

# The Cistercian Informer

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## In This Issue



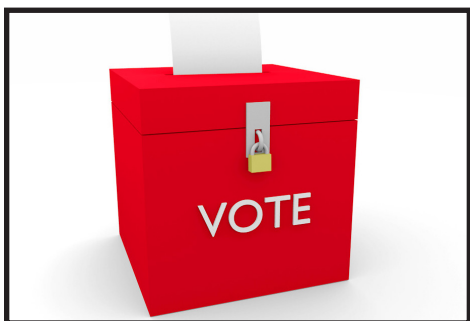
### IN NEST: Freshman Initiation

*The \*official\* start of their new, crazy high school journey*



### IN EDITORIALS: Being Pro-Life in 2020

*One writer's view of what can be done*



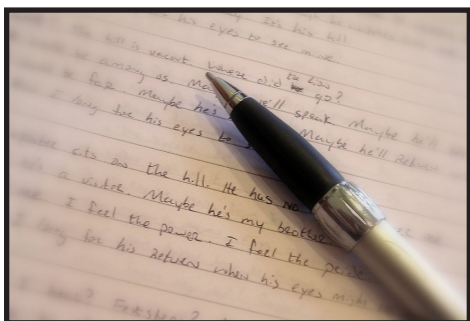
### IN NEWS: The Election & Voting

*An overview of voting rights and its complicated nature*



### IN SPORTS: Dak Prescott's Future

*What comes next?*



### IN MIDDLE SCHOOL: Tutoring Club Is Back

*An essential service returns*



### IN ARTS: Eddie Van Halen Tributes

*The passing of a legend*

## The Election & Voting

*Saish Satyal & Ethan Ramchandani, '21, who are informed and aware.*

When the *Informer* team met at our article-planning meeting a couple weeks ago, the writers of this article promised to make this a positive piece, and something to bring hope to our readers after we had published "Democracy in Danger." Unfortunately, those writers were unable to complete that task. A lot is going to go wrong in November, whether we like it or not. The best way to help would be to volunteer, but by the time this issue comes out, Dallas County will no longer be accepting volunteers to count ballots or help with the election process.

Essentially, the best way to help this upcoming election is to stay calm and make sure that you (and those around you) stay aware. Make sure that you don't give in to what news pundits declare, and recognize that this election will take a long time. If someone calls a winner on Election Night, don't believe them (even if it's your favored candidate). They're just aiming to get views for their news organization and they won't be right



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(at that point, anyway). Unlike 2016, when we heard Donald Trump being definitively declared President at 2AM, we won't know who has won the vote counts until a couple of weeks after; in fact, that's the best case scenario. Some political scientists and strategists have gamed out a series of events in which we won't know the winner until January 2021. Ask your parents about what the 2000 election felt like—they might have a better idea of what's to come.

The best way to make sure that the confusion doesn't last until 2021 is to go volunteer for your favorite candidate. A landslide victory for either Trump or Biden will ensure that there are no court cases like Bush v. Gore where Bush won Florida by 400 votes. You can work for candidates up until election day, so even if you can't count ballots, you can make sure that your candi-

*Continued on Page 5*

## College in the Pandemic

*Ayden Kowalski, '21, who sees big changes coming.*

The pandemic, among other things, has completely upended the college admissions process. *The Cistercian Informer* reached out to Mr. Blackwell, Cistercian's college counselor, to get his advice for how high schoolers should approach college admissions in a COVID world.

**How important is it for applicants to physically visit their preferred colleges?**

Colleges know and understand that students may not have had the ability to physically visit their campus. COVID was just digging in when spring break visits were about to begin. While some schools will admit that a campus visit demonstrates the applicant's interest in the school, they also certainly recognize that travel at this time could be compromising to family health and simply inconceivable at this time.

So as far as gaining admission to a college or university, I know that the lack of campus visit will not be a determining factor. From the applicant's point of view, I know it can be difficult to get a sense of what a university feels like unless you are physically present on campus. Colleges have really stepped up their digital presence by producing online content for families to digest in the form of virtual campus tours, on-demand admission presentations, and information about departments, but it's hard to understand the makeup of the student body or general vibe of the place without being on campus to look around and see how the students interact with you and each another. When your parents were applying to school 30-40 years ago, many students were attending colleges without ever stepping foot on campus. They read the guidebooks and brochures that communicated what the feel of campus was like and knew they were going for the education that was being provided.

*Continued on Page 2*

## STAFF

### WRITERS

Saish Satyal, Ayden Kowalski, Ethan Ramchandani, Maxwell Vaughan, Tarun Senthil-Kumar

### SECTION EDITORS

**Nest:** Saish Satyal  
**News:** Ethan Ramchandani  
**Arts:** Alex Smith  
**Sports:** Chase Frutos  
**Middle School:** Tarun S.-Kumar  
**Editorials:** Mateo Ramirez

### PRODUCTION

**Layout:** Mateo Ramirez  
**Digital:** Ayden Kowalski  
**Pictures:** Tarun Senthil-Kumar  
**Faculty Sponsors:** Mr. Laurange, Br. Matthew

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Alex Smith

**OTHER CONTRIBUTORS**  
Mark Van Kirk, Peter Novinski, Ben Woods, Sam Laber, Fr. Raphael



## College in the Pandemic (Cont'd)

Now, with the newness of facilities, amenities, and technology, sometimes being on campus is the only way to experience what [a school] can offer. My advice is for students to do a lot of research of schools as sophomores and juniors to get a sense of what campuses offer and understand where they might learn best, and if they are able to visit at some point during this time, they should take advantage of it. If not, it can be difficult in senior year, amidst the homework and college applications, to take time out to go to a college campus and visit. In this case, I typically advise students to go ahead and apply to the school based on what you know, and visit after that or even waiting until they have been accepted.

