

Catholic Schools Week

By Matthew Madrigal

Every year in the last week of January, our school along with Catholic schools around the world celebrate Catholic Schools Week, a time to celebrate the achievements of Catholic schools. Our school, Paracelete, celebrates this week by allowing students to dress up in a variety of themes and participate in many events special to our school.

Like many Catholic schools, Paracelete's students have to wear uniforms, making this week all the more special since it gives students a chance to wear something different than what they are used to. As you walk through our school's hallways, the hallways light up with the students all dressed up to fit with the themes presented to us. This year, our school's dress up days were Career Day, Nerds and Jocks Day, Twin Day, and Red and Gold Day. Many students were creative in their choice of clothing and everyone was excited to see how the other students looked. On Twin Day, we see large groups of students often wearing the same or similar clothes to match each other. On Red and Gold Day, many students would celebrate our school by wearing colors of Paracelete.

Another key part of Catholic Schools Week is the dodgeball tournament held every year. Many students often sign up for a chance to be declared the champions for the year. The dodgeball tournament allows students the chance to compete against each



Sean Tagaro and Caleb Medellin dressing up for Nerd and Jocks Day.

other in a fun way while giving an entertaining show to those who are watching.

The tournament began during lunch with teams going head to head. There were two competitions, one for the boys and one for the girls. Most students went to watch, cheering on their friends and waiting to see who would be the victor. Teams were steadily wiped out until it was down to the last four teams, the final match for both the boys and girls. After many hard fought matches, the winners were the team made up of our school's coaches and our last year's girls' champions.

Unlike the dodgeball, most students were not anticipating the concert the school's band had

orchestrated. This was the first time this year our school's band performed for the entire school. This gave them the opportunity to perform some of their favorite music for the others to enjoy. Some of the songs performed were their renditions of the music from Lord of the Rings, an assortment of Disney music, and many other pieces. Many students and staff commended the band for their dedication and bravery for performing for the whole school. When asked about her thoughts about the band's performance, assistant principal Mrs. Seidel said "It was an awesome and very entertaining performance. I am always amazed at how talented the students are. [The band teacher] Mr. Matalon is always able to prepare them so well and having them play songs

that everyone knows always makes us feel like we are part of the performance."

To end Catholic Schools Week, the school threw one big rally for our Winter Ball Court alongside a lip sync battle. Five seniors were picked and had brought everything they could to show why they deserved the title of Winter Ball King. This year's Winter Ball Court consisted of Edward Santiago, Cassius Mendez, Mister Burnside, Richard Diaz, and Josh Weilbacker. Their mothers gave speech, showing their pride for their children. The Winter Ball Court created a creative video showing themselves eighty years into the future looking back on their senior year here.

The grand finale of our school week was the lip sync battle. Many students rose to the occasion showcasing their talents in front of the whole school. Many students danced, acted, or sung for the whole school to see, but only one was able to win. The performance that won was Zyon Bolds who danced to "Party Rock Anthem." When asked about his thoughts on Zyon's dance, student Alejandro Bernal said "Zyon's made [the rally] worth the time. [Zyon's dance brought] screams of joy and exclamations of [amusement] as Zyon's "bust moves" out in front of the school."

This rally concluded our Catholic Schools Week and students hope for more as great as this one.

Winter Ball

By Matthew Madrigal

Every year, following the end of Catholic Schools Week, is the Winter Ball, one of the big dances that students participate in the school year. Winter Ball is one social gathering event that our school holds every year. Like Homecoming and Prom, it is a dance.

Prior to the actual event, seniors vote for five princes to be a part of the Winter Ball Court. One of these seniors will become the Winter Ball King and the students will find out at the dance. This year's Winter Ball Court was made up of Edward San-

tiago, Cassius Mendez, Mister Burnside, Richard Diaz, and Josh Weilbacker. These five seniors move on to compete to gain the votes needed to be made Winter Ball King through the form of creative videos. This year's theme for the videos was the Winter Ball Court, eighty years from now, reminiscing on their senior year here at Paracelete.

The day eventually arrives when the Winter Ball was to begin. Students of all grade levels were excited for the dance. Many students had arrived, all of them looking to have a great time at



Edward Santiago crowned as Winter Ball King



Students dancing at the Winter Ball.

The Winter Ball Court waiting to find out which of them becomes the king.

this year's Winter Ball. One student Cesar De La Cruz, who was attending Winter Ball for the first time, had said "I was excited to [dance] and was [having fun] on the dance floor." It was clear that the students were excited for the Winter Ball.

