



# The Minstrel

NEWSLETTER OF GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY

Feast of St. John Bosco, 2023

Dear Friend,

Have you ever heard of Don Bosco's chestnut miracle?

As we begin a New Year together, this is the perfect time to remember St. John Bosco, whose feast day falls right at the beginning of a long stretch for us at Gregory the Great Academy. We often talk about Don Bosco as our patron in the light of his educational philosophy, but there is another and deeper aspect to the man that we look to for inspiration and guidance in our work of forming young men—bravery.

And that's where the chestnuts come in. Don Bosco would often arrive at his Oratory with a bag of chestnuts for his boys—one little bag for literally hundreds of boys. As the boys lined up and he began to fill their hands, the older boys nudged the priest and whispered that there wouldn't be enough chestnuts for everyone.



*Icon of St. John Bosco from the chapel hall at Gregory the Great Academy by Dmitri Andreyev.*

But the smiling saint didn't hold back and kept distributing chestnuts, handful by brimming handful to boy after boy, even though his bag was impossibly small. But, as the older boys looked on in wonder, the chestnuts never ran out while Don Bosco gave each and every one of the boys their fair share—including an extra large helping for the older boys.

Don Bosco was never afraid to do good, even if he was faced with obstruction or opposition. This miracle of the chestnuts is a beautiful image for all that he did: fearlessly providing as God provided for him. God rewarded Don Bosco's bravery, whether with things as small as chestnuts or things as large as lodgings, teachers, or benefactors. Nothing is impossible to God through those brave enough to trust in His Providence. Don Bosco was content to expect that Heaven would provide even a miraculous supply of chestnuts if that was what he needed.

What more can we give these boys than the example and habit of bravery? Don Bosco once said, "The power of evil men lives on the cowardice of the good." If we are doing anything here at Gregory the Great Academy, I pray it is making brave good men—good men who are brave enough to know the true, do the good, and love the beautiful. What more can we give these boys and the world?

You have been brave with us, and I stand in profound gratitude to you. In cooperation with God and Mary Help of Christians, you make our brave formation of the young possible. By your support, we are able to do what we do as bravely as we are able, without fear of failure. By your generosity, you, together with Our Lord, keep filling our bag of chestnuts for our boys and give us the courage to pass on the gift of courage.

Thank you for everything and may God bless you.

In Christ,

Luke Culley



Luke Culley  
Headmaster



## The Feast of the Immaculate Conception

One of the vital aspects of educating young men in the Faith is to help them foster relationships with their Heavenly Mother. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception offers a beautiful opportunity for this cultivation, as the whole day is devoted to celebrating Mary. Just as medieval knights would fight for the honor of their lady in tournaments, so do the boys partake in an all-day intramural rugby tournament to honor their Lady preserved from all stain of original sin. The boys are grouped into teams, each taking a name reflecting one of

Our Lady's glorious titles and offering roses to her image at the end of a solemn procession through the snow. This year, "Our Lady of the Rosary" was victorious—as she always will be!

The tournament is followed by a banquet for the students and faculty, the refectory decorated for the occasion and abounding with food and drink. Each class performs carols and Advent hymns in preparation for the birth of Our Lord and the momentous role Mary played in the history of salvation. It is a hopeful sight to see teenage boys, so often filled with ad-

olescent cynicism, lay their prayers at the feet of the Immaculate Conception in play and song.



## The Daily Bosco

Every morning at 7:30 am, the Residential Dean sends a message to the faculty and staff of Gregory the Great Academy. This message includes an update on the day's schedules, events, current student situations, upcoming activities... and the Daily Bosco. The Daily Bosco simply comprises a brief quote from St. John Bosco to serve as a daily reminder of the patronage of this saintly teacher and to help us incorporate his wisdom in our work with the souls that God has given to us. Here are a few of the kinds of quotes we see in The Daily Bosco each morning that keep the teachings of St. John Bosco with us as we teach.

*"The teacher who is seen only in the classroom and nowhere else, is a teacher and nothing more; but let him go with his boys to recreation and he becomes a brother."*

*"If one is to do good, he must have a little courage, be ready for sacrifice, deal affably with all and never slight anybody. By following this method I have always had significant success, in fact, marvelous success."*

*"You are surrounded by many boys who constantly watch you. Do your utmost to set them on the right path by good example, advice, and exhortation."*



## A Trip to Jim Thorpe



This past December, the boys of Gregory the Great Academy headed south to the picturesque town of Jim Thorpe to participate in its annual Old Time Christmas celebration. Traveling to this event is a yearly treat for both boys and townsfolk alike. The weather was perfect for the occasion, and the crowds were in high spirits as the boys sang and juggled, performing all of the classic carols they learn at the Academy.

This merry excursion is not only a good time, but is also the per-

fect occasion to spread the joy of Christ precisely during that part of the year when our world is willing to listen. Little children and adults hear (and often sing along to) the story of the good news that a Savior is born for them. This purpose of caroling is not lost on the boys. Their spirit of evangelization in song is as palpable as the laughs and cheering of the observers. May God continue this good work and bring new people to know Christ through the happy and wholesome witness of our boys!





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Questions? Contact Christopher Smith at 703.901.5415