



*The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter*

## ST. GREGORY'S ACADEMY

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# W i n t e r 2006



**K**now you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. 1 Cor. IX, 24

Dear Friend,

These are the difficult days in the lives of our students. The joys of Christmastide are past, and we have many days to go before the celebration of Christ's glorious Resurrection (and the promise of another break from the routine of Academy life!). The sky is often overcast, the winds cold and blustery. Deep inside of us there is a desire to hibernate and wait for warmer days.

But in the readings for Septuagesima Sunday, St. Paul exhorts us to resist this temptation to repose. Using the figure of an athlete in training, he urges us to contend for the prize of an incorruptible crown, our salvation. He compares the Christian vocation to the running of a race. We must not become overconfident and allow our eyes to wander from the goal, or else we may be counted among the also-rans who failed to win their crown of glory.

This reading is so timely for us at St. Gregory's. Each afternoon after classes the boys of the Academy bundle themselves up and jog to the back of the school's property for rugby practice. The article in the center of the newsletter focuses on this game that you may be unfamiliar with—and the benefits that are derived by the young men who play it. For myself, I see this game as an opportunity for our boys to acquire a number of virtues critical for the realization of our noble calling as sons of God and heirs of heaven: self-mastery, courage, and magnanimity.

Yes, the playing of rugby is an essential component in the formation that St. Gregory's offers young men, but it comes with a price. Nearly all the teams we compete against come from the Philadelphia area. Just getting to our "home field" at Monocacy Park in Bethlehem requires an hour and a half drive. In the last couple of years the cost of transporting the team and spectators has increased alarmingly, putting a further financial burden on the Academy. Please consider making a generous donation today so we can continue to offer

the young men in our charge the opportunity to compete in sport, and more importantly, gain the habits necessary to win their incorruptible crowns of glory.

We encourage you to write your prayer requests on the back of our reply card when you send them back. The boys and staff will pray for your intentions in our chapel. We also ask that you pray for our intentions as well.



*St. Gregory's Academy Chapel*

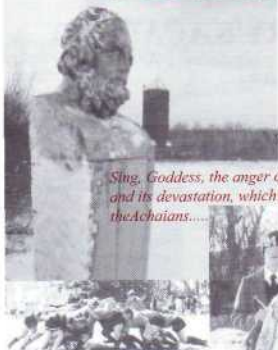
In Christ,

*Howard Clark*

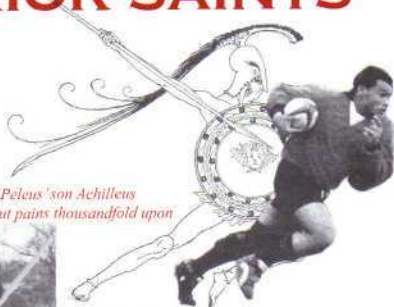
Howard Clark, Headmaster



# WARRIOR-SAINTS



*Sing, Goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilles and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians.....*



THUS begins *The Iliad*, and we readers are hurled not far behind the strong souls of men armed for battle. Throughout his immortal epic the blind bard Homer vigorously refuses to lapse into dreams of battlefield sentimentality. Rather he revels in the gore and blood of harsh hand-to-hand fighting. But his aim is not bloodlust, nor the opposite stance of pacifism. The eyeless singing sage of old sees a vision far otherwise. Here his affliction proved gift; for

oftimes our short-sighted eyes lack the sight that pierces.

The ancient Greek world was itself a *rosy-fingered dawn* of the mind, in which the immaterial realm was first grasped and lauded. Here the glistening form first danced, Whether it was in the mind of Euclid, or in the soaring intellect of Plato, all creation flickered with a spark of the other world reflecting unchanging perfection: the very Good itself.

Aristotle believed that because man could grasp the immaterial form by his mind, he thus possessed in himself the gleam of God. And because of the nobility and immeasurable worth of such a gift, he needs *strain every nerve* to live in accord with it. To be called to the heights, beyond the devouring fires of time and the clutches of the inscrutable Lady Fortune, is a prize of prizes, perhaps the only thing worthy of attainment.

Though Homer's world is rough and brutal, his heroes stand tall. Men of strength contend with one another continuously striving toward perfection: their lives vividly intertwining with the lives of other men as well as the very gods themselves. Though they seem childish at times, the gods never escape Homer's horizon, higher forces are ever present and ever in interaction with mankind in his work. As Aristotle would later state, if man indeed is ignited by a spark of the Divine he must live in accord with it. The plains of Troy prove ripe ground for the attainment of such vision. All life falls under Homer's piercing gaze, his bold brush strokes elevate it toward the most perfect conceivable form. Warfare and un-redeemed as it may be, the poet seeks to offer what is on behalf of the better angels of our nature to the skies: the most that can be asked of a minstrel singing in the dark.

*And now battle became sweeter to them than to go back in their hollow ships to the beloved land of their fathers.....*

We at St. Gregory's Academy are grateful for the gift of Homer's gaze. A bronze bust of the bard marks the entrance to the practice field towards the back of our property.



eginning in October our boys train for the game of rugby. Although the season itself will not start until March, there is much work to be done. The looming influence of professional sport in America, with its exaggerated celebration of the individual, needs be cast out in favor of the greatest of team games. Rugby is a world with laws of its own. The ball must be moved forward but can only be passed backward. Fifteen take on fifteen but no one is allowed to block. Since one stands little chance against so sizable an opponent, all players must work together to achieve success. When a tackle is made play continues, thus all players must be in the utmost physical condition. Hits are hard, the breaks are few, and the bodily requirements high.