Winter Ball is an event best spent with fellow students. Many students will go and dance or simply just hang out with friends; however, this should not stop you from meeting other students or reaching out to someone you do not really talk to enjoy the Winter Ball with them. Students were enjoying it very much. One student, Sean Tagaro, said, "After [attending] the Winter Ball, I could say for certain that this was one of the most pleasant experiences of [the school year]."

As all of the commotion subsided, all the students had gathered around to see who would be made the Winter Ball King. After much deliberation, the Winter Ball King was revealed. Edward Santiago was this year's Winter Ball King. When being asked about how he felt, he said "I was extremely shocked once I heard my name announced. I am grateful and blessed to have been able to [be] chosen as King,

as it is one of my most pleasant memories I have made here during my time at Paraclete, and a memory that I will fondly look back on in the future and never forget."

To make sure everything went well for this year's Winter Ball, it would require a lot of planning. This year's Winter Ball coordinator was Paraclete teacher Mrs. King who was in her second year of being in charge of the Winter Ball. When being asked about how she felt about the Winter Ball, Mrs. King said, "It means celebration, celebrating the winter, life, and the school." Mrs. King's goal was to leave a positive impact on students who attended, saying "Hopefully, it brings a lot of school spirit and has the kids enjoy their company [with each other]."

Winter Ball is one of the few events we have during our high school years. High school may feel long, but in reality, it is only four years. These four years are the last years before we enter adulthood. Winter Ball is one of our chances to make some lasting memories during our high school years. As students, making our time here enjoyable is important because we will never be able to redo the past.

Lasting Memories of Retreats

By Matthew Madrigal

Given the choice of being excused from school for a day or still going, many students and I would choose to be excused from school. Retreats allow students to miss school that day; however, they are much more than that.

During my freshman year, my friends and I saw the retreat as an opportunity to skip school instead of what it really was. The retreats at Paraclete are meant for building and strengthening bonds while appreciating the gifts God has given us; however, all my friends heard was they get to skip school for a day and we were sold. That year's freshmen retreat was a hike up a mountain. As we exited the bus and saw the mountain when we arrived, we were awestruck at how large it was and the fact that we were going to hike up it.

Despite my group of friends going in with the intention of just

skipping school, we still managed to strengthen our bonds and created memories that I will never forget. One of those memories was that there was a scale showing the chances of a forest fire and it being slightly higher than anticipated. It was not that high of chances but it still is something my friends and I laugh about even to this day. Another memory was walking up the mountain and being able to appreciate the scenery around us. My personal favorite memory is when I looked at the view from the top of the mountain and realized how far we climbed and how beautiful the view was. We got to see a large forest beside many other mountains. It was all green and filled with life, preserved to show its beauty, the way God would have wanted. This view could have only been seen from the top because we could only have seen bits and pieces of the scenery as we walked up.

This year's sophomore retreat was a bit different than the one from last year. All of those who went were placed in a church. The first activity was one where we had gotten into a circle, placing one person in the middle. This person had to trust everyone else that they would not fall and touch the ground. We also played a game where one person had to describe a feature they love and those who had said feature had to get up from their seats to switch to another one. All these activities helped to develop the bonds of my class.

This to me is what makes retreats special. It is a time of self reflection and appreciation for the world God gave us. As students, we are able to have time to spend away from the stress of life and appreciate the beauties of it, to experience life in its purest form with fellow students, and develop a greater

understanding of yourself and the world God created. When asked about the importance of retreats, Ms. Huerta said, "Retreats are a great opportunity for students to take some time for personal reflection. They're a fun day away from school, but they also provide a good space to examine life, share experiences and realize you aren't alone, reflect on your next steps forward, bond with others, and hopefully spend some time with God." This is what retreats are about. We strengthened our bonds and made memories the whole time. When you get the opportunity to go on a retreat, do not hesitate and go.

"Retreats are a great opportunity for students to take some time for personal reflection." - Ms. Huerta

Lent: Why it Matters

By Matthew Madrigal

Lent, the official beginning of the Catholic year, is one of the most important seasons for the Catholic Church. During this time, Catholics around the world spend increasing their relation to God in preparation for Jesus's death and resurrection.

