



The Minstrel

NEWSLETTER OF GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY

Advent 2013

Dear Friend,

AT THIS MERRY TIME OF YEAR, our minds turn rightly to gifts and giving. Although the getting and spending of our commercialized culture detracts from the beauty of these practices, as Catholics it is important to keep gifts and giving good and holy—for so it was when Our Maker gave us the gift of Himself on Christmas Day and received what poor gifts the kings of the world could lay before the manger at Bethlehem.

It was not very long ago that I was a student of St. Gregory's Academy. But by a strange and happy series of circumstances I was given the great gift of being involved in my old school's new realization as Gregory the Great Academy. Gregory the Great Academy is your good and holy gift to our students, as it was to me when I was a boy, and as I hope and pray it shall be when

my two small sons are older. This school, this community, has been your way of giving the gift of Christ and His tidings of great joy. Through this school, you have provided a guiding light to many, as did the Eastern Star of old.



I have been doubly blessed, both to have been led to that gift and to have been permitted to give it myself. I am honored and humbled to stand in your ranks as one who has been called to bring newcomers to the wondrous stable beneath the singing hosts of heaven and dancing stars. But to you goes our highest thanks—for without you, without your gift, the gifts we give here in classroom, chapel, and dormitory would never be given and never received.

Without you, twenty-three Catholic boys would not have celebrated the feasts of St. Nicholas and the Immaculate Conception with suppers, song, and sport. Without you, they would not have enjoyed roaring Christmas carols in New York City, spreading the joy of the New-Born King. Without you, our students would not have performed a medieval mystery play about the shepherds at Bethlehem. Without you, they would not have the same chance to receive an appetite for life, a devotion to God, a balanced love for poetry and logic, and a rare loyalty to the school where they might claim to have learned the arts of the human condition.

At every Divine Liturgy celebrated at Gregory the Great Academy, you and your fellow benefactors are recalled aloud in grateful prayer offered by our students and faculty. This prayer occurs as our chaplain bears the gifts to the altar to be consecrated into the same Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of that same Christ Who gave Himself as a precious gift to mankind. Whenever I join my voice to those prayers at that poignant moment in the Holy Mystery, I reflect on the gift you have given to all of us—the gift of our little school named after a great saint and aimed at a great purpose. Gregory the Great Academy is a gift.

Please, if you are yet to join us in this work to spread the good news of the Son of Mary, do so today in the name of this holy season. The gifts we give are signs of the gratitude we all owe to Christ Our Lord—as are the prayers we offer for those whose generosity allows us to carry on the work of His Church.

May God bless and keep you this Christmastide.

In Christ,

Sean Fitzpatrick
Headmaster



Sean Fitzpatrick
Headmaster



Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give thee . . . (Acts 3:6)

Teachers are often sadly lacking in silver and gold, but the gift that they transmit to their students is immeasurably more precious. This is most of all evident in the fact that the fruits of a good education are not possessed by the recipient alone, but invariably radiate beyond. Through the gift of receiving a Christian education, we are brought into a tradition that extends beyond our teachers to their own teachers and their teachers' teachers, and this witness impels us to participate in this transmission ourselves.

As John Senior, a student of the great teacher Mark Van Doren, once said in a profound paean to his mentor, "We thank you for so many and so much and cannot honor you except in our students—your grandstudents and even great-grandstudents—all of whom love and honor you more because these things are increased in their consumption."

I myself had the grace to attend St. Gregory's Academy in Elmhurst, PA, from 2000-2004. While at the Academy, I had the opportunity to be educated and formed by a tremendous group of teachers, including Mr. Howard Clark, Mr. Paul McCleary, and Mr. Sean Fitzpatrick. (Howard Clark, a student of John Senior, was one of the grandstudents of Mark Van Doren, which makes me one of Van Doren's great-grandstudents.) It is no exaggeration to say that every aspect of my life was transformed and shaped by my experience at St. Gregory's.

In addition to being drawn into a deeper relationship with the Lord, especially through the development of a liturgical spirituality nourished by the beauty of the Gregorian chant and polyphony, I developed a love of literature, philosophy and music both through my classwork and the robust culture that permeated the school.

I was also drawn into the Academy's vigorous athletic program, learning to love rugby and soccer—despite a meager store of previous athletic experience—and to build up the endurance that produces character. On several occasions, I was able to travel on school trips to France where I participated in pilgrimages to the great cathedrals and shrines and visited Benedictine monasteries, giving me my first inkling of a vocation to the religious life. In all these things, I was set on the path to developing into mature manhood according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

At St. Gregory's, I was educated in the great tradition of the Church's culture, which celebrates everything that is good about humanity while submitting the achievements of the pre-Christian era to the purifying light of Christ. Christ burns without consuming, for his love does not destroy but purifies: Christ destroys nothing of man except sin; Christ takes nothing away, and gives everything.

Since leaving St. Gregory's, I have been able in different ways to share in the task of passing on what I received at the Academy both at the University of Notre Dame and now in formation for the priesthood at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC. St. Augustine once wrote that in order to defend the

Faith, it is necessary "not that your hand be filled with a brief handbook, but that your heart be set on fire with great love."

When the heart of a student is set ablaze, other hearts too will catch the spark of flame. When we truly encounter the Word, the flame who burns without consuming, we ask ourselves: "Did not our



Br. Innocent playing the Irish flute at a Dominican gathering at Providence College.



