



And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. — Luke 2:7

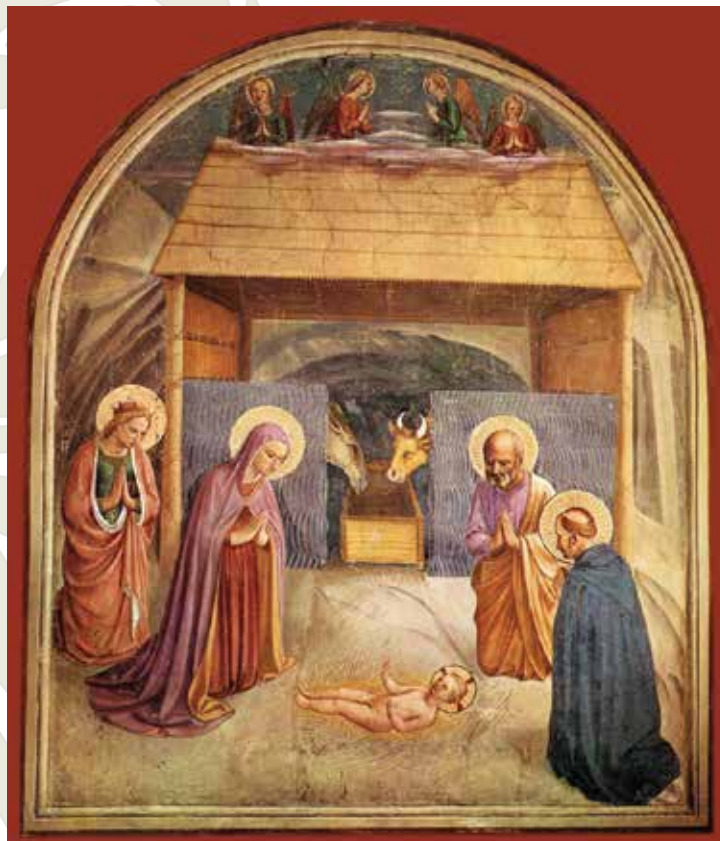
Dear Friend,

There is no room at the inn for Gregory the Great Academy—meaning, we do not yet have a permanent home—but so long as we have room in our hearts for Christ, we are happy. Like the Holy Family, we make do with what we have and this is not a cause of sorrow for us, but of joy. It is one of the things that makes our school unique. Over the years, we have used various temporary locations, merrily bringing our books and boys along with us. At the beginning and end of every academic year, students and teachers work together setting up and breaking down, and we are really able to pitch and pack like a circus. Merry clowns of God that we are, a school of rovers, we bear our Academy along, placing all in God's Hands with the conviction that people do not need great places to do good works.

Let me tell you a story from our first year, a story showing that our leap of faith in founding a school without a home would not be in vain—as long as we, indeed, had faith as we leapt.



Sean Fitzpatrick
Headmaster



Nearly four years ago, we had just assumed possession of an old hotel where we were to start our school. The boys were arriving the next day, and the teachers had only a few hours to make everything ready. Things were going well when my friend and fellow Luke Culley and I determined that the next order of business was to set up a chapel. We rolled up our sleeves and strode to the space where morning and evening prayers would be sung and Holy Mass celebrated. Standing in that bare corner with Mr. Culley, however, I found that neither of us had the slightest idea how to proceed. As though to shake us both from doubt, Mr. Culley began setting chairs in rows with great energy.

“What are we going to do?” I asked, “How are we supposed to do this?”

“I don't know,” Mr. Culley admitted. Abandoning his chairs, he said, “I'm calling Fr. Christopher.”

The call that followed to our faithful friend whose parish was three hours away in Rochester, New York went in this wise:

“Father? This is Luke. We need to set up a chapel for the school—and we don't know how.”

“I'll be there in three hours.”





Three hours later, Fr. Christopher arrived in a car packed to bursting. From it he drew liturgical linens, bright icons of the saints, and pieces of an oak iconostasis to mark the Holy Place. Laying aside his cassock, the priest went straight to work. He built an altar with his own hands and sewed the cloth for it. He constructed the iconostasis and affixed candles before the shining images of Jesus and Mary. He brought incense. He hung curtains. He arranged icons around the walls and windows. He raised a great Crucifix over the altar. When the boys arrived, they found a small and beautiful chapel in that corner that was bare only hours before, a chapel where Our Lord reposed all through the year with them.

By the grace of God, we have not only been given a good chapel every year, but we have also been given a good chaplain in Fr. Christopher Manuele. After two years and much prayer, Fr. Christopher was permitted to join our faculty as our spiritual leader, and it has been such a blessing to have him,

Above: Fr. Christopher Manuele gathers outside our Barn Chapel with students of the Academy, where they celebrate the Divine Mysteries several times a week and pray the Rosary and Liturgical Offices daily. As we continue on our journey to secure a permanent home, we count our blessings and the happy provisions of Heaven.

Below: The Holy Place in our Chapel, decorated and ennobled with the beautiful iconostasis and bright icons that Fr. Christopher brought to our school four years ago. The Crucifix was painted by former faculty member, Dr. Lawrence Cecchi.



Fr. Christopher Manuele

"In the parable, Our Lord likens the Kingdom of Heaven to a treasure buried in a field. Gregory the Great Academy is not the treasure, but a field, simple and rough. It is to this field that young men come in search of treasure, some knowingly, some unknowingly. It is our hope and work that when these young men leave they will have found the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven and discovered that it is hidden within the field of their own hearts. It is by your generosity, a generosity to which we again appeal, that we can continue to cultivate our rough field for God so that it may become a vineyard, beautiful and true, to bear worthy fruits for the Master."