### Do you foresee any long-term effects from COVID on the college system in general?

I predict that the online classroom is going to shake up the industry. For so long, college has been about the “experience” of being on campus and everything that goes along with that: football games, social

life, dorm rooms, independence, life in the city, etc. There’s always been online colleges, but now that so many students have had a virtual learning environment at highly selective institutions, many people are going to question the cost that they’re paying for the brand name of the education they’re receiving without the added amenities and experience. Some schools who have been entirely dependent on [...] tuition dollars to pay bills or fund their campus amenities will really be hurting financially if students choose not to come to campus to take advantage of them. Some colleges can weather the storm, but if this continues into next year, some will have to cease operations all together and the result would be fewer college options for students to attend. It could also increase the number of students choosing not to go to college and instead pursuing vocational careers or start at two-year community colleges. Technology could enter into the market such that instead of a traditional 4-year degree, 18-month credentialing programs could be sufficient enough for employers to hire. I also think

that short-term, because there was a repeal of a rule that restricted the recruitment of transfer students from other colleges, that the transfer student recruitment market is going to really ramp up. Students who are not happy with their first year experience or who wanted to go to another college but chose not to because it was primarily hybrid or online may now be interested in finishing their degree at another school. Because colleges will have those seats available to fill because their own students have transferred out or did not return, I think we’ll start seeing more scholarships being given to transfer students and an increased level of attention paid to them, [more] than there ever has been.

### Is there anything current juniors should already be doing to prepare for the next application cycle, which already seems uncertain?

I think juniors can be thinking outside the box because so many extracurricular activities have been canceled and the opportunities for leadership have as well, so it’s really

an opportunity for them to pursue their passions or interests in a way they haven’t been able to before. It also communicates to the colleges what they are able to do “when the going gets tough” and how their mind thinks. It doesn’t have to be creating their own business model or anything super extravagant, but if they can explore the things they think are really cool and might have interest in, potentially coordinate with their peers to organize a discussion or project, something they can tell a college that they did when they couldn’t do anything else, this will communicate their personal initiative and also a great deal of individuality which colleges, especially the highly selective ones, are really looking for from their applicants. And of course, I’m here to help! Once “non-stoptober” is over with the seniors, I’ll be more available to talk with juniors about their thoughts and plans for the future and am looking forward to navigating this journey with them.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity. Catch the full version online!*



Photo By Sam Laber

*Mark Van Kirk, '21, who sees a great future for the freshmen.*

When any Cistercian student recalls the beginning of high school, the first thing that comes to mind is the Freshman Baptism. As each freshman is hurled into the water, his physical transition from a dry environment to a wet environment is accompanied by a mental one—a realization that he is taking on a new role. As a high schooler, he will discover more opportunities and take on new responsibilities than ever before.

But the Class of 2024 ditched the typical Freshman Baptism in favor of something more unique—a Freshman Launch. This new name

## Freshman Initiation

was met with much criticism last year, but these freshmen proudly accepted it as they were launched down the meager slope above the upper field. Preceding the launch,

Michael Wilson took advantage of his booming voice to bequeath words of wisdom to the high school neophytes. With staff and paper in hand, he consecrated the ground upon which these freshmen would glide, and, miraculously, a line of freshmen began to emerge. Soon, it was time for the first ever Freshman Launch to begin.

One at a time, the freshmen stepped onto the makeshift Slip ‘N Slide and assumed a position on their bellies. Then two seniors grabbed each freshman by the arms and propelled him down the slope. Some freshmen had to grab onto the plastic to prevent sliding off the tilted runaway, and others flew down the slope perfectly like penguins. But in the end, all the fresh-

men made it to their destination at the bottom, where their classmates stood cheering.

The last person to slide down was their Form Master, Mr. Nied, who decided to slide down in a sitting position. The seniors happily accommodated him, making sure to spray him with plenty of water before giving him a good push. It marked the end of the Launch, but the beginning of an adventure. These young men may have missed the Freshman Mixer, but they will certainly not miss Homecoming and Prom in the coming years. In fact, without school sports underway, the freshmen have time to consider what they will do during their high school years.

I would recommend for each freshman to think outside the box. If you and your friends have any interests that are not encompassed by the various clubs, try starting a new club. The Digital Music Production has just been created, and it has already caught the attention of many upperclassmen. Just remember, in the words of Walt Disney, “If you can dream it, you can do it.”

Starting a club is only one of

the many things that high schoolers can do. Many of the fantastic clubs that were presented to the freshmen a couple of weeks ago were started by current high schoolers. Many volunteer organizations have finally reopened, including Feed My Starving Children, and they would greatly appreciate more volunteers. Or, if you would like a taste of endurance, you can watch David Blaine’s TED Talk—“How I Held My Breath For 17 Minutes.” This task is not something many of us would think to try, and I highly recommend that no one does. I would also recommend that you make sure that the stress of getting into a great college does not overshadow your freshman year. High school is an adventure, make sure you’re able to enjoy it.

So you, Class of 2024, have ventured into high school differently than all preceding classes, but your Launch speaks volumes about your capabilities. If you have carved your own path as freshmen, who knows what else you will accomplish as seniors? The most important thing is to keep your head up as you continue to glide down High School Hill.



## Being Pro-Life in 2020

*Dominic Andrews, '21.*

For Catholics today, one of the most pressing issues out there is abortion. I, as the co-president of the pro-life club, view abortion as a harmful and evil practice. There are many reasons why, which I do not have room to delve into, but my participation in the pro-life movement has shown me many things about pro-lifers and where we, as a movement, stand today.

