Truth, Goodness, and Beauty
By Chip Denton

Trinity’s motto is Veritas, Bonitas, Pulchritudo. Around Trinity, even those with no Latin have learned how to translate this: Truth, Goodness, Beauty.

Each of these three bears sustained attention. What do we mean by “truth”? Can you teach goodness? Where is beauty in our curriculum? But my purpose here is to look at them together. They form a triad that spans not the whole of human experience but a large enough swath of it to remind us that we are complex creatures capable of a rich array of relationships. A good education ought to honor the whole person as created in the image of God. We are intellectual beings (Truth); we are moral beings (Goodness); and we are aesthetic beings (Beauty). Ignore any one of these, and Trinity would offer a lopsided education. So one of the values of our motto is that it reminds us, as Charlotte Mason liked to say, that education is the science of relations and that we human beings have the capacity to form relationships with all manner of people and things (art and nature, for instance). We celebrate a rich education.

These three (Truth, Goodness, and Beauty) have quite a history. They go back to the Greeks, and Christians like Augustine brought them into the theological tradition of the early church. Thomas Aquinas extended this thinking in his Summa, and there is a deep and rich tradition of Catholic thinking about these three. Works like Étienne Gilson’s The Arts of the Beautiful are profound explorations into the nature of these three.

I keep calling them “these three” because we lack a really suitable name for them, considered together. Fine names have been suggested (see below), but none has caught on like, say, “Trinity” has for the Three-Personed One God of Christian theology. Still, the names that have been suggested, while not particularly helpful for marketing purposes, are excellent windows into the nature and value of these three and remind us why we continue to honor them by placarding them all over our stationery and across the frosted glass outside my office.

The Permanent Things

This expression, I am told, comes from T.S. Eliot, who passed it on to his friend Russell Kirk. Kirk believed that Truth, Goodness, and Beauty were part of an order of reality:

There is an order which holds all things in their places: ...it is made for us, and we are made for it. The thinking conservative, far from denying the existence of this eternal order, endeavors to ascertain its nature and to conform to that order, which is the source of the Permanent Things.

This calls to mind C.S. Lewis’s claim that there are two possible ways with the self: we can try to shape reality to conform to the self (a modern or post-modern project); or we can try to conform the self to reality (the classical and Christian project). All of these thinkers regarded Truth, Goodness, and Beauty as realities against which the wise person would measure and adjust herself. Cultures change, ideas go in and out of fashion, but some things are permanent and are thus worthy of our greatest attention. Such a notion would explain, for instance, why geometry is still (since the Greeks) an essential part of most school

See “Truth” on page 2

Read Dr. Denton’s blog at www.pedagogblog.blogspot.com.
Building Library,
to see you there. Thursday, October 18, 8:30–9:30 a.m., South
you. You will be glad you made the time, and we'll be so delighted
group discussion will lead you, stretch you, and encourage
get to it before the 18th, please do come. The panel of wise folks
available in the South Building lobby. Even if you cannot possibly
summer. Didn't read it? It's short—you still can! Copies are
that we used it to begin conversations with our children this
explore the messages within Tolstoy's book and the unique ways
be truly generous, sometimes sacrificially so. At the October 18
leave behind. It helped our family to verbalize what it looks like to
men.

The Eternal Verities

On September 13, 1922, a young man stood before the trustees, faculty, and students of a new Christian school called the Stony Brook School. That man was Frank Gaeblein, who went on to serve as Stony Brook's headmaster for 41 years. Dr. Gaeblein set forth a vision for the school:
an enterprise built upon the foundational truths of Christianity. These are the great and abiding things—the eternal verities. Our contemporary philosophy, a large part of our religious thought, is colored by the idea of relativism, the endless ebb and flow of things. Yet the great truths remain. They are immutable, abiding—as much more firmly fixed than the mountains as the infinite transcends the finite. They cannot be shaken; they constitute “the everlasting yea.”

I had not heard this expression before I read Dr. Gaeblein’s address, but I found it later in a Puritan prayer

republished in The Valley of Vision. Wherever it came from, it is an apt phrase to capture the essence of our motto. Truth, Goodness, and Beauty “remain” and “abide.” Our investment in them is our best investment, sure to last, never to fade.

The Great Transcendents

This is my favorite tag for our motto, but it is surely the least marketable. I have been told never to use a word like “transcendent” in a public setting. I refuse to concede the point, but I will admit that it is readily misunderstood. To transcend is to pass across some important and seemingly impassable divide. Christians will be familiar with the expression, from Paul, of the “peace that transcends all understanding.” Paul’s meaning is that all the understanding in the world will not get you across the Great Divide from anxiety and fear to peace. That requires faith and prayer, which allow us to cross that Great Divide.

