



The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter

## ST. GREGORY'S ACADEMY

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*"And as they led him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country; and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus." Luke 23: 26*

## LENT 2007

# Dear Friend,

In one of the admirable meditations that he composed for the Stations of the Cross, Cardinal Newman has a passage that often calls you, the Academy's friend, to mind. It is from the Fifth Station:

"At length His strength fails utterly, and He is unable to proceed. The executioners stand perplexed. What are they to do? How is He to get to Calvary? Soon they see a stranger who seems strong and active - Simon of Cyrene. They seize on him and compel him to carry the cross with Jesus. The sight of the Sufferer pierces the man's heart. . . he takes the part assigned to him with joy."



This moment along the path Our Lord suffered on His way to Calvary is significant; because although Jesus could bear His cross by Himself, by permitting Simon to assist Him, He "reminds us that we must take our part in His sufferings and have a fellowship in His work." How often this truth is brought home to me when St. Gregory's is in want or distress and a veritable stranger comes to succor us in our moment of need!

The verb to *succor* in Latin means literally to *run-under*. It means, I think, to be like Simon of Cyrene who when *stepping in* from the country willingly placed his shoulders *under* the cross to aid and comfort Another. By your prayers, your alms, and your acts of sacrifice for the Academy, I really believe you are undertaking the continuing work of redemption that Our Lord initiated upon His cross and imitating the actions of Simon. Daily I pray that you will be rewarded accordingly.

Of course, all this comes by Mary's intercession. For Newman continues:

Jesus "prayed not for Himself, except that He might drink the full chalice of suffering and do His Father's will; but she showed herself a mother by following Him with her prayers, since she could help Him in no other way. She then sent this stranger to help Him. Sweet Mother, even do the like for us.

"Pray for us ever Holy Mother of God, pray for us, whatever be our cross, as we pass along our way. Pray for us. . . and send some faithful servant of thine to succor us."

In Christ.

*Howard Clark*  
Howard Clark, Headmaster

## Lenten Meditations

from the Classes  
of St. Gregory's  
Academy



As we begin the penitential season of Lent, we should be aware of its purpose in relation to our spiritual goals. Lent is a time for us to remove ourselves from the things that distract us from living with Christ so that we can become closer to Him. This practice is especially important as we prepare for Easter, which celebrates God's promise to us of eternal life with Him in heaven.

We can see this goal exemplified in a book we read in Lent for freshmen literature called *Otto of the Silver Hand* by Howard Pyle. The story takes place in the Dark Ages where a boy named Otto was born in a household of robbers. At his mother's dying wish, he was sent to be brought up in a peaceful monastery, far away from the violent life and crimes of his father's castle. As Otto was sheltered from the tribulations of the world in a place where God was worshipped and loved, so do we understand the essential motive of the Lenten season.

Lent gives us a special opportunity to avoid sinful occasions and gain better control over ourselves, making us true masters of our wills, and not slaves to the wants of the flesh. We need to draw nearer to what is good and righteous in this world, and use this holy and sacrificial time of Lent to live nearer to God. We can do this by using the time that Lent gives us to detach ourselves from the evils in our lives and focus on our souls, as Otto did while living at the haven of the monastery, cut off from the evils of his time.

Lent is a time of preparation for Easter, just as our lives are a preparation for heaven. *Otto of the Silver Hand* is a good book for us to read during Lent because it gives us an example of this spiritual goal - Otto's time at the monastery was a preparation for his whole life. We should use this time of making ourselves ready to our advantage and move forward on the path to our goal: to give glory to God in heaven for all eternity.

Christopher Audino, Albany NY, Class of 2010

As the joyous season of Easter approaches, the Church gives us the forty days of Lent so that we may prepare our souls for the torrent of graces made available to us. The passage of Lent to Easter has often been compared with our own passage through life and death, journeying towards the resurrection of all at the end of time. Our whole lives must be a preparation for that last day, just as Lent prepares us for Easter.

This concept of preparing ourselves for the last day is reflected in what we are studying right now in sophomore literature class: Nordic mythology. The most important theme in Nordic myth is the common knowledge of the approaching end of time, a time called "Ragnarok" or the "twilight of the gods." Both men and the gods knew that the day would come when the world would be consumed by fire and darkness and the final battle between the gods and the giants would be fought and none would survive. But they also knew that if they lived their lives well and died without fear of death, then out of the ashes of the crumbling world, a new, beautiful, and peaceful world would be born. They knew that the people of the new age would not be afflicted with the troubles and sorrows of the old age because the wisdom and bravery of their own lives and deaths would serve as conquering weapons against those powers of evil which had once prevailed.

As we now carry out our Lenten penances, we learn a lesson from the ancient Norse tales whose gods and heroes made their own sacrifices to better prepare themselves for "Ragnarok," their end which carried with it a promise of life in a new age higher than their own. The study of this mythology makes a fitting analogy to ourselves immersed in the preparatory rigors of Lent. For not only do the gods' actions have special meaning for us, but we can also use their examples in our own personal provisions for the end we must all await and face someday without fear.

Jacob Reilly, Tulsa OK, Class of 2009



**B**Y this time, the juniors of St. Gregory's Academy will have finished reading The Trial and Death of Socrates. But the trial of Lent has now begun to bequeath its own particular hemlock to the school in various ways. The willing sacrifice of padded kneelers, snacks, meat, and even free time seems to mirror Socrates' philosophy that death is not actually an evil but a journey in which the soul purified from the body either sinks into everlasting repose or progresses on to another world.

