



# The Minstrel

NEWSLETTER OF GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY

September 2014

Dear Friend,

Do you know the secret of Gregory the Great Academy? Such mysteries are sometimes best illuminated through stories. Among my duties this summer was the task of finalizing our faculty for the 2014-2015 academic year. I had already begun the work of admissions in order to bring our student numbers up by about 70% from last year, and much of that work involved financial negotiations. When my focus shifted to solidifying the staff, I was prepared to take on a new series of negotiations. Imagine my feelings when, one after another, I had interchanges such as:

“I am so happy that you are able to be a dormfather and teach. Now, for salary...”

“Mr. Fitzpatrick, I only want to be paid in adventure!”

Or: “Now, of course, our budget is tight this year so for compensation...”

“No worries, sir. Anything is fine.”

Or: “I am sorry that I can’t offer you more for your service.”

“That’s alright. This wouldn’t be as rewarding if you could.”

It is something of a miracle to have a faculty that is so cheerful to serve in the spirit of poverty and brotherhood in Christ for the common good of the community. Dr. John Senior wrote that “the essence of a school is a faculty,” and so is the essence of this pioneering school driven by the



Sean Fitzpatrick  
Headmaster

essence of a pioneering faculty, who are not so much employees as they are apostles. Our faculty does not work at the Academy as a job, but as a labor of love, freely giving of their time and talent for the sake of the treasure that lies where the heart is. God has given our school what Dr. Senior called a “faculty of friends,” and we pray that friendship will define the experience of our school for our students. Teaching is a species of friendship, and so do we strive for friendship to be the essence of our school: friendships that build up a friendship with Christ. That is the secret of education, and, God be praised, it is the secret of Gregory the Great Academy.



The word “apostle” comes from the Greek verb meaning “to send forth.” Gregory the Great Academy strives to participate in the missionary energy of the Church that propels all Christians to go forth and gather all the faithful into the fold of the Heavenly City. We strive to go forth with the Pilgrim Church as she wends her way to the New Jerusalem. It is in this spirit that our teachers lead our students every year on a pilgrimage in Spain along the ancient Camino de Santiago de Compostela. In the following pages you can read one teacher’s account of last summer’s pilgrim-

age, which is a fitting meditation as we begin the pilgrimage of another academic year.

Please pray for our faculty this year as we march on together leading a new group of boys to new discoveries in goodness, truth, and beauty; and also please remember that, to quote Dr. Senior again in closing, “faculties survive on stipends derived from endowments and gratuities sufficient for what Chaucer called ‘glad poverty,’ the minimum necessary to health and Christian happiness.”

May God bless you all.

In Christ,

Sean Fitzpatrick



# Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela



By Andrew Beebe

## Pt. 1: What I Found Behind the Bureau

Pilgrimage is a lost word. A word put on the bureau an age ago which then dropped down behind it and no one has seen since. It is a forgotten word, a forgotten experience. My intention here isn't to explain what a pilgrimage is; it's just that I found one through a friend of mine, hiding for a millennia under that bureau, and my intention here is to dust it off and present it to you. I do not wish to go into the idea of pilgrimage, but to tell the story of the pilgrimage I went on.

We were a group of jugglers from a high school called Gregory the Great Academy: four teachers and four high school seniors who had just graduated. Four seminarians joined us, all jugglers, singers, musicians, and merry makers, from a seminary in New Hampshire, one of whom had been a teacher at our school, who came because he was an old friend and asked to bring some of his new friends along for the ride. And there was one quiet and holy and charming and unassuming priest who was our chaplain. We were a group of thirteen who were going on the Camino de Santiago in Spain. We were to fly to Madrid, bus to Leon, and walk three hundred miles to Santiago without money or care. And oddly enough, for a group concocted as we, this part of the trek went without a hitch and we arrived in Leon without losing a member of our group or inflicting any harm to ourselves or anyone else.

We each brought only the necessities we would need to survive for two and a half weeks: a sleeping bag, a change of clothes, our good cheer, and most important of all, our juggling equipment so that people we met along the way would provide us with the fuel we needed, namely money for food and shelter, to complete the trip. We had nothing to fear because the people we met on pilgrimage were some of the warmest, kindest, most generous people I have ever had the grace to encounter. They brought pagan *xenia* and Christian hospitality to life for us.



Andrew Davidson, Class of 2014, marches along the Camino with Bernardo Rios, a seminarian from St. John's Seminary in Boston. Following behind are Andrew Beebe, the author of this story, and graduate Jonathan Gearhart.

## Pt. 2: Scant Breakfast, the Funny Bits, and a Well-Rested Dog

And now the difficulty arises of how to tell the story of our everyday experiences and what to focus on. Is it best to look at the daily routine of waking up groggily and, despite how you feel, getting up knowing you have at the very least a thirty kilometer hike facing you and packing your sleeping bag and rucksack for the day's journey, snatching a cup of coffee if you can, and eating the scraps of what's left over of a mostly-eaten breakfast because you're the slowest getting-up-out-of-bed/sleeping-bag-packer in the group? Or is it best to chronicle the shows, focusing on the juggling, and the joy that the show was able to impart, opening people's hearts to wonder as children at the beauty of harmony, of seeing the bobbing balls and pins accompanied by raucous music sung and played by ruddy-faced men who have walked and sung and sweated and shouted all day?

