



INTEGRITAS

Wyoming Catholic College

COMMENCEMENT WEEK 2019

ISSUE 6.2

A HANDFUL OF QUIETNESS

BY DR. GLENN C. ARBERY

PRESIDENT, WYOMING CATHOLIC COLLEGE

(DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL PRESIDENT'S DINNER, MAY 10TH, 2019)



Your Excellency, Reverend Fathers, Members of the Board of Directors, Faculty and Staff, Friends of the College, Parents and Families of the Graduates, and Men and Women of the Class of 2019:

Several weeks ago, I was reading the very Lenten Book of Ecclesiastes, and I came upon a passage that immediately struck me: “Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and striving after wind” (Eccl 4:6). *A handful of quietness.* At the end of this week, when relatives and friends have discovered once again how far Lander is from everywhere else; when all our students have labored through final exam after final exam; when faculty members have not only written exams but spent hours in hallways and offices and even on sidewalks giving oral examinations (not to mention all the grading); and when everyone on the staff has been intensely making preparations for this weekend, we have all had two hands full of toil, and I hope we can take these few moments tonight as our handful of quietness.

But as we do so, it's important not to think that in all this toil we have been “striving after wind.” The mood of Ecclesiastes is world-weary: “Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity” (Eccl 1:1). But the mood of this occasion is the opposite. During this season of Easter and Commencement, we feel the powerful

hope of renewal and Resurrection, and our quietness contains the stir of promise and deep purpose.

When I was writing about our seniors earlier this week, it occurred to me that the Commencement exercises tomorrow will mark their formal entry into the history of our time. *The history of our time* sounds a bit overstated, like something that Monty Python would lampoon, but I was remembering the end of Robert Penn Warren’s great political novel, *All the King’s Men*: “Soon now we shall go out of the house and go into the convulsion of the world, out of history into history and the awful responsibility of Time.” Out of history—that is, out of the experience of the great record of the past in this curriculum— and into history, where these graduates will take on the responsibility of Time as teachers, as parents, as men and women making their way in business or the Church or the arts, whatever they find that they are called to do. The world they are entering certainly needs their help. The nation is divided and full of anger, the Church struggles with scandals, Europe can find no coherence, China continues its imperial growth unchecked, and the moral distinctions of the past several millennia have been declared “hate speech.” The great striving after wind continues. The very idea of dispassionate reasoning is arcane, and those who cast shadows on the walls of the Cave in Socrates’ allegory have the most superb technology in history at their disposal.

INTEGRITAS
Wyoming Catholic College

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
Dr. Glenn Arbery

EXECUTIVE EDITOR:

Joseph Susanka

CIRCULATION:

Colin McCarty

**COPIES AVAILABLE
UPON REQUEST.**

©2019 Wyoming Catholic College

It seems naïve to think that these graduates from a tiny Catholic college in Wyoming can do anything of note in this great scene of vanity. But this is, as always, the paradox of our faith. Earlier this week, I read on *Catholic Herald* that the great Jean Vanier had died at 90; if you don’t know him, he’s the man who founded the L’Arche communities that have done so much for people with Down syndrome worldwide. The writer

of this article was Sohrab Ahmari, the recent convert from Islam, and he asked Jean Vanier what he could do if he couldn't live in community, since he was married and in the middle of a professional life. "Try and find somebody who is lonely," Vanier told him. "And when you go to see them, they will see you as the messiah. Go and visit a little old lady who has no friends or family. . . . People say, 'But that's nothing.' It is nothing—but it's also everything. It always begins with small little things. It all began in Bethlehem. That was pretty small."

These seniors have already impressed me in this regard. For example, it was a small thing (in Vanier's sense) back in January, when some of our seniors organized a benefit concert for a freshman who could not afford the cost of a root canal. Crux Coffee Shop was overflowing that night, and the sheer happiness of it moved everyone who came. It was worth it just to watch Peter Fay as the MC. A number of these seniors, especially Mary Frances Johnson, have worked since freshman year helping with CCD at St. Stephen's Mission on the Wind River Reservation. This is also the class that every year organized and hosted a sit-down dinner for the faculty as the school year neared its end. In this year's entertainment, the seniors sat as the panel in judgment of the faculty members, who were put through a version of Quis Quid, a tradition that goes back into the dim antiquity of Wyoming Catholic College. It was the funniest night I can remember—including, among other things, Dr. Stanley Grove's brief and comically scandalous version of Yeats's "The Second Coming." These seniors were also very involved in organizing the first St. Joseph's Day street festival, when we closed off a block of Third Street and had food, entertainment, games, and booths to honor this great saint, in an outreach to the whole Lander community.

