



The Blue Jay



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With grace and candor, Fr. Fitzgerald share news of his diagnosis of ALS

President will step down at year's end

Ever a man of God, and expressing the hope that his faith embodies, Father Raymond Fitzgerald, S.J., began frankly: "Let's get the bad news out of the way."

Earlier this semester, the president of Jesuit High School shared that bad news with the school community. He has been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, known as ALS or "Lou Gehrig's disease."

"There is no cure and ALS proceeds to greater loss of muscle functions," he told a special assembly of the Blue Jay community on Jan. 15. As a result of the diagnosis, Father Fitzgerald said he will step down as president of the school at the end of this academic year.

The good news, however, he added, is that the illness does not affect cognitive functions and generally progresses at a gradual pace. In speaking directly with the community, he emphasized his willingness to discuss his condition. Even after stepping



Father Raymond Fitzgerald, S.J., addressed the Jesuit High School community at a special assembly last month to announce that he has been diagnosed with ALS, a progressively debilitating neuromuscular illness.

down as president, he hopes to remain at Jesuit for as long as his health allows.

He also told students that they need not define their relationship with him by this illness. There remain many other topics for conversation, he noted with his signature sense of humor: "New Orleans restaurants, the care and feeding of zombies, and Greek verbs, to name but three."

Expressing the hope and trust in God that our faith embodies, Father Fitzgerald quoted lines from the Suscipe, a prayer of St. Ignatius: "Give me only your love and your grace, and that is enough for me."

"It is true that God never fails to give us His love and grace," he said. For the students of Jesuit, he asked three things at this time.

"The first is your help. You have the strength that I will increasingly lack. Second, your prayers, something that we can always do for one another. The third, quite simply, is being yourselves; yourselves both as you are and as God is forming you to be."

Father Fitzgerald had shared

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'Jesuit is my bucket list'

The news of Father Raymond Fitzgerald's announcement of his diagnosis of ALS spread rapidly throughout the Jesuit community, to alumni, families and supporters of the school.

Among the reactions, the president of Jesuit's Board of Directors, Mr. Arthur Mann, recalled a conversation with Father Fitzgerald shortly after his medical diagnosis was confirmed in the fall.

"I met with Father to discuss where do we go from here," he said. "I was still trying to comprehend this incredibly sad news."

"I remember thinking that here is a priest, and a young priest, at that, but also a man with human needs," Mr. Mann said. "So I asked him if he had a 'bucket list,' something he wanted to do more than anything."

"His response was immediate and clear," Mr. Mann recalled. "'Being at Jesuit High School is my bucket list,' he told me. 'Every day is new, different, challenging and rewarding. This is what I want to do. I want to be with my family.'"

Continuing life in ministry, being with his Blue Jays, are president's chief goals

By Jack Caliva
and Brendan Besh
Staff Writers

Following the announcement of his medical diagnosis, Father Raymond Fitzgerald, S.J., has continued in one of what he has considered the greatest joys of being president: spending time with his Blue Jays. In the Commons before school or at lunch, at meetings with his Odd Instruments Orchestra, or in the courtyard after school, he has made a particular effort to be with the students of Jesuit High

School.

He sat down to chat with *The Blue Jay*, reflecting on the impact of his illness, but also on the many other aspects of life he continues to share with us all.

The recognition of his illness came about slowly.

"I started noticing some symptoms in mid-fall of 2012," he said. A diminished strength in his grip and a twitching in his arms began making it difficult to give out Communion or hold a pen.

At an annual checkup, his doctor noted that there could be many causes for

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Following a hearty round of applause, Father Fitzgerald was greeted by a number of students expressing their support and love.

'No limit to goodness except what we set for ourselves'

Fr. Fitzgerald
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the twitching and weakness, and sent Father Fitzgerald to a neurologist.

"The neurologist ran some tests. They ruled out that it could be a tumor, which is good, and did another series of tests, and at the end of which he gave me his best diagnosis and suggested I get a second opinion on this," he said. "But the other neurologist confirmed the diagnosis."

Since that diagnosis in June, his doctors have stressed that the illness is never exactly the same in every person. "The symptoms are not progressing with huge rapidity but they are moving in a certain direction," Father Fitzgerald said. He is undergoing exercise and physical therapy to maintain muscle use as long as possible, and is taking medication that has shown success in slowing the rate of deterioration.

