



# The Minstrel

NEWSLETTER OF GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY

September 2021

Dear Friend,

Last summer, I received a surprising eye-opener about the impact of our school of joy. And though it was just a tiny experience, it was a tremendous encouragement.

As you know, I have for years now taken the graduating class from Gregory the Great Academy on a summer pilgrimage. We have typically bicycled or walked the Way of St James in Spain or the Way of St. Francis in Italy. This year, with European travel compromised, we had to find a new way and new holy places and decided to make a pilgrimage in our own homeland. We mounted our bikes and began the 200 miles to the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, stopping along the way at the Shrine of the North American Martyrs in Auriesville, New York.

I was hesitant about the prospect of an American pilgrimage because of our practice of not bringing any money with us on the road, but only our pilgrim spirit and our juggling equipment. Europeans along the ancient pilgrim routes we have traditionally traveled are



Luke Culley  
Headmaster

more used to the idea of a pilgrimage and of lending a hand to pilgrims. Would Americans have the same acceptance of us?



Well, my fears were unfounded! A little moment in upstate New York exemplified the joy we found along our way. We arrived on the late side of a rainy night in a little backwoods town where the only sign of life was a small ramshackle tavern. I feared we may not receive the warmest welcome in such a place, but in we went anyway with song and spectacle. And the good, rough people within were delighted. They laughed and clapped and cheered and were moved by our story as we broke our bread by their generosity.

Then a woman approached me and said, "Are you from Gregory the Great?" What a surprise! There, in that middle-of-nowhere spot on the Mohawk River, where I thought we would not find a friend, we found not only friends, but family. The lady had sent her son to our school many years ago and was as surprised and happy to suddenly find us as I was to find her. She opened her home to us that evening and our pilgrims were sheltered for another evening by her magnanimity and God's grace.

That meeting afforded me with an astonishing realization of how far and wide the effects of the joyful mission of Gregory the Great Academy have gone. It is a great good that we have sent out so many people who have been touched or formed by our school as true pilgrims. Our boys and their families are beginning or continuing a journey to find a resilient joy in God's mercy and they will bring that holy happiness out into the far corners of our country where it is needed.

But to do this, we need you. Our mission is to make missionaries, but like most missionary apostolates, we rely entirely on your financial support. Please give a gift to Gregory the Great Academy this fall and know that in doing so you are participating in sending forth strong and good men, alive with the love of learning and the desire for God, who will bring His peace to a troubled nation with pilgrim hearts and missionary zeal. Thank you for your support.

In Christ,

Luke Culley





## Life on the Farm

The farm at Gregory the Great Academy has now entered its fourth year, baptized with a fresh name, “Academy Fields” (follow “academyfields” on Instagram). This fall the boys will raise and process over 700 meat birds. Along with being stewards of the feathered, foolish, and often funny bi-ped, the lads will help take care of our growing herd of hogs. Currently, we have eight sows (five that will soon have their second litter), two boars, and two sets of 14 feeder pigs that will be raised for our freezer, fall and spring semesters respectively.



*John Burger, Academy Fields Farm Foreman.*

This past year, several of our gilts became first-time mothers in the frigid beginning of March. After rigging some extra pens in our barn, we brought the ladies out of the weather to farrow together. I am proud to say that Lil Baby, our only original hog from the first year of the farm, and still our favorite, is now a grandmother.

Her daughter, Lil Baby 2 (forgive the lack of creativity in naming) gave birth to 11 healthy pigs. The night she went into labor, I was up in the loft of the barn throwing down hay to give her more material for a nest, when all of a sudden, I heard a boy yell up at me from below that she had just popped out a piglet and he thought something should be done. Lucky he was there to alert me as we made sure that the whole litter survived, never a guarantee with a new mom and the temperature in the teens.

In other farm news, Lil Baby’s sister, Big Momma, was retired and, with the help of the sophomores, was swiftly dispatched, butchered, and smoked for our graduation banquet last May. In June, during the final full day of our inaugural summer camp, the young lads were greeted with the spectacle of Lil Baby giving birth next to their campsite to her third litter. God grant them many months!

Finally, to round out the summer, I am perhaps most proud to say that our former farm prefect, Nate Bateman, put his Academy Fields education to good use by successfully slaughtering and butchering two hogs for his sister’s wedding this July, which I had the privilege (and the curse) to smoke and prepare. Raise. Slaughter. Butcher. Cook. Feast. Academy Fields: Education in the Real. — John Burger



## The Old: Alumni Work Weekend

This August, Gregory the Great hosted the 5th annual Alumni Work Weekend at the school. Over a dozen skilled alumni and their children came to help the Academy get ready for the upcoming school year. Director of Operations Michael Miller had a list of projects that we would have been hard pressed to tackle without the help of these stalwart gentlemen and their progeny.

From opening up the transom windows in the commons to bring more light into the lives of the boys, to pulling down the mighty ash tree near the Throop House which had succumbed to the emerald ash borer, the alumni and faculty worked tirelessly over the course of the weekend. Work was followed by leisure with a dinner prepared for the whole crew and an evening of festivity where we shared stories of our time at the Academy and hopes for the future of this school we love so well. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend and make the weekend a smashing success. We can't wait to see everyone next year!



*Above right: Zach Bateman ('08) and Jack O'Brien ('21) stand by the fallen ash with current students, Kevin O'Brien and Michael Miller. Right: Members of the Class of '98, Nick Beck, John O'Brien, Michael Miller, and Sean Fitzpatrick pause from treating the facade masonry.*

## The New: Highlander Camp



Summer is for camping, and at Gregory the Great Academy, there is no exception. Thirty-two 7th and 8th grade boys took over our 200-acre campus as Coach van Beek and his team ran our first Highlander Camp. The boys spent the week sleeping under the stars, throwing axes, shooting arrows, and building boats. More importantly, the boys enriched their souls with the Latin Mass, daily prayer, and lively discussions on myths and legends with our faculty. We hope the boys had as much fun as we did, and we are certain there were a few future Highlanders in the mix.



*“Joseph loved Mr. Fitzpatrick’s lectures, the boys he met, and all of the new things he got to experience (rugby, killing a chicken, Latin Mass, juggling, seeing piglets just born, the huge slip and slide with soap instead of a shower ... ha, etc.). It had a big impact!” — A Happy Parent*