Is it best to look at the funny bits, the people and experiences that made us laugh along the way? Remembering with crinkling eye and a smile "Saint Anne of Ireland," the

Irish "pagan" wonder-worker who bought each one of us, all thirteen members of our group, a beer and thus restored our cheer at the end of our second day of walking? Or how the wind blew the fog savagely over us one night as we slept in a town on top of a mountain and kept us cold and awake while a fellow traveler slept all night peacefully right next to us with his little dog, and how in the morning his dog bit a tourist and the tourist blamed our leader for it?



Or of the walking and walking? Of the physical journey itself and the toll it had on our bodies as we climbed slowly and wearily and achily, up and down, the rolling, majestic mountains of España?

### Pt. 3: Wondrous People We Met, and Liturgy in Ancient, Holy, Places

Do we sit and speak of the people we met? St. Anne of Ireland and David (pronounced Da-veed) who runs five miles to town every day and picks up trash along the way, begs for whatever food and juice he can get and carries it all, running the five miles back, to the little stand he has set up just to give all the weary pilgrims who pass his way rest and food and drink for free? Where he fed us *cous-cous* and gave us juice and water and friendship? Or the Frenchman who took us to a hotel, which in Spain is called an *albergue* (pronounced al-bear-gay), and bought us rooms to sleep in after we sang him *Je Vous Salue*, the French Hail Mary, in two parts? Or the group of Australians and Tennesseans who bought us all dinner one night after we did a show and sang them “Waltzing Matilda,” and next day bought us lunch and beer? Or Jesus (pronounced Hay-soos) who ran an *albergue* with his daughter and brother, who knew us from previous pilgrimages and for whom we did a night show, for which they put us in their *albergue* and fed us dinner and breakfast in the morning for free?

How does one speak of the liturgy in ancient and holy places of cool and silent stone? And the daily struggle we had of securing a church for this liturgy? Of the homilies of our good and holy priest? Of the hymns, the *Enarxis*, the Litany of Peace, the Antiphons, the *Troparia*, the *Kondakion*, the *Trisagion*, The *Prokimenon* and the Alleluia, rebounding off the faces of the stones, set ringing?



(Left) Former faculty member, Matthew Schultz, juggles with graduate Jonathan Gearhart to please their fellow pilgrims.

(Below, from left to right) Dormfathers Andrew Beebe and Ben Strong, graduate Luke Romanchuk, and seminarian Matthew Schultz celebrating their arrival at the Cathedral of St. James.

### Pt. 4: At St. James of the Field of Stars

How does one explain the exultation of arrival at Santiago? Or the grandeur of Saint James? The cathedral with the swinging thuribral that takes six grown men to swing? Saying Liturgy that night outside on the stone bench that sticks out from the wall of the cathedral, our voices echoing around the square as a horde of revelers took a dip and shouted from the fountain in the center? And the next morning having the security guards unlock an alcove overlooking the tomb of St. James the Apostle, beloved of Christ, so we could have Liturgy there?

Or the sunny shows we did the rest of the day in Santiago? Or marching around the cobbled streets as it started to rain, singing and playing the accordion as a crowd under umbrellas slowly gathered around behind us and followed us until we found we were surrounded by them in a square and were forced to give one last spontaneous show just in order to get away, but which gave us enough money to be able to eat dinner at a nice restaurant and take a bus to the airport just as the rain turned into a pour?

How do I best tell the story of a pilgrimage and the thousand, and the hundred thousand, really the countless, events and thoughts and feelings and experiences that go into a relatively short period of time? By asking questions and wondering about it myself. It is a journey. It is a joy and a pain. It is a microcosm of the journey of life itself packed into a few short days. It is a holy thing. It is a pilgrimage.





The faculty of Gregory the Great Academy, 2014-2015. From left to right: **Sean Fitzpatrick**, headmaster & teacher; **Karen Beebe**, registrar & teacher; **Garret van Beek**, head coach & teacher; **Andrew Beebe**, dormfather & teacher; **Paul Prezgia**, business manager & teacher; **Ben Strong**, dormfather & teacher; **Matthew Williams**, music director & head dormfather; **Andrew Smith**, teacher; **David McMyne**, dormfather & teacher; **Ben Hastings**, kitchen director & teacher; **John Bascom**, dormfather & teacher; **Luke Culley**, academic dean & teacher.

## Joining Our Faculty This Year . . .



(Above) Ben Hastings is a graduate of Thomas Aquinas College and has spent many years working in Alaska. He spent three years studying drawing and painting at the University of Alaska. This is his first year with the academy, where he will be cooking, teaching senior philosophy, and running a drawing guild.



(Above) John Bascom is a native of Kansas City, Missouri. He graduated from St. Gregory's Academy in 2009, and went on to earn a BA in English from the University of Dallas. He will be teaching American History, Latin, and assisting with Rhetoric II as well as dormfathering and coaching.

(Below) Dormfather David McMyne is a graduate of St. Gregory's Academy, class of 2011. After graduating, he volunteered with NET Ministries and traveled throughout the U.S. evangelizing Catholic youths. Migrating to the upper peninsula of Michigan, he volunteered at a wilderness retreat center run by Companions of Christ the Lamb. David will use the skills he gained there to head a guild teaching wilderness bushcraft.