As he noted in his address to the student body, he remains open to discussing his condition but also to "not discussing it, as well."

His commitment to Jesuit, Class of '76, remains as strong as ever, he emphasized.

"First off, this is where I am assigned to be; that does figure into it," he said. Jesuit also is where he wants to be, serving as a leader, a teacher, and as a priest.

"The 'bucket list' things aren't really the way I think. For other people, that might be meaningful and I am happy for them," Father Fitzgerald said. "When asked if there is a place that I really, really want to see, I'd have to say no. It's nothing exotic."

"If you asked what makes me happy, it would be the kinds of things I am able to do here and the kinds of people who are here; such as the C.S. Lewis class, the conversation one has in the Commons, or being a priest in this context, the ministry and life I've dealt with most of my life," he said. "That is one thing I desire to do."

Exercising his priestly ministry, whether by celebrating the Eucharist, offering spiritual direction or just sharing in a conversation of faith, also remains among his greatest joys, he said.

As he said at the special assembly, another hot topic of conversation in his hometown must be dining.

"As a New Orleanian, I enjoy eating, and luckily we have a few places that can accommodate that," he said with a smile. "I am also blessed with the Jesuit community we have here and time to spend with my Jesuit brothers, living together in the same community I have certainly found a blessing during my assignment here."

Sharing a passion for movies and reading, we asked for a list of books that everyone should read.

"That's almost a completely



Father Raymond Fitzgerald, S.J., enjoys one of his favorite activities, spending time chatting with students in the Commons. He often can be found there before school, during lunch or in the afternoons after the bell has rung.

Staff photo by Jack Caliva

What is ALS?

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. Motor neurons reach from the brain to the spinal cord and to the muscles throughout the body. As ALS leads to the degeneration of these neurons, they can no longer send impulses to muscle fibers that normally result in muscle movement. This weakens the muscles, potentially leading to paralysis.

The disease first gained notoriety when it struck New York Yankee **Lou Gehrig** in 1939. It is often called 'Lou Gehrig's disease.' It is the same illness that now afflicts former New Orleans Saints player **Steve Gleason**.

ALS is not contagious. Approximately 5,600 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with

ALS each year. The incidence of ALS is two per 100,000 people, and it is estimated that as many as 30,000 Americans may have the disease at any given time.

Although the cause of ALS is not completely understood, the recent years have brought a wealth of new scientific understanding regarding the physiology of this disease. While there is not a cure or treatment today that halts or reverses ALS, there is one FDA approved drug that slows the progression of ALS. Several other drugs now in clinical trials also hold promise.

For more information, visit ALSA.org or teamgleason.org

Compiled from the ALS Association.

different conversation. It kind of depends on what people are interested in, and then we could go from there," he said.

"Well let's see, though, I can do favorite authors. Honoré de Balzac would be my all-time favorite author. P.G. Wodehouse, an English writer of comic novels and short stories; and Charles Dickens, I have always been a fan of him. Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas always have a way of getting you into a wonderful world.

"I'm a big fan of St. Augustine, anything he wrote or preached; and theologically I like the Patristic era, which is a group of 5th and 6th century writers," he said. For contemporary theology, he likes Anglican scripture scholar N.T. Wright, and German historical theologian, Martin Hengel, "who really has a magisterial study on the New Testament."

"And anything Cardinal Ratzinger/Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote is great."

"For genres, it's really eclectic; I like mysteries and historical

novels."

Before leaving the presidency at the end of the school year, Father Fitzgerald said he hopes to further some key accomplishments, including finishing out the year strongly.

"I want to move ahead on strategic planning, and look towards how the endowment might be enhanced to give us another income stream, so that the rise of tuition might be mitigated," he said. "We are working on another master plan for the building as we get it ready for its upcoming 100th anniversary. All of these will occupy a lot of my time, but these would have happened anyway because this is what one does in a third year."

Since becoming president in 2011, Father Fitzgerald also has been able to return to the classroom, co-teaching the popular class on the writings and theology of C.S. Lewis. The message of much of Lewis' writings has gained particular resonance now.

"At certain points, when reading over for class, I would think, 'That was well put, there.'"

One of the great things about C.S. Lewis, in either one of his direct works like *Mere Christianity* or in a fiction work, is that what he is describing is applicable in any stage of his life.