It's too much to even try to mention all they've done, such as their accomplishments in the choir, their senior orations, and their fine writing. I still remember Mary Woods' sonnet from freshman year, Madison Michieli's and Nathaniel Heithoff's essays on Milton last

year, and Brandon Seedorf's essay on Ovid in *The Waste Land* this past month. We remember the deep impression they've made on all who have met them, such as the townspeople who participated in mock job interviews arranged by Dottie and Jim Tonkowich. They also impressed visiting headmasters in search of teachers for next year. As many as eight of our forty-two graduates will be going to San Antonio this next school year as part of a new Great Hearts school's founding faculty. It is exciting to anticipate this community, where they will be part of the revival of classical learning in K–12 programs across the country. The word has already gotten out among educators, as I'm sure it increasingly will among those in other lines of work. We've been getting requests for our graduates from schools in Jackson Hole, Chicago, Grand Rapids, Denver, and as far away as New Jersey, because of the range and depth of what our students receive at Wyoming Catholic College.

And just one word about how they receive it. How can we praise highly enough the professors at Wyoming Catholic College who have taught them, both in the classroom and in their homes, with such wisdom and generosity? We understand in a curriculum like ours that we all learn from the great teachers whose wisdom comes down to us in books. Even though Socrates was suspicious of writing, the practice turns out to have been highly useful—as his student Plato rightly intuited. But reading well always means bringing those carefully composed words to life in the “active sap” of living minds (as Maritain puts it). In the last few weeks, these seniors have had such an encounter with one of the twentieth century's great writers, the poet and critic T.S. Eliot. In their last humanities essay, they wrestled with the fragmented structure of *The Waste Land*, and my wife and I had two classes with them on Eliot's *Four Quartets*. There was some stiff resistance to Eliot's difficulty, and at this point, it's only fair to confess that I've had problems with him myself, largely because he was held up to me in my own undergraduate years as The Official Poet (in capital letters) of the twentieth century—which meant that the accessible poetry of

past centuries had officially given way to near-incomprehensibility and the necessity of mighty interpretative exertions.

But my fondness for Eliot has grown, not only because his lines retain an incandescence in the memory, but also because of his importance in standing up for classical culture and Christianity in the twentieth century. Dr. Jim Tonkowich told me yesterday about how the novelist Virginia Woolf reacted to Eliot's conversion in 1927. As soon as she heard about it, she wrote that Tom Eliot "may be called dead to us all from this day forward. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is," she went on. "I mean, there's something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God." Eliot's courage in dealing with this kind of reaction cannot be overstated, nor can the spiritual depth he sought and achieved when the culture at large had rejected God.

Reading the *Four Quartets* again this time has been deeply moving, because Eliot's vocation as a poet strongly resembles our vocation as a college. When the seniors were on retreat several weeks ago, I reminded them of these lines in "East Coker":

...what there is to conquer
 By strength and submission, has already been discovered
 Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
 To emulate—but there is no competition—
 There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
 And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
 That seem unpropitious.

Eliot is talking about poetry, but he also speaks of the great truths of the tradition, which cannot be passively inherited like mysterious heirlooms. They have to be worked for, with both "strength and submission" (as Eliot puts it), and when they are rediscovered, they could not be more vivid and contemporary. As the poet John Keats put it in one of his letters, "Axioms in

philosophy are not axioms unless they are proved upon our pulses.” Exactly—but when they make our hearts pound with the beauty of them, they are ours, and they change our lives.

What I particularly love about Eliot is that he listens to the advice of his brilliant and problematic friend Ezra Pound, whose slogan was “Make it new.” By this, Pound does not call us to reject the past, as so much of modernity has done, but to immerse ourselves in the best of the tradition and to restore its freshness in our own time. This is very different from jettisoning whatever is inconvenient in a fawning adaptation to currently fashionable ideologies. Rather, it’s a matter of giving a living form to the best of thought, the height of beauty, the depth of pathos, and the movement of spirit—as did Dante, or the builders of Notre Dame (whose loss urges us to imagine what it took to conceive it 850 years ago).

That was not striving after wind. It was the work of those who could say, as Eliot does, “Fare forward.” It was those who understood and lived out, through several generations of building, what Eliot means when he writes, “For us, there is only the trying. The rest,” he says, “is not our business”—because it is certainly up to God.