It is a fact that most people, whether pro-life or pro-choice, view abortion as an evil. Most pro-choice people believe that it is a necessary evil for women, because there is, at the very least, a potential human life at stake. Pro-lifers, similarly, believe that abortion is not only evil, but is unacceptable and should be prevented at all costs. In many ways, the pro-life movement has become much stronger than it was 50 years ago. We have acted in greater accord, which have helped make real, tangible impacts against the practice. It must be said that pro-life laws definitely help prevent abortions. Over the past decade, state

legislatures have passed more than 400 pro-life laws protecting the unborn. Some states, for example, have enacted heartbeat bills, which bans abortion after a heartbeat can be detected. Alabama has even enacted legislation which would provide legal protection to nearly all unborn children. These are the good things that the pro-life movement has accomplished, and the movement has, in recent years, been further helped by science. In a culture that is so science-obsessed, recent developments in fetal technology, such as ultrasound, have put a human face on those in the womb. It has become harder and harder to abort a fetus as its human attributes become more and more apparent. Late-term abortions are becoming more and more unnecessary and, as time goes on, appearing more and more untenable.

With the appointment of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, pro-lifers believe that an end to abortion in the United States is close. Not only is overturning *Roe v. Wade* unlikely, but it would not, unfortunately, help in states where pro-life causes are small.

States such as California and New York would simply keep their abortion laws. In fact, pro-lifers will have a lot more work to do than just making laws. Another top priority for pro-lifers is making abortion unnecessary and this is far more challenging than just enacting laws. So, how can we help women out? Pregnancy help centers, which are mostly Christian, have helped greatly. However, while still recognizing their contributions, these places are not enough to stop the practice. Federal and state governments can help prevent abortion by giving mothers more paid leave, and other similar incentives. This could, in theory, prevent abortions by making the economic reasons for abortion less relevant.

Pro-lifers have, unfortunately, become very partisan as the years have gone by. As a pro-lifer, I am left with very few options: the Republican Party is the only political vehicle



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that pro-lifers feel can bring about change. This is not a fault of pro-lifers (or anyone in particular, for that matter), but merely an unfortunate happenstance. We, as pro-lifers, must reach across the aisle. This should not be just a partisan issue, but a human rights issue. Therefore, we must all work together to make abortion less needed. I hope that one day all humans can realize what evil they have done, and we can become a pro-life world helping all people in need—not only the born and unborn, but also their mothers and families. Together, we can forge a brighter future.

*\*The views expressed within this article are those of the author and not necessarily those of Cistercian or The Cistercian Informer.\**



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*Saish Satyal, '21.*

A few weeks ago, the *New York Times* published a bombshell report full of revelations about President Donald Trump's tax returns. Having obtained a copy from a source they refuse to reveal (pesky journalists), they revealed things such as the fact that the President has not paid income taxes for 10 of the last 15 years. Not to mention, for two of those 15 years, his accountants found a loophole for him to only pay \$750 in those taxes. In fact, in 2017, he paid more in personal taxes to foreign governments than to the USA. We should also note that the President effectively admitted to

not paying taxes in a 2016 Presidential debate. We'll have to start with how Donald Trump managed to pull off his tax avoidance and the state of his finances. Reports by *Forbes* and the *New York Times* have shown that Donald Trump is in a massive amount of debt; this debt is mostly loans that he's taken out on his vast collection of properties. For the eager Democrats in the room, there is no line in his tax returns that states "RUSSIA LOANED ME 1 BILLION DOLLARS" or even something to that effect. The fact that he's in debt shouldn't be very significant given that 80% of adult Americans are in debt; these debts range from credit card debt, car payments, mortgages, and anything in between. It's a normal part of life for most people. However, these aforementioned organizations found that approximately \$300 million of Donald Trump's debt is going to be due from 2020-2024.

## Trump's Taxes

While this usually wouldn't be very concerning, Donald Trump has shown through his blatant violations of the Hatch Act (think of the final night of the RNC) and through his manipulations of the DOJ to fight his personal cases (think of the DOJ's intervention in the E. Jean Carroll case) that he's not above wielding the powers of POTUS to serve himself. We've seen VP Pence stay at an Irish Trump property 180 miles away from where he was having meetings, clearly taking taxpayer money and handing it to the Trump organization. At the International Trump Hotel in D.C., various lobbyists, political operatives, foreign diplomats, and domestic organizations can be seen gathering and hosting events; a Republican operative described it as "a magnet for unsophisticated foreign governments and companies to offer tribute. . . it is perceived as a path to influence." Many supporters of the President will point out that previous holders of the office have owned properties and they haven't been criticized as he has. This is true. However, it should be noted that previous presidents have

completely relinquished ownership of their businesses or placed these properties in a blind trust to avoid any potential impropriety. Breaking with precedent (as he is famous for doing) President Trump has relinquished control of operations in his businesses; however, he still holds stake in his companies and will continue to profit from them. A 2018 financial disclosure statement showed that he earned almost \$41 million from the D.C. hotel alone. This hotel clearly isn't the only property Trump benefits from (Mar-A-Lago is another famous one), but it's a great example of him improperly using the office of the Presidency.

It would, of course, be unfair to assume that the President would use taxpayer dollars to pay off his debt. He's worth billions of dollars, there's no reason for him to run headfirst into a scandal just to avoid losing a few million dollars. The only problem is that Mr. Trump may not have as much cash as we suspect. We know that he continues to receive income from branding deals (because of his fame on *The Apprentice*) and through certain real estate investments. With a total of \$427

*Continued on Page 4*



# Taxes (Cont'd)

million in income from 2005-2018 and a total of \$276 million through investments in office buildings, President Trump should be paying millions of dollars in taxes every year. The key to this puzzle lies in the businesses that he happens to prop up: it seems that he invests in failing businesses (thereby reporting losses on his taxes) which exempt him from paying federal taxes. In some cases, these losses are able to carry over and allow him to not pay income taxes in the next few years as well. The strange thing is that many of the businesses that Trump holds in high esteem are losing him money.

