



An Open Letter to My Parents

Blessings Undeserved

By **Moises Gomez ('19)**

Dear Mom and Dad,

You never deserved to have a child like me. Most people wouldn't understand why I say that, but you know exactly what I mean. Strong-headed and restless, I was always seeing how many rules I could break in a single day, or how aggravated I could make my siblings. You did your best to impart your wisdom to me, but I was not very interested in receiving it.

Thankfully, one of the lessons I couldn't help but learn was the importance of hard work. Seeing Dad put in the hours he did, day in and day out, alongside Mom, who was a 24/7 problem-solver in our household, instilled in me a work ethic that enabled me to graduate in the top of my high school class with offers from multiple colleges.

I applied to Thomas Aquinas College because I knew you wanted me to — but I didn't want to go. There were too many rules, too many books, and not enough opportunity to get into trouble. I chose to go out of state, where I could focus on the things that really mattered to me: parties, sports, and landing a job that would make a lot of money.

You drove well over 1,000 miles to drop me off at that college, and I will never forget the tears that filled both of your eyes as you tried to put into words how proud you were of me and how you hoped that I would spend my time focusing on learning as much as I could and growing in holiness. As soon as you left, I returned to my new room and sobbed, torn between a deep desire to make my parents proud and the knowledge that I had no intention of living the life you wanted for me. I quickly shed that guilt and got back to what I really wanted to get out of college.

Fast forward to the following summer, when I returned home: Through deep reflection and prayer I saw that I could not continue living that way. I wanted to go to TAC. I wanted to be part of a community which put God first and pursued the intellectual life in a serious way. After realizing that I meant what I said, I immediately received your total and unfailing support. Coming to the College would mean one year more of school, more debt, and changing all my plans, but none of that mattered to you. You wanted what was best for me, and no price was too high.

Four years later, I am weeks away from receiving my diploma from TAC. In my time here, I have grown by leaps and bounds. With each stride I look back and see that I never deserved to have parents like you.

You loved me unconditionally from the start, sacrificing constantly to make sure I grew up with opportunities that you never had. From piano lessons to soccer practice, from martial-arts class to band rehearsal, you always put my life ahead of your own.

I am grown now and, being engaged to a wonderful young lady, stand on the cusp of starting my own family. You have shown me what it means to be a family and to have a home with Christ at the center. You have taught me that to be a good man means infinitely more than being a successful one. As I prepare for this new chapter in my life, I can only pray that I am half the parent to my children that you were to me.



Forever your son,
Moises

All in the Family



Last December, when Theresa DeBates formally committed to attending Thomas Aquinas College next fall, she received her highly coveted "Class of 2023" t-shirt, which she put on for a photo with alumni siblings Bridgette ('17), Matthew ('19), and Isaac ('21). Have any TAC family photos to share for future issues? Send them to parents@thomasaquinas.edu.

This Spring
Honor Thy Father & Mother
with a Novena of Masses



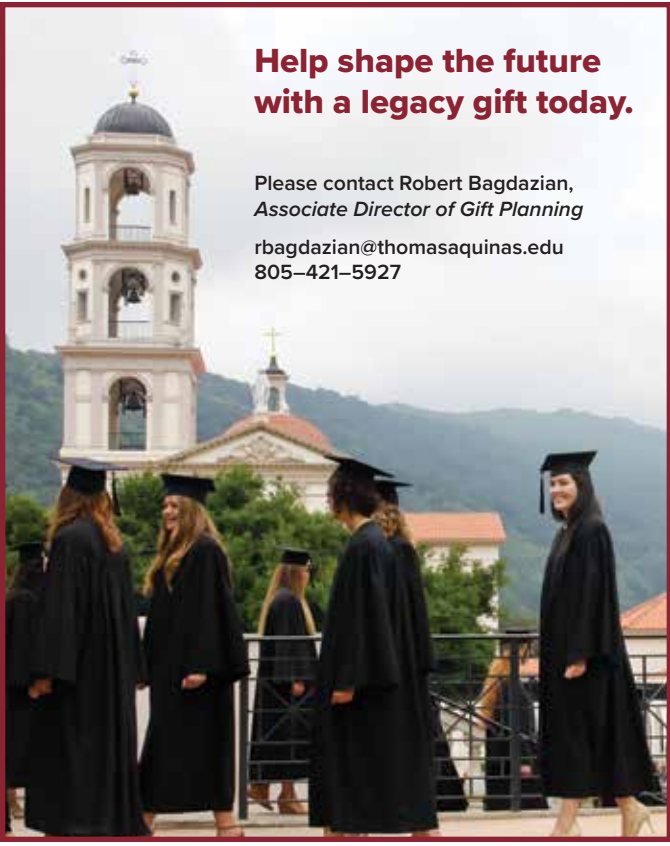
Beginning on Mother's Day (May 12) and Father's Day (June 16), the chaplains of Thomas Aquinas College will offer a novena of Masses for mothers and fathers, respectively. Each parent included in the novena will receive a beautiful, personalized card from the College.

