

# The Pelican

## December, 2004

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*Surgentes Simul Alis Fidei ac Rationis*

### The Monthly Newsletter of The Atonement Academy

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#### FROM THE HEADMASTER

Dear Parents,

December is a very busy month, though we have relatively few school days. It's always good to remember that as Advent marks the beginning of the new liturgical year, it is meet and right for us to have a few new year's resolutions of our own. More on that in a moment.

I'm very fond of that Spanish tradition of leaving the manger in the Nativity scene empty until Christmas: Preparing for Christmas, children can put a straw in the manger every time they do a good deed, to make the bed a little softer for the baby Jesus. Love is made not of sweet words, but of deeds. Every time we make a little sacrifice for the others, or offer the smallest effort up to God, we are truly preparing the way for Christ, just as if we were there with St. Joseph gathering straw to make soft the first bed of the King of kings.

By now you should have received information from your room mother about our annual participation in the Adopt-a-Family program of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Please be generous in giving to families in need, but please have your children participate in some way (helping with the shopping, wrapping the gift, etc.) so that they may take this chance to learn again the joy of helping others.

We celebrate St. Nicholas's day here at The Atonement Academy, so make sure your children don't miss school on December 6<sup>th</sup>!

Unfortunately, North Star Mall has cancelled its annual Christmas caroling program for this year due to construction (don't we know how *that* is!), so our middle school chorus won't be able to take that trip this year. We'll do it again next year, along with singing at some nursing homes.

Speaking of construction, since our new gym isn't ready yet, we've had to move the location of our Christmas pageant for this year to the Knights of Columbus Hall at 6909 Camp Bullis Road, 78256. Many

thanks to my brother knights for lending us their hall at no charge. **In order to accommodate the change of venue, we have changed the date of the Christmas Pageant to December 15.** It begins at 7:00 p.m., but students should arrive by 6:45 at the latest.

In order to do our part to counter the Puritan influence in our culture, it's a good idea to remember to *keep celebrating* Christmas during the whole Christmas season, not just on Christmas day. To that end, the parish performance of Nine Lessons and Carols will be given at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth day of Christmas, December 28. Please come, and keep the Christmas cheer in your "flowing cups freshly remembered" all the way through the wondrous season of Christmas.

Those who came to the November PTC Meeting were the first to hear this (warmly received!) announcement:

**Due to the fact that the cold weather (or what passes for cold weather in San Antonio) is upon us, and the new gym is still not ready, we will allow students the option of bringing sweatpants and/or sweatshirts to wear over their athletics uniforms for the remainder of the year. NOTE WELL: Only plain, all black sweatshirts and sweatpants may be worn. NO logos, stripes, mesh, nylon, or cutoffs allowed.**

The end of the first semester is fast approaching (it ends with 1:15 p.m. dismissal on December 17). Please encourage your students and confer with their teachers so that your children finish the semester well.

An excellent resolution for the new liturgical year is to try to refocus ourselves on our family routine. Having a reasonable routine, and working hard to stick to it, is normally a major factor in scholastic success. Please help your students come to school fully prepared to offer God their best every day.

Thank you for the privilege of helping you educate your children. Have an especially merry Christmas!

Dr. Stephen Hollingshead

**PRE-KINDERGARTEN**

The King’s Fair was a success. We would like to start off by saying thank you to our room moms. Mrs. Hollingshead and Mrs. Duffner did a wonderful job. To all the parents, thank you for the donations for our dessert booth. Now to the work: December is a short month for us. We will be learning the letters J and K. We will also learn numbers 10 and 11. Please work with your child on writing his first name. Introduce your child to the spelling of his last name. Beginning in January the children will write their first and last names. Our Christmas program is this month as well. The children will sing “Away in a Manger” and have a small sentence to say in the program. The first week of December, we will send an information sheet out that includes the song and their part in the program.

Mrs. Garcia and Miss Crawford

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**KINDERGARTEN**

We are fast approaching the Christmas holiday, but we have a lot to do first. The kindergartners have really taken off reading!! Many of them read AR books from the library and all of them are reading books in the classroom. Thank you for helping them to love to read. In Math, they will continue to learn about telling time to the hour, counting coins, measuring, addition and subtraction, and writing numbers with words. We will be exploring Christmas customs from across the globe and learning the origin of many of our own traditions. We will also learn about the season of Advent and how to prepare for the birth of our Savior. Thank you all for the time and materials you are so generous with in the journey to educate our children.