*The Trump Organization* owns 17 golf courses across the globe and has lost \$315.6 million on them since 2000. Even his hotel in D.C. is losing money, reporting \$55.5 million in losses from 2016-2018. It seems that investing in failing businesses to avoid taxes isn't exactly the best way to stay rich. President Trump has infused cash into his struggling businesses and personally guaranteed loans to multiple creditors, loans which are going to be due in the President's second term. As of 2018, the President hadn't paid down the principal on any of his loans, which means that the full force of those debts are going to hit him in the coming years.

Now, here's where things get complicated. The reporters from the *New York Times* and the President's accountants are far more financially literate than any of the writers at the *Informer*, especially given that none of us know how to pay taxes. There is something called an alternative minimum tax which is supposed to make sure that the ultra-wealthy cannot do what the President is doing: using business losses to wipe out any financial responsibility. However, his team of lawyers and accountants were able to skirt the President's financial burden through a series of legal maneuvers which involved filing for an extension on his 1040 form. He also used up some tax credits which he had accumulated from turning a historic Post Office into his International Hotel to make sure that he wouldn't have to pay millions of dollars in taxes.

We've constantly heard that the IRS is auditing the President's taxes, which is why he can't release them. We should clear up, you can still show your tax returns even if you're under audit. However, the subject of his audit, started in 2011, is the \$72.9 million that

the President gained as a result of a financial bailout signed into law by President Obama. Essentially, in an effort to reduce the burden on business owners affected by the Recession, President Obama signed a bill which allowed for owners to request a complete refund on taxes paid in the past 4 years (if they'd lost certain amounts of money in the Recession). On any other taxes paid over 4 years ago, business owners would be eligible to receive 50% of their taxes back. Normally, business owners could only wipe out their tax burdens going back 2 years. The President, who had declared losing \$1.4 BILLION from his core companies in 2008 and 2009, was able to get back the \$72.9 million that was mentioned earlier. This figure was effectively what he paid in taxes from 2005 to 2007, with some interest. Many readers may be wondering, "How in the world was the President able to lose \$1.4 billion in two years and still be semi-financially stable?" Well, in 2009, he abandoned his stake in his failing Atlantic City casinos and was able to write the loss of that value on his taxes; the use of the word "abandoned" seems to be important here since that allows him to pull a legal stunt with the IRS to write off that loss. Unfortunately, it seems Mr. Trump didn't quite meet the requirements for the stun, which is why the IRS has been auditing him for so long.

The President's tax returns also show him paying out exorbitant fees to various consulting firms, such as \$1.1 million payment on a \$5 million deal in Azerbaijan or the \$630k of payment on a \$3 million deal in Dubai. While his returns don't show the exact company to which he paid the fees, the *New York Times* reporters saw that Ivanka Trump's financial disclosure, which was made available when she joined the WH staff in 2017, showed her receiving payments to the tune of \$747,622—the exact amount of money that *The Trump Organization* wrote off in consulting fees for certain hotel projects in Canada and Hawaii. When project insiders in Azerbaijan or Turkey were questioned about the involvement of a consulting firm, they definitively stated that there was no independent third party playing a role in any of these projects. Yet, the returns show consulting deductions that were paid out to someone. Ivanka disclosed on her report that she received her payments from *TTT Consulting, LLC*. This corporation seems



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to be one of many entities that fall under *The Trump Organization* umbrella with "TTTT" or "TTT" in their names. On her website, Ivanka was listed as a senior executive at *The Trump Organization* and in a 2011 deposition, Mr. Trump stated that the only people he trusts to handle important licensing deals are Ivanka, Eric, and Donald Jr. It's a testament to Ms. Trump's time managing skills that she was able to be so intimately involved in her father's organization while consulting for a separate organization while also helping raise her children.

The President isn't only writing off consulting fees on his returns; he's also writing off hair styling, luxury items, estate taxes, and political legal defenses (which isn't quite legal). The Trump brand and business seems to be based off of the persona of Donald Trump (not necessarily the real Donald); a lot of his business acumen seems to be branding himself as more than he is. It's a strategy that's made fact-checkers the bane of his existence. If one can claim that the mogul persona is Donald's biggest money maker (and his cash flows from *The Apprentice* seem to support that claim), then anything to help him keep up his persona (private jet rides, fancy hairstyling, etc.) should be considered a business expense. By that train of logic, these things are necessary to run his business. He's also been able to avoid paying estate taxes by classifying his luxury mansion in upstate New York as a business—something to make a profit. However, by admission of *The Trump Organization's* website and the Trump children, the estate is treated as a vacation residence of the Trump family.

The state of the President's finances is a confusing mess, which is to be expected. It's filled with legal loopholes and Herculean feats of tax evasion. The only problem is the idea of tax avoidance, something that this article hasn't touched on

quite yet. I like to think that I've been fairly objective in this article, but a famous quote from Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. comes to mind: "Taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society." For someone as rich as Donald Trump to go to these great lengths just to avoid contributing to our society disappoints me deeply. Our taxes allow the government to function, for better or for worse. Our taxes are funding our education system, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and they allow for massive government projects that have undoubtedly made the lives of many Americans better (think of Interstate highways). Tax avoidance is not moral and it should not be praised as smart; those that lead us are supposed to be the best among us. That's why we call them leaders and follow them.

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## The Election & Voting (Cont'd)

date wins in a way that no one can question. You should also make sure that you do your own research and make sure you don't give into misinformation campaigns. The President has declared, multiple times, that voter fraud is rampant in this country. It isn't. That's not a partisan statement, it's a statistical consensus from hundreds of studies. There are cases of voter fraud that do exist, and the rate for mail-in fraud is higher than the rate of impersonation fraud (which is virtually nonexistent anyway), though this does not mean that fraud is rampant. There have not been enough voters fraudulently voting in an election to swing anything on a state-wide or federal level in recent history. If someone tells you that there are millions of people voting fraudulently, they are misinformed and you should ask them for their sources.

