

May 17, 2012
Feast of the Ascension

Dear Friends of Clear Creek Abbey,

The world is on fire. As in the time of Pope Saint Gregory the Great, we are engaged in a struggle to save Western Christian culture from the barbarians—only this time they have cell phones. I would like to introduce you to a high school that is fighting against this new barbarism. Saint Gregory's Academy--now Gregory the Great Academy--is both a 'classic' sort of boarding school for boys and a bold experiment in education. Its unique way of inspiring the practice of Catholic piety, while cultivating manly virtues in the students, makes it stand out from other institutions in America and Europe.

My numerous contacts with the faculty and students of Saint Gregory's has led to an appreciation of what has already been accomplished by the teachers and young men and prompts me to look with bright hope to what is surely still to come of this cultural chevauchee. Please give your attention to this letter from my friend Bishop James Conley as he introduces you to this unique and important work.

+ br. Philip Anderson, abbot

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Why would a group of high school boys sacrifice a trip to Spain, something they had been saving for and anxiously anticipating for more than a year? Virtue, mostly. And certainly grace. But above all, loyalty. Let me give you some background on the story.

In 2006 I completed ten years of service as an official at the Vatican Congregation for Bishops in Rome. I had the privilege of serving under two Supreme Pontiffs: Blessed John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. Although my work at the Vatican consumed all of my time during the day, I was able to devote my evening hours to American college students as a chaplain to the University of Dallas Rome campus and as a theology instructor for the Christendom College Rome campus.

As fellow Americans abroad, we banded together on numerous occasions. Some nights, fiddles, harps and harmonicas would appear, and a spontaneous celebration would begin. These were evenings of laughter, fellowship, and great joy.

The students exhibited an extraordinary quality of wonder and curiosity that reminded me of my own college days at the University of Kansas. A number of these college students were graduates of a school very close to my heart, St. Gregory's Academy. The Academy was, in fact, a fruit of the Integrated Humanities Program at the University of Kansas, which played a large part in my own conversion to the Catholic Faith. My former roommates and fellow converts at the University of Kansas, Alan Hicks and Howard Clark, were instrumental in the founding and enduring success Saint Gregory's Academy.

What is truly remarkable about the legacy of St. Gregory's is how the Academy effectively and consistently

transformed high school age boys into devout Catholic young men and ambassadors of Christian culture.

I was recently talking to a mother of two SGA graduates. As her sons transitioned to college, she marveled at their development of character. Mothers seem to have a good sense for this type of thing. Once, during his first home break from SGA, she asked her oldest son to help her with the laundry. Without any comment or complaint, her son proceeded to gather up the laundry in the house and clean his own room as well. She was thrilled with the enhanced maturity of both of her sons. They manifested an increase of care and solicitude towards her and the rest of the members of the family. After visiting with other SGA moms, she realized this was a common experience.

Sadly, earlier this year, it was announced that St. Gregory's Academy would be permanently closing at the end of this school year. After 20 years in Elmhurst, PA, a place that had become the home of SGA, the news came as a blow to many loyal families, graduates, and members of the faculty.

But oftentimes when a door closes in life, the great goodness and mercy of God opens yet another door. God's providence is truly a marvel to behold.

I am proud to be a member of the Clairvaux Institute, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to revitalizing society by returning to the roots of Catholic Culture. The Clairvaux Institute has taken up the cause of the educational mission of St. Gregory's Academy. I am happy to share with you the good news that Clairvaux will open a new school starting this fall modeled on the tradition of St. Gregory's Academy. The new school, Gregory the Great Academy, hopes to incorporate the spirit and time-tested qualities forged at St. Greg's over the past 20 years.

The new school will have a temporary home thanks to the generosity of Fr. Eric Bergman of the St. Thomas More Society. Fr. Bergman has graciously offered the Academy the use of newly acquired property of St. Joseph's, which is located in the Providence District of Scranton, PA. The property consists of a beautiful Church, a rectory, a school building, and an old convent that will serve as a dormitory. Equally important, Fr. Bergman has volunteered to be the chaplain for Gregory the Great Academy.

The enclosed brochure highlights some of the core elements of GGA: a classical liberal arts curriculum and a solid spiritual formation, as well as music, juggling, rugby, and outdoor activities. Although these are all parts of the educational experience at St. Greg's, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. There is a great culture at St. Greg's, and that culture is proudly Catholic to the core.

I wish all young men could experience this type of education. It is indeed a great privilege to attend such a school.

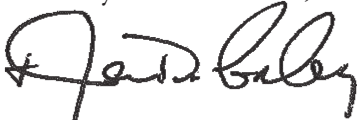
The last class of St. Gregory's Academy in Elmhurst will graduate on May 26. This class, like former classes, has been putting money aside over the past two years in order to pay the expenses for a walking pilgrimage of thanksgiving to the tomb of St. James the Apostles in Compostela, Spain.

The class was preparing to purchase their airline tickets when they heard of the prospect of a new school opening next year. They came together as a group and arrived at a decision. Approaching Mr. Clark, the headmaster of the new Gregory the Great Academy, they offered to contribute all the money that had saved for their pilgrimage to go towards the renovations and start up costs associated with the new school. They also offered free labor for the three weeks they would have been overseas in order to prepare the new facility for next year.

So why would these young men make such a sacrifice? From where does such loyalty come? I cannot fully answer that question. I can only applaud them. Could it be that they have received an extraordinary grace and insight at such a young age? Perhaps they recognize a treasure worth cherishing and preserving, and they are willing to make a great sacrifice in order to pass this treasure on to others.

In these challenging times, when darkness seems to have enveloped so much of the world, especially our young people, I am heartened that there is such a place as Gregory the Great Academy. My sincere prayer is that this place and this tradition will continue. Won't you please join us, and my extraordinary young friends, in supporting this great and important work of the Church?

Sincerely Yours In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James D. Conley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

+Bishop James D. Conley

Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Denver

P.S. The monks and I have been praying for this new endeavor, and we ask you to join us.