

Christmas 2023



Dear Friend,

Before I tell you about **the gift that came with this letter**, I'd like to tell you about the boy who created it **for you**.

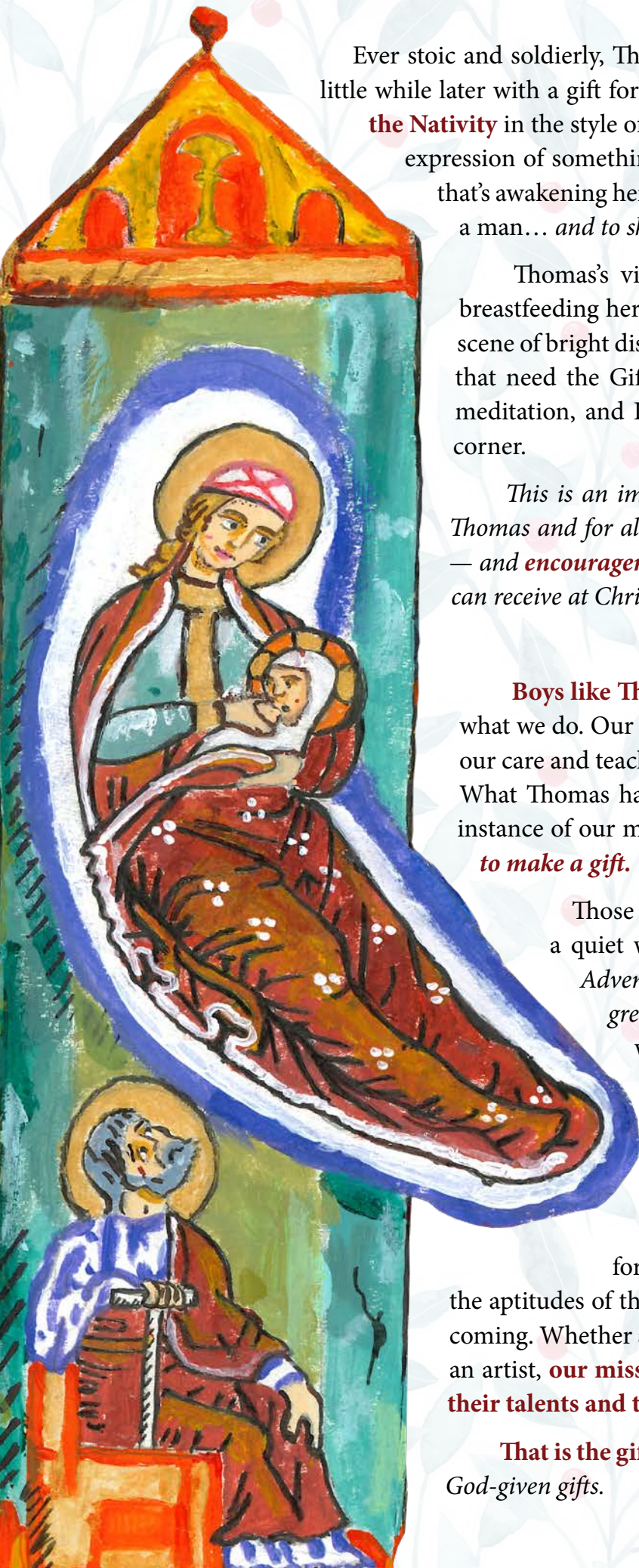
Thomas is a meditative boy from Georgia. His father told me once that, as a child, Thomas said he didn't know whether he should be a clown or a monk when he grew up. Well, Thomas is growing up in the right place with us who esteem both clowns *and* monks. Now a sophomore, Thomas has thus far proven himself to be a dutiful student and a striving athlete, with the clear eye of a monk and the wry humor of a clown. Time will tell which path he chooses.

I knew that Thomas enjoyed drawing, and thought if ever we had an art project on hand, it would be good to get Thomas involved. When the idea came up for an original Christmas piece for our benefactors, it wasn't long before Thomas stood silently in my office. ***"Well, Thomas," I said, "how would you like to do a painting for everyone on our mailing list?"*** I watched for his reaction...

"Sure," said Thomas, after a pause, but never a change in his face.

And that was that. A man of few words.





Ever stoic and soldierly, Thomas disappeared into the dorms and emerged a little while later with a gift for you: a beautiful work of folk art — **a triptych of the Nativity** in the style of the early Christians. This painting is a marvelous expression of something that animates Thomas's meditative soul, a soul that's awakening here at school and learning to see and assert itself like a man... *and to share a vision.*

Thomas's vision of the Nativity shows the Mother of God breastfeeding her Divine Son — a tender life-giving gift, given in a scene of bright disarray, a jumbled yet joyful world of fallen children that need the Gift of the Word Made Flesh. It's a lively piece for meditation, and I hope it will find its way to your Advent prayer corner.

*This is an image born of the education **you have provided** for Thomas and for all of our boys, and it is a wonderful encouragement — and **encouragement**, in whatever form, may be the best gift anyone can receive at Christmas time.*

* * *

Boys like Thomas are the reason why we are here, why we do what we do. Our school seeks to draw out the talents of the boys in our care and teach them to offer the fruits of those talents to others. What Thomas has done for you, and for all of us, is an excellent instance of our mission — **where a boy with a gift found a chance to make a gift.**

Those opportunities may take years to arise, involving a quiet waiting and watching — *not unlike the season of Advent, where we wait and watch the approach of the greatest Gift of all.* Though he didn't know it, Thomas was waiting for this moment to bring this colorful incarnation of the Incarnation into being *and to share it with those who have made his education possible.*

This is something that happens all the time here at our little school in a thousand different forms — where the richness of our life cultivates the aptitudes of the boys so that they may give in ways that few saw coming. Whether as a singer, an athlete, a student, a poet, a leader, or an artist, **our mission is to give these boys what they need to find their talents and to enact them for the good of many.**

That is the gift we give to our boys — *the gift of discovering their God-given gifts.*



All of this is only made possible, however, by the gifts YOU give to us.

We turn to you for wholesome food for hungry boys, vibrant books for young minds, sacred supplies for Liturgy, balls for sports, clubs for juggling, tools for butchering and building, bandages for falls, and merrily clanging radiators for the dorms during the tough northeastern winter. We need all these things and more — *and you have never let us down.*

We have done much with what you have given us, and our school is growing sturdier and stronger every year — becoming more and more a place where boys like Thomas can find the challenge and the chance to rise above themselves and bring something new and good to the lives of the people around them. BUT... before any of these boys can do that,

YOU must rise to the challenge yourself

and seize this chance to do your part in this soul-awakening. That very challenge and chance lies before you as you read this letter.

Please be generous in your gift to us this Christmas. We depend on you so much. We will do our part, giving what we have to offer to our boys so that a sacred, self-fulfilling, and self-giving circle can complete itself in each of their lives, where every one of them comes to return what has been entrusted to them for the greater glory of God.

Have a very happy and holy Christmas, and *thank you* for remembering us at Gregory the Great Academy.

Christ Is Born! Glorify Him!

Luke Culley

Luke Culley

Headmaster, Gregory the Great Academy

PS: Thank you for giving a gift to Gregory the Great Academy TODAY! We are so grateful for your generosity and your Advent sacrifice!

PPS: We chose to accompany Thomas's painting of the Nativity with the famous St. Andrew's novena. St. Andrew is known as the "first called," and so do we help our students reply to the call of Christ in their lives. Will you answer the call as well?