Other than staying calm and staying educated there isn't much else that you can do. If everyone ensures that their respective communities stay calm, our country won't fall into chaos. However, we're going to have to start looking at the future of our country's election. If you haven't, please go read Coby Scrudder's ('21) series of articles on our broken two-party system and how we could fix it. This article examines practices that many voting rights activists call "voter suppression" and sees if they are actually disenfranchisement or common-sense measures against fraud.

Additionally, ID laws are complicated. 89% of Americans have some kind of government-issued photo ID, which means it doesn't affect most of them. In fact, as I'm sure the juniors and seniors can testify to, many Americans keep that form of ID on themselves at almost all times. However, this discounts the 11% of Americans who don't have access to photo IDs. This 11% is made up of the elderly, minorities, and generally low-income members of the population. The Brennan Center for Justice estimates that approximately 18% of senior citizens (those aged 65 or older) and 25% of African Americans don't have photo IDs. Now, to clarify, we should say that they don't have government-issued photo IDs that are still valid. Low-income citizens, those living in densely populated areas, or some young adults in college will often use public transportation instead of spending hundreds or thousands of dollars on a car. The elderly are often

able to use other forms of ID such as Social Security cards or Medicare/Medicaid cards in order to get what they need. While it should be noted that some states have passed laws which allow the use of Social Security cards or other non-photo IDs when voting at the polls, the states with more stringent voter ID laws are the ones being accused of voter suppression.

Of course, the voter ID laws aren't the most pressing issue here. Even in the state of Texas, a state with some of the most strict ID laws, you can still go to your local polling station and request an RID (Reasonable Impediment Declaration) form and cast your ballot, so long as you have something to verify your identity. This can be a utility bill, a bank statement or even a paycheck. In the grand scheme of "voter suppression," voter ID laws aren't the largest factor working against getting out the vote. Something more pressing, for example, is the fact that some citizens are unable to register to vote online in states like Texas, Mississippi or North Carolina. In many cases, citizens must register to vote 25 days (or more) before election day and they must send it through the mail. Disallowing online registration is another barrier for many who want to register. It presents another unnecessary hurdle for potential voters to cross, forcing them to fill out their forms and drop it off at their local Post Office instead of simply clicking a couple buttons.

On the other hand, the vast majority of US states allow for some form of online registration beforehand or same day registration at the polls. Many states are also implementing automatic voter registration programs that allow you to opt-in for registering (which most people do) when you get your driver's license. Unfortunately, recent cases in Virginia, Florida, and Alabama have shown that State departments are not quite yet up to the task of online registration; in these states, the government voter registration sites crashed on the day of their deadlines to register to vote. Cistercian students, of all people, should understand the injustice of being unable to complete something right before it's due, especially if it's extremely important.

Another issue that voter rights advocates are up in arms about is purges of voter rolls. An activity with a sinister name, these purges serve to help clear the rolls of voters that are dead, have moved, or



*Photo From Creative Commons*

those that have not been active in voting for multiple years. From an organizational standpoint, the purging of these voter rolls is clearly required. The problem is the execution of these purges; in a now infamous case in the 2018 election for the governor of Georgia, many voters only found out that they were now ineligible to vote when they got to the polls. Of course, this case was only made worse by the fact that the man who won the election, Brian Kemp, was in charge of purging voters from these rolls. They wrongfully purged 200,000 voters who had still recently voted and had not died or moved out of the state of Georgia. Shockingly, these purges had a 63% error rate. While these Georgia purges are the most egregious case in recent memory, recent voter roll purges have disenfranchised millions of voters. If the Supreme Court had not "gutted" the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in the landmark *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), the Brennan Center for Justice estimates that 2 million fewer people would have been purged from the voter rolls.

In this case, the Supreme Court struck down a provision of the Act that forced states with a history of discrimination (so, mainly States in the South) to seek approval from the federal government before changing their voting laws. Their reasoning was essentially that states hadn't been doing it for a long time, so there was no point in unnecessarily forcing federal oversight on them. The late Ruth Bader Ginsburg described the move as "throwing away your umbrella because you're not getting wet." In fact, after the ruling, then AG Greg Abbott pushed for new Voter ID laws that had previously been struck down by federal courts, and the Texas state legislature passed these restrictive new laws.

ID laws, registration, and voter purges aren't the only way that people's rights are being restricted. Gerrymandering plays a huge role in diminishing the votes of the people, too. Of course, this is a complicated topic since not all gerrymandering is considered bad. In fact, in an effort to protect the votes of minority populations, some gerrymandered districts are encouraged. The only problem lies when legislatures take it too far and redrawing district lines turns into a power game instead of a game in which fair representation is ensured in our halls of power. Other efforts to diminish the power of the people come in the form of long lines at the polls. Lines are everywhere, so it's strange that voting rights activists would complain about them. Although this seems like a minor point, the problem is that some of these lines are absurdly long, almost to the point where states can be accused of voter suppression. Densely populated areas tend to hold more minorities and often more low-income citizens, and their polling places are being quietly shut down, leading to a chilling disparity in the voting wait times between minorities and white people.

Frankly, voting laws are complicated—the effects of restrictive laws are subtle and lead to a quiet disenfranchisement. Being unable to vote is often not what grabs the attention of people watching the news. However, it's important to pay attention to what's going on; the rights of those less fortunate than us are being chipped away. To the Cistercian audience, most of what we say won't affect us. But it's important that we stay vigilant and educated to make sure that those in different situations are afforded the same rights we are.



# Dak Prescott's Future

Maxwell Vaughan, '21, who sees the metaphorical fork in the road.