"While some things may point to certain interests, like Eschatology (the study of the end of time), and I may have had that, but, on the other hand, speaking about wanting to live a heavenly life now is true all the time."

"It was a great experience and one of the great things about literature like C.S. Lewis, an author that you should read every 10 years or so, is that different things will pop out to the reader. What was particularly great about that class was having a room full of people discussing a book that gets the energy going and gets to the power of literature and having an excess of meaning around."

This summer's pilgrimage to South America to World Youth Day with 35 Jesuit students and about a dozen other chaperones also took on special meaning for Father Fitzgerald, coming just

after having received his diagnosis.

"World Youth Day and the pilgrimage before that was such a privileged and a particularly graced time, especially with the news I had received before," he said. "You have to bring something to prayer on pilgrimage and this is as good a thing as any. And seeing the great example on that pilgrimage left me very consoled."

Along with being in the presence of Pope Francis at Rio de Janeiro, of course, a number of smaller moments were especially moving, he said.

"What I was moved by the most was an evening Mass we had at Trinidad in Paraguay. Saying Mass in the sanctuary of one of our Jesuit Reductions is something that you just never think you would be able to do."

Celebrating that Mass under the stars, or taking in wondrous natural sites, such as the famous Iguacu Falls, were natural highlights of the pilgrimage.

"But something that really meant a lot to me that wasn't a big ticket item was just the cumulative effect of looking around the bus and it being a remarkably good group of people. This is really something. And the joy I found in that group and not thinking, 'When is the spell going to break?'"

Father Fitzgerald said he saw on the pilgrimage an "open-endedness of grace."

"There really is no limit to goodness except what we set for ourselves," he said. "The dynamic of the group and the sort of ways that different individuals would impress me each day just grew every day."

"It is like the great end to the C.S. Lewis novel, *The Last Battle*. It's a story that never ends and each chapter is better than the one before."

President

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the news the day before with the faculty and staff of the school, before the public announcement was made.

Earlier, he had conferred with the Board of Directors to inform them that he would be stepping down at the end of the school year.

Father Anthony McGinn, S.J., Father Fitzgerald's predecessor, will return as president this summer while the board conducts its search for the next president.

Father Fitzgerald concluded, telling the student body to "harbor no doubts about how good you are and can be; harbor no doubts about what a source of encouragement, joy and consolation you are to me."

Despite the diagnosis of ALS, he emphasized that God has given him an abundance of blessings.

"Among the greatest of these is sharing these years with you."

Blue Jays face blizzard to make stand for life

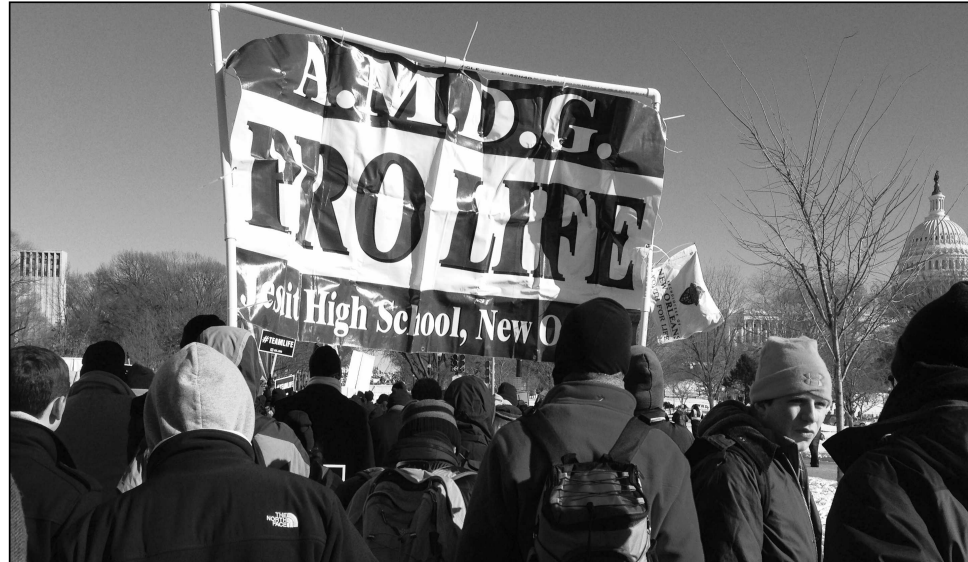
By Jack Caliva
Editor-in-Chief

Reporter's notebook

A little ice and sleet might shut down roads and bridges here at home, but even an arctic blizzard couldn't deter a flock of Blue Jays - along with approximately 400,000 others - from marching to protest abortion in our nation's capital.