Dr. Glenn Arbery was born in South Carolina and grew up as a Protestant in Middle Georgia. His reading of Flannery O’Connor as a freshman at the University of Georgia began his journey toward the Roman Catholic Church. A convert at 25, he entered the Church at the University of Dallas, where he later took his Ph.D. He has taught literature at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Thomas More College of Liberal Arts in Merrimack, New Hampshire, the University of Dallas, and Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he held the d’Alzon Chair of Liberal Education. He also served as Director of the Teachers Academy at the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture and as an editor at People Newspapers in Dallas, where he won a number of regional and national awards for his writing. He has published two volumes with ISI Books, *Why Literature Matters* (2001) and *The Southern Critics* (2010), editor. He is also the editor of *The Tragic Abyss* (2003) for the Dallas Institute Press and *Augustine’s Confessions and Its Influence*, which appeared from St. Augustine Press in 2018.

MISSIONARIES OF HOPE

BY BISHOP DAVID L. RICKEN, DD, JCL
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY
(BACHALAREATE MASS HOMILY, MAY 10TH, 2019)



I cannot tell you what a joy it is to be back in Lander for Wyoming Catholic College's Baccalaureate Mass and graduation ceremonies.

It is truly miraculous to behold all that has happened here as we continue to witness God's special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this wonderful gift of Wyoming Catholic College. As you graduate today, this is a wonderful moment in your life to reflect deeply on what you have received here, to be truly grateful, and to ask the Holy Spirit to instruct and guide you in the years ahead. Today's Mass of the Holy Spirit prayers and readings are beautifully constructed, and in this homily I would like to go a little deeper into these from the spiritual point of view.

The Collect beautifully states what I will say about the Scriptures: "God, to whom every heart lies open, every desire speaks plainly, and from whom no secret is hidden, cleanse, we pray, the thoughts of our hearts by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we may merit to love you perfectly and offer you worthy praise." One of the Holy Spirit's works is to enlighten the mind and connect it to the heart. As you have spent so many years pursuing the transcendentals to understand reality better, you have been given the opportunity—through charity and the use of reason—to allow the power of the Holy Spirit to sink down into your heart and to motivate you to live the dynamic life of a missionary disciple: "I will give you a new heart, and place a new spirit within you, taking from your body your stony heart and giving you a natural heart" (Ezk 36:25–27). When I was your age in college seminary, I was becoming resentful about people whom I thought disregarded me. My spiritual director gave me some very wise advice: "Go to the chapel and kneel before the Sacred Heart statue, and meditate on the love and mercy of God. Then ask him for a heart transplant, that he may exchange his worthy

and noble heart, which beats constantly out of love for all creation, for your stony heart, and replace it with the ability to forgive and to move on in the actions of love.” Thus I ask all of you to not let pride and arrogance get in the way of your growth. Do not hold onto resentments; if you need to make peace with anyone here, before you leave this hallowed ground and go onto the next phase of your life and calling, be sure to reconcile with others. Be sure to love, and to give all you’ve been given to the service of the Holy Gospel—the Gospel which turns into joy when we walk the road with Christ through trial and tribulation.

You’ve given your life to the pursuit of the transcendentals—truth, beauty, and goodness—but we know the source of these transcendental gifts: Jesus himself. The Holy Spirit is the primary actor in bestowing even our desire for these transcendental qualities which lead us to Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life. Thus you see that everything is intimately connected, though you may need more experience—maybe the wisdom of years, or at least hard knocks—in order to recognize the tremendous ways you have been loved, most especially by Our Lord himself.

It is so moving to look out over all of you, to hear what’s been happening at Wyoming Catholic College, and to be a privileged part of this now very concrete college, which was once just a dream. I feel that I can say with the writer of Ephesians, “I too...do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him” (Eph 1:15–17). What a privilege it is to return here, ten years after this college’s foundation, with three years of preparation beforehand! This college exists because it weighed on my heart to reach out to the young adults who seemed to be getting more and more disconnected from the Church. From this pastoral desire, this college has grown into being, and I have great gratitude for all those who came together to pursue God’s will for your generation.

Part of living the Christian life is to grow more and more free from our attachments to ourselves and our own desires. Thus this college is built for freedom, true freedom in Christ Jesus. It is all about a radical availability to Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit who leads us to the Father. And so, my hope and prayer for all of you (as for myself) is that you be completely empty vessels, available for God's use however he wishes, whether in great things or small things done with great love, and with radical availability to his holy will.