With Dak Prescott's ankle injury, the Cowboys are at a fork in the road in the progression of their franchise. Two routes lie ahead: one without Prescott, and one with Prescott. Since his contract expires at the end of this season, the Cowboys will have to decide whether they want to resign him or not. If they do resign him, it will come at a hefty price. With this question in mind, let's see what some experts have to say about the situation.

Analyst Emmanuel Acho, on the show "Speak for Yourself", believes Dak Prescott has played his final game in a Dallas Cowboys uniform. Acho further states that there are two reasons that Dak will not play a part in the Cowboys future: either Andy Dalton leads the Cowboys to the playoffs, and therefore Dak is seen as an unnecessary part of the team's future, or the Cowboys tank and receive a top 15 pick, and so they draft a quarterback to replace Dak. Acho also says that since owner Jerry Jones is a

businessman, he would easily take a cheaper, younger quarterback with lots of promise over a quarterback who was on track to sign one of the biggest contracts in NFL History.

This is not a bad idea, but I think Acho is neglecting the fact that Jerry Jones has a "win-now" mindset. Let's face it, he's 78 years old and unless he has a deal with the devil, he probably doesn't have many years left. Jerry Jones wants one more Super Bowl before finishing off his time with the Cowboys. So then, it would make very little sense for the Cowboys to draft a quarterback even if they have a top-15 pick. Realistically, they would not be drafting Trevor Lawrence or Justin Fields unless they trade up a couple picks. They would most likely be drafting someone like Trey Lance or Jamie Newman who would need time (possibly several seasons) to reach their full potential and to develop into a quarterback who could lead the Cowboys to a Super Bowl. This would be a bad decision, because the prime years of key players like Amari Cooper and Ezekiel Elliot would be wasted, as would the last years of key veterans

like Tyron Smith, Zach Martin, and Demarcus Lawrence. This simply does not line up with Jerry Jones' "win-now" mentality. Additionally, using a top 15 draft pick on a quarterback would be pointless. The Cowboys' most pressing needs are on the defensive end. They've given up the most total yards and second most points in the league. The secondary needs help. So, it would make much more sense to draft a defensive back like Patrick Surtain who can make an immediate impact, rather than a quarterback who would take time to make an impact.

That being said, if Andy Dalton does find a way to lead the Cowboys to the playoffs, I do think it is more likely that Jerry Jones lets Prescott walk. However, I know the Cowboys front office would find it very hard to let go of Dak, especially considering his production in the first couple games. In fact, he threw for over 1,856 passing yards,



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leading the league. And, I think it would be a little far-fetched to say that Prescott's production would drop drastically after the injury. If he takes his time and heals fully before returning, there's no reason that his playing ability should decrease. Also, Dak has certain intangibles that are hard to find in other quarterbacks across the league. He is not only a great quarterback but also a fantastic leader and can control the locker room. Jerry Jones recognizes this, and even though he has a reputation of being a "businessman" first, I think that he knows he would be letting a franchise quarterback and leader go.



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Tarun Senthil-Kumar, '23, who chronicles his return.

Despite the NBA's constant evolution, the dominance of the big man has persevered. Though centers have adapted over time, they remain the most important players on the court. Looking back, NBA history is divided into three eras: 1950's-1970's, 1980's-2000's, and 2010's-present. In the early era, George Mikan, Bill Russell, and Wilt Chamberlain dominated with their overwhelming size. In the middle era, a golden age of big men that included Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Hakeem Olajuwon, Shaquille O'Neal, and Tim Duncan revived the NBA. These big men were more physical

and technical than their previous counterparts. In today's era, one unorthodox team has forced centers to improve greatly and rapidly.

The NBA had been dominated by its tallest players until Steph Curry and the Golden State Warriors revolutionized the sport with their efficient, three-point heavy offense, proving that a shooting team could win a championship. Their small-ball lineup, only featuring players 6'7 and under, created mismatches for opponents. The Warriors cracked the code by prototyping several "point forwards," wing players capable of shooting, passing, dribbling, and defense all while possessing elite athleticism. The rest of the NBA, eager to match Golden State, began to rely less on centers and more on point forwards. This movement caused many elite big men such as Dwight Howard to lose effectiveness, but in doing so, it created the most influential position of today's era: the unicorn. A

# The Big Man's Evolution

"unicorn" is a big man that can do everything a point-forward can do but with a seven-foot frame. Look no further than the 2020 Finals. Anthony Davis, the Lakers' anchor, dominated Miami on offense, averaging 25 points and 42 3PT%, and defense, guarding 6'6 Jimmy Butler on the perimeter. Bam Adebayo, the Miami center, played point guard on offense while proving to be a defensive juggernaut. Much like a chess queen, a unicorn possesses every capability, making it the most dangerous position.

The return of the big man has not only dispelled the notion that guards dominate today's league, but it has also challenged the greats of the past. When Steph Curry won MVP twice, teams began to run their offenses through their point guards rather than their big men. Earlier, offenses would either isolate the center in the post or run pick-and-roll with the center to create penetration and easy shots. The Warriors strictly used their big men as off-ball screeners for their guards. With the dawn of the unicorn, teams have reimaged ways to play through their big men. Nikola Jokic

practically plays quarterback, Kristaps Porzingis bombs threes from the logo, and Karl-Anthony Towns isolates from the perimeter. Whether today's big men are better than those of the past is a tricky question. In terms of skill, today's big men are better basketball players than previous centers. Anthony Davis can do more on a basketball court than Bill Russell or Tim Duncan could, especially offensively. This doesn't even include seven-footers like Kevin Durant and Giannis Antetokounmpo, who are skilled enough to play point forward, but would've played center in previous eras. In terms of impact, past big men far surpass current big men. Wilt Chamberlain averaged 50 points while Shaq dunked every time he posted up. It's simply impossible for a team to win a championship today with a center as its best player, whereas it was the norm to do so earlier. In conclusion, the Warriors forced centers to adapt their game to match point forwards, and this evolution of the big man represents the evolution of basketball as a whole through the advancement in skill and versatility.



