



The Minstrel

NEWSLETTER OF GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY

Graduation 2014

Dear Friend,

You can imagine how the Disciples must have felt upon hearing Our Lord's parting words just before He ascended in glory into heaven.

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.*

The challenge to be a disciple is one we are all familiar with—at least the verbal expression of that challenge. But how often have we set out to accomplish the immensity of evangelization? It is no easy thing to live out the duty to literally conquer all nations for Christ. Being Catholic necessarily involves a universal attitude—a worldview that actually encompasses the world. It may seem impossible, but it is only in the undertaking of the seemingly impossible that it becomes possible. This spring, Gregory the Great Academy graduated a stalwart group of young men who have now been given the self-same summons of the eleven Apostles. And they are not even eleven, but four.



Sean Fitzpatrick
Headmaster



The first stage of their test, their quest, is not to be daunted by it; and I cannot think of a better, braver crew. They are well suited to take on the immensity of the Catholic call because they have already experienced making the impossible possible. They have already been a part of a miracle. In coming as seniors to Gregory the Great, a new institution housed in an old resort, they all faced a situation where the odds were stacked against them. Yet, a school was formed and a pack of boys was converted into a community of Christ. The seemingly impossible came to be.

And it shall continue.

Given the number of applications for next year, the need arises for larger facilities. I am happy to tell you that we are finalizing a contract for a new property that is far more suitable than last year's. It is a retreat center located in a quiet corner of the Pocono Mountains, where we anticipate welcoming a student body of forty in the fall.

With the increase of prospective students also comes an increase in requests for financial assistance. For many families, the expenses of boarding school are beyond their means. In an effort to accept students based upon worthiness instead of their family's ability to cover costs, we are doing our utmost to maintain a need-based tuition discount policy. This comes with the understanding that all discounts must be accounted for through our fundraising efforts.

If you are able to provide a scholarship for a student, or sponsor someone in whole or in part this year, please indicate your interest on the enclosed reply card. Your generosity can give the gift of a Catholic, classical education to a good student and, in so doing, you yourself will participate in the Catholic command of Our Lord—to make the Good News of the Gospel available to everyone within reach and beyond.

May God bless you this summer.

In Christ,

Sean Fitzpatrick



Headmaster's Address

Seniors, if there was ever anybody that you reminded me of this year, it was and still is—and this is serious, very serious—Robin Hood's Merry Men. Think for a minute. Here we are, homeless but happy; living a life of refuge and community; preparing ourselves to right the wrongs of society; making our hearts ready to help those in need; and living a life infused with a merriment that is manly and mysterious. Seniors, Jonathan, Andrew, Luke, and Peter, if you were anything this year, you were merry men.

The most important aspect, perhaps, of this comparison is that Robin Hood's Merry Men were not afraid to take the risk of being outlaws for the right reasons. And neither were you. It is a challenge we all have to face in a world that has gone mad, and whose laws are oftentimes the ways of the lawless. Here at your academy, you embraced a code—an outlawed code of holy chivalry and holy roguery. Have you ever thought about what that code means? What have you learned by undertaking this adventure with us? What are you leaving here with? I am sure you all have good answers for these questions. But even so, I will offer you three thoughts of my own.

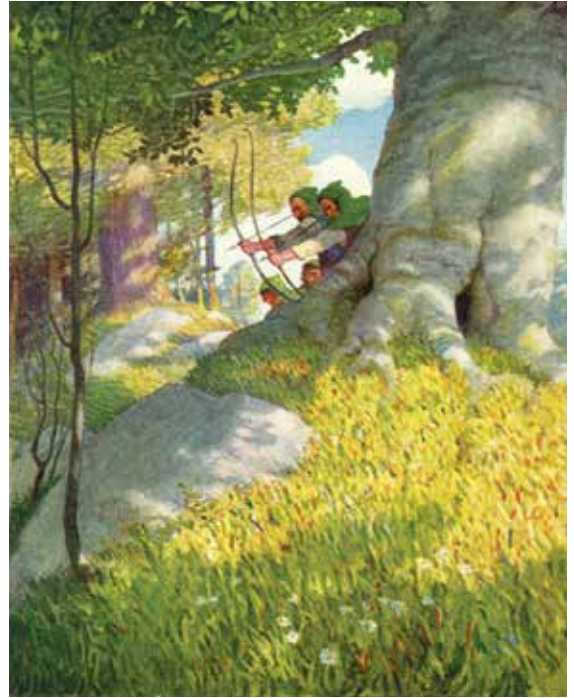
First, you leave us with an experience and understanding of comradeship—camaraderie. Robin Hood would not be the same without his band of Merry Men, and we would not be the same without our friends, without our partners—those people we love and trust. You all know that very well. Remember, however, that the friendships that you have made here, the friendships you have made with one another, as strong as they are and as likely to last a lifetime as they are, are heralds of a greater friendship that you are called to form. “I will not now call you servants... But I have called you friends,” spoke Our Lord to His disciples, His friends. , one of the chief reasons for this education you have received is to learn about friendship with men, and that for the sake of forming a friendship with He Who became Man.

. . . Second, you leave us with a new sense of wisdom. You may not realize it yet, but you have. Living life as you have lived it, even for the space of this single rough and rustic year, cannot help but infuse in the heart some of the secrets of Lady Wisdom. Your experience of life here at Gregory the Great, sequestered as it is, has opened a horizon before your eyes and brought you into contact with the world—and with many of its rougher edges, too. From harsh weather to human weakness, you have had a taste of inconvenience; but you have been shown, I hope, that inconvenience is, as Mr. Chesterton said, an adventure taken in the wrong frame of mind.

