



The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter

ST. GREGORY'S ACADEMY

RR 8 Box 8214, Moscow PA 18444

Phone (570) 842-8112 / Fax (570) 842-4513

www.saintgregorysacademy.org

Advent 2006

Dear Friend,



Have you ever felt as if the beautiful season of Advent is the most neglected time in the Church's calendar? At St. Gregory's Academy, we make whatever effort we can to hold on to this precious time of preparation for Christmas. For now is the time to *prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths, so we shall see the salvation of God* whose coming was announced by the Archangel to the Virgin Mary.

This King of Kings, this Emmanuel, *who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of servant, made in the likeness of men* deigned to be born in a stable and placed in a manger.

This humble birth that gave Mary such joy is our joy too... that is if we have prepared His way during these weeks of Advent. For as the Venerable Bede wrote, *not only is Mary blessed who merited to conceive in the flesh the Word of God, but they also who endeavor to conceive this same Word spiritually by the hearing of faith, and to give Him birth... by keeping and doing what is good.*

This should be our constant hope during Advent, to experience the mysterious birth of our Savior in our souls on Christmas Day. *O happy crib of Bethlehem!* exclaims St. Bonaventure. *In thee I find the King of Glory: but happier still than thou, the pious soul which holds within itself Him whom thou couldst hold but corporally!*

As I have written to you before, the education we offer at St. Gregory's - to imprint a true Catholic character upon the minds and hearts of our young men - takes many forms. All that we do here, in chapel or classroom or elsewhere, should work toward that end. So it's not surprising that not only the beautiful Tridentine liturgy that the boys attend so often but even the reading of a classic tale by Dickens can become the occasion for this preparation Advent invites.

Please, if you believe it's important for the young to receive this Catholic preparation in the riches of our faith, take a moment and make St. Gregory's part of your Christmas giving. *By doing what is good*, as the Venerable Bede wrote, you will conceive Him in your hearts; and by your generous donations to our work, you may ensure that He may be conceived in the hearts of others. God bless you for your kindness.

In Christ,

Howard Clark
Howard Clark, Headmaster

P.S. For a special new tax incentive for you and a chance to help St. Gregory's at the same time, please see the back of our reply card.



Come in! Come in! and know Me better, Man!

The chills of early winter have settled on the bristling hills of northeastern Pennsylvania. The walls and wings of St. Gregory's Academy struggle soberly in the teeth of inclement weather. The boys awaken to face the stretch from the end of Thanksgiving break to the beginning of the Christmas vacation. There is a thinness to the air; an icy sting and snap that makes the teachers stride quickly to class in the morning, and the ruggers pick up the pace on their property run in the afternoon. The very weather bespeaks an urgency towards something; a need to move and arrive. The frosty climate of Advent has come. Nature herself manifests the spirit of this holy season, which urges us to wake from our slumbers and make all haste to the lowly crib of Christ the King.

As November rigidly shifts to December, and plummeting temperatures and snow-falls are unforgiving, the seniors lead a rigorous charge for the Christmas holidays, setting course through a tempest of exams and howling rugby practices. Mentally and physically the students are on the move, anticipating an arrival to a sacred and beloved destination.

Standing solemnly together in Literature class, the boys recite from Shakespeare:

"When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whoo;
Tu-whit, tu-who, - a merry note"

The boys' note is not so merry. The song of their exodus towards homely fires tolls like a solemn bell in their heads. The old chimes of hearth and home are calling to them monotonously, sonorously.

At this time, this holy time, while the upper-classmen give a feast in honor of the Immaculate Conception, the under-classmen are given *A Christmas Carol*. There they read that "it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance

rejoices," and they begin to understand something that is at hand; the longing of Advent for the splendor of Christmas resounds in these words; the desperate Want of the penitent for the remote Abundance of the blessed. Now Christmastime begins to dawn dauntingly on young pilgrim minds "as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time... in the long calendar of the year, when men and women open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys." Mr. Dickens thus teaches the terrific challenge of the Christmas Season, the glorious goal of Advent, and his students shudder, laugh, and learn.

The procession advances, treading across spiritual plains as well.