Mmes. Elias and Phinizy

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**FIRST GRADE**

Fa La La La La, winter is in the air, and as Jack Frost nips at your nose, the first graders are buzzing around on their toes. Small angels with feathered wings singing “Glory to God in the Highest” and wise men with bejeweled foil crowns once again journeying to Bethlehem signal the beginning of the Advent season, and as the children stay busy preparing for the upcoming Christmas program, they are also keeping their fingers crossed that St. Nicholas will visit them on his feast day, December 6 (and perhaps bring them a treat or two). While the children sing about Baby Jesus and study the meaning of the Advent wreath, they will also have time to explore the fascinating habitats of slithering reptiles, bottle-nosed mammals, and leaf-like insects. Parents, be sure to ask your children about the different living conditions for mammals, reptiles, and insects. They may just surprise you with their scientific knowledge! On the reading front, the first graders are making excellent progress; therefore, next grading term, the children will aim for AR reading levels of 2.0 or higher. Since reading is the cornerstone to academic success, it is important for all of the children to continue reading daily for at least fifteen minutes, especially during the holiday break! As you and your children enjoy the festivities of

December, remember to keep Advent a holy and peaceful season.

Mrs. Otten and Miss Deffenbaugh

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**SECOND GRADE**

We hope this finds everyone enjoying some cooler weather as we prepare for our celebration of the birth of Christ our King. We will be practicing daily for our part in the Lessons and Carols service to be held December 15. Along with this, we will be finishing our study of the two Great Commandments and the virtues in religion class. We will also discuss Advent preparations and the story of Christ’s birth.

All of the second graders are excited about beginning cursive writing. We are off to a good start and will continue practicing our letters and joinings. In math, we will be using addition algorithms, working on division problems and squaring numbers, as well as working with three- and four-digit numbers. In phonics, we will continue to study digraphs, combinations, sight words, and of course our weekly spelling list to help students become stronger readers and spellers. Continue to encourage work toward your student’s AR goals. The last day for second graders to take AR tests for this quarter will be Wednesday, December 15. No tests will be taken after this date until we return in January.

In Science class, we are entering the realm of the physical sciences. Upcoming topics include matter; sound, heat, and light; and force, magnets, and electricity. In social studies, we will focus on customs, history, and cultures. We have so much to learn and do as we finish this second quarter of the school year!

As we make our way through this busy month, let us all take time daily to acknowledge and better prepare for the celebration of our Savior’s birth at Christmas. A blessed Christmas to all!!

Mmes. Garcia and Henriquez

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**THIRD GRADE**

The third graders are making progress on their writing skills and will now work on speaking and listening skills. We’ll be doing oral presentations and practicing choral speaking, which will help us to prepare for the Christmas pageant. The third grade will be reciting Genesis 22 chorally for the pageant.

They did a fantastic job on their dioramas for Science class. Now that we’ve studied different types of environments, we will learn how they can be changed and affected. Math is starting to get more challenging, but I know we can do it! Rate word problems, multiplying three-digit numbers, and working two-step equations are among the next topics. This Advent we will be using the Jesse tree, an old tradition that recalls salvation history, in preparation for Christmas. It should be exciting to learn more about the key Old and New Testament figures that helped prepare the world for our Savior. I want to thank all of you for a wonderful first semester; a special thank you to Mrs. Collins and Mrs. Dolan, our room mothers, who have helped a great deal and most recently worked so hard to help us with the King’s Fair. I look forward to a great second

semester! God bless you and your family this Advent season; have a joyous Christmas.

Miss Peacher

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#### **FOURTH GRADE**

The fourth grade is entering the last weeks of the second quarter. We will be continuing our journey in the physical sciences, looking at light and sound. In English, we will be trying to explore and deepen our writing skills. Reading will take us back into short stories, since we have finished our C.S. Lewis book. Texas History is bringing us deeper into understanding the early Spanish explorers and their struggles with settling in Texas. In Math, we will be getting into fractions, quotients, and mixed numbers. Religion will focus more on the saints of the day and preparing for our Christmas performance. We will be working through our religion book also. Christmas will be here soon!