## Tutoring Club Is Back

*Ethan Ramchandani, '21, who is ready to teach and reteach.*

After a long hiatus over the summer, the Cistercian Tutoring Club has returned in triumph. We were unable to provide our services last spring due to the pandemic coupled with our new online reality. Though COVID-19 has its limitations, your dependable Cistercian Upper School has taken advantage of online meetings, and we're ready to help!

Without in-person activities available, the Tutoring Club will be hosting virtual meetings Monday through Thursday from 4:30 - 5:30. We want to give both tutors and students time to settle home from school before jumping into sessions. These online meetings will be hosted via our Microsoft Team, so please contact your Form Master if you're interested. You can also email us at 21satyals@cistercian.org or 21ramchandanie@cistercian.org.

When in-person activities return, the Tutoring Club will hold sessions from 3:30 to 4:30 in the Form I and II classrooms. We will

ensure minimal cross-Form contamination and careful sanitization of the classrooms before and after meetings. For those of you who aren't familiar with our club, there are no obligations to come in consistently. We provide help any time, whether it's only for one test or across multiple subjects. Given that our tutors are also Cistercian students, not only do we provide help in a certain subject area, we also provide study and organizational tips that are essential to succeeding under Cistercian's rigorous curriculum. We also encourage students to ask their teachers questions as there are times where even our tutors can get confused.

Being a tutor for the club is more restrictive than being a student; you are expected to show up with some kind of regularity. Whether you volunteer twice per week or every day, we need to know when tutors show up so that we can assign them to students whose questions match the tutor's strengths. If tutors aren't faithful to their commitment, we're often left with one tired tutor managing 5 different kids, and that means no one is able

to learn the way they should.

We hope Tutoring Club provides an environment where students can learn while also having fun. They are being tutored by those they consider "big brothers," people who were in their shoes just a few years ago. There have been moments where the students have distracted their tutors with intelligent discourse on who would win in an imaginary fight, but that merely contributes to the charm of the club. It's not a place of intense and silent learning, rather it's a place for students to grow along with their tutors. In fact, we've had Fridays where we introduced the children to new science experiments or did a mock Model UN with impostor aliens. On other days, as a treat, we've brought in Kool Aid and M&Ms (for those that do their work, that is).

These things that I've mentioned have been present for the past 2 years of our flourishing



Photo By Exodus

operations. This year, the Tutoring Club has teamed up with Dr. Dudasko and Fr. Gregory to present the Writing Center, a hub where any Cistercian student (not just Middle Schoolers) can submit their writings and essays to be reviewed by their peers and teachers. The Writing Center is a great opportunity for students to improve their writing skills, which are valuable in any field. Any Upper Schooler interested in working at our Writing Center can email Dr. Dudasko, Fr. Gregory, or the Tutoring Team.



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Has the election got you worried? Check out these other equally worrisome headlines instead!

**Michael Farr: The problem with the economy is that there are too many poor people**

As an editorial for CNBC, this article was far too good not to include in this. Yes, Michael, that's been the problem for a long time. I'm glad you've caught on! It's shocking, isn't it, that perhaps our problem is that there aren't enough people actually benefiting from our explosive economy? In reality, Mr. Farr (the CEO of a financial consulting firm in DC) makes a lot of legitimate points, including advocating for more government spending to

## Garbage Guru

increase consumer spending. But WOW, to have someone in his position write this headline is a level of hilarity I haven't seen in a while.

**Poisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny demands that Russia give his clothes back**

I hate the Russians so much. I mean, I understand attempting to poison your political rivals; I've done it multiple times. But to keep their clothes while you're at it? That's a level of cruelty that even I don't dare stoop to. Of course, as with every article that this series covers, the reality is a lot more serious. Russia is a suppressive authoritarian state, and the fact that Mr. Navalny had to be treated in Germany because he was afraid for his life should be a chilling fact; that's why it should be so disturbing that the USA hasn't condemned these Russian actions or petitioned for some kind of investi-

gation yet. He also needs his clothes back to build some kind of case that the official government poisoned him since right now, all we've got is a gut feeling, which doesn't hold up in court.

**Lindsey Graham says Black people can 'go anywhere' in South Carolina if they are conservative**

I should clarify Lindsey Graham's comments to make this sound less racist. When he says "go anywhere," he means in terms of power and success. His comments also don't just apply to Black people; they apply to Brown people and immigrants too! Oh, the context doesn't really help it that much? He still sounds racist? Well, you've got to remember that this man referred to segregation as "the good old days" in a Senate confirmation hearing! I'm still holding out hope that he was being sarcastic when he said "good old days," but the video does him no favors. His tone doesn't change, and the context doesn't call for that type of joke, if it was a joke. I will be very angry if Jaime Harrison doesn't give him the beating of a lifetime this

Election Week.

**Former Twitter CEO says some capitalists are 'going to be the first' to be 'shot in the revolution'**

That's a brutal statement, I won't lie; he says they're going to be lined up against a wall. Twitter hasn't even taken the tweet down yet (controversy is good for business, I suppose). However, I want to focus on the fact that the FORMER CEO OF TWITTER said this. Sir, you're a capitalist too! You have also profited from the parasite that we call "the social media industry!" Why would you think you're exempt? The context of his tweets happens to be him explaining that companies cannot separate themselves from society and pretend that their actions have no consequences (which is true). He seems angry at social media companies for allowing garbage to be spewed on their platforms (Facebook, we're all looking at you) while pretending to protect "the First Amendment." Once again, he's right! If he'd just NOT written the murderous Stalinist part of his tweet, then we'd have gotten along.



