

## IV. Curriculum by Year

### FRESHMAN YEAR FROM CREATION TO THE INCARNATION

**A Year of Anticipation:** Freshman year is a year of anticipation. Just as the students are in a time of transition, this year focuses on fallen humanity's transition to the order of grace. Students are discovering the longing within them for the birth of Christ, just as the world was longing for Christ.

**Overarching Theme:** The Incarnation, the reality of God becoming man, is the central, pivotal, and most important event in history. Freshman year studies the world that God created, that fell, and that longed for a Redeemer. In history, we follow the journey of ancient man and his longing for the birth of Christ. In theology, we see God's plan for salvation unfolding in the Old Testament.

In literature, we read man's longing for redemption and reunion of the family. Philosophy follows man's search for the true, the good, and the beautiful. We follow the journey that led the philosophers to examine and understand the world around them. This search is continued in science, where students observe the world around them from the heavens to the earth. Latin, art, logic, and music follow the search for beauty and order in the created world. In mathematics, Euclidean geometry offers the students a deeper exploration of the philosophical structure inherent in nature discovered by the ancients.

**Skills to be Developed:** We want freshman students to have time for extracurricular activities and to enjoy life with their family. Homework most often consists of math drills and Latin, with independent reading selected on the basis of ease of understanding and enjoyment. Writing assignments focus on the Logic phase of the Trivium, ordering facts into organized statements and arguments. Writing skills focus on clarity of thought and structure. Part of our role as an academic institution is to identify areas of strength and remediation very early in the ninth grade to offer our students all the tools necessary to be successful in high school. To that end, we start freshman year with a week-long Successful Student Seminar to provide a comprehensive and detailed orientation to high school life. Topics include note taking, time management, and organizational skills.

**College Prep / Third Party Testing:** While Chesterton Academy never teaches to a specific standardized test, we realize the importance of these tests for college acceptance, scholarships, and financial assistance. Standardized tests also provide us valuable assistance in identifying areas of potential academic struggle or giftedness. During the freshman year, students take the PSAT9 and the Classical Learning Test (CLT8), a preparatory assessment for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. Results are evaluated to identify learning gaps and to establish a baseline for future student testing.

**End Goal:** The freshman student should emerge as a joyful person who feels at home and successful in his surroundings, with advanced reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

## **SOPHOMORE YEAR**

### **FROM THE INCARNATION TO THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES**

**A Year of Incarnation:** If freshman year is about anticipation and transition in the life of new high school student, sophomore year provides an opportunity for tremendous growth. The student, in general, is more settled, more mature, more analytical, and more capable. As students encounter the reality of the birth of the Son of God made man and the foundation of the Church as the central moments of all history, they mature academically, spiritually, and morally.

**Overarching Theme:** In theology, history, and literature, the events of the Incarnation and growth of the Church are covered in depth. From the study of the New Testament, birth of the early Church, writings of the Apostolic Fathers, Christological controversies, rise of medieval times and literature, to the flowering of Christendom in the High Middle Ages, this period immerses the students in the emergence and glory of Catholic culture. In philosophy, students discover the high point of intellectual development through the readings of Plato and Aristotle, coupled with the thought of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas.

The study of Latin reaches the conclusion of the introduction to grammar and syntax. Students continue to master basic Latin grammar and syntax in preparation to read ancient texts in a more mature and nuanced way. Art, rhetoric, and music enhance and intensify the student's exposure and love of this period of history.

Biology continues the exploration of God's marvelous creation, not in the expanse of the universe, but in the microcosm of man's own body.

**Skills to be Developed:** The development of presentation skills (the Rhetoric phase of the Trivium) is a primary focus of the year. Emphasis on critical reasoning, reading skills, and writing ability continue during the sophomore year.

**College Prep / Third Party Testing:** During the sophomore year, students take the PSAT and the Classical Learning Test (CLT10). Results are evaluated to identify learning gaps and to measure academic progress. With the transition to high school complete, college preparation activity increases. ACT and SAT preparation should either commence or continue with greater intensity. Skills and interest inventories also help students think about potential career paths, and students may also begin to explore potential apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and vocational programs as an alternative to traditional four-year college degree programs. Students are also encouraged and supported in the process of discerning a call to the priesthood or consecrated life.

**End Goal:** The sophomore student should emerge as an informed, articulate, and well-read individual ready to explore and engage with the modern world, not on its terms, but from the perspective of the Incarnation – as partakers in the divine life, members of the Mystical Body of Christ Jesus.