For the Catholic Church, Lent represents Jesus' time spent in the desert prior to the week of his death. Jesus spent forty days and nights fasting, not eating or drinking for its entirety. During his time in the desert, the Devil appeared to Jesus, trying to test if he is truly the Son of God by telling him to convert the stones into bread to end his hunger and attempt to fall to his death to see if the angels would save him. Jesus told the Devil that God should not be on the test. Frustrated by Jesus' will, the Devil tempted Jesus by promising him all the kingdoms of the world under his command, but Jesus remained loyal to God and the Devil left Jesus alone. After Jesus' time in the desert, he returns

home to a happy crowd of people who are excited to see him; however, the people turn on him in less than a week, shouting for Jesus's death on the cross when Pontius Pilate asks them. Jesus is crucified shortly thereafter. The following Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead which begins Easter.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is characterized by its increased devotion to God. Campus Minister, Ms. Huerta, describes Lent as "a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter." When asked about how Catholics should prepare for Easter, Ms. Huerta stated, "[Lent] focuses on three pillars: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, which help each of us prepare our hearts to celebrate the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus."

Although Catholics are not obligated to do something as extreme as Jesus did such as going without food or water for forty

days, engaging in these three pillars are important for us. Some also practice abstinence, leaving behind comforts in order "to get closer with God for the season of Lent or completely abandoning any addictions that only serve to damage oneself. All of these practices are for the sole purpose of increasing our bond with God and trying to better ourselves not only as Catholics, but as people.

Many people across the world may feel Lent is pointless; however, it is the complete opposite. When being asked what she would tell people with this train of thought, Ms. Huerta would ask them, "[How] they [would] prepare for anything else...Lent serves the same purpose [of preparation]. It's about preparing ourselves and our space for the greatest celebration of all: the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection."

In the end, Lent is about renewal. Humans are not perfect, and

we have to accept that truth. However, this should not stop us from trying to be our best versions of ourselves. We should all spend Lent trying to get closer to God. God has done so much for us, and we do not do enough in return to repay him. That's why during Lent, it is encouraged to do something simple for God. Things such as extra prayer, giving to those in need, fasting on Fridays, or abstaining from something that puts you further from God are all things that we could do during Lent for not only God, but ourselves as well.

"[Lent is] about preparing ourselves and our space for the greatest celebration of all: the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection." - Ms. Huerta

Celebrated by Christians around the world, Easter is a holiday with a variety of interpretations. The springtime holiday, typically celebrated between late March and late April, is a reminder of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and his victory over death and sin. Being such a commercialized holiday, however, it becomes easy to lose sight of the profound religious message presented during the Easter season.

Described as "the highest holiday in the liturgical year" by Campus Minister Ms. Huerta, Easter marks the end of the Lenten season. These forty days of contemplation and abstinence serve as a solemn backdrop leading up to Easter. Lent's reserved tone is fitting for a season commemorating Jesus' fasting in the desert, while Easter is a welcome, joyous celebration marking the Savior's return.

"Easter is the entire reason we're Christians...to deny this is to deny Christ's Messiahship and to deny Christian faith all together," explains Ms. Huerta. This is

because Jesus' Resurrection not only defeated death and sin, but enabled believers to go to Heaven for eternity. Faith in God and the forgiveness of sin are central Christian beliefs that Easter represents perfectly.

Commonly, Easter is celebrated through family meals, sharing of candy, egg hunts, and egg decoration. In the United States, these practices are mainstream and celebrated by many regardless of their religious beliefs. As such a widespread holiday it has also become one of the most commercialized. "I personally think it's a great holiday to focus on faith and family, to show gratitude for what Jesus did for us, and to remind ourselves what it means to be a follower of Christ," Ms. Huerta offers. "I worry about the consumerism of it all."

When entering the Easter season each year, let us take some time to remember its true meaning and fulfillment of Jesus's sacrifice for mankind. Luke 24:6 puts it best: "He has risen!"

The Easter Tradition

By Maya Cornell



2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen!"
- Luke 24:2-6

Valentine's Day: More Than Just Chocolate

By Maya Cornell

When thinking of February 14th, most people immediately conjure up images of chocolate, romance and bouquets of flowers, but it is so much more than that. From a spring festival to the celebration of a saint, Valentine's Day has come to have many meanings over the years.

Starting at the beginning, Valentine's Day's origins are murky but some sources attribute its roots to a traditional pagan festival typically held in spring. Lupercalia honored the founders of Rome and celebrated the concepts of

fertility and purity. Feasts were held on this day as well as ritual sacrifices and other rituals aimed to boost fertility. Valentine's Day was later adapted from these festivals by Christians, with many aspects of the celebration changing to better reflect Christian values.

