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Editor's Introduction to the 25th Issue

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Editor's Introduction to the 25th Issue

*“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).
Evil is never defeated by evil; once that road is taken, rather than defeating
evil, one will instead be defeated by evil.*

— Message of the Holy Father John Paul II
for the 2005 World Day of Peace, January 1, 2005

As I write this preface to the 25th annual edition of our faculty journal, we enter the 6th year of our nation's occupation of Iraq. Last year's cover of *Headwaters* featured Wendy Sterba's photo titled “The Human Cost of War,” depicting one pair of boots among 44 pairs memorializing Minnesotans lost in Iraq. With the passage of another year, two dozen more Minnesotans — nearly 1,000 Americans in all — have joined the ranks of our war dead in Iraq.

This year's cover photograph, **Anna Lisa Ohm's** “Honk for Peace,” depicts a small group of students, rather forlorn-looking on a cold February day, demonstrating in opposition to the Iraq war on the I-94 footbridge in a vigil sponsored by Saint John's Campus Ministry.

The cover photograph sets the tone for the lead article in this year's issue, “Is Iraq Another Vietnam — Or Not?” by **Ken Jones**. Forty years ago, another president faced waning support as the American public grew increasingly tired of an unpopular war. Are there meaningful parallels to what we see happening on the political front today? Does drawing an analogy between Vietnam and Iraq provide beneficial insights or obscure important differences? These are the vital questions Jones addresses in his essay. Among the lessons from history highlighted by Jones is the knowledge that there will always be threats to our security and that the key to living in the world is figuring out the proper balance between living with danger and the cost of trying to remove it.

In “Peter and the Truth,” Robert L. Spaeth Teacher of Distinction Award winner **Rene McGraw**, OSB, invoking the metaphor of Afghanistan and Iraq, asserts that neither education nor life itself is about learning how to gain security, but to search for a fuller truth. Though that search — like the guarantee of security — remains elusive,

the heart of a liberal education is the exhilaration we experience uncovering one connection at a time.

Continuing the theme of education in a changing and uncertain world, **Anna Lisa Ohm**, in “Letter from the Persian Gulf,” reflects on the contrasts between our “down-home, Lake Wobegon lifestyle” and the United Arab Emirates’ “effervescent dash into the First World.”

Echoing the cross-cultural, global theme of the preceding essay, **Sophia Geng**, in her short story “Young Soldier, the Taxi Driver,” captures critical moments in the lives of rural Chinese villagers confronting the challenges of rapid urbanization.

But even in our increasingly global society, where economic, political, environmental, and cultural events in one part of the world quickly impact the lives of people around the world, politics remains local, as borne out in **James H. Read**’s compelling chronicle of his campaign for a seat in the Minnesota legislature in “Doorstep Discourse.” Read’s vivid description of face-to-face politics highlights not only its potential for enhancing civic engagement and democratic deliberation, but offers a fascinating glimpse of rural culture in Central Minnesota.

The Benedictines who came to Central Minnesota 150 years ago and their legacy, of which we are a part — both as citizens and as educators — comprise an important part of our local culture. In last year’s issue of *Headwaters*, Jill Zasadny (“Moses Has No Tongue”) examined the conflict between Abbot Boniface Wimmer, who led Benedictine men here in 1846, and Prioress Benedicta Riepp, who led Benedictine women to the United States in 1852. So, it was with great interest that I listened to **Ephrem Hollermann**, OSB, deliver her 2007 commencement address, “Keeping the Dream Alive.” In it, she invoked the legacy of Mother Benedicta, a central figure in the history of the Sisters of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph. At the faculty workshops at the beginning of the 2007/08 academic year, I approached Sister Ephrem, who graciously granted permission to publish her commencement address as a counterpoint and complement to Zasadny’s contribution in the previous edition.

In “The Benefits of Taking Academic Risks: Creating the Life You Want to Lead,” Sister Mary Grell Teacher of Distinction Award winner **Pamela L. Bacon**, though nominally addressing the class of 2011, inspires all of us to recognize the power within to create our future and exhorts us to make choices based not on what seems safe, but to take up new challenges if we are to reap the full measure of intellectual reward afforded by our institution.

At the end of their communal essay, “Poetic License,” **Mara Faulkner**, OSB, **Cynthia N. Malone**, **Karen L. Erickson**, and **Scott Richardson** note, “We four live and

write in a place of enormous privilege and potential.” Still, they acknowledge the challenges and risks they take in transmuting their personal experience into poetry and fiction.

One of the challenges of a liberal arts education is the synthesis of multidisciplinary knowledge, as evidenced by recent modifications to our common curriculum and the growing emphasis on integrative experience and capstone courses. **Timothy A. Robinson** explores these complexities in “Getting It All Together: The Fragmentation of the Disciplines and the Unity of Knowledge,” pointing out the pitfalls of pushing *too* hard for too much integration *too* fast and noting the benefits of balancing our desire for unity against the benefits of disunity.

Continuing the theme of the interconnectedness of academic disciplines, **Charles W. Wright** laments the disciplinary isolation of moral philosophy and the consequent reluctance of mainstream philosophical discourse to incorporate fresh insight into human morality derived from recent interdisciplinary research. In his essay, “Natural Selection and Moral Sentiment: Evolutionary Biology’s Challenge to Moral Philosophy,” Wright offers a brief review of contemporary developments in evolutionary biology and social neuroscience that challenge the traditional philosophical supposition that human morality is best investigated separately from the empirical sciences.

Transitioning from the academic concerns of several preceding contributors to the life stories that follow, **Liz Wurdak** provides a brief interlude with two poems: “October Blast” and “Musings.”

Ron Baenninger shares a slice of an intriguing life story that began in Yokohama as the armies of Japan were invading China. In “Getting Out,” Baenninger draws from his father’s notes and his mother’s diary in a riveting chronicle of his family’s escape from Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The current issue of *Headwaters* concludes with “A Beethoven Triptych” by **Willem Ibes**, who this year celebrates an extraordinary 50 years of teaching at Saint John’s University and the College of Saint Benedict. The companion compact disc inside the back cover of this journal is Ibes’s gift of gratitude to his colleagues as he marks this important milestone in his remarkable career.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. (Rom. 12:18)