So it is with Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. They allow us, in an imperfect but real way, to cross over a Great Divide between this ephemeral and contingent world into the Reality that is the heart of all that is. Truth, Goodness, and Beauty give us glimpses of this reality. Or we might say they give us traces. N.T. Wright calls them “clues.” They whisper into our ears that there is another Reality beyond the one we live in all day long. They suggest to our souls, “This is not all there is.”

Think for a moment of the beauty of music. Physicist and theologian John Polkinghorne speaks of the mystery of music as a “window into reality.” He asks a profound question: “From a scientific point of view, it is nothing but vibrations in the air, impinging on the eardrums and stimulating neural currents in the brain. How does it come about that this banal sequence of temporal activity has the power to speak to our hearts of an eternal beauty?” The connections we make to this eternal realm are brief and passing, but they are powerful. As C.S. Lewis attested in his autobiography, Surprised by Joy, one will spend a lifetime searching for that connection to the permanent, eternal transcendent.

Our goal at Trinity is to set children and young adults up for the making of these connections. We cannot orchestrate them, but we can set the table, so to speak. Our job is to make sure that the spread is rich, full of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. And surely it is one of the best jobs in the world to watch as the neurons fire and the Spirit moves.

TPO In the Know

The President’s Corner

By Julie Burson

Soon the leaves on the trees will be showering us with their hidden colors and summer will seem distant, except for a few distinct memories. I hope that for you and your children, Two Old Men made the type of lasting impression that the very best books leave behind. It helped our family to verbalize what it looks like to be truly generous, sometimes sacrificially so. At the October 18 TPO Third Thursday meeting for all parents, we’ll get a chance to explore the messages within Tolstoy’s book and the unique ways that we used it to begin conversations with our children this summer. Didn’t read it? It’s short—you still can! Copies are available in the South Building lobby. Even if you cannot possibly get to it before the 18th, please do come. The panel of wise folks and a group discussion will lead you, stretch you, and encourage you. You will be glad you made the time, and we’ll be so delighted to see you there. Thursday, October 18, 8:30–9:30 a.m., South Building Library, Two Old Men.

Run for Mukhanyo

Monday, October 8

Students and faculty will be running to support Mukhanyo Christian Academy in South Africa. This is a wonderful, student-led opportunity for the Trinity community to exercise generosity. Please send in your donations in your child’s “Run for Mukhanyo” water bottle on Monday.
What’s Happening

Flu Clinic Tuesday
October 9, 12:30–3:30 p.m.

The Trinity flu clinic will be held Tuesday, October 9, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the Great Room. Please bring your insurance card if you qualify for a free flu shot. Otherwise, the cost of the flu shot is $25, payable in cash or by check made out to Maxim Health. If you have questions, please contact Cheryl Blake, School Nurse, at cblake@tsdch.org.

Headmaster’s Dinner
October 13, 7–9 p.m.

You are invited to attend the fifth annual Headmaster’s Dinner on Saturday, October 13, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education in Chapel Hill. Headmaster Chip Denton will reflect on one essential element of a Trinity education, something that brought the first families to Trinity and that keeps so many of our families here today. This will be a wonderful evening.

Family Science Night
October 24, 7–8 p.m.

Trinity School will hold Family Science Night on Wednesday, October 24, from 7 to 8 p.m. in the Blue Gym. This will be a night of fun, hands-on science activities for Lower School students. It is a family event, with activities designed for parents and children working together to explore science with a little direction from Middle and Upper School students. Activities may include opportunities to use microscopes or do some exciting simple chemistry. If you have questions, contact Matt Hall at mhall@tsdch.org.

Trinity Family Directory Is Now Online
Access the directory via the Parent and Faculty/Staff Portals

The Trinity online family directory has been launched! You can now search online for the names and current contact information of Trinity families, faculty, and staff. To access the directory, log into your portal account and click on the word “Directory” on the left-hand banner. To view written instructions for using the online directory, click here or go to the Trinity home page and click on the Parents tab, then on Portal Access & Navigation Instructions.

Congratulations to the following seniors, who have been nominated for scholarships:

Grace French: Levine Scholarship, UNC-Charlotte
Alex Gould: Belk Scholarship, Davidson College
Ren Jacques: Park Scholarship, NC State
Arwen LaDine: Park Scholarship, NC State
Bryn Morgan: Morehead-Cain Scholarship, UNC–Chapel Hill; Danforth Scholars Program, Washington University in St. Louis
Sarah Spencer: Morehead-Cain Scholarship, UNC–Chapel Hill; National Merit Scholarship (semifinalist)

Above: Lower School students use iPads in Latin class
Below: The face painting station at the Family Fun Fest
Upper School Jazz Ensemble: A First for Trinity School

This year the Upper School is providing something new for interested music students through the creation of a course dedicated to instrumental jazz. Although some jazz has been incorporated into instrumental education at Trinity in the past, this year’s course, provided in two semester-long modules, focuses exclusively on jazz, its history, jazz dialects, theory, and improvisation techniques. Why jazz? What does it teach beyond just another art form? How does jazz education prepare a Trinity student for lifelong music participation? What skills learned in the jazz classroom benefit a student outside the classroom?