Other sources claim that one of the Saint Valentines (there are several officially canonized by the Catholic Church) was the figure behind this popular tradition. Some legends claim he wed young lovers in secret after the

state forbade them to, while others suggest Saint Valentine was most famous for freeing persecuted Christians from imprisonment. These two legends do share some similarities; however, in both he was slain for his actions and canonized by the Church as a saint.

But how does any of this tie into how Valentine's Day is celebrated today? In our modern society, it becomes easy to disregard Valentine's Day as a holiday of pointless spending and not-so-Christian expressions of love.

There are many great ways to celebrate Valentine's day while remaining conscious of its historical roots and religious significance. Rather than stressing over buying the perfect gift or setting up an extravagant date, perhaps consider simply spending healthy quality time with your special someone. Love is free and unconditional—Jesus taught us as much—so why should it be any different on Valentine's Day? After all, sometimes it's the little things in life that are most important.

Junior Ring Ceremony

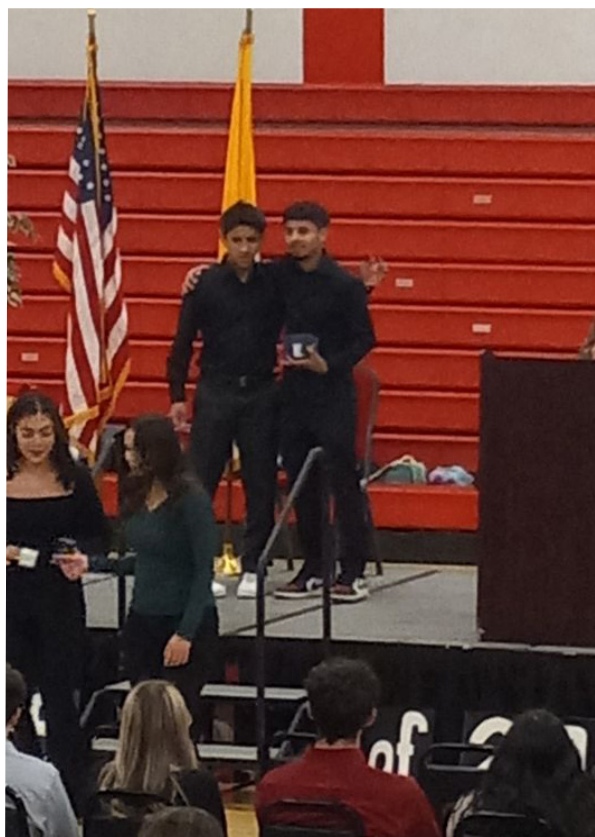
By Maya Cornell

Each year, Paraclete juniors eagerly await the junior ring ceremony; an event which marks their transition into upperclassmen within the school and pays homage to the graduating senior class as well. It is a time of reflection wherein juniors receive a custom-made ring from their senior friends while being surrounded by friends and family.

When asked what he hoped the junior class would gain from this experience, teacher and event organizer Mr. McWilliams stated that he wanted them "to be leaders...not just academically...but morally." McWilliams, an alumnus of Paraclete High School, participated in the event himself as a senior, having personal experience handing off a ring to a junior student.

This January, Mr. McWilliams served as junior ring ceremony's main planner. "It's a lot of little details you need to remember", he explained about the planning process. "Otherwise, it'll seem like chaos." Fitting in these fine details ensured that this year's ceremony went as smoothly as possible.

Decorations were in order, seating was pre-arranged, and everyone knew when and where to go during the ceremony. The ceremony began with an introduction to the event from ASB President Grace Calandri, followed by a blessing from Father Norbert. From there, pairs of



juniors and seniors took the stage, exchanging the rings and posing for photographs. Once the ceremony had concluded, a class photo of the juniors was taken for the yearbook, with additional photo opportunities for eager parents and loved ones. It was short, sweet, and to the point, while still leaving enough time for sentimentality.

As was mentioned by Grace Calandri during the ceremony's opening, the rings juniors receive represent eternity. "A circle never ends", explains Mr. McWilliams "it symbolizes not just their position as alumni forever, but [that]...the senior and junior classes influenced each other, and that influence will last forever."

Cooper Gonzalez—a junior in attendance at the ceremony—described his experience receiving his custom-made ring as an excitingly sentimental experience. With his mother, father and sister in attendance, the event was made all the more special and laced with nostalgia. "You're gonna be an upperclassman in a few months," Cooper explains.

No matter how much time has passed, a junior ring is a wonderful way of remembering one's time in high school. This year's rising senior class is no exception. As the years go by and the fleeting days of highschool come to a close, memories of this day will not be so easily forgotten.