The Pro-Life Club returned to Washington, D.C., last month for the 41st annual March for Life. The march commemorates the Supreme Court's 1973 decision of *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion in the United States. The number of abortions that have occurred since that decision is estimated at more than 57 million in the United States alone.

Our group of 54, which included students, faculty members and alumni, arrived in a frigid Washington on Jan. 18. We first traveled to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. There we witnessed firsthand the atrocities committed throughout Europe by the Nazis against Jews and other targeted groups. Many were moved during this experience and saw the underlying con-



Blue and white banners were raised high in Washington, D.C., last month as members of the Jesuit Pro-Life Club joined hundreds of thousands of others in the 41st annual March for Life. More than 50 members of the Jesuit community, including students, faculty and alumni, weathered the single-digit cold to speak out against abortion on the anniversary of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade*.

Staff photo by Jack Caliva

nections between the Holocaust and the modern horrors brought about through abortion.

Louisiana has been called the most pro-life state in the union. In D.C., that was evident. We participated in *Geaux Forth*, an event sponsored by the

Louisiana Right to Life for the many young people from the Bayou State gathered for the march. Various speakers told of ways the next generation of leaders can take an active part in the pro-life movement.

On Tuesday morning, we

joined our colleagues from Jesuit Tampa to hear from noted commentator and writer George Weigel and other members of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. Weigel is best known for his comprehensive biography of the soon-to-be canonized Pope John

Paul II. The EPPC is a group of scholars in Washington who discuss and write about the country through the lens of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The members of EPPC discussed the abortion

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Senior Besh cooks up passion for Pro-Life cause

By Jack Caliva
Editor-in-Chief

I caught up with Brendan Besh on a brisk morning in Washington, D.C., hotel lobby. He was drinking a coffee from Starbucks and eating some sort of pastry. (Not likely up to the standards of a pastry made by his father, who you may have heard of.)

We were in the nation's capital for the annual March for Life with the Pro-Life Club. Brendan is that club's president. He is very involved in not only the local Pro-Life movement but also in a lot of aspects of life within the Jesuit community.

When he's not out on the pitch or leading Pro-Life Club meetings you can find him pondering life and *The Catcher in the Rye*, or talking about Arthurian legends, whenever he can fit them into the conversation.

The Blue Jay: Can I get your autograph or your dad's autograph?

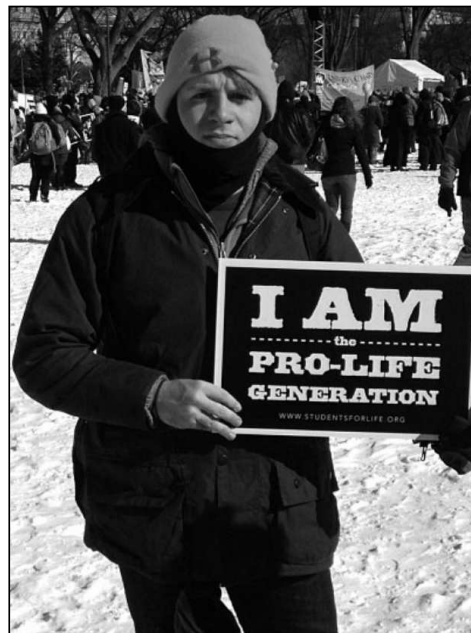
Brendan Besh: You'd have to take that to my secretary, Cullen Walsh. He handles all my personal go-betweens and appointments, including those with my family.

TBJ: How is this year going so far?

BB: It's going well! I love all of my classes and teachers and it's been great getting to know my classmates even more.

TBJ: What have you been involved in at Jesuit and specifically this year?

BB: Pro-Life Club, National Honor Society, the rugby team, Campus Ministry, the newspaper, Sodality, and Peer Support,



Senior
Brendan Besh participated in January's March for Life in Washington, D.C., helping to lead a contingent of Blue Jays from the Pro-Life Club. Being president of that club represents only a portion of this Blue Jay of the Month's many interests.

to name a few.

TBJ: Do you have any favorite moments from this year or this summer?

