage can be used to help ourselves is fighting our temptation and desire to sin. It requires having self control, patience, and perseverance to get through the discomfort of trying to stay pure but it makes us become better people who are responsible and trustworthy. This is even shown in the Divine Comedy in the Paradiso as Dante explains and shows the blessings of having the courage to renounce sin. It is courageous to gain self control, patience, and perseverance because it is setting aside the discomfort of temptation to keep ourselves pure and righteous.

Another aspect of having courage to help ourselves is having gratitude. Now, satisfaction is something that is non-existent and not very courageous. No matter how much we attempt to achieve it - in a world that measures itself by accumulation - by means of buying products, winning prizes, getting admiration, etc, we will never do so because we as humans will always search for something more than what we have. Therefore, it takes courage to deny the urge for satisfaction especially when what we perceive is going to satiate us is all everywhere. As stated before, it takes all our self control, patience, and perseverance to give us the courage to reject the desire for more. The only way to be content instead of satisfied is to be grateful for everyone and everything. To appreciate what everyone brings to our lives and for what we have and how blessed we are to have what we have is an authentic show of self love and courage. This aspect of authentic self-love reflects my view on courage because it is going against temptation and the discomfort of abstaining from harmful practices for the betterment of the state of one's mind, soul, body, and virtues.

From listening to people who have experienced and understood courage in various ways during the past weeks has inspired me to work to understand courage and live courageously as it helps myself and the world. What I understand is courage, seems to be the best way to live as any person in any community. We learn to authentically love ourselves and others which gives us compassion and responsibility which brings out the best in anyone. I am sure that when all peoples of the world have courage, they will love one another and serve one another and also love and serve themselves. Courage is a great power and gift that we all have and when we utilize it, we become the best that we can be.

Andrew Driscoll



...joined Saint Paul's Choir School at the start of his fourth-grade year. Almost immediately, he was recognized by the faculty for his broad and ready smile. Within minutes, he impressed further with his quick recall, intellect, and caring attitude towards all others.

Andrew shows courage every day when he sits at the piano. Over the past five years, he

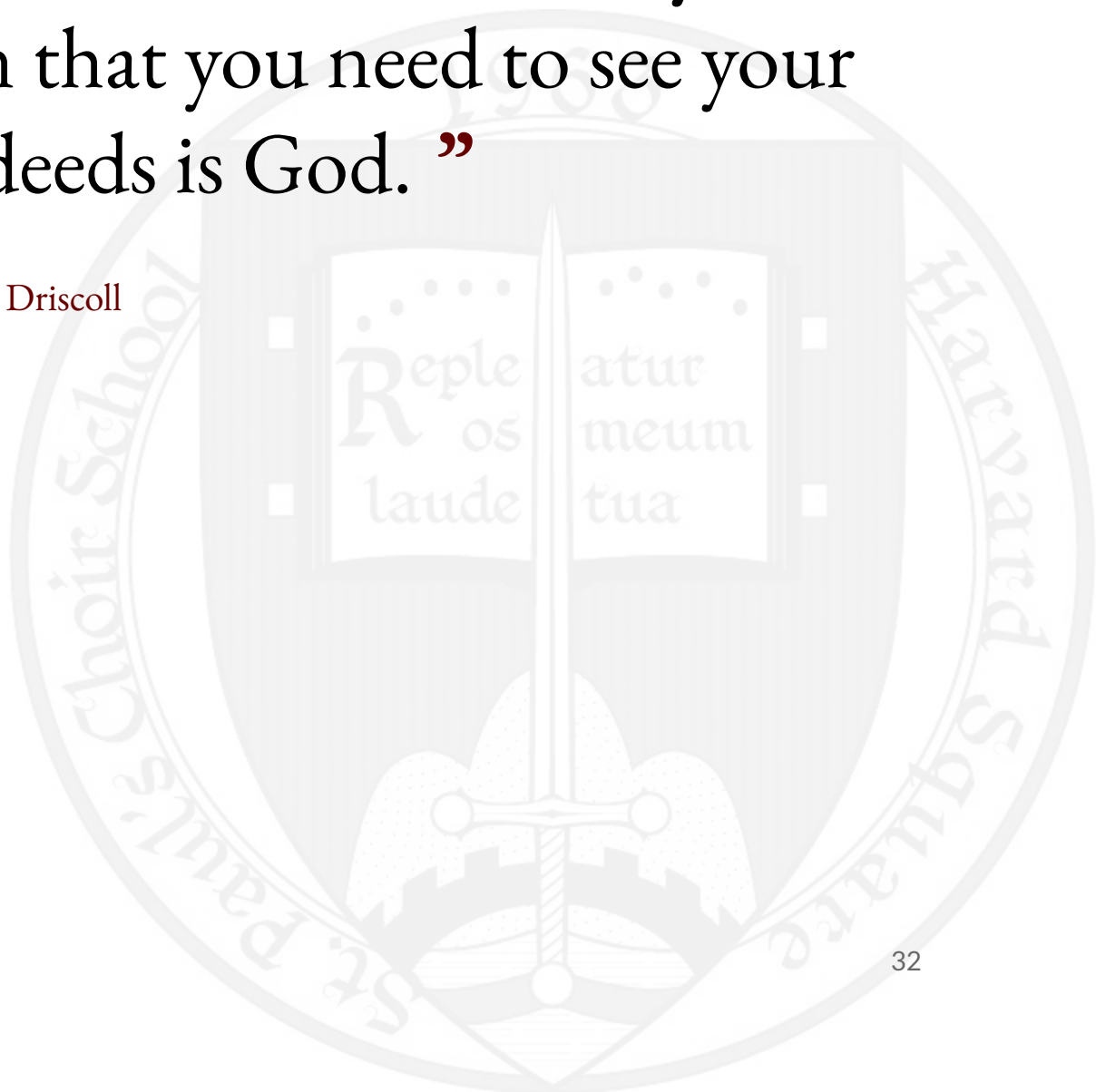
has pushed himself further than most other students in SPCS history, completing Music Theory Grade 5 and Piano Grade 8 in record time. In addition, he has performed professionally with the Ip Piano School.