Mr. Kelly

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#### **FIFTH GRADE**

For the month of December the fifth grade still has a lot to look forward to before the semester ends and Christmas arrives. In math, we will be redoubling our effort to learn from the simple mistakes we often make on our homework, as well as cover some additional geometrical concepts. We now know that with increased vigilance concerning our daily homework we will be able to produce better test scores and gain a more complete comprehension of the material. In history, we are looking forward to taking a closer look at the governmental structure we have in the United States, and its impact on our daily lives. After completing a short research paper for English class, we will move on to discuss verbs and their many uses. The time that we have put into studying our weekly spelling lists has paid great dividends, and we are almost assured of finishing the semester with high marks in the subject. Keep up the good work! By the end of the semester we will finish the first semester of the Junior Great Books reader by reading "The Bat-Poet." More than anything, we have learned that by taking the time to read and consider the stories in our reading books we have become better readers and increased our ability to discuss stories as a class. By the end of the semester we should also finish Unit B of our science text, and move on to the study of earth science. In religion, we will be working hard to memorize our part for the Christmas pageant in hopes of exhibiting our dedication to Christ. Lastly, the fifth grade would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a blessed Christmas season filled with peace, joy, and love.

Mr. Kawulok

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#### **GEOGRAPHY**

The fourth grade students are in Europe, concentrating on the Balkans in Central Europe. We've studied the land of Alexander the Great – Macedonia. We have explored Croatia, a country of two languages

and two alphabets! We have learned about "ethnic cleansing" in the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, (soon-to-be "Serbia" and "Montenegro," and that state's subsequent break up into small states of Bosnia and Slovenia, in addition to Croatia and Macedonia. All of these nations will be included on a test December 7. Also on the test will be two West European countries which have occupied our interest in late November: France and Germany. Our final class this semester will be a look at the people and monarchy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The fifth grade students – having just completed a month's long study of South America and their massive home project on the subject – now turn their attention to the nations of the Caribbean. We'll visit the exotic isles of Dominica and Trinidad & Tobago, where the spice of nutmeg reigns as an important export. We will visit the United States Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and another former Spanish colony, Cuba. The "pink" beaches of The Bahamas will be explored, as will the Cruise line ports of call: Jamaica and Antigua, both former British colonies. We will end the semester with a test covering ten Caribbean nations. Resting on the warm, sunny beaches of the Caribbean over Christmas break will give us the strength for our next adventure!

Deacon Orr

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#### **MIDDLE & UPPER SCHOOL HISTORY, AND SIXTH GRADE MATHEMATICS AND RELIGION**

Hello, Parents of History Scholars,

November was militant, but December will see the establishment of peace. In sixth grade, the scholars will be studying the artistic advancements made during the European Renaissance after those battle-ridden Middle Ages. The seventh and eighth graders will study the foundations of the governments of Texas and the United States after each political body had gained its sovereignty through war. The upper scholars will be debating the moral virtue of ancient figures in history through Plutarch's Lives, and stay up to date with current events.

The sixth graders will also continue their excellence in the fields of math and religion by continuing further into pre-algebraic skills and an intensive study of the meaning of the Mass.

Mr. Howell

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#### **MIDDLE & UPPER SCHOOL SCIENCE AND SEVENTH GRADE MATHEMATICS**

Well...we're almost half way through. So much to do, so little time! In the seventh grade Pre-algebra class, we're chugging at a furious pace through the Saxon Algebra 1/2 program. We've recently explored such concepts as roots, proportions, and overall average. As always, the key to staying on track is to remain diligent in the homework! In the sciences, the sixth graders have just finished the last of their geology and are moving into the study of the processes that rule life on the earth's surface: hydrology and meteorology. The seventh graders are thick in the middle of anatomy and will soon move into reproduction and development. The eighth graders are learning how to name chemical compounds

and will continue to practice this necessary skill for a while before moving into learning how to balance chemical equations. Finally, the freshmen have just learned how genes and DNA work inside cells, and are going to use that knowledge in their explorations of classical Mendelian genetics.