BB: I enjoyed my service project and especially my time on World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro.

TBJ: Do you have a favorite moment from World Youth Day?

BB: Probably our time in Paraguay at Santa Maria de Fe, and when we hiked up the hill for Mass and prayed the Stations of the Cross.

TBJ: Is there anything in particular you want to do differently with the Pro-Life Club this year?

BB: I want to organize a second pro-life week this semester in order to increase awareness and help spread activism throughout the school. This semester also will have many presentations and a revamped oratory contest. We also just got back from an incredible March for Life. We participated in the Mass for Life, and *Geaux Forth*. We also got to visit the

Holocaust Museum, and participate in the march all with a beautiful six inches of snow.

TBJ: Speaking of snow, you live in the dirty 'dell. Is it a pain getting to school every day?

BB: I mean, with a cup of black coffee and the Beatles blaring in the truck with my trusty co-pilot Tommy Yun at shotgun, it isn't too bad! It gets tiring, but it's completely worth the drive.

TBJ: What is your favorite movie, book, TV show, and celebrity chef?

BB: *The Matrix* trilogy, *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck, *Downton Abbey* and *The Office*, and John Besh.

TBJ: Your dad is a well-known local and national chef. Is it weird seeing him around on television and having people know who he is.

BB: It's weird but I've gotten used to it. It's surprising to me that people actually pay so much attention to local chefs.

TBJ: What's your opinion on bread pudding?

BB: It's not my favorite.

TBJ: What's your favorite Besh restaurant and menu item there?

BB: Probably the clams pizza at Domenica or the pork empanadas at Borgne.

TBJ: I imagine meals at your house being like a meal at Downton Abbey. Are they as good as we think they are?

BB: Well, we don't wear tails and we happen to be short of a second footman at the moment. But the meals do happen to be as great as you might imagine!

TBJ: What do you enjoy doing outside of school?

BB: I enjoy reading, hanging out with my

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Restoration to the richly detailed stained glass windows are among the renovations coming in the Holy Name of Jesus Chapel.

Renovations on tap in Holy Name Chapel

By William Fine
Staff Writer

With the beautiful and historic stained glass windows and its inviting atmosphere of solemn serenity, the Holy Name of Jesus Chapel is one of Jesuit's treasures.

Father Raymond Fitzgerald, S.J., has called the "small chapel," as it is known by most in the community, the spiritual heart of the school.

To maintain its beauty as a place of worship for years to come, Jesuit has embarked on a new capital campaign project to renovate the chapel. Hoping to raise \$500,000, the drive already has received \$70,000 in pledges.

The planned renovations include refurbishment of every part of the historic chapel, from

repairing cracks in the pews to restoring the rare paintings on the walls. Since its opening on the Carrollton and Banks campus in 1926, the chapel has never been redone to this level.

The renovation is expected to take nine months, with the major work beginning at the end of this academic year. The hope is to keep the chapel open throughout the process, but if it does close, functions normally held there, such as daily morning Mass, will move to the Chapel of North American Martyrs.

The administrative wing is also expected to stay open throughout the project.

Pamphlets detailing the renovation plans are available outside the president's office.

One renovation, according to Father Fitzgerald, that is expected to be particularly pleasing: "There will be pads on the pews, by popular demand."

Arcade Fire's latest shows indie band's artistic growth

By Cameron Martinez
Staff Writer

Arcade Fire is one of the world's biggest indie rock bands, not only in their popularity worldwide (having won the Grammy for Album of the Year in 2011 for their previous album, *The Suburbs*) but also, literally, in size.

For the group's newest album, *Reflektor*, it expanded to a 10-piece ensemble, adding two Haitian percussionists to the mix. They joined lead singer and guitarist Win Butler, his wife, Haitian singer Regine Chassagne, multi-instrumentalist Will Butler (who moves from keyboard to drums to bass without hesitation), a bassist, lead guitarist, drummer, and two violinists. Local fans will get a chance to hear the group live at this year's annual Jazz and Heritage Festival.

Some might think this multitude is unnecessary, but listening to the skill with which the band incorporates all these instruments into quasi-orchestral harmony, weaving melodies in and out, one not only understands but scorns other comparable bands for not achieving similar sonic unity on such a grand scale.

