

THE ABBEY: A SPECIAL PLACE YOU CAN ALWAYS CALL HOME

By Dr. Bill Thierfelder

While considering the meaning and purpose of a liberal arts education here at the Abbey, I came across a wonderful book written by Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman entitled *Historical Sketches*. In chapter eighteen, on Colleges, the Corrective of Universities, he captures the special feeling everyone expresses who visits or attends Belmont Abbey College. Although the Cardinal was writing in 1873, and describes an all-male college, I believe that what he wrote applies equally well to a co-ed college



shelter of the weak and inexperienced, who have still to learn how to cope with temptations which lie outside of it. It is the place of training for those who are not only ignorant, but have not yet learned how to learn, and who have to be taught, by careful individual trial, how to set about profiting by the lessons of the teacher. And it is the school of elementary studies, not of advanced; for such studies alone can boys at best apprehend and master. Moreover, it is the shrine of our best affections, the bosom of our fondest recollections, a spell

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like ours. The following excerpt beautifully describes a college, our college, as a home:

“It is then a household, and offers an abode to its members, and requires or involves the same virtuous and paternal discipline, which is proper to a family and home. Moreover, as no family can subsist without maintenance, and as children are dependent on their homes, so it is not unnatural that an endowment, which is, as I have said, suggested by the very idea of the college, should ordinarily be necessary for its actual carrying out. Still more necessary are buildings, and buildings of prominent character; for, whereas every family must have its dwelling, a family which has a recognized and official existence, must live in a sort of public building, which satisfies the eye, and is the enduring habitation of an enduring body.”

This portrait of a college captures much that is implied in the word “home.” As Cardinal Newman writes,

“This view of a college, which I have not been attempting to prove but to delineate, suggests to us the objects which a college is adapted to fulfill in a University. It is all, and does all, which is implied in the name of home. Youths, who have left the paternal roof, and traveled some hundred miles for the acquisition of knowledge, find an ‘altera Troja’ and ‘simulata Pergama’ at the end of their journey and in their place of temporary sojourn. Home is for the young, who know nothing of the world, and who would be forlorn and sad, if thrown upon it. It is the refuge of the helpless boyhood, which would be famished and pine away, if it were not maintained by others. It is the providential

upon our after life, a stay for world-weary mind and soul, wherever we are cast, till the end comes. Such are the attributes or offices of home, and like these, in one or other sense and measure, are the attributes and offices of a college in a University.”

It is in a home such as this, that a student can fully experience the blessing of a liberal arts education. I am most grateful to you for your continuing support in providing our students with endowed scholarships, beautiful buildings, and a faculty and staff that loves and mentors them like no other. You and your families remain in my daily thoughts and prayers and I look forward to welcoming you back “home” soon.

God bless,
Bill