Andrew is noted and respected in the Saint Paul's community not only for his considerable talents on the piano, but also as a dedicated chorister, whose commitment to the choir has taken him around the world and seen him perform with such institutions as the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra.

Andrew departs Saint Paul's as a chorister, pianist, and scholar of high renown. Next year, he joins Cambridge Rindge and Latin School.

“ Courage is about having integrity and not needing others to give you rewards in return for your good deeds... The only person that you need to see your good deeds is God. ”

Andrew Driscoll



Victory over Fear

BY ANDREW DRISCOLL

What does it mean to act courageously? Let us start with the ancients. Aristotle had the opinion that courage was the median of confidence and fear. This means that you have to mix confidence, which is being able to do something hard, with fear, which is knowing what you are up against. I think that this is true, but it is missing some elements. A hero of mine who could add to that is Nelson Mandela, who said that, “Courage is not the absence of fear, but a victory over it.” Which brings me to my definition of courage. Courage is being focused on helping others even if you have to overcome fear to do so.

I think an important part of courage is helping others and putting others' concerns and needs above your own. Someone who exemplifies and explains this to us is Pope Francis, because inside his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* he shows to us in many ways why you should not be selective with charity. An important point that I noticed that Pope Francis came across was that in the societies and norms of today we can forget that in order to be truly courageous we have to forget our labels in society. If we do, we can be like the good samaritan and come to the aid of anyone we meet, no matter what low place in society they have, or differences that you might have between you. Another extraordinary example of putting others in front of yourself is the character Desmond Doss in the movie *Hacksaw Ridge*. Desmond Doss, who was a real soldier in World War II, was bullied and beaten up by his fellow

soldiers because Desmond's religion influenced him to become a pacifist, so he was a medic instead. However, when the battle actually came, Desmond went into the battlefield and saved 60 lives in one night and many of those people had beaten him up previously. He shows major courage in two ways, putting the lives of others in front of his safety and, also being unselective about charity to the extent of saving those who hurt him badly. Charity is a type of love and CS Lewis connects the different types of love to the idea of giving. The Greeks have four different words for the four types of love: Storge, Philia, Eros, and Agape. Storge is the only type of love that does not need courage, because it is just liking something and not really loving it. However all the other types of love require courage; like Philia, which means friendship, needs loyal courage, and eros, which is romantic love needs sacrificial courage; but the love that requires the most courage is agape, because it is loving everyone unselectively and indiscriminately. In order to properly show agape you have to forget your and everyone else's place in society when it comes to love. courage is having the mindset of putting others and anyone above yourself and to be a servant of the servants.

Courage is about having integrity and not needing others to give you rewards in return for your good deeds. We all know the Story of the Good Samaritan, but I think a value in it that some people miss is that you do not need recognition for the good deeds that you do. This does not mean that all you have to do is clean your room without telling your mom; it means doing all the good deeds that are available for the rest of your life. The only person that you need to see your good deeds is God. If you only do good deeds to try to boost your own ego, then it is useless because in the end you are just trying to get satisfaction from others. Albert Brooks says that having satisfaction from getting things from others is not needed for anything. The problem with chasing satisfaction is that you will never get it unless you put your trust in God. This is why before you do anything you should always ask yourself

if this will help you get closer to God and eternal life. Another good example can be found in America's Got Talent, where Nightbirde, who has cancer sings a beautiful piece that she wrote called, "it's okay " It is about how she did not complain or ask for pity, but instead fulfilled her dreams and her goals. She could have been sulking in her hospital room, but instead she gives everyone the pleasure hearing her sing. All of these stories are of people that had the courage to not care about their place in society, or to fall out of the rat race of satisfaction and instead go with God, or finally to give it their all even if it is their dying day.

