When Pope Francis addressed a joint session of the U.S. Congress on September 24, St. Ambrose Academy classes were put on hold, and students and faculty gathered in the St. Thomas Aquinas parish social hall to watch the pope live on the EWTN Internet feed. There was one student, however, who missed the gathering. Sophomore Mary Donohoe was on her way to New York City to see the pope in person. She traveled with a group of high school girls organized by members of the Milwaukee-based Petawa Residence and Cultural Center.

The girls and their chaperones left the Petawa Residence early on September 24, driving first to New York City, where they had tickets for the papal procession in Central Park on September 25.

“It was so powerful to see hundreds of thousands of Americans come together to see Pope Francis,” Mary said. “He brings such a message of mercy and joy, especially related to the Church’s teaching about the family.”

In Philadelphia, the girls stayed at the monastery of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary and participated in events at the World Meeting of Families, including the Papal Mass on Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

“I was so happy to see how much Pope Francis interacted directly with all the people in the crowd,” Mary said. “This was such a whirlwind trip, and I feel so blessed to have been able to see the Holy Father in person.”

Starting this fall, the St. Ambrose Academy Development Office will feature some new folks hard at work to ensure that the school’s resources keep pace with its enrollment growth.

Joe Draves, who brings seven years’ experience in Catholic development working for Relevant Radio, is St. Ambrose Academy’s new Development Director. Joe has a Bachelor of Business Administration from UW-Madison and a Masters of Theological Studies from Ave Maria University’s Institute for Pastoral Theology. Joe and his wife Julie are the homeschooling parents of five children, and will be relocating to the Madison area from Appleton.

“I’m excited by the broad support that St. Ambrose enjoys today,” says Joe. “My hopes for this year are to create strong friendships that will inspire even greater support for the school and our students.”

Alumna Bridget Wittwer (SAA ‘12) has joined the office as the new Associate Development Director, replacing Michael Bowden (SAA ‘10), who is now a full-time faculty member. Bridget, who has a degree in Event Planning, and her husband Nick live in Spring Green with their 5-month-old son John.

Following the arrival of her third child, Teresa Guadalupe, in August, Laura Karlen has assumed the role of Senior Development Associate. Kim Donohoe, previously Associate Development Director, will be helping the office as a volunteer as she homeschools her son Jack this school year.
New Faculty Profile: Emily Hilts

In the first few weeks of teaching at St. Ambrose, science and math teacher Emily Hilts has enjoyed getting a crash course in humanities-related topics from her colleagues on the St. Ambrose faculty. “I’m gaining a whole new appreciation for The Iliad!” she laughs.

With a degree in wildlife ecology from UW-Madison, Miss Hilts is most at home with science and math. Her passion for biology—inspired by childhood family trips to Chicago’s Shedd Aquarium—and love of the outdoors led to her undergraduate research of invasive species in the lakes of northern Wisconsin near her hometown of Marathon. To balance her research experience, Miss Hilts also worked in communications for the UW Limnology department and as an intern after graduation at St. Paul’s on the UW campus. With this background, teaching at St. Ambrose was a logical choice for Miss Hilts.

“I always thought science was so beautiful and amazing that I just wanted to tell people about it,” she says, “and if I’m going to tell people about the world, I want to tell them about God.”

Miss Hilts teaches middle school math, algebra, and life science, and high school biology. She is engaged to be married in May 2016 to John Prez- zia, a FOCUS missionary at Loras College in Dubuque this year.

Her first month on the faculty has met all her expectations: “I just really love being around the kids!”

St. Ambrose Benefactors
Jim & Wendy Delaney

We caught up recently with St. Ambrose friend Jim Delaney. Jim is the second-generation co-owner of Delaney’s Restaurant (experiencedelaneyes.com) on Madison’s west side. He also owns Delaney Financial (delaneyfi.com), which specializes in financial strategies for businesses and families for retirement income streams, wealth building, estate organization, key person and life insurance. Jim and his wife Wendy found out about St. Ambrose at the very beginning through Jim’s cousin and current faculty member Patrick Delaney.

SAA: Jim, why is the Catholic classical education at St. Ambrose important to you as a Catholic, even though you don’t have children to send to the school?

Jim Delaney: Roman Catholic classical education is extremely important to us because of the intelligent and faithful students it produces. Our observation is that St. Ambrose students graduate with purpose and direction. The Roman Catholic education provides them with a solid catechism-based faith, self-worth and an appreciation of the worth of others. These middle- and high school-aged students are the future of our faith and society. In the future, I want to be interacting with these fine people. They will be doctors, judges, business owners, consultants, fathers, mothers, neighbors, priests, etc. of the society in which we live.

SAA: What has your impression been of our classical education approach?

Jim Delaney: Classical education is a very efficient and effective way to learn. It provides such a broad scope of information in context instead of pieces of information not tied together. The class discussions are fascinating and engage students. This approach yields a deeper level of learning and more talented graduates.

SAA: Why do you support St. Ambrose?

Jim Delaney: Benefactors can have such an impact right here in Dane County. Wendy and I can see the results with each and every graduating class. It is very rewarding and humbling.

Thanks, Jim and Wendy, for your investment in the students of St. Ambrose Academy!