As a reminder to parents: The Atonement Academy Science Fair is fast approaching on January 30. All middle and upper scholars are required to participate. Science fair projects for sixth and seventh graders can be about whatever the student chooses, while the eighth and ninth graders must choose a project from their class subject, chemistry and biology respectively. ALL students must demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the scientific method in the execution of their projects. Additionally, the eighth and ninth graders must turn in a term paper that forms the background research for their project; this is due January 21.

Dr. Vallor

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**MIDDLE & UPPER SCHOOL ENGLISH, AND EIGHTH GRADE RELIGION**

One of the most important goals of any writer, and one that gives him perpetual unrest, immense frustration, and mental turmoil, is the goal of clarity. A writer, unless he is wasting our time, has something to say; and through his writing he communicates the fruit of his thinking to his readers. Clarity in part refers to how clearly the writer communicates the meaning of his thoughts to his readers; however, clear communication cannot be achieved without clear thinking. It is with the clarity of his thoughts that a writer must begin his task of revision if he is to express effectively and meaningfully his thoughts to another. Clear writing flows from clear thinking. Clear thinking is, after all, the goal of grammar studies.

Unfortunately, the road to clarity within our writing is often hindered by hazy thinking. We often know what we mean--or think we know what we mean--when our readers scratch their heads at the vagueness of our written discourse, even after we have revised our writing innumerable times. Sometimes we are not writing well; most of the time we are not thinking well.

However, since language does convey meaning and does correspond to reality, clarity is possible to a greater or lesser degree. I encourage you to read your child's papers or have your child read his papers to you. As you read or listen, ask yourself the simple question: do I clearly understand what is being said? Inform your child where in his writing he is clear, and also where he is not clear. And where he is not clear is where his revision should focus, both in his writing and even more so in his thinking.

I trust I make myself obscure.

Mr. Cupp

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**MIDDLE & UPPER SCHOOL LATIN, FRESHMAN ALGEBRA II, AND SEVENTH GRADE RELIGION**

*Salvete,*

Christmas approaches. In religion, we shall contemplate and discuss the mystery of the Incarnation.

The sixth grade Latin scholars will be learning the 3<sup>rd</sup> conjugation of verbs. A conjugation is simply a pattern for the inflection of a verb. Just as in English some verbs form the past tense by adding “-ed” and others by changing the vowel, as “drive” becomes “drove,” similarly in Latin there are different ways to form tenses, four such ways or conjugations to be precise. These vary but little from one another, though those little variations can cause great confusion in the neophyte.

Our second year Latin scholars will learn the 4<sup>th</sup> declension. What conjugations are to verbs, declensions are to nouns. Thus in English to speak about more than one “mouse” or “man” we say “mice” or “men,” although the typical pattern for the plural is to add “s” or “es.” Since Latin is highly inflected, *id est*, has many endings, each noun has several plural terminations. Ah the Latin tongue! a cornucopia of endings, unlike that bastard tongue, the French, not only pusillanimous in its own terminations but leaving our own native English in even greater want.

*Valete,*

*Magister* Ruplinger

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**FRESHMAN THEOLOGY**

In addition to reading 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings, the Freshmen will memorize their passage for the Christmas Program.

Mr. Arndt

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**EIGHTH GRADE ALGEBRA I**

Algebra proper meets geometry in the planes of analytical geometry. We're inching closer to that goal from both ends as we study more about geometric solids on the one hand and more about graphing equations in a coordinate plane on the other—and, oops, try not to drop those refinements of rational expressions as we juggle between the other two! Math's a ball. Don't drop it.

Dr. Hollingshead

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**ATHLETICS**

The focus of the Athletics program for the month of December will be to keep the students moving! With all of the rain, and the space constraints due to the exciting progress on our construction project, the students, Mrs. K, and I got to feeling a bit shut-in last month. To remedy the situation, Mrs. K and I are currently developing and modifying several different soccer- and basketball-related activities with the goal of wearing the kids out! It should be a challenging but enjoyable month.

Thanks to all for their generous support of the Marathon pledge drive last month...we raised over \$1000 for our new gym!

Coach Lyle

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