



The Minstrel

NEWSLETTER OF GREGORY THE GREAT ACADEMY

All Souls 2016

Dear Friend,

Every August, on the feast day of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, a family makes their way to a cemetery close by their home in upstate New York. They are usually accompanied by a priest, St. Gregory's alumni and faculty members, and friends as they gather around a white marble tombstone that stands out from the other grey grave-markers scattered about, sunken and slumped, weather-worn to anonymity. As the priest prepares incense for a memorial service, barefoot girls in country dresses swing over a fence into a field of goldenrod. They gather armfuls of yellow and green and lay the tender sprays before the white stone, encircling the earth where a loved one lies. After prayers and hymns, an old man with grizzled beard and gravelly voice stands by the stone, placing his hand on its peak, and speaks about his son, freckled Zachary, who fell asleep in the Lord over twenty years ago on the feast day of St. Bernard. He was 16 years old.



Sean Fitzpatrick
Headmaster



Zachary was a student at St. Gregory's. He was the first of our brotherhood to pass away, and he is remembered to this day, even by students who never knew him. I was one of those students. Zachary was gone when I arrived at St. Gregory's. I never knew Zachary—but I know him.

On Zachary's headstone, carved by his brother's wife, are the words, "To speak of the dead is to make them live again." As his father speaks every year by his son's grave, making his son live again, so do we tell our boys of Zachary. How he tied a pillow to the clapper in the old bell tower to silence the early morning roll call. How he gave our rugby team the name "Highlanders." Zachary was in many ways the founder of the spirit of our school. He was a poet. He was a singer of songs. He was a merry, contemplative soul. I never knew Zachary, but I know what he loved. His loves were given to me to know and love myself. They have been given to hundreds of boys long after his death, boys who never knew Zachary—but they know him.

This is what the holy season of the dead recalls to those of us on this side of the grave. The tradition of remembering the faithful departed and praying that their souls be elevated to the company of the saints is central to Catholic culture—a culture that we are sharing with students from all over the country. It is a hope that is indispensable in a world darkened by despair. These traditions are what make our education life-changing. We teach our boys what it means to live by showing them what it means to die. And Zachary plays a part in teaching that lesson.

Without your support, Zachary's school would be no more, and his memory would diminish. With your support, Zachary lives on here among us. Remember us at Gregory the Great Academy. Please pray for Zachary and for us. Thank you for your generosity.



In Christ,

Sean Fitzpatrick



In Memoriam Zachary Culley, Our Comrade

“To Speak of the Dead Is to Make Them Live Again”

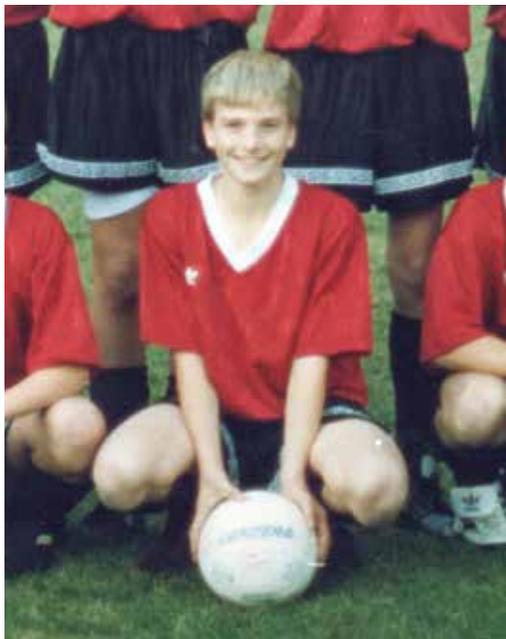
By Bernard Corey, Class of 1997

When I was almost eight years old, I met a boy named Zachary Culley, who was six months younger than I. We met on a dirt road over a chasm called the Falls. It was early August, 1986. I had just moved to the country with my mother and my brother, Francis.

From the moment I met Zach, we started having fun together. We made forts in the woods, swam in the Falls, slept over at each other's houses, and helped his sister rehabilitate wild animals such as possums, fawns, raccoons, and birds. Once we got into mischief smoking some of his father's cigars. On summer nights, we scared local campers by making strange noises in the dark.

After being in the eighth and ninth grade together, we both started attending St. Gregory's Academy for our sophomore year. We became roommates along with my brother Francis. Zach was like another brother to me. We both had different interests, but were happy to be with one another. Zach loved reading and writing poetry. He loved the studies at St. Gregory's. Out of the books he read, he thought up many pranks. One took place on Graduation Day. During the graduation dinner, Zach and a few guys sneaked off with a pillow and duct tape. While everyone was enjoying themselves at dinner, Zach was in the bell tower taping the pillow to the clapper. The next morning, the seminarians were waiting for the bell which ended their prayers. The only thing they heard was thud, thud, thud....

During the summer of '95, we were both looking forward to our junior year at St. Gregory's. I was in Ireland that summer, and Zach went to the Chartres Pilgrimage and toured France with his brother. Toward the end of the summer, we began getting together in the evenings.



Zachary Culley with the first Highlander soccer team. The name “Highlanders” was proposed by Zachary in the early days of the school.