The album starts with the single, "Reflektor," a 7-minute-long, eerie-disco song about technology and modern society's obsession with it. Rock legend and longtime Arcade Fire fan David Bowie joins in on backup vocals. The first disc continues with more disco-esque songs, such as the bass-driven "We Exist" and the reggae-funk "Flashbulb Eyes," all the while giving us the hauntingly beautiful

Music review

lyrics Arcade Fire always delivers. The last three songs of this disc have more of a rock feel.

The first of these, "Normal Person," is in the vein of The Rolling Stones and is one of my personal favorites, with hard-hitting guitar riffs wailing over Butler asking, "I'm so confused, am I a normal person?" and concluding by the end that he's "never really ever met a normal person." The last two songs, "You Already Know" and "Joan of Arc," keep up the energy of "Normal Person" and close out the first album in a blaze.

The second disc of *Reflektor* steps back from the dance sound of the first disc and hits hard with Arcade Fire's emotional depth. The first song, "Here Comes the Night Time II," exemplifies this emotion with simple, beautiful chords and lyrics.

"It's Never Over (Oh Orpheus)" conveys themes of love, loss, and isolation through the mythical story of Orpheus

and Eurydice and juxtaposes the simplistic beauty of the chorus with the overlapping rhythmic melodies and multipart harmonies of the verse, including some of the most moving music Arcade Fire has produced.

Its counterpart, on the other hand, "Awful Sound (Oh Eurydice)," is one of the weaker songs on the album because it attempts too much and falls short. "Supersymmetry" is an unnecessary final track that taxes the listener's attention at the end of an already lengthy album. Though enamored with Greek mythology, Arcade Fire fails to avoid the dangers of self-indulgence.

Verdict: This is not an album for the weak of heart. Coming in at a running time of an hour and 15 minutes, it would be folly not to call this 13-song double EP (with only four songs under 5 minutes in length) epic. Despite its lukewarm and frustrating ending, *Reflektor* is an otherwise great album, arguably the best of the genre this year. It's a long journey, but a worthwhile one.

March

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laws being passed across the country and the effects of the president's health care plan from both the state and national level.

That night, we attended the Mass for the Unborn at the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception on the campus of the Catholic University of America. The Mass was concelebrated by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, the archbishop of Washington, D.C., and Cardinal Sean O'Malley, OFM Cap., the archbishop of Boston.

In his stirring homily, Cardinal O'Malley compared the selling of abortion to the fairy tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Under the guise of the "right to choose," abortion advocates are selling something that does not exist and making all of us the fools.

Other highlights of the trip included seeing all the snow - a rare sight for most of the students - as well as time spent on the National Mall and at the various

museums of the Smithsonian Institution. We also visited the sacred grounds of Arlington National Cemetery, and took a nighttime tour of the various national monuments.

Over the course of the weekend, the weather slowly worsened. At first, we encountered merely cold temperatures in the mid- to upper-30s. But an arctic blast drove the mercury down to single digits. By the morning of the March for Life, the thermometer read 7 degrees.

But this inclement weather did not deter anyone's spirits. With an estimated 400,000 others on Wednesday morning, we trekked from the National Mall to the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court. And the snow that had fallen overnight only made the Mall look that much better.

Following the march, our group returned to the hotel to collect luggage and head to the airport for the flight home.

Despite the weather delays plaguing much of the country, we were blessed to arrive home on time at 10 p.m. Wednesday, ready to come back to school to tell about this moving experience.

Besh

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family, pro-life work. I've also started acting and will appear in Dominican's spring musical, *Hello, Dolly*.

TBJ: I heard you can dance a mean polka.

BB: No mas polka, por favor.

TBJ: Is it true that you initials are BBB?

BB: Brendan Broseph Besh.

TBJ: Favorite teacher?

BB: Coach Chapoton, Mr. Reuther, Mr. Rossi, and Mr.

Wyss.

TBJ: What colleges are you looking at and what are you considering as a major?

BB: I'm looking at LSU, Fordham, University of Dallas, the College of William and Mary, Boston College, and Notre Dame. I plan to study political science or history. And I eventually plan on going to law school.

TBJ: Do you have any parting words or advice for the Blue Jays audience?

BB: "Don't ever tell anybody anything; if you do, you end up missing everybody."

TBJ: Thanks, Holden Caufield.

The Blue Jay Editorial Board Editor-in-Chief

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4133 Banks St., New Orleans La. 70119 (504) 483-3873