Courage is also doing whatever it takes for those you love. For this we might as well start with a Roman emperor, Marcus Auralius. In his book, the Meditations, he goes out of his way to thank people who have helped him. Imagine having a book that becomes a world classic, and the first chapter is just you thanking others. Skip forward almost two thousand years and you get Max Warburg, a kid who also strived to do whatever he could to make his family happy. Max developed cancer at a young age, but even with this difficulty ahead of him, he still strived to make his family and friends happy by doing things like throwing a Christmas party for his entire ward of kids, who were all sick. Max never made his cancer define him, but instead made the most of the life he had left. Courage is about doing whatever you can for whomever you can, and someone who exemplifies this is Jesus. A place in the Bible that I love is when the gospel of Matthew when Jesus went into the temple and drove out all who were buying and selling there. Although Jesus is normally portrayed as being a peacemaker, in the passage he shows us that sometimes we have to stir up the courage and defend our families and our beliefs. Whether you study a Roman emperor, a normal kid, or Jesus himself, you will always find that they have great courage.

I have explained to you what it means to be courageous, but I have not explained why you should act courageously. I think the best answer can be found in Dante's Inferno, where Dante takes us through the different layers of Hell, and in all of them if you are not courageous you will end up there. For example the worst level of hell, which is inside Satan's mouth, is a punishment for all those who betray their friends. Your first reaction might be, glad I will never end up there. However, the more you really think about it, the more you realize how many times in your life you had the opportunity to betray your friend for your own benefit and had the courage to reject that temptation. This is what courage is all about, being focused on helping others even if you have to overcome fear and temptation to do so.

David Marino



...joined Saint Paul's Choir School at the start of his fourth-grade year. Almost immediately, he was recognized by the faculty for his ability to work with everyone. Whether he is acting as

Head Chorister or organizing a football game, David can always be counted on.

David shows courage every day when he greets his classmates and teachers, bringing them his best. He is unafraid to communicate care and consideration for each member of the community, whom he treats like family.

David is noted and respected in the Saint Paul's community for his embodiment of the virtue of brotherhood. In his leadership, deep family ties, musical talent, and athletic ability, David welcomes and makes time for each classmate.

David departs Saint Paul's as a leader of high renown. Next year, he joins Catholic Memorial.

“ Courage includes an ability to persist. Courage is required from people in their everyday lives. ”

David Marino



Ability to Persist

BY DAVID MARINO

Many people are familiar with J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* with Gandalf and Aragorn and many other heroes battling the evils of Sauron in almost hopeless situations. If asked, most people would call Aragorn the most courageous character in this tale because he takes a leadership role in bringing armies to fight Mordor. However, not everyone realizes how much courage it took Frodo Baggins to have been tasked with the role of bringing the ring of power to Mount Doom and destroying it. That is true courage. This year, the eighth grade listened to ten presentations in which guest speakers attempted to explain what courage is. Out of these presentations, four of them really captured my attention because they shared a common theme——courage includes an ability to persist. Most people might think that courage is charging into battle and slaughtering the enemy because that is what they idealize watching action movies. While it is true that you need courage to do this, charging into battle is not courage in its fullness. Courage is required from people in their everyday lives. My definition of courage is being able to persist through things that you fear and find difficult.

Among the first capstone presentations that caught my attention was one by Liz Watson of the Max Warburg courage curriculum. Ms. Watson said that her definition of courage is determination and hope in the face of fear. Ms. Watson told us a story about a boy named Max Warburg. Max Warburg

was a boy who ruptured his spleen; the doctors treating him diagnosed him with a rare form of leukemia. While battling cancer, Max was able to persist throughout that fear of death and help his family and other sick kids in the hospital. Max demonstrated true courage through his ability to persist even in the face of death, like receiving treatment, spending time with family, and helping others, not himself. Max even said that despite being very sick, his family would not miss Thanksgiving because of him. Max Warburg has helped me discover my meaning of courage by not letting his sickness control him or his behavior.

The second presentation that captured my attention was one by Ms. Amburn who said that courage is enduring for the sake of others. She explained this by talking about the life of Jesus. Jesus, the son of God, faced hardships and pursued through them for our sake all the way to the cross. Jesus, more than anyone else in history, displayed courage by saving humanity while being hunted by Romans. Throughout Jesus' life, He persisted in everything and further helped me discover my definition of courage.