This is a freedom to be in the presence of the real world, not the virtual world of our own making. Isn't it interesting that they call this "virtual reality," which is actually an oxymoron? Yet it does dominate people with the illusion that virtuality is reality. You have learned the difference through your outdoor expeditions. Only the true and real inform our cognition; only by being humble before nature can we recognize the Creator. This is also the freedom to build a relationship with the real Jesus—not a virtual Jesus, but the real Jesus. By your great love of the Mass and the Liturgy, you encounter Christ. By spending time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, you experience the uncovering and the generosity of his merciful Heart, as he assists you in deepening the intimacy with God that only God can give. You learn fidelity through the dry hours, sitting through impatience, sorting through your own thoughts, and offering yourself again for the gift of radical availability to Christ. You learn to let him love you and call you into love, and experience his presence in your hearts.

This is the freedom to build a Christian community, *koinonia*, with a real communion of mind and heart. By living together, by sharing in debate, dialogue, and discussion about the Great Books, you have been formed to be of better service to Christ, the Church, the world. And it is the freedom to be a disciple of the Holy Gospel by allowing the passion of the Holy Spirit to fill your mind and heart and join them together, and by moving in service to the world in whatever way God calls you. It is the freedom to answer God's call for your life, whether through the noble vocation of marriage and family, or the vocation to the priesthood, or the vocation to the religious life.

The second thing we founded the college upon is trust in Divine Providence. If you were with us in the very first years, you know how we had to trust when there was no reason to trust at all. That has been the journey of this college from its founding to the present day (as Dr. Arbery can testify). Though it was not easy to serve God's will for this college, we had to place it into his hands. You must do the same as you learn to use the Holy Spirit's powers of discernment, which he gives so that more life may be sent from here to the whole world. If the only thing you learn from here is to deepen your relationship with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and to let God be the master of your life, then you would have learned enough. Likewise, through the gift of the Holy Eucharist—where we get to consume the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus himself—we see that God is not an old ogre calling us to live an impossible lifestyle. He gives us the Sacraments, the Eucharist, Confirmation, the prayers and communion of the Church. In today's Gospel, we find the way to his joyful gifts:

Remember the word I spoke to you: no servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they also will persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours, and they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me . . . When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify because you have been with me from the very beginning (John 15:20–21, 26–27).

I hope that your formation here has taught you generosity. Every day is a pure gift. Every moment of every day is a pure gift. And through the freedom you have learned here, through the challenges of working, studying, and living here, I pray that you are learning to carry the cross with you, and that you are truly available with *disponibilité* to the movement of grace of the Holy Spirit to be drawn more deeply into the mystical union of the soul with Christ. For that is what this life is

all about. As I say at the ordinations of our young men in Green Bay, remember that it's not all about you. In fact, it's not about you at all. It's all about Jesus Christ, and being available to his grace.

I pray that this is a demarcation for which you are grateful. You have received so much from your parents, your grandparents, the faculty and staff, and the chaplains. Now it is time to think about giving back and making sure that others know Christ in the Gospel of the Catholic Church. This is my prayer for all of you, that you are generous, available, humble, and open to the motions of the Holy Spirit.

In 2007 or 2008, shortly after the college was begun, I dreamt that I saw many Wyoming Catholic College graduates in their gowns standing on the edge of the precipice of one of the mountains in this area. Suddenly, they took off flying, and flew to many different parts of the United States. In just the last few months, this dream has begun to make sense to me; in fact, I have never told anyone about it except one or two friends. But in it, I saw the phrase, "missionaries of hope." You are being sent out into the world as missionaries of hope. Whether it is through something grand and glorious, or something simple and humble done with great love, this is what you've been prepared to be. Our world and our church need you as missionaries of hope. I know you will always be grateful for the education and formation you've received here; you'll keep in touch with some of your classmates for the rest of your life; and you will always have Wyoming Catholic College on your heart. May you truly become missionaries of hope.

The Most Reverend David L. Ricken was ordained a priest in the Diocese of Pueblo, Colorado, in September 1980. In 1987, he received his Licentiate degree (J.C.L.) from Pontifical Gregorian University; in 1990, he was named diocesan chancellor; and in 1996, he was nominated an official of the Congregation for Clergy in Rome. On January 6th, 2000, he was ordained to the episcopacy, becoming the Diocese of Cheyenne's seventh leader. During his tenure in Wyoming, Bishop Ricken helped found Wyoming Catholic College. He was installed as the twelfth bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay on August 28th, 2008. He is a member of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and serves on the Pro-Life and Evangelization and Catechesis committees.