The former of these possibilities is disposed of by our Apostolic heritage, thus leaving the Christian doctrine that through death we enter into life. Socrates did not fear the hemlock because he believed that in reality death is a transition to a better place. Why should Christians, privileged with faith, be loathe to suffer the hemlock of Lent (which is only a shadow of death) when Socrates, a pagan, looked forward with pleasure to its inevitable prospect? Death is not an end but a beginning.

As juniors in high school, life seems to be just beginning; but the real beginning does not start until the soul separates from the body and its passions. Through the observance of Lent, we are all called as Socrates was and as Christians are, to live not in fear of dying but to live in fear of doing wrong rather than right.

**John Macik, Gallup NM, Class of 2008**

**A**T St. Gregory's Academy we are always made aware of what is going on in the Church year. We are reminded of the changing seasons in many ways: the color of the priest's vestments; the tone in which Mass is sung on Sunday; even the weather and the quality of food sometimes seem to be indicative of the Liturgical Season. All of this is especially true and evident during the holy time called Lent.

In fact, even the things we are studying in the classroom have a bearing on this season of the Church year. A strong example of this can be found in our senior rhetoric class which provides a clear connection with Lent, and therefore, a better perspective and understanding of its purpose.

Rhetoric is the art of using words which persuade. A striking instance of rhetoric's usages can be found in Sacred Scripture, especially viewed through the light of the Church's liturgy, where the revelation of the Word moves us to deepening our understanding of God's divine Good. In this class we study the Old Testament and memorize Psalms that tie in well with the events in question. We are currently and appropriately reading the Book of Exodus.



This is the beginning of the story of the Israelites wandering in the desert for forty years in search of the Promised Land.

Lent, as the Bible suggests, can be thought of as a journeying through the desert. We must leave behind luxury and comforts and endure some hardships. The Israelites, because of their obstinacy and hardness of heart, were not ready to enter the Promised Land, until they had been tried in the desert. Likewise, we must undergo a test, a purification, and make ourselves ready for the glorious feast of Easter, which looks forward to our resurrection from death in victory with Christ.

**Joseph O'Brien, Crofton KY, Class of 2007**



# A Lenten Meditation from the Faculty of St. Gregory's Academy

The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent's Gospel recounts Our Lord's temptations in the wilderness. Atop the temple the devil bids Him cast Himself down, *for... he hath given his angels charge over thee...* Our Lord retorts, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* This is from Deuteronomy, which continues as *thou temptest him in the place of temptation, or Massah, names of a wilderness spot where the Israelites camped in their Exodus.*

*Let us sing to the Lord... the horse and the rider He hath thrown into the sea,* sing Moses and the children of Israel, having passed through the Sea. Pharaoh pursued and the wet waters drowned him, but the children of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst thereof.

Hours earlier it had been different. Seeing Pharaoh's pursuit as they camped before the sea, the people had cried, *perhaps there were no graves in Egypt, therefore thou hast brought us to die in the wilderness.* And though the victory bore exultation—the recollection of the signs and wonders wrought, the mirth of such Passover, the joy of liberation overflowing to voices joined in Holy Canticle would soon fade from the memory with a dying fall: the barren wilderness now their sole reality. There is little to eat, *Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat over the flesh pots and ate bread to the full,* murmur the people. Again at Raphidim: there is no water. *Why didst thou make us go forth out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our beasts with thirst?* Moses named the spot *temptation*, for there the children had asked *is the Lord amongst us or not?*

The serpent perceived our sluggishness in this regard. Often dubbed the tempter, in the tale it is the children who tempt. *Is the Lord amongst us or not?* This same Sunday, St. Paul notes differences between appearance and truth: *by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown and yet known, as dying and behold we live.* How did the Lord respond to His children's grumbling? *In the morning a dew lay round about the camp... thou shalt strike the rock, and water shall come out of it that the people may drink.*

Deuteronomy's memoir continues *He afflicted thee with want, and gave thee manna for thy food... to show that not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God... as a man traineth up his son, so the Lord thy God hath trained thee up.* Manna lasts but for a day, then it began to be full of worms. But it is enough for now. Moses bids the people *thou shalt remember.* And in moment's memory ice and fire rain from the sky— but not on them, the waters are as a wall, the crag a gushing spring. *He hath given his angels charge over thee.*

*Render thy hearts and thy garments.* The Lord bids the fast to express what is within. It is the heart which must undergo a lifelong Exodus from the land of its captivity, often through deserts. The appearances inspire thirst and hunger and panic bids us tempt: *Is the Lord amongst us or not?* We seek an immediate miracle, something opposed to the good world of which we are a part. Hope for something other than the now, dissatisfaction with the moment makes us forget past moments and leads to doubting the moment: the only thing that is truly real. Such doubt may in a sense be the cause of all sin, all death. If man lives by the word, then we too must look into the mirror of Israel. Wooed by the words of Holy Writ, and there seeing our reflection, we might hope to answer the command: *thou shalt remember all the way through which the Lord thy God hath brought thee*

*He will overshadow thee with his shoulder, and under his wings (thou shalt trust) sings the Psalmist in today's Liturgy. All Mass propers chant the ninetieth Psalm, and the Gospel points us there again. Borne upward in talons not our own, overshadowed by feathers and the eagle's great strength, we ascend. Thou shalt remember.* Thus Lent begins, and with it the prophesy: *He shall cry to me and I will hear him... I will fill him with length of days; and I will show him my salvation.*



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