. . . Finally, you leave us with joy—and hence with a few tears. One of the tests of true joy is that it is not easily dampened by mere surroundings—much less a few tears. Just as John Bosco rejoiced to have a dilapidated barn full of dung for the housing and education of his boys, so too did we rejoice to give you, our boys, Chestnut Grove. Though it wasn't full of manure—not before we took it over anyway—our hideout this year posed other challenges. But none, I feel confident in saying, which ever threatened the happiness of our hearts.

. . . My parting words to you are a piece of advice. It is something I have said often over the course of the year, especially to the freshmen, and the freshmen will just have to bear hearing it yet again. It is a piece of advice that bespeaks the reality of what you have done this year and what

This issue of *The Minstrel* includes abbreviated forms of the valedictorian address, given by Mr. Luke Romanchuk, and the headmaster's address, given by Mr. Sean Fitzpatrick. To read the full addresses, please visit: www.gregorythegreatacademy.org.



many more, God willing, will carry on after you have left. Always keep in mind, Andrew, Luke, Peter, and Jon, that nothing worth doing is free of peril—remember that and live by it. Use this year as a model for doing things worth doing, and take the risk of doing those things. Take the risk of being merry in a miserable world. Take the risk of being apostles, of being Don Juan's, Don Quixote's, or Merry Men. Run the risk, and may you run it well.





The Very Reverend Fr. Michael Salnicky leads the invocation at the commencement exercises. Fr. Salnicky served as the academy's chaplain this year. Behind him stand (from left to right) the Class of 2014, Andrew Davidson, Peter Doetsch, Jonathan Gearhart, and Luke Romanchuk with headmaster Sean Fitzpatrick.

Valedictorian Address

My friends, when a ship leaves its berth to seek a newer world, there is always an inevitable sorrow among the crew upon the departure, and a longing for their home that they loved so well. As they sail across the briny deep, they will, of course, encounter stormy seas and gales, and they may lose some of their good crew along the way, but they eventually will come to a port of call and there find some temporary harborage and healing for themselves. Again they will set sail, this time perhaps with a fresh coat of paint, new rigging, or a few new crewmen here and there, and maybe even a new captain, but their spirit and purpose remain the same: that is, to find a place they will call home—"to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Looking back to my sophomore year, the same year that the old Academy closed, I recall that after we all heard that the school would close, I told my mother that I felt like I was aboard a sinking ship. Little did I realize that our ship was not sinking, it was just setting sail to a different port. I suddenly found myself

part of the voyage—our headmaster was newly appointed, our crest added to, and some of our crew lost. But in essence and in spirit, we were still that same school, that same motley crew, which had lived and learned in our beloved Elmhurst building for 19 memorable years. "That which we are, we are." Rowdy voices still make the walls shake and the rafters roar as they jubilantly rise and fall in song; bagpipes still echo across the campus as students try to become better clowns and masters of the impressive art of keep multiple dancing objects in the air. Teachers still bring Homer, Plato, Euclid, and many other golden texts to life in the classroom; and beloved old folk songs are still passed down and kept alive by wide-eyed freshmen. The Divine Liturgy is still celebrated in the building in which we live, a building where Our Lord resides, living with us under one roof. And, of course, we all still experienced the 8 1/2th circle of hell on a freezing practice field while Coach van Beek bellowed out instructions to us, his voice making even the trees tremble. "Though much is taken, much abides."

My friends, the ship has not sunk. No. It sails on, thanks be to God. And now, as we four journey on our individual odysseys, we cannot forget that the memories we formed here at this school truly define us, and give us both a name and an image to reflect upon and be guided by. Along our adventures, we cannot lose hope of eventually finding our home. Like the Academy, our purpose must hold.

I have a firm conviction that we as a community, like Odysseus, will find, or found, a good home for this Academy; and I am also certain that, if need be, this extraordinary faculty could run the Academy out of a tree or a yurt with little difficulty, especially after witnessing and experiencing how well this school and its inseparable accompanying spirit lived on this year. There is no doubt in my mind that this school will never be washed down by the gulfs, but that it will live on and touch the Happy Isles, blossoming in the minds and hearts of students, alumni, faculty, and in everyone else that this Academy has the opportunity of reaching out to with song, soul, and spirit to bear witness to the loving joy of Christ our God.

Andrew Davidson (far left) plays Little John in the troupe's graduation performance. Juniors, Joseph Kelly, John Pollock, and Joseph Thrun stand in for the Greenwood. Jonathan Gearhart (left) plays Robin Hood. The performance was a lively combination of storytelling, music, and juggling acts.





Above: The St. Julian Juggling Troupe after a performance in Hudson, New York. Over 100 people packed inside a 19th century factory reclaimed as an arts center to view the show. All donations generated by the show went towards the annual juggling pilgrimage in Spain to the tomb of St. James. Mr. Luke Culley (center with concertina) will lead the pilgrimage together with Mr. Ben Strong (far right with accordion).



Above: The Graduating Class of 2014, Andrew Davidson, Peter Doetsch, Jonathan Gearhart, and Luke Romanchuk sing "The Parting Glass" after receiving their diplomas from Academic Dean, Luke Culley.



Right: Peter Doetsch plays the Sheriff of Nottingham in the troupe's show, "Under the Greenwood Tree," searching through a delighted audience for the bold renegade, Robin Hood.