Mr. Davis and Mrs. Barilleaux additionally helped me discover my definition of courage by discussing how courage is necessary to become a saint. To become a saint, you must accept your authentic being and to live as a reflection of Divine being. This means to live in a way that reflects God's goodness. Mr. Davis and Mrs. Barilleaux also talked about Dante's *Inferno*. For anyone who doesn't know, Dante's *Inferno* is an epic poem about Dante traveling through Hell. One of the punishments in Hell is that of the thieves, who are stranded in a desert while naked and being chased by snakes. This punishment is for thieves. Thieves did not have the courage to step into the light and trust that God would provide for them; they instead always hid and stole when nobody could see them. Because of this thieves are punished by being revealed and not being able to hide from pain like

they could on earth. If thieves had the courage to not hide and persist through their temptation, they would not be punished like this in Hell. This ties in to my definition of courage because, in order to become a saint, you must also persist through temptation.

Fr. Kelly said that courage is focused on the wellbeing of others. Putting others first might seem easy; people always say that they would put others before themselves. However, when that moment actually comes, many people don't. It happens everyday, whether hastily grabbing the biggest piece of cake, or getting the best bed in a hotel. To love your neighbor as yourself requires true courage; it can be challenging and difficult to give the better option to someone else. Fr. Kelly illustrated his point by mentioning Nightbirde, a singer on *America's Got Talent* who was dying of cancer. Fr. Kelly discussed her story because he wanted to show us how much persistence you have to have throughout fear to sing on *America's Got Talent* and have cancer at the same time. Fr. Kelly showed me what courage means by explaining to us that you need to have persistence throughout fear.

Courage is being able to persist in things that are hard, a definition that can challenge most people's idea of what courage might be. Courage is, of course, valor in battle, as seen in *The Lord of the Rings*. But it is also persistence, as Max Warburg taught. It is also an attitude of enduring—perhaps even hardships—for the sake of others, as Jesus exemplified. Building on Max Warburg's example of perseverance, it is also balancing courage with fear in the face of the unknown, as shown by Nightbirde on *America's Got Talent* and first described by Aristotle. So perhaps the next time you read or watch *The Lord of the Rings*, you will pause and remember this other dimension of courage, and rethink who might be the most courageous in the tale.

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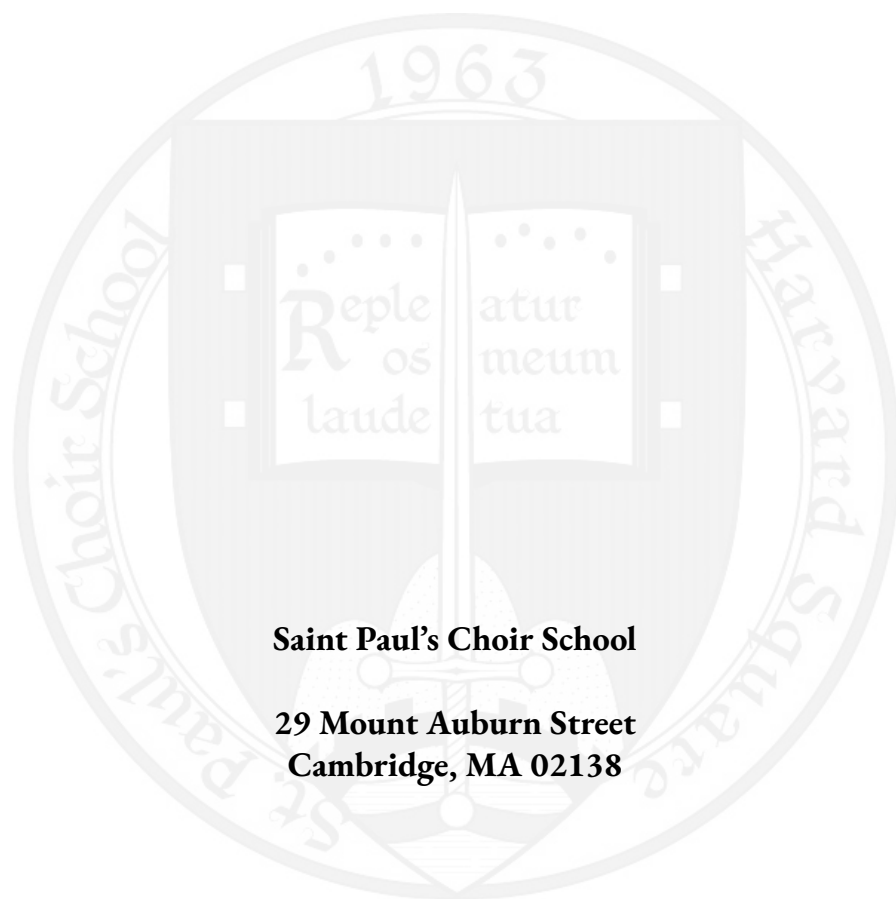
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