For Dr. Sean Monahan and his family, moving to Madison this summer from Shoreline, WA was like coming back home. Dr. Monahan earned a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry at UW-Madison, worked for several years in biotechnology in the area and he and his wife Jane have family in the area.

Despite not working in a formally classical environment before, Dr. Monahan recognized his approach to teaching had always been classical...he just didn’t know it!

Whether it was Ph.D.-level scientists he mentored or students at a Catholic school where he taught in Washington State, Dr. Monahan’s approach was to “teach students to take responsibility in the learning process. We are not going to give you all the answers, but we are there to help you find the answers. For retention, figuring something out on your own has a bigger impact than if I just gave you the answer.”

The Monahans’ 8th grade twin sons, Patrick and Collin, had also never been in a classical environment before. Their transition, however “has been seamless”, Dr. Monahan explained. “They’ve easily fit into SAA, especially with their new classmates encouraging them to try cross country and playing chess games after school.”

From the collaborative nature of his fellow faculty to the “very fun, very high energy students”, Dr. Monahan has been impressed how much SAA “is a family and that we’re really here to help each other.” Welcome, Monahan Family!

What happens when a knowledgeable priest comes to St. Ambrose Academy (SAA) for a live Q & A radio program? He must answer tough questions!

When Relevant Radio Executive Director Fr. Francis “Rocky” Hoffman stopped in at SAA on Friday, September 28 to broadcast the live “Go Ask Your Father” radio program, the students didn’t lob up softballs for the priest. Among the many questions from students in grades 6-12, they questioned him about indulgences, the Galileo sanctions, and what Jesus would think of communism.

Were the students convinced by his answers? Sophomore Grace Tejeda, who asked a question on-air, commented, “I thought it was a really, really cool experience to have someone who knows so much and is such a great priest come to our school... I think that he did a really good job [with the tough questions], especially with the time limits. It’s pretty obvious that he had definitely studied quite a bit and knows what he is talking about.”

Grace added, “It was really cool to hear that what he said correlates a lot with what we’re learning in Religion.
Heather Lancaster, class of 2019, with St. Peter’s students

Faith in Action: ‘Christ is Everything For Us’ & Fall 2018 Service Day

St. Ambrose students are developing love for Jesus both in the classroom and the chapel. On Friday, October 19, the entire student body put that principle into practice at 15 sites throughout the Diocese of Madison, including Camp Gray, The Beacon and Second Harvest during the fall Service Day.

Senior Celine Schmiesing immediately connected studying documents from the Second Vatican Council in Religion class and the Service Day that she helped plan. “We’ve been learning about the role of the laity, which is ‘to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God,’” she said, quoting Lumen Gentium.

Volunteering with elementary school children at St. Peter’s School in Ashton reassured Celine: “I really enjoyed working with the kids, and they allowed me to see how teaching is what I am called to do.”

At the Catholic Multicultural Center, Junior Nathan Tataje saw the opportunity to mentor the 7th grade boys in his group as they swept, mopped and washed dishes alongside him: “I was there to motivate and lead others to see the bigger picture that we are helping others see the light of Christ.” Nathan found a lot of meaning in the tasks given to them: “Even in one day, we could help [the CMC staff] assist the community in a real way. Christ came and, being the King, is the greatest servant that ever lived. We are modeling Christ. If Christ is everything for us, we should give wholeheartedly back to other people.”

LEAVING A MARK ON THE SOUL: STUDENTS HEAD TO AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE

Books, plays and other works of art have a unique ability to transport us to other worlds while reflecting experiences within our own sphere. Diving into primary sources in a classroom is a key component of the education St. Ambrose students receive. And so, seeing a work like William Shakespeare’s As You Like It performed onstage brings a new depth to a student’s experience!

Each fall, the entire St. Ambrose student body takes a trip to experience a work by William Shakespeare live at American Players Theatre (APT) in nearby Spring Green. St. Ambrose English teacher Katie Behrens commented, “… the experience of seeing well-performed Shakespeare leaves a mark on the soul.” In her estimation, APT is “one of the nation’s premiere venues for Shakespeare”, which makes experiencing As You Like It on Friday, October 5 a unique opportunity for SAA students to encounter Shakespeare in a formative way.

What is Shakespeare’s enduring legacy today? For senior Heather Lancaster, it’s that Shakespeare’s observations about society still apply today; he had a gift for understanding and portraying the human heart. Junior Jack Krebs was riveted by original interpretations of works that are now 500 years old: “The best part of going to APT is to see a visual representation of how other people interpret a text differently. For example, last year’s King Lear had a modern setting at APT even though Shakespeare obviously didn’t write the play to be set in 2017.” Although many of the sixth graders, for example, may not yet follow some of the more complex plot twists and elevated language in As You Like It, they could pick up on the humor – like people of Shakespeare’s own time—and recognize that virtue and vice in human society have not changed over the centuries.

In an age when trends pass ever more quickly, it is an outstanding opportunity for students to be able to appreciate the arts and how older texts can shed light on current events and even situations in our own lives.

SAA students and parents get ready to take in As You Like It at the American Players Theatre