Fr. Christopher Manuele, of the Melkite Diocese of Newton, processes with the students on All Souls Day.

especially given the challenges of providing a fitting sacred space for our community every year. In keeping with the carol's call, "Let every heart prepare him room," Father has been preparing both rooms and hearts with care. It is wonderful to work with such a priest, a true apostle and missionary, ready to do the right things well under difficult circumstances, as did Joseph and Mary when there was no room at the inn. Rooms we have, at least, and we thank God for them! Though we can only do our best with them, that does not mean we cannot do the best things in them.



This year, we have our chapel in an old red barn, a fitting subject for contemplation during the Christmas season. We are a poor school, but we keep company with the King of Kings, and in a place that recalls His own lowly birth so long ago. But just as the stable in Bethlehem was glorious with starlight and angelic song, so do we rejoice in our lowliness. Christ comes to our students in our barn every day, just as He came to the world in a barn on Christmas Day. We gather in stalls like toiling beasts to rest and find sustenance at the Manger. We seek Him in our barn, our chapel, like humble shepherds, and



"At a school like St. Gregory's, you can see how the Ordinary Cleons could have built ancient Athens, or how the Ordinary Quinti could have grown Rome from an upriver village to the ruler of the Mediterranean. Give the young people Sophocles, Virgil, Shakespeare. Give them a life healthy for soul and mind and body. How can you fail to raise graduates who make their contemporaries from other schools, even the valedictorians, look paltry and puerile?" – Anthony Esolen

Save the Date: SAT., FEBRUARY 25TH, 2017

The Second Annual Soirée benefiting Gregory the Great Academy

Featuring:

Dr. Anthony Esolen, Professor of English, Providence College, renowned translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy*



Invitations:

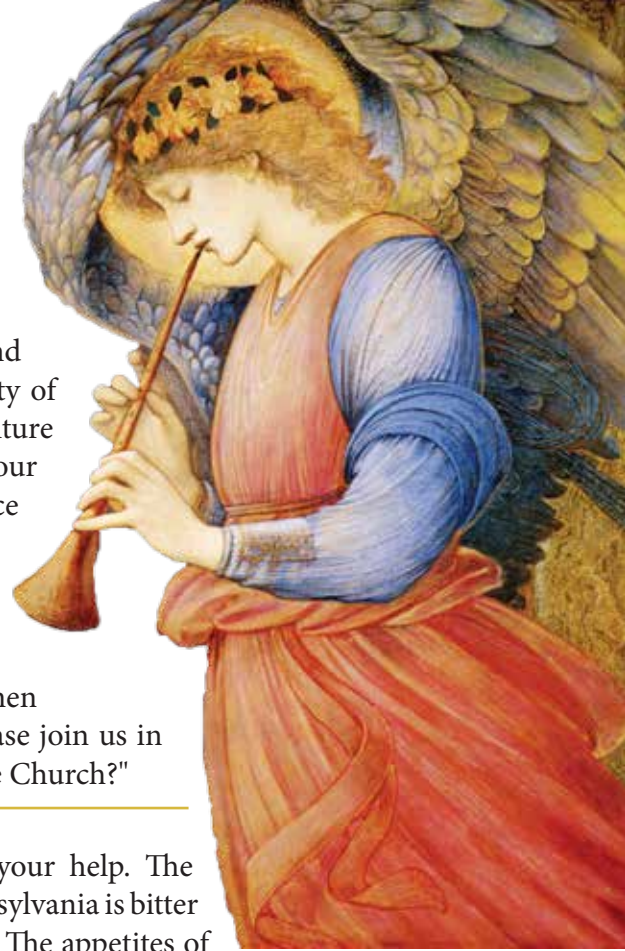
To receive an invitation, contact Daniel Schiller at 518.560.9658 or email him at dschiller@gregorythegreatacademy.org

Bishop James D. Conley:



+The Most Rev. James D. Conley, D.D., S.T. L., Bishop of the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska.

"Given the state of affairs in our country, in our cities, our neighborhoods, there is no doubt as to the need for havens like Gregory the Great. What may not occur to you is the duty we all have to offer our spiritual and material support for such endeavors. The faculty of this school is on the front lines of a war over culture itself. They need us—all of us. It is only with our help, as we join them in participating in the grace of God, that they will carry on and develop their mission to educate a new generation of soldiers for Christ. Please, join the drive to restore the art of Catholic education, and play a part in changing the lives of today's young men who will be tomorrow's leaders. Won't you please join us in supporting this great and important work of the Church?"



pray that we might return to work from worship as wise men.

It is because we have a chapel in an unusual place that the occasion for education and enlightenment is stronger. It is because we operate our school where a school was never meant to operate that we are merry. The students of Gregory the Great have a palpable sense of the importance of their education because we challenge them to carry out their education wherever we can, because education is important and can take place wherever there is the will and the grace to make it happen. Though the spaces are sometimes strange, they provide place for things that are wonderful. When people subject themselves to the will of God, all things are possible—although we do look forward to the benefits of a permanent home!

This Christmas, please remember to put a penny in our hat. As we continue our quest to find a home, like the Holy Family

sojourning in Egypt, we need your help. The winter weather in northeast Pennsylvania is bitter and heating costs run very high. The appetites of 60 growing boys is a costly wonder to behold. Providing sturdy books and repairing well-used juggling equipment is expensive. *Please give a gift to our boys this Christmas* as we bring light into dark places and joy to the world. You and your intentions will be remembered before the Newborn King in our barn.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Fitzpatrick".

Sean Fitzpatrick