# Van Halen Tribute

*Alex Smith, '21, who was as shocked as the rest of the world.*

On October 6th, Eddie Van Halen, lead guitarist of the band Van Halen, passed away from a long battle with throat cancer. Being the rock star and guitar virtuoso that he was, it should not be surprising that he led a private life. As a result, his death was a shock to the world of music, especially because of his significant health improvements over the past decade. He died in Santa Monica, California at the age of 65.

Eddie Van Halen was born in Amsterdam on January 26th, 1955. In 1962, his father moved his family to Pasadena, California. As a kid, Eddie had a rough adjustment moving to America; his father was Dutch and his mother was Indonesian, leading to him and his brother, Alex, being bullied a lot in school. As first graders, they could barely speak English. Eddie even recalled his classmates forcing him to eat sand during recess. Eddie and Alex (who ultimately became the drummer of Van Halen) used the time to cultivate rock n' roll attitudes,

saying, "You had no choice but to be tough because there was no other way to get through it."

Eddie's father was a musician himself and he made sure that his children would carry on the torch, teaching them piano at a young age. Before Eddie ever discovered the guitar, he was winning piano competitions in Long Beach, California. It wasn't until he stumbled upon his brother, Alex, playing the guitar that he became a rocker. He got himself a drum kit and the brothers started their first band. It did not take long for them to realize their strengths, though, so they switched instruments, with Alex becoming the drummer and Eddie, the guitarist.

Eddie and Alex were in several bands throughout their schooling, eventually finding their way around the Southern California club circuit. In 1974, Michael Anthony joined the brothers to become their bassist and David Lee Roth came in on vocals. It was in fact Roth's idea to name the band "Van Halen", after they learned their original band name, "Mammoth", was already taken. For the next three years, Van Halen played bars and clubs in Los

Angeles, Santa Barbara and Pasadena. By 1977, they had become LA's most popular club act. Eddie instantly became the face of the band, recognized for his groundbreaking guitar technique. Before Van Halen even released their first album (*Van Halen I*), Eddie already had signed a guitar endorsement deal with *Kramer Guitars*. This led to the creation of one of rock's most iconic and recognized guitars.

In 1977, Van Halen signed with *Warner Records* and released *Van Halen I* in 1978. By the time *Van Halen II* came out, they were getting major radio air time. They released a record every year from '78 to '82 and on January 9th, 1984, they released their biggest album to date, 1984. After the 1984 tour, Roth left the band and Sammy Hagar picked up after him, joining the band at their zenith.

When Eddie died, Van Halen was



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still officially together. Roth had rejoined the band and their most recent tour had been in 2015. Eddie Van Halen completely changed the notion of playing guitar. His instrumental track, "Eruption," was just under 2 minutes long, but it changed rock music forever. In his mind, he was simply playing the guitar "like the piano," but listeners could hardly tell what they were hearing. His sound, in short, was beautiful chaos. Eddie was not just a rock legend, not just a guitar virtuoso, but he was a hero to kids around the world. His infectious smile, his laid-back attitude, and perhaps most memorably, his wit, made him one of the most lovable rockers of all time.

## Eddie Van Halen

By Peter Novinski, '21





# “The Cliffs of Moher”

*Ben Woods, 21.*

The cliffs slump to the sea

Heavy-eyed from years chiseled by the breath of frustrated time.

Still chaos underfoot I walk in silence

Bristling grey weeds like barbed wire to tender legs.

Soft mist shrouds the cliffs like a funeral veil

False footholds across the hungry void.

Far below headstrong waves rise; cold Spartan warriors

Throw themselves against the enemy wall to die in defeated roars

Their broken bodies collected again to die again to die again to die again.

Above they seem but toy soldiers

with painted frowns warring unamused God.

The world blinks as my chapped fingers glide

Roughly along the charged grey wire

Fencing oblivious goats chewing longingly at death.

I heard a story once where a man urinated on charged wire and died from electrocution.

I laughed at the idiocy but no more for looking on the cliffs I know

Imagination tantalizes.

I.

I don’t know what death is.

Blackness or brilliance or pain or peace or joy or violence

But imagination tantalizes.

Two friendly fast forgetful steps

Two simple smooth unresisted twitches

Separate everything and nothing

The brown wood and the black flame.

The world spins as the grass consumes my legs and

Stabs and worms like varicose veins.

Captive mind pendulums back and forth

Trapped by a twisted gypsy drunk on sickening fumes.

Bile rises as my insides writhe like twisted tentacles

In a gordian knot of throbbing panic.

Quickly I could jump from the rock and

Greet nothingness with a smile

As my mother screams my name in agony

Because I will know what no living person knows.

II.

I think I know what life is.

Life moves in bright colors and complexities and

All insignificant, gone with two forgetful footfalls.

The soccer ball but a couple sprinting steps away.

Closing in my mind thinks nothing but the spinning white orb

One more step and the cliffs open before me and

I plunge over the edge and fall

Violently embracing the void as I grasp for God.

The ball rolls out of bounds and the players keep playing as the world collapses

And demons curl warmly around my heart

Comforting me.

III.

I don’t know what life is.

Blackness or brilliance or pain or peace or joy or violence or

See the cliff towering over red steaming rotting Death

Another innocent dreaming demon

Gazing wide-eyed up with churning whatever.

Think of the horrible sucking kiss

Dragging him upwards to light and life as he begs to earless Satan

Long twisted claws desperate to scrape

His demon mother laughing his name in joy

A smile etched on her twisted cavernous face.

Two sides of a miserable coin

Alice wails through the looking glass as her

Double faceless tears drip down the shining mirror on the other side

Imagination tantalizes

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Sobered I remember something as I walk

Dry eyes gazing softly at the skies:

Imagination tantalizes but reality rarely satisfies.

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