As winter arrives the air grows cold and wind whips around our humble field. Strange things begin to occur. The boy who sauntered down the hallway, limbs every which way, has suddenly begun to walk upright his head held high. He learned to tackle for the first time on Tuesday. This boy who was shy in class now has an air of confidence when he speaks. He scored a try for the first time in a game last week. That boy who sought personal gain above all else now takes his fellows into account more often. He has recently become master of the switch-pass.

Elevation of heart and soul are intrinsic to the language and art of rugby. The game was created for the very purpose of teaching leadership and virtue to young men. While violence mixed with malice is the worst of crimes, the ability to push one's body, sustain injury, and hit hard for the sake of a good end is a participation in reality. At the end of the day the coaches gather the players in a huddle. Perhaps snow is falling, perhaps the ground is icy, all are cold, but somehow a warmth clings to that small space. The boys' breath can be seen hanging in midair as they bow their heads in prayer to Our Lady. Homer offered life good and life bad to the gods and painted his heroes as forever striving towards a pinnacle. In humble imitation we ask the same of our boys only it is not merely a Greek ideal to which they strive, but rather something greater.

In the *Inferno*, Dante paints the Greek Masters on the very outskirts of Hell, the region called Limbo. They stand in solemn melancholy: not miserable, but ignorant of the eternal joy of Love. Dry overcast afternoons are clear but lack radiance. So too were their vision sharp but joyless. With Mary and her *fiat* came the stirring title *cause of our joy*. The Greek Masters sought the cause that bore the end, but alas this true and final cause was a beam of light too elusive in those dark days.

Yet unbeknownst to them their legacy would prove a sturdy lampstand. Their words would lay the path for a King. Church Doctors again and again plundered gold from the writers of antiquity: St. Augustine saw in Plato a portal to St. John's Gospel, St. Thomas Aquinas is often dubbed the baptist of Aristotle. Though they knew it not at the time, the brave minds of the albeit pagan Greek world were in truth the pawns and servants of Holy Providence, cultivating a world into which Holy Mother Church would be received. This all began with Homer. Just as in days of old when our Holy Mother Church herself seized the good things of antiquity, so too does our school seize the good out of this game. A game of glory, a game of leadership, a game of sacrifice, of suffering, a game of joy, rugby rises in a Catholic environment to heights beyond which its founders ever conceived.

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception the sun sparkled over white snow-covered ground, as the boys of St. Gregory's competed in a rugby tournament in honor of Our Lady. Before the matches began, the captains gathered their teams in order, and together processed to the field, solemnly bearing a statue of Our Blessed Mother. Having prepared for her a place of honor by the side line, one by one the captains led their players before her, offering roses, and kissing the feet that tread upon the serpent. The games that ensued were fierce but happy. At the end of the day, the victors took up their Lady and led her safely home, while the rest followed singing the Ave in joyous twilight.



Below:  
The Highlanders  
gather in prayer to  
Our Lady  
Queen of Victory



The 3rd Annual  
**Robbie Burns**  
**Supper**  
 at St. Gregory's Academy



Headmaster Howard Clark and guest speaker Dr. William Fahey of Christendom College address the assembly at St. Gregory's 3rd Annual Burns Supper.



The students, faculty, staff, and guests gathered in the candlelit Refectory for the Robbie Burns Supper. A meal consisting of traditional Scottish fare was served in honor of the poet.



The Senior Class of 2005-2006 sing a tune by Burns in tribute to the great poet and song writer of Scotland. Other poems and songs by Burns were recited and sung by the students after the meal and into the evening.

The Burns Supper 2006

On Saturday 28, 2006, the students and staff of St. Gregory's Academy gathered in the refectory to celebrate the 3rd Annual Robert Burns Supper. To the sound of bagpipe and drum, the night began with the ceremonial presentation of the Haggis. As the blare of the pipes died down Mr. Steve Fitzpatrick addressed the dish with a toast by Burns entitled "To a Haggis". The Selkirk Grace followed. Then, Mr. Sean Fitzpatrick spoke a "Toast to the Lassies" in right bonnie Scots: This favor was returned by Mrs. Beebe in her "Toast to the Lads".

Then a fine repast was had by all. It began with Haggis: lamb intestines, ground and wrapped in the same's stomach. This was closely followed by cock-a-leekie soup and birdies (small pies of meat carrots and potatoes), soda bread and stovies (a casserole of the same ingredients as the birdies). The dessert of spiced apples and lemon pound cake was a fitting finish to the feast.

Dr. William Fahey of Christendom College gave the main address focusing on Burns. He did an admirable job considering that "half of Burns is unintelligible...the other half is unpronounceable."

Following this, poems, songs, and toasts passed in quick succession. One of the highlights was the traditional skit "Tam O' Shanter." This skit boasted a fine repertoire of freshmen actors, homemade props, and Mr. Sean Fitzpatrick's impressive narration in the original Scottish brogue.

As the night wound down, a fallen comrade John Blonski was saluted by a toast followed by the revelers' proud singing of "Bonnie Charlie." This was an emotional moment for his brother, alumnist Joshua Blonski, who also attended the supper.

Mr. Clark capped the night with some closing remarks, which were interrupted by a standing ovation from the enthusiastic fellows. Our headmaster thanked Dr. Fahey and all who made the night a success.

Grace followed and the merrymakers processed towards the chapel to the sounds of "Auld Lang Syne." As the echoes faded and silence began its slow descent upon the dorms, the boys again knelt before their Lord and God.



-by Matthew Castricum, '07



Fr. Evaristus Eshiwu FSSP of the Fraternity's Nigeria Apostolate, paid an unannounced visit to St. Gregory's Academy on January 22. He spoke to the students about the history and endeavors of his apostolate. During his brief stay, the students collected \$397.00 and donated it to Fr. Eshiwu and the Nigerian apostolate.