



The Minstrel

NEWSLETTER OF GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY

Winter 2025

Dear _____,

When I think of the virtue of courage at Gregory the Great Academy, I think of boys enduring rugby practices in winter before plunging into icy streams for five minutes of joyous pain singing war songs. I think of boys waking up in the dark, chanting lauds in a chilly chapel, and doing farm chores in the snow.

And then I think of the winter world of *Beowulf*: a world that exists in an eternal winter where men gather around the fire of the mead hall singing and drinking to keep the darkness and danger of winter at bay. The world of *Beowulf* is a winter world indeed, a world of hardship and constant warfare. It is a world where courage is the preeminent virtue, for it is upon courage that all the other goods of civilization depend.



Luke Culley
Headmaster

Beowulf is a man of courage: he kills marauding monsters and finally a dragon, but at the cost of his own life. In the end, however, this epic seems to question the preeminence of courage. For what good is courage when the ultimate victor is not the hero but the encroaching winter night of Death that will eventually come for us all?

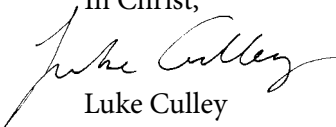


But courage is not defined by victory. In its deepest and truest sense, courage means humble submission and obedience to reality, not shying away from the world, but continually plunging back into the dangerous, joyous, rough, glorious, and yes, sometimes ice-cold and painful world of the real.

The essence of courage is exemplified best by Our Lord in His agony when He says, “Not my will but Thine be done,” and by Our Lady when she responds to the angel Gabriel, “Be it done unto me according to thy Word.” Both accept everything asked of them by God. This is courage, humble engagement with all of God’s creation, with all of God’s destiny for us.

Is courage enough? For the pagan Beowulf, the answer has to be, No: courage can only be a noble but futile protest against the impending darkness. But for us, the answer is, Yes! For Christ is truly the Victor over the monster called Death. In Christ, we are able to courageously and confidently face up to the whole of reality because Christ, the Lord of Life, has conquered every form of death.

Our mission at this school is nothing if not courageous. And your courageous support is your own sacrificial and beautiful act allowing another cadre of young men to engage bravely with the risks, dangers, and joys of the real. They—and all of us—thank you for your much-needed support this winter.

In Christ,

Luke Culley



HARD THINGS...BUT C

ONE OF THE MARKS THAT GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY IS A GOOD SCHOOL is that it is a hard school. We embrace the truth that nothing worth doing is free of peril, and our students are challenged to break free of the “comfort zones” so over-valued by secular society to encounter hard and good realities.

For with suffering, there comes a spiritual strengthening, and we train our students to grow in the spiritual capacity to appreciate glad poverty, Christian community, and friendship with Christ with all of the ups and downs that accompany such endeavors. Please enjoy these reflections on some of those hard, good things written by four of our students.



Study Hall

Every day, the Academy requires two hours of self-directed study. Although this is helpful, study hall can pose something of an irritation. An active teenage boy often has an understandable dislike for sitting at a desk for two hours. But this cloistered, peaceful time also represents a chance for a young man to grow in many strengths: diligence, focus, prioritization, self-reflection, and time management, to name a few. And it is usually the case that a student will work harder and go further when left with his books in a quiet place. By providing time for silent, uninterrupted work, study hall is an important contribution to the academic life and personal growth of every student. —**Finn Gorman, Sophomore, Strasburg, VA**



Homesickness

As a first-year student, I have found that the most challenging thing about being at St. Gregory's (so far) is homesickness. But it is something that has and will make me a stronger, better person. I used to take my family for granted, like most boys my age do. But I have come to appreciate what a blessing it was (and still is) that I grew up in a loving Catholic family. It's funny how you have to leave something behind to find it. The other upside about being away from home is that it makes you much more independent. Homesickness is not really a sickness—it's more like a growing pain. It really hurts, especially at first, but the end result is that you are more mature, more prepared, to take on life. —**Sly Smith, Freshman, Pittsburgh, PA**

GOOD THINGS



Getting Along

Arguments are bound to happen at a boarding school. Everyone can't get along with everyone else all the time, especially when doing difficult things like keeping to a schedule and working side by side both physically and intellectually. When arguments arise, though, they are not necessarily bad. They bring about opportunities to encounter new ideas and different ways of seeing things. Even when a conclusion isn't reached, the two parties often part without thinking less of the other. Disagreements can be hard on students, but they invite the truth that God can create good out of bad situations if we, in turn, practice the charity, patience, and respect our Faith requires of every man. —**Timothy Schmiesing, Senior, Sidney, OH**



Winter Rugby

Among the many challenges faced at Gregory the Great Academy is the yearly struggle through the long winter. During this time, rugby practice up on the windy hills of our campus is very strenuous—but that makes these practices all the more essential towards the formation of weak boys into strong men. Few things bring men together as well as suffering, and there are few sufferings as intense (and good) as wintertime rugby. On the snowy practice field, the closely bound members of the team teach each other resilience, fortitude, and maturity. Although always difficult in the moment, I believe every student looks back with gratitude for the chance to prove his endurance both to himself and to his teammates. —**Thomas Ranieri, Junior, Front Royal, VA**





Purchase your tickets now for Gregory the Great Academy's

10th Annual Soirée

Saturday, April 26th 2025, 5:00 p.m. at Gregory the Great Academy

\$125 per person 🌸 \$200 per couple

Cocktails and heavy
hors d'oeuvres
throughout the evening

Silent and live
auctions



Singing by the boys of
Gregory the Great Academy

Special Guest:
Fr. Andrew DeSilva ('97)



gregorythegreatacademy.org/soiree