



# The Minstrel

NEWSLETTER OF GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY

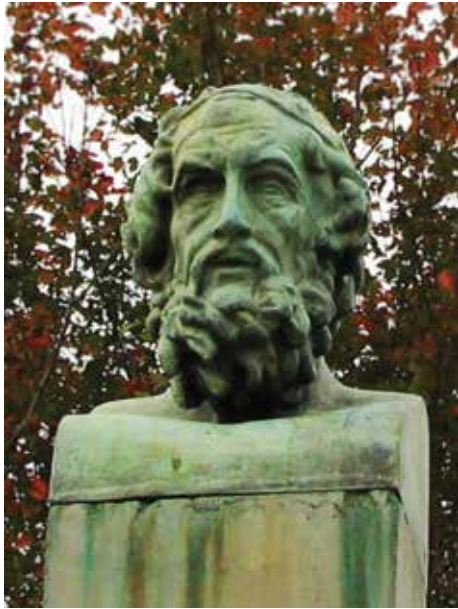
Fall 2016

Dear Friend,

I am happy to bring you the news that another school year is underway at Gregory the Great Academy. We have 60 boys this year, which is a good number; large enough to be a force and small enough to be a family. In fact, 60 has been our target as we have—only with your help—steadily grown over the last four years. This student count is a particular joy to me as 60 was the enrollment maintained at St. Gregory's Academy, the old school I attended whose traditions our new school is continuing.

As we recall older days and ongoing traditions, it is fitting that this issue features a letter from the founding headmaster of St. Gregory's, Mr. Alan Hicks. Mr. Hicks was my headmaster and teacher, whose sacrifices years ago to make St. Gregory's a reality are marked by today's successes—they are his successes as we are his successors. It is hard to find such ardor as he had in the task of bringing boys out of the prison of our times to be born in wonder.

I remember one Saturday as a student when Mr. Hicks sent for me very early. Standing in rubber boots, he informed me, a city kid, that he had been compelled to shoot a lame sheep of his and the carcass needed disposing. "You could use the experience," Mr. Hicks said, and left me to the task of hauling a massive dead sheep to the dump. The following Saturday, I was summoned again early. "There's a ewe giving birth in the barn," was the news this time. "I want you to stay with her until the lamb can stand." Death last week and this week, birth. A circle was completed that was natural, educational. I learned something that I had read between the lines of Homer, heard in my heart at Mass, and was an unconscious part of myself—unconscious until then.



Only teachers who are motivated by the welfare of their students find the moments that furnish such real-life lessons, pure teaching moments that corroborate the classroom lectures. Mr. Hicks knew how to point boys towards encounters with reality that were informative *and* formative. And he taught his students to do likewise. The result is his achievement of an educational tradition and a nourishing culture defined by an integration of the physical and the spiritual and a devotion to those mysteries where the soul is suddenly stirred by the sacred.

Thanks to folks like you and Mr. Hicks, boys are still sharing the experience of St. Gregory's with an appetite for life, a devotion to God, a balanced love for poetry and logic, and a rare loyalty to the school where they learned the arts of human happiness. This school is a testament to those who have made it possible, who have both conceived it and allow it to thrive. Please remember our boys this year, as you always have, and make a gift this fall towards a life-changing education. May God bless you.

In Christ,

Sean Fitzpatrick



Sean Fitzpatrick  
Headmaster



## A Letter from Founding Headmaster, Alan J. Hicks



Twenty three years ago, in the summer of 1993, my wife and I loaded our four little children into an old Ford van and set off from the fertile plains of Kansas. I had recently been hired by the District Superior of the Fraternity of St. Peter to found a school for boys, what we had decided to call St. Gregory's Academy. The Fraternity gave me a free hand in this enterprise, but I had little experience in the workings of a secondary school—and a boarding school at that! I had a plan however, one I thought would be the best method of development for this, or any school. My thought was not to work out the details of a program of studies, or even the program itself in all essentials, but to find the best men I could, and together to come up with what we would do. In other words, rather than impose a curriculum from without, I decided to let it grow organically from within the minds and hearts of intelligent, educated, and virtuous men.