Yearning souls are not left behind in this time of surging, of coming towards the threshold of comfort and joy. To live the lesson presented by Mr. Dickens is indeed a lofty test, which looms before his pupils out of his pages. But as the Staves are sung and the boys begin their journeys with Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge, the task to unclench any tightfisted hand begins; an inspired passage commences away from the "squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner" whom we all know. The heartrending self-discovery of Scrooge and the desire to undo horrors unearthed is the process of a fruitful Advent. With Scrooge the boys realize a need to purge themselves before they answer the call, "Come in! and know me better man," and discover the jubilant mystery of the Incarnation with peasants and kings, called together as one by the choirs of heaven.

The chapel is cold. After study hall, the boys pull on sweaters before they file in to night prayer and fill the high ceiling with sounds of chant, (and echoes of a few wintry coughs). The Advent candles pierce the darkness bravely before the kneeling boys, like a cluster of distant lighthouses. The chaplain leads them in prayer—in preparation. The process begun is not an easy one. Every boy knows in his own way it is a steep path fraught with difficulty. But, they recall, as the ghostly mentors of Scrooge held up a mirror to him rigidly, relentlessly, and sometimes reluctantly, so too they must face their own inward conversions and cleansings, looking to don a garment worthy of the Bridegroom's coming. Alongside of Scrooge, kneeling in the shadows of their own tombstones, the young men are invited to declare to not be the men they were but for the holy intercourses of the Advent season. Many, hearkening to this call, swear in this same chapel to lead a changed life, an altered life that will honor the spirit of Christmas in their hearts; and try to keep it all the year, living in the past, the present, and the future.



Early next morning, the boys wake to yet another pale sun cresting a frigid landscape beneath the high dormitory windows. They dress hurriedly upon leaving the warmth of their blankets and climb the stairs to attend Holy Mass. Stooping over their missals, the thundering words of St. Paul shake away their sleepiness as the church bells shook Scrooge from his nightmare; "*... it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.*"

The boys fall to the labors of the day with a will. The days which march toward the holidays are themselves holy days, bringing in more anticipatory joy with every sunrise and sunset. Every job well done, every act of brotherly charity, every class well attended carries a benediction, a murmur of good things to come.

And as the boys begin to see their lives in the warming light of Christmas, and watch their fetters melt away into so many insignificant bedposts, may they all laugh together with Ebenezer Scrooge. And though all the world laugh at their merriment, "let them laugh," Mr. Dickens instructs, for "nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter." May it then be said of them upon their return home to their families that they know how to keep Christmas well, and "may that be truly said of us, and all of us!"



A great
'stocking
stuffer'



Will you buy a ticket to support our school and try your chances in winning this classic American automobile? See reply card for purchasing your tickets. For more information and pictures see our raffle website:

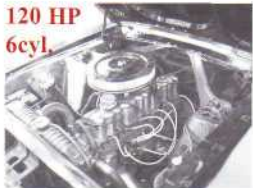
www.67mustangRaffle.com

1967 FORD MUSTANG COUPE RAFFLE FOR ST. GREGORY'S ACADEMY

1967 Ford
Mustang
Coupe



120 HP
6cyl.



Automatic
transmission



The first generation of Ford Mustang has become legendary. No one can deny it. Having the opportunity to work on one and almost rebuild one is the dream of many boys. And owning one of these muscle cars? **For some lucky ticket holder this 1967 Mustang Coupe will soon be the Grand Prize.**

Last spring several of the students at St Gregory's Academy set out with our chaplain, Fr. James Fryar, to restore this 1967 Mustang Coupe. After hours and hours laboring in the cold confines of the basement of our large barn on the property, this car was slowly brought back to excellent (but not showroom) condition. Some of the many improvements include:

A complete engine rebuild with professionally bored cylinders, the block professionally power cleaned, and a complete valve job with new valves and sleeves... New pistons, new crank shaft, new cam shaft, new lifters, rods, molly rings, and bearings... New oil and gas pumps, new timing belt and gears... a fairly new carburetor.

Besides the engine, this Mustang received a new factory re-manufactured transmission... New torque converter, new radiator with a lifetime warranty, new rear leaf springs, shock absorbers and battery... New battery, new Euro-style headlights with Xenon light bulbs, new belts and filters, new solenoid and exhaust... All the necessary body work, newly repainted black... By the time of the auction, this auto will have new tires mounted on the original wheels.

The drawing will be May 19, 2007.

TICKETS: \$25 EACH OR 5 FOR \$100

Please check the Mustang box on the reply card and buy your tickets today!