

hello :)

we have *LIFTOFF!!!*

~ The Staff

The journey of a thousand miles, the sages say, begins with the first step. The importance of this first step was the topic of the *Freshmen Seminar's* first class. Who am I? Where do I want to be in four, eight, eighty years? These were just some of the questions raised in Dr. John Bickford's talk, *Challenges of the Future*. Of course, it all begins with that important first step.

Dr. Bickford communicated to the freshmen the importance of keeping the big picture in mind through life while keeping themselves firmly in the here and now. As ninth graders, this means first remembering that high school counts. A

high-schooler cannot entrust his character development to an MMORPG (for those of you too old to know, this refers to a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game) for the next four years and then suddenly head off to college. These years are too sacred. One's high school years will determine the university one enters. High school is an opportunity to prepare for the milestones of our life - marriage, professional work and family - by developing lasting friendships and personal discipline; it's a chance for some serious leveling-up.

The second part of the session was a great opportunity to start gaining the necessary exp (experience, that is). The class divided into two groups and held an epic debate on the legality of electronic file sharing in a showcase of blazing oratory and bombastic rhetoric that our politicians would envy. And much to the surprise of all and sundry, the (deserving) victors were those who argued for the lifting of all restrictions on file sharing. Though there still persist rumors about conflicts of interest on the other side of the aisle. ;) ▲

The aim of *The Grade* is to help high school students prepare themselves to take on **responsibility**. The better prepared they are, the more responsibility they will get, and the more exciting their lives will be. The underlying idea is that what matters in life is not material possessions, athletic ability, good looks, intellectual ability, etc. What matters is *character*. Character allows men to take on responsibility and makes them great. Character endures long after these other things are long gone.

The Grade helps young men see their high school years from the viewpoint of their entire life. It encourages them to develop now the skills and attitudes they will need for the great tasks awaiting them: forming a family, serving society through their work, developing friendships with colleagues, neighbors and God. Through a combination of classes, career presentations, and one-on-one mentoring, it teaches them to be men of character who are ready for responsibility.

This newsletter, *mygrade*, is a project of *The Grade*. It is written and produced by the students of *The Grade* with the aid of the staff to publish the news, events and adventures at *The Grade*. Welcome. :P



Building LEADERS brick by brick



~ Jimmy O'Toole

All of us, whoever we are, will at some point during our lives be called to be a leader. Whether it be our kin, a company, or a club, we will all somewhere at some time hold a leadership role. Thus, it is imperative to develop the character of a responsible leader.

The opening sophomore/junior seminar of *The Grade* focused on leadership, and the qualities that make an outstanding leader. A former senior vice president of IBM, Joe Lane, was invited to tell us of his experiences guiding and leading one of the world's major corporations and of the traits of a good leader. Naturally this included a segment on *Batman, The Dark Knight*.

Having talked the talk, it was soon time to walk the walk. After our seminar on leadership, the class was split into four

teams and each given 15 minutes to perform the task of building a tower that could support a brick. One person must be given the role of deciding the design of the tower, and then supervising the building of it. The others must to some degree follow, or the time would expire before a design would be settled upon. Our team suffered from too many chefs; not exactly a recipe for success. We came up with a clever design, but wasted much too much time deciding upon it. However, it did demonstrate that it is necessary to have other opinions and other ideas to consider as a leader. In the end, two teams did succeed.

Mr. Lane explained that a leader is someone with a vision of how things should be and a plan as to how to get there, someone with good strong moral principles, and well-developed virtues. So although we may know what makes a good leader, the challenge remains for us to achieve the goal.

How do our decisions affect those around us? How do we lead? Are we persons who fit the bill of a good leader? ▲



~ Peter Sperlazzo

Seven unsuspecting high school seniors shuffled into a small library with little idea that their mental furniture was about to undergo major restoration. The topic of the two-hour lecture was relativism, taught by Dr. David Gallagher. We began with a brief overview of what relativism was, starting off with sampling of the different flavors; one could, for example, be a complete relativist, an historical relativist, or a partial relativist. Then we were presented with the main course: moral relativism.

"I believe what I want. You believe what you want. Let's not judge each other." We've all heard a similar refrain, and it is an attractive crutch since tolerating everyone else's views seems an effective formula for world peace and the healing of the planet. Yet, as Dr. Gallagher pointed out, by saying that one should tolerate everything, we are saying that everyone is right, and such reasoning does not hold in real life. For example, parents' belief that good books are edu-



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cational has not the same invalidity as teenagers' belief that videogames are educational.

The conversation then steered towards ways to counter relativism. One might suggest that the idea of enforcing acceptance would meet a consistency problem: "So you're a relativist, and you're saying that I'm wrong?" Or one might point out the coherency problem by relying on the Principle of Non-Contradiction - something cannot be and not be at the same time, and in the same respect. Contrary to Macbeth's witches, fair is not foul, nor is foul fair.

The class ended with three illustrations of questions with only one correct answer; the first asked whether a door was open or not, the second whether the Loch Ness Monster exists or not, and the third whether racial discrimination is inherently wrong. These examples served to show how two conflicting views cannot coexist. It also shows that goodness and evil are real qualities of human actions.

The class ended on this note, leaving seven sagacious seniors (with brains more bendy than usual) better able to tread on *terra firma*, and not on the sea of sentiment. ▲