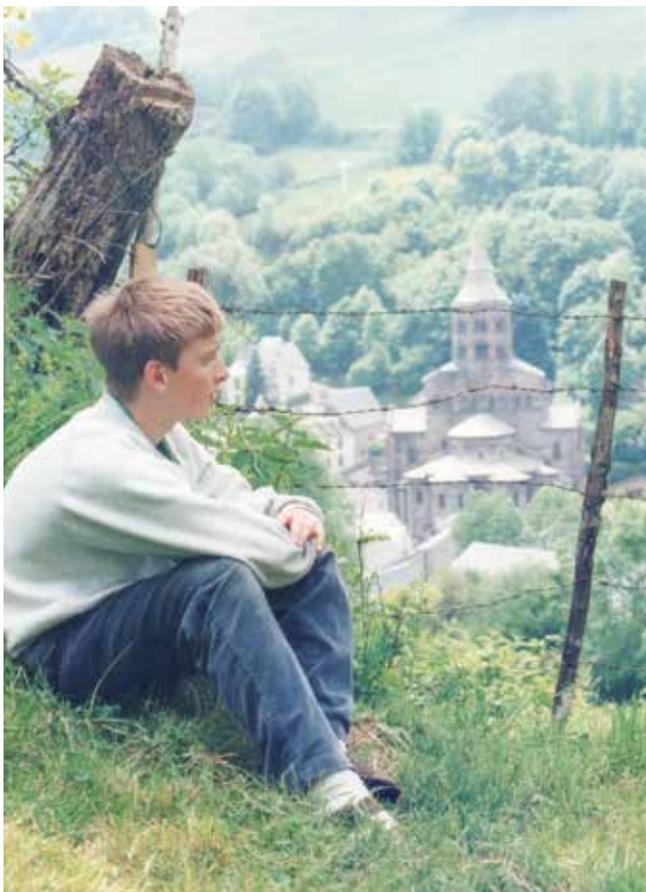


Francis and Bernard Corey on pilgrimage in France, visiting the spot where a cherished photograph of Zachary Culley was taken.

It was August 20, 1995, a Sunday, the Feast Day of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Coming home from Mass that morning, my mom and I talked about St. Bernard and also of St. Augustine. For what seemed like no reason at the time, we talked about the grief young Augustine felt when his close friend died. That Sunday morning, we joined Zach's family for breakfast after they returned from their Ukrainian Divine Liturgy. I then drove my mom home, took Zach to another town to run an errand for his mother, then brought him home and, promising to return later, I went away on an errand of my own.

As I neared Zach's house on my return, I encountered cars and emergency vehicles by the bridge over the Falls—the place where Zach and I first met nine years before. Getting out of my car, I peered over the bridge into the Falls. There was my friend Zach lying on the rocks at the bottom. I returned home while my mom accompanied Mrs. Culley to the hospital. A couple hours later, my friend was dead.

I cried and felt so empty. I helped make his coffin and dug his grave. Zach was laid out in the living room of his family home where we used to play. I carried Zach's coffin and placed it in his grave. Zach's priest struck the



Zachary Graham Culley, March 30 1979 - August 20 1995

coffin with a metal crucifix, saying that the coffin would not be opened until the Second Coming of Christ on this earth, when Zach's soul would be reunited with his body. I could not bring myself to go to his home or to the places we once played. When I told my mother how I felt, we remembered our Sunday morning talk about St. Augustine. We read in his *Confessions* the feelings he had when his friend had died. At the time, St. Augustine was not a Christian. He did not have the comfort of our hope and faith.

We still miss Zach very much and will always look back on our happy days with him fondly. Zach's death has made real for me the Bible verse that says we never know the day or the hour when the Lord will call us home. We are still being formed spiritually, but Zach's death deepened my awareness of the right way to live. May he rest in peace.

Please remember in your prayers the following deceased St. Gregory's students:

Zachary Culley	Paul Levine
Derek Foss	Patrick Horey
John Blonski	John Gajewski

O'er the hills on wings sail I
In search of heaven's fairest beauty
In the mistiness of sky
I search for her, my duty

Below me rocks and barren ground
Then archers' arrows send me higher
And now the startled hunting hound
But not a sight or sound of heart's desire

Past the stream and on a yonder mound
Stands a gray stone well
I looked in and uttered not a sound
To the ground cold and still I fell

In the well she lay
So on the ground I stayed

– Zachary Culley



Robin Hood Days



A favorite challenge is a race to build a fire without the use of matches but only a ferrocerium rod or flint. The winner is proclaimed once the fire is built high enough to burn through a cord stretched over the building ground.

Every fall, the boys at Gregory the Great enjoy an event called Robin Hood Days, where they camp out together for a weekend and partake in stout woodland sports and merry entertainments.



Skill and strength with the bow and arrow is a central event for Robin Hood Days. Many of our students are bow hunters and comported themselves honorably in the range. In the evening, the boys feasted on roast venison provided by the bow of Mr. McMyne.

Knife throwing is a goodly game under the greenwood tree to while the time as campsites are constructed, rustic food is prepared, and instruments are carved out of wood. Robin Hood Days is an event to allow our boys to rejoice in being boys with all the romance of the Merry Men.

Please support the Academy
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