Br. Innocent passes on the Pascal fire during the Easter Vigil at the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, DC.



Philip Smith (Br. Innocent) with the St. Gregory's Academy graduating class of 2004.

hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road?" The love of learning and the desire for God nourished by my studies at St. Gregory's has borne fruit in my life as I share my love of the Faith and of Christian culture with my colleagues, confreres, and students. The gifts I have received continue to increase in their consumption—and yet far from being consumed, by the grace of the Word may they come to enflame the hearts of others.

—Brother Innocent Smith, O.P.

Letter from a Student

My name is Thomas Audino, and I am a sophomore at Gregory the Great Academy. I am from Albany, New York, and my three older brothers are graduates of St. Gregory's Academy.

One of the things I enjoy about attending the Academy is the sports program. Our coaches work us very hard, but it is all worth it. Workouts can get rough, like waking up at 6:30 AM on a Saturday to do an hour of Matt-Fury exercises, then a six-mile run, and then a two-hour practice with Coach van Beek. Everyone here, including myself, has lost weight and gotten into better shape over the last two months.

Along with the sports program, I enjoy all of my classes. The ones that I like the most are Music, Literature and Scripture. I also have the privilege to take Natural History with Mr. van Beek which is the most interesting class I have ever taken. Mr. van Beek is only able to come to our school once a week, so every Friday we have a three-hour class. During the first hour we learn in the classroom, but for the next two hours we study in the woods, or around the pond. Every time we go out we are asked to find the insect, animal, or plant that we have been learning about in the classroom.

Since arriving at the school, I have also learned to enjoy cooking. Once a week my class gets to make lunch for the whole school with Mr. Dalimata. At this school it is the students' job to keep the building and the grounds clean. It is actually fun to do the all-school cleanup with Mr. Costello, because of the interesting stories he tells us as we work.

Singing and Juggling are a huge aspect of the school as well. Every night after study hall there are students juggling, playing

Our Gift to Benefactors

Gregory the Great Academy is honored to have Mr. Andrew Wilson Smith on its teaching faculty. Mr. Smith, a graduate of St. Gregory's Academy, is a professional stone carver and sculptor. He recently completed a commission carving the capitals and lintel of the abbey church at Our Lady of Clear Creek Benedictine monastery in Oklahoma. Among the subjects Mr. Smith is teaching this year is art. As a special Christmas offering to our benefactors,



Our Lady's Juggler, a matted picture suitable for hanging (8½" x 11" with matte), is our gift to benefactors donating \$49.90 or more.

Mr. Smith is creating a block print that illustrates a scene from a story that is central in the lore of our school—the old folk tale known as *Our Lady's Juggler*. It is a Christmas story about an old juggler who performs for the Infant Jesus in the church where he takes refuge from the cold. The image depicted here is the model for the final piece, which will be carved in wood, coated with ink, and pressed upon paper. The students

of Gregory the Great Academy will assist Mr. Smith in creating these prints as a gift to those benefactors who can donate \$49.90 or more this Christmas Season.

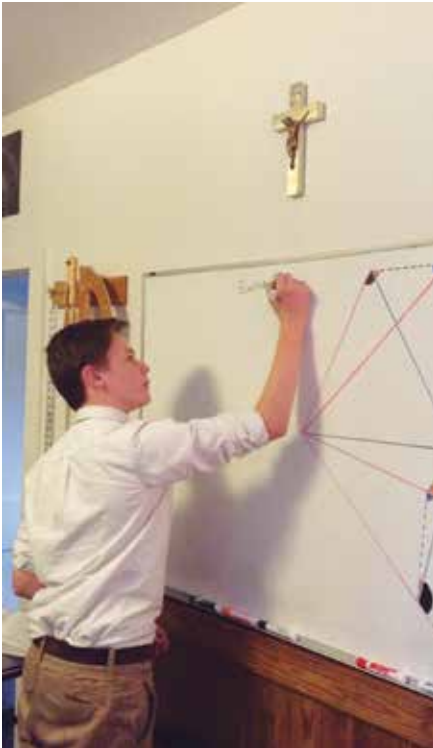
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guitars, singing, or strumming one of Mr. Williams' ukuleles. I was very excited to make the juggling troupe this year, and I am looking forward to going Christmas caroling in New York City in a few weeks. Thank you for helping to make this school a reality for me and all of the other students.

—Thomas Audino
Class of 2017

The Crowded Hours at Gregory the Great Academy



(Left) Sophomore Thomas Audino demonstrates a Euclidean proposition in Mr. Andrew Smith's studio. (Center, upper) Head coach and teacher Mr. Garret van Beek leads his lower-form Natural History class in a discussion of the behavior of White-Tailed Deer during the Pennsylvania fall. (Center, lower) The freshmen and sophomores attend Sacred Music class in the refectory. From left to right: Thomas Audino, Mark Grenier, Thomas Urgo, Gregory Zuranski, Kyle Kerstiens, and Dominic Valentine. (Right) Senior Peter Doetsch takes on the quarter-staff challenge during a weekend of outdoor sport.



(Left) Mr. Matthew Williams leads the Gregory the Great Academy Schola in a practice session prior to the Divine Liturgy. (Right) Fr. Michael Salnicky celebrates Divine Liturgy for GGA three times a week. Under the direction of music teacher, Matthew Williams, the students have learned to sing nearly the entirety of the Byzantine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in three-part harmony.