Now the obvious problem with such a plan is finding such men. Well, let me simply say that with God's grace, with my own prudential sense, and with a wee bit of luck for sure, we were blessed in our early years with a faculty that would, together, develop a program of sound, if not profound, intellectual, spiritual, and moral formation. It is difficult to say which elements contributed the most to this formation. I could give a long list—Latin, poetry and music, Classical Logic, Rhetoric, the Great Books, rugby, the direct experience of nature, the Tridentine Mass, life in community. But in my quiet moments, if perchance I find myself reflecting on those years, what comes first to my heart are the men with whom I was privileged to work with and all those good boys and their families.

Those were some of my best years and memories, as a teacher, an administrator, and as a man. However, as life in this vale of tears would have it, I moved on to other places and other experiences. Nevertheless, I have always received a consol-



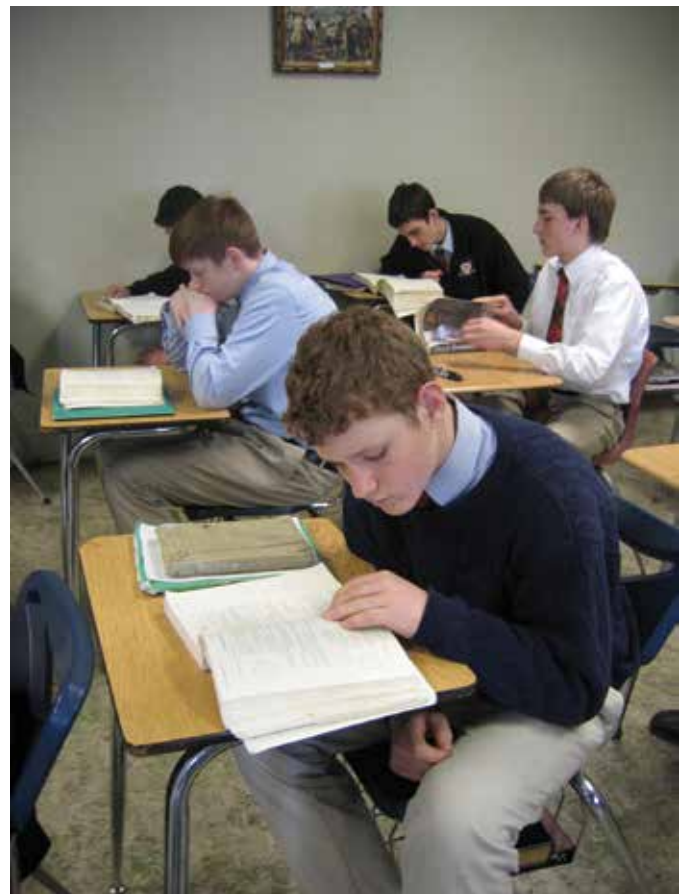




ing pleasure in the ongoing existence of St Gregory's, and now Gregory the Great, the continuation and development of what was begun in those early days. Indeed, as I follow the progress of Gregory the Great Academy I am filled with a profound satisfaction in the thought that graduates of St. Gregory's, some of my own students, and other good men as well, through heroic perseverance and a dedication to what is true and good and beautiful have continued this good work.

The ongoing success of Gregory the Great Academy is a tribute to the virtues of these men and also to many of you who have continued to support this work with your essential contributions and prayers. I have extensive educational experience on the East Coast, the Midwest, and now in California, and I am fairly confident in stating that Gregory the Great Academy is one of the best schools for boys in this wide and glorious land. What a privilege to be connected in any way to this work, and I hope you have a sense of that privilege as well. In these confusing times, it is a great comfort to know that this school of virtue and Catholic manhood continues. God bless you for your support of this work of God, and I pray that He will continue to bless these young men in their selfless efforts to form the minds and hearts of youth.

In Christ,  
Alan Hicks





## Return to the Academy



*Top: The Class of 2017 on pilgrimage in France at the Benedictine monastery of Fontgombault, one of the places that inspired the original idea of St. Gregory's. The class made the pilgrimage as Juniors to prepare and pray for their Senior year. Above: The 2016-17 student body assembled on the field outside the Academy's temporary home in the Pocono Mountains. Our 60 students hail from 24 states comprising 16 Freshmen, 11 Sophomores, 13 Juniors, and 20 Seniors. Please remember the boys at St. Gregory's this year in your prayers and your charitable giving.*