## JUNIOR YEAR

### THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES TO THE RENAISSANCE

**A Year of Culmination:** With a wealth of knowledge already accumulated, the juniors are already well-rounded, highly-educated individuals. The study of logic has refined their thinking, and rhetoric has given them the ability to express thoughts with depth and clarity. Perhaps most significantly, the juniors are also able to listen to the views of others with understanding and empathy. These students now explore the glorious synthesis of faith and reason, Church and culture in the High Middle Ages, and, at the end of the year, are mature enough to begin to engage with the modern world.

**Overarching Theme:** One of the many strengths of a classical curriculum is that no subject is taught in isolation. The interconnectivity of the junior class curriculum is readily apparent. The synthesis of faith and reason is brought forth in the separate disciplines of theology, philosophy, history, literature, art, and music in such a complementary way that the overall effect is of listening to a symphony and not a single instrument. This is where the beauty and benefit of a classical curriculum becomes apparent.

Meanwhile, pre-calculus and chemistry introduce the students to more mature, more challenging realms of higher learning, and Latin III allows the student to pivot from grammar to translation, a more rewarding and engaging pursuit. Overall, the junior year is a gratifying experience, leaving the students with an appreciation of the Faith truly understood and lived.

The pilgrimage to Rome internalizes and intensifies this experience and makes it deeply personal, preparing the student, body and soul, mind and heart, to accept his or her calling to apply their faith to the modern world.

**Skills to be Developed:** Having experienced the synthesis of truth, goodness and beauty, the Chesterton student in their junior year excels in the realm of metaphysical inquiry and analytical thinking. With superior rhetorical skills, they are able to present an argument and listen to different viewpoints with charity.

**College Prep / Third Party Testing:** Students take the PSAT exam early during Junior year; exemplary scores qualify students for National Merit Scholar awards and scholarships. SAT and ACT exams are also taken during the Junior year, as well as the Classic Learning Test (CLT). Optional AP exams are also taken. Test results continue to be monitored to identify learning gaps and to measure academic progress.

**End Goal:** The junior student is an articulate, thoughtful learner, prepared not for a test, but for life. He is prepared to engage with the modern world, with its errors and advances, in a thoughtful and mature way.

## SENIOR YEAR

### THE MODERN WORLD

**A Year of Application:** There is a sense of nostalgia in the senior students as they look back on their great journey, starting in freshman year with the anticipation of ancient times, through the revelation in sophomore year of the Incarnation, and the culmination with the glory of Christendom in junior year. The senior now turns their mature gaze forward to the modern world, one that they will soon enter, armed with grace, wisdom, virtue, and purpose. Their goal now is one of application.

**Overarching Theme:** The need for application is very immediate to the Chesterton senior. In theology, the students will examine the moral teachings of the Church and learn to apply them to daily life. The role and necessity of apologetics and evangelization will be readily apparent. Literature will expose the students to the full range of human experiences from the great mercy of Dickens, to the hopelessness of the existentialists, and the good-natured, common sense call to sanity of G.K. Chesterton. In history, the age of revolution will come into focus. The formation of the United States, its government, and the spread of democracy will be a primary area of study. While much good came through these revolutions, a period of world wars and atheistic government also occurred. The role of the Blessed Mother in guiding the world back to Christ through the horrors of the 20th century will be a major thread in the narrative.

Philosophically, the problems and perils of modern thought are viewed in the context of Christian anthropology. The inevitable result of separating faith and reason is traced through to its nihilistic and hopeless conclusions. But the call of Pope Saint John Paul II to rediscover the harmony of faith and reason sound as a clarion call in the darkness.

**Skills to be Developed:** As they prepare to enter the world, the Chesterton senior refines critical skills of logic and rhetoric, balanced by empathy and humility. Having experienced the truth, goodness, and beauty of God and His creation, the student is ready to engage the culture in a spirit of love and truth.

**College Prep / Third Party Testing:** The ACT and SAT exams are taken early in the senior year with a focus on college application, acceptance, and scholarship qualification. Students receive guidance throughout the college application and selection process. Students also receive ample opportunity to explore apprenticeship or vocational training options.

**End Goal:** Possessing the skills and character requisite for success in college and vocational life, and with a heart for evangelization, the Chesterton senior is prepared to engage the culture in a spirit of truth and love. The student fully understands and embraces who he is in light of God's love and responds to the Lord's call to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world." Our seniors see themselves as messengers of God's love to the world. As G.K. Chesterton says, the world is "divided between the men who are bringing that message and the men who have not yet heard it, or cannot yet believe it" (The Everlasting Man). Our seniors will go forth as apostles who will share the love of Christ with a world so desperately in need of hope, joy, and truth.