

Merry Christmas

From Gregory the Great Academy



December 2024

Dear <<<Personal Salutation>>>,

Are you surprised by the gift we sent you? Well, the best Christmas presents are surprises, and this dramatic work of art depicts the union of *two of the greatest surprises in history*: the **first** being the Incarnation, and the **second** being the Christian victory against the seemingly invincible Ottoman Empire at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

We all know the story of Lepanto's madcap hero, Don John of Austria, issuing Rosaries to his soldiers as weapons... but did you know his steadfast admiral, John Andrea Doria, had aboard his ship the first reproduction of **Our Lady of Guadalupe**? He knelt before it when battle broke, as Don John danced on his prow, in an act of hopeful expectation to the Expecting Virgin.

The enclosed painting—**created especially for YOU this Christmas** by Daniel Balan, the father of one of our students—offers a vision of the Holy Family rowing across the battle line at Lepanto. **For Mary was there**, hearkening to the Rosary recited by the soldiers processing round the decks, her quiet, pregnant power blazing at that apocalyptic battle with all the splendor of the star-crowned Woman of Revelation, **she who graces our Advent expectations as we wake to put on the armor of light**.



This battle, like the Birth of Christ, changed the course of salvation history. And to remember the wars of the world at Christmas, when even the Holy Family struggled under political upheaval and violence, is to remember that it is beneath the mantle of our Mother that we find peace on earth.

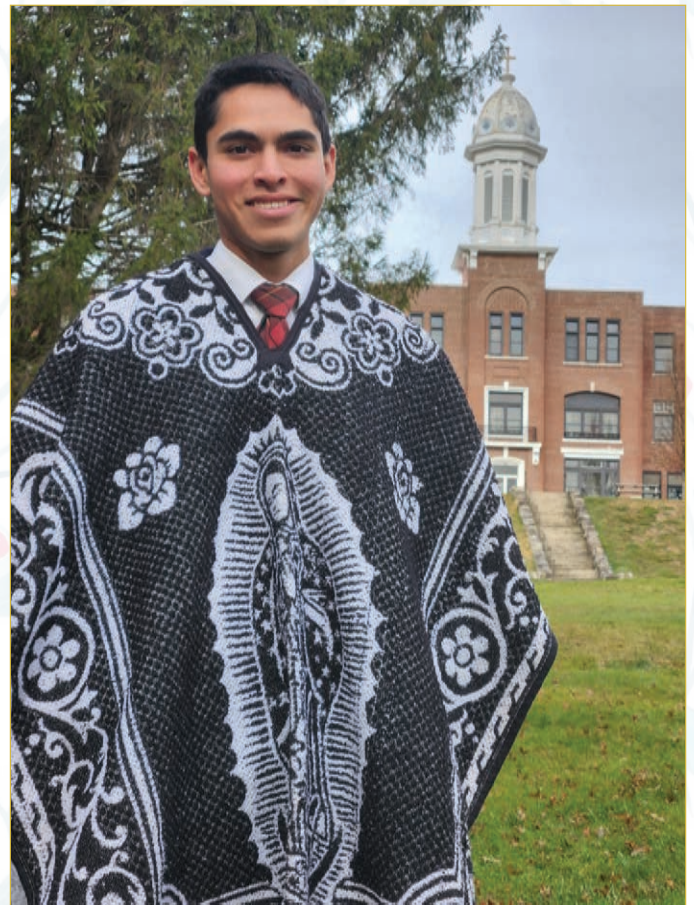
Our boys love tales of daring and warfare, so to make a crèche out of a sea battle is in keeping with the spirit of Gregory the Great Academy. Indeed, Mr. Balan captures a character of boyhood in this painting. Any boy might draw the Nativity in crude, confident strokes set nonchalantly in the midst of a crayoned military barrage, with rockets over Bethlehem instead of angels and soldiers instead of shepherds.

There is a childlike whimsy to this vision, despite its grit... and if anything makes it a fitting Christmas image, it's that. For Christmas is for children—when our little ones look upon Our Lord and see themselves. The Infant Jesus is the most stirring and comforting of mysteries. To think of God becoming a baby is to know **Who our God is**.

Yes, Christmas is for children, and there are plenty of children at our school besides the boys. A gang of faculty children are often riding bikes round the barn, swinging sticks in the woods, toddling up to Mass, or having a snack in the refectory. **It is good that the boys have these children bouncing about their school, who look up to them as big soldierly brothers. It makes our school more familial.**

Our cook welcomed her firstborn last summer and she has been at the pots and pans and delivery orders with her doe-eyed daughter bundled on her chest. In fact, a new duty of the kitchen prefects is to hold Cordelia or check on her cradle in the kitchen office.

Another baby that has been in the boys' lives recently is the little nephew of one of our students, struggling with cancer. **The boys prayed for him every single day.** Natey fell asleep in the Lord last October, and the boys sang at his funeral and again at his graveside, witnessing the unspeakable sadness of parents burying their child.



Though these families might make the boys miss their own siblings and parents, being away at school as they are, that sadness is an occasion for comfort and joy through connection with the Holy Family. The boys say goodbye to their mothers to find another that they've had all along. **Mary becomes so real to the boys here because they realize how much they need her.**

When I hear the boys sing the *Salve Regina* in our candlelit chapel every night, when I see them venerate the icon of the God



Bearer, the *Theotokos*, when I pray the Rosary with them, when I notice the foot of the Marian statue in the main stairwell where the paint on her foot is **worn to nothing** from years of boys touching it reverently as they pass by on their way to class, I know that our school is strong and safe in the most important sense. *All is calm, all is bright 'round yon Virgin Mother and Child...*

This reminds me of the tender words spoken by the Queen of Heaven to Juan Diego before she blessed him and the whole world with the holy tilma: **“Am I not here, I who am your mother?”** She *is* with us—she “that God kissed in Galilee,” as G.

K. Chesterton writes (with a blush) in his pounding epic “Lepanto.” **She is with us, bringing us to Jesus and Jesus to us** as gently as she directed her Son to do something about the wine at Cana and, at the same time, directed us to do whatever He tells us.

So, in the spirit of their devotion to Mary Mother of God—made possible only through *your* devotion to this mission—The boys have not one, but **TWO gifts for you** this Christmas!

The boys made a ROSARY for you. Yes, they handcrafted a series of single-decade Rosaries, **and we will send you yours in return for any gift, however small**—for at our school every gift counts. So, in this, our Christmas gift exchange, we look forward to sending **you** a second present in gratitude for yours, with a Rosary string that has a tactical quality to it, like a piece of gear, so you can bear it with you as the weapon that it is.



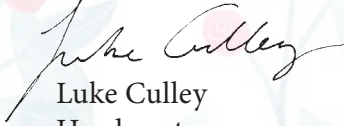
Send your gift today!

And we need you to make that gift, too.

As our nation fights through a crisis of youth culture, **please** seriously consider that the best way **you can help heal the diseases of our day** is by giving generously to this school. The remedies of goodness, truth, and beauty are realities forming strong, steely hearts here, and with your help, we will make men who can alter the course of history towards Christ through Mary.

THANK YOU for your support, and a very **MERRY CHRISTMAS** to you and all your little ones!

In the Infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother,


Luke Culley
Headmaster

P.S. Our costs in this work are great, **but I know your faith is greater.** Please go the extra mile for us this Christmas and make a considerable gift. Our boys need **you** and are looking forward to acknowledging your gift of an education in the Incarnation with the Rosary string they made for you. **Yours is ready!** Make your tax-deductible donation today and take **your** part in the charge and the victory.

