



The Minstrel

NEWSLETTER OF GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY

All Souls 2024

Dear Friend,

There's nothing like the crimson colors and earthy odors of fall to signal that a new school year is beginning even as the larger human drama unfolds and unwinds. As Howard Pyle wrote in *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, "So passed the seasons then, so they pass now, and so they will pass in time to come, while we come and go like leaves of the tree that fall and are soon forgotten."

All things roll on and slip away—but the boys who come to this school do not soon forget the good they experienced here. They remember it even as they remember to live largely and give the goods that they got here, just as Robin Hood did to those in need, saying:

"Let us e'er be merry while we may, for man is but dust, and he hath but a span to live here till the worm getteth him, as our good gossip Swanhild sayeth; so let life be merry while it lasts, say I."

Robin Hood is a foundational text for our school. The freshmen read it every fall as the whole student body troops out to become the merry men themselves for three robust days in our woods, roasting meat over fires, shooting arrows, swinging axes, roaring songs over root beer and apple cider, and building crude, curious shelters. It is a true welcoming for the new boys and a reaffirmation of the spirit that animates this school of merry adventure.



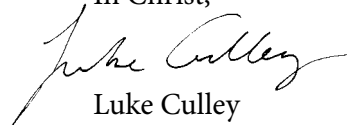
As our freshmen write their first letters home, teachers receive their first messages from parents. We heard from a mother recently who wrote:

Picturing your freshman class reading *Robin Hood* outside under a tree offers a rare and powerful sense of hope, even to those of us not there physically very often... If you've ever read *The Education of Little Tree*, you might remember this bit: "Granma said when you come on something good, first thing to do is share it with whoever you can find; that way the good spreads out where no telling it will go. Which is right." Our gratitude to all the Gregory the Great Academy faculty for doing this very thing over and over again.

Letters like these are so encouraging. They not only affirm the gift of this school, but also remind us that the good life we are pleased to live with our students is, indeed, a gift. It is a blessing to give a gift so freely and easily, and that is one of the chiefest graces of this community. It gives that which is a joy to give again.

Please do not forget us this fall like forgotten leaves. **The gifts we give are first given by you.** Please be generous so that we may be generous. Please pray for us as we pray for you. Please join us in the joy of life despite the chill of mortality. Our boys are indeed a source of hope. May they be so to you, too. Thank you for your charity.

In Christ,


Luke Culley



Luke Culley
Headmaster



Learning How to See Again

The freshmen are often surprised when they learn the purpose of drawing guild—because it's not to become a better artist, but a better human being! After reading Josef Pieper's essay, "Learning How to See Again," they are introduced to the consideration that, since human beings are essentially knowers, the more they know, the more of their humanity is unlocked. And since seeing is the sense by which the most information is gained, Pieper concludes that the better a man can use his eyes, the more he will know—or, "the spiritual capacity to see reality as it truly is" increases.

According to Pieper, an excellent way to strengthen our eyes, and therefore our minds and souls, is to engage in drawing. Eddie Kelly, dormfather, carpenter, teacher, coach, alumnus, and *artist*, is leading the freshmen in making their vision stronger through subjects in classroom and outdoors to exercise their powers of observation and learn how to become more human. Or as Christ put it, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light," (Matt 6:22-23).



Learning to Love Lady Wisdom

The seniors are privileged to have a course in Ethics led by Dr. Annie Lefler. As they read and discuss Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Dr. Lefler draws out of her students not only the purpose of philosophy, but also the purpose of life—which is to know what is good for man. A poignant position of Dr. Lefler's that has often graced our discussions is that all human efforts—whether in ethics, philosophy, theology, art, architecture, poetry, or science—are rooted in the desire to live forever.

With this eternal end in mind, the students learn how to apply virtue ethics to their thoughts and actions, following a course interspersed with literature and psychology as well as current topics. Though only an introduction to the love of wisdom and living well, let us pray that this rich experience will give our seniors the tools they need to recognize their passions, know how they work, how to talk about them, and ultimately how to use them in their quest for the good life beyond death.



Working with Fire

A large part of the character of a boys boarding school is affected by the characters of the boys who attend it at a given time. This year, fourth-year senior Angelo Verona has brought a passion of his to school: blacksmithing. With help from the guild masters, he has set up a forge in the barn, dusting off our old anvil, hammers, and tongs and making them ring again. It has been awhile since there was a student who knew how to ply this age-old trade, and it is wonderful to see Angelo rekindle the flame. He is determined not only to contribute to the culture of the school through this activity, but also to pass on



his skills to other students. Angelo taught himself how to blacksmith by reading books, talking to blacksmiths at fairs, and rolling up his sleeves and getting at it. He enjoys it because of the challenge and the pleasure of fashioning hardy things with his own hands that are practical and handsome. In appreciation for his forge, Angelo is working on a sturdy door knocker for the Academy's annual Soirée auction in April.



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Robin Hood Days—Come Hither!