In a recent online article (“Jazz Education in the Century of Change: Beyond the Music”), Dave Liebman, founder and artistic director of the International Association of Schools of Jazz (IASJ) and jazz professor at Manhattan School of Music, relates specific jazz skills to life skills. For instance, when a student learns the skill of spontaneous improvising during performance, Liebman states, it exposes a “level of personal honesty” in that person in both a spiritual and physical way. Since it is impossible to mask or hide when improvising, a truth about the performer is revealed. This focus on honesty requires jazz performers to stand on their own knowledge and encourages humility.

Regarding soloing as a jazz skill, Liebman connects two important life skills: leadership, the ability to follow, and the ability to work within a group while maintaining individuality. When playing jazz solos, it is important to be able to take charge when necessary, but it is equally important to know when to relinquish control and recognize another’s authority. In a similar vein, throughout a jazz performance, a musician is working with the group to create a unified sound, yet at the same time finding moments to express his or her individual voice. Jazz musicians must constantly synthesize and incorporate information in a fluid and creative way. Liebman relates these skills to the concepts of leadership, the ability to follow, and clarity of thought.

Improvising and learning to play from a lead sheet require skills beyond reading music. A jazz musician must understand the theory behind the music, its chord structure and modes, its form, and its style. He or she needs to develop a discerning ear, a willingness to experiment, and an acceptance that there may be many solutions to a problem. Learning to play jazz develops confidence, fosters trust, and gives outlet to the imagination. It links us to our American heritage and to the roots of the popular music we listen to today. Jazz is an accepted and practiced art form all over the world. It is ever evolving and constantly changing.

While some of our Trinity students may continue music or jazz studies in college, the reality is that the majority will not. Despite this fact, the skills learned in jazz ensemble will serve our students well as they venture into a rapidly changing, more globalized world.
Truth, Goodness, and Beauty in Varsity Volleyball
By Coach Jenni Allen

On the Saturday morning of the “Volley with the Knights” tournament in Raleigh, Trinity’s Varsity Volleyball team yawned its way through the doors of North Raleigh Christian Academy’s gym. It was early, 7 a.m., and we were all exhausted. We hadn’t returned to Durham the night before until after 11 p.m.

Trinity was among 20 varsity teams preparing for a physically exhausting day. Looking around, it was clear that every school did “preparation” differently. The hallways were a maze of kneepads and fishbone braids. Sleeping bags and bodies were scattered throughout every corner of the building. Our girls were finally able to find a small nook by the locker rooms where we could all squeeze together for our pre-match devotional. It was noisy and cramped, but our captains led us in a prayer and a reading from Philippians 4 as we huddled with our heads close together to hear.

Just before finishing, a Hickory Grove dad caught sight of our team as he made his way to the main gym. He poked his head into our nook and simply stated, “Now, there’s a team,” before disappearing out of sight.

Later that day, this same father spotted my orange jacket as we both made our way to the cafeteria. We chatted briefly about volleyball, about his daughter, and about our standings before he asked me, “How do you get them to want to pray together?”

As if the answer had anything to do with me.
Truth, Goodness, and Beauty in MS Gold Volleyball
By Coach Janet Ray

The MS Gold Volleyball team is a group of girls learning what it means to be a team. Our biggest focus this season has been to communicate well. Of course, communication about volleyball during a match is important, but the communication that most delights my heart is of a different kind.

Not only have these girls come together to play volleyball well, but they have also come together to encourage and love each other well. I love it when Alex cheers for her teammates, when Kathryn reminds everyone that we can do this, when Elise gently guides her teammates on the court, when Madison serves and knows she is in a zone, when Heather hits the floor to dig a ball and comes up to a sea of smiles from her teammates, when Anna puts a hit down the line and knows it was a great hit, when McCauley puts that ball over the net that we thought for sure would land on our side, when Daizha gets just the right set for her left-handed hit, when Addison takes the set and puts it right in the hole on the other side, when Alyvia enters the game to serve, cool as a cucumber, and puts the ball over the net. They didn’t start the season this way. They were 10 girls who wanted to play volleyball. Now they are a team that communicates and cares for each other well. Truth, goodness and beauty: the Middle School Gold Volleyball girls have plenty of it, inside and out!

Go Lions!