Cost: \$5 per card for shipping and handling.
Mother's Day names must be received by May 10; Father's Day by June 14.

thomasaquinas.edu/novenas

**Help shape the future
with a legacy gift today.**

Please contact Robert Bagdazian,
Associate Director of Gift Planning
rbagdazian@thomasaquinas.edu
805-421-5927

A group of graduates in black gowns and caps are standing in front of a church tower. The tower is white with a dome and a cross on top. The background shows a mountain range under a cloudy sky.

Parents' Day of Giving

Show Your Gratitude to Thomas Aquinas College on May 1

“With the possible exception of the alumni themselves, there is no one who can appreciate the good that Thomas Aquinas College accomplishes more than the parents of our students and graduates,” says Robert Bagdazian, coordinator of the TAC Parents' Association. “We see how our kids grow while at the College. We see them grow in wisdom, deepen their faith lives, discern their vocations. How can we ever begin to express our appreciation for this priceless gift?”

Parents looking for a way to show their gratitude — and to help pass along the gift of a Thomas Aquinas College education — will have an excellent opportunity to do so on May 1, Feast of St. Joseph the Worker and the College's second annual Parents' Day of Giving.

“To launch last year's Parents' Day of Giving, an anonymous donor made a \$75,000 matching gift, which we TAC parents easily met, with hours to spare,” says Mr. Bagdazian. “So this year we're raising the ante: Two anonymous donors have combined to match every gift, up to \$125,000, made

between now and the end of the day on May 1. We have no doubt the parents will beat this new goal, too!”

Although called the Parents' Day of Giving, the event is not limited to just TAC parents. “Grandmothers' and grandfathers' gifts will be matched as well,” says Mr. Bagdazian. “Grandparents played a significant part in helping us reach our goal last year.”

As did alumni. Early on during the 2018 Parents' Day of Giving, the College received numerous inquiries from alumni who asked if they could make donations in the names of their parents, both living and deceased. With the anonymous benefactor's blessing, the College then opened the door to these alumni gifts as well. “It was an inter-generational effort,” says Mr. Bagdazian. “It was beautiful to see alumni honor their parents that way and to witness families united in their love for Thomas Aquinas College.”

For this year's Parents' Day of Giving, the benefactors have generously agreed to match early-bird gifts. “So there's no reason,” says Mr. Bagdazian, “to wait until May 1!”

“How can we ever begin to express our appreciation for this priceless gift?”

Parents' Day of Giving Wednesday, May 1, 2019



Have Your Gift to Thomas Aquinas College Doubled!

Two anonymous benefactors have agreed to match all parents' and grandparents' gifts to Thomas Aquinas College — up to \$125,000 total — between now and the end of the day on May 1, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.

Make your gift now!
thomasaquinas.edu/PDG

Campus Life

Freshman Backpacking Trip



Over Presidents' Day Weekend, Head Chaplain Rev. Paul Raftery, O.P., led a group of 10 Thomas Aquinas College freshmen on a backpacking trip to Topatopa Peak in the Los Padres National Forest, adjacent to the California campus.

“Chariots of Fire” Quad Run



Inspired by a classic scene from *Chariots of Fire* — in which Harold Abrahams successfully completes Cambridge University's Trinity Great Court Run before the King's Gate Clock strikes 12 — the students of Thomas Aquinas College staged their own, now-annual quad run in March.



Ultimate Frisbee Tournament



In the final game of this spring's inter-class Ultimate Frisbee tournament, the seniors staged a comeback to beat the juniors 12-11.

Chryso





Walk for Life

In January some 230 Thomas Aquinas College students made the 350-mile trek to San Francisco for the 15th annual Walk for Life West Coast. As they do every year, the students helped lead more than 50,000 walkers through the city's streets, praying for the unborn and bearing witness to life all the way.

mos



On March 31, Chrysostomos, a student choir directed by Isaac Cross ('19), performed its spring concert in St. Cecilia Hall. The concert featured a wide range of choral music from the Western tradition, including Spanish folk songs and Russian liturgical music.

Antigone



On March 23 the St. Genesius Players treated Thomas Aquinas College students, faculty, and families to a production of Sophocles' *Antigone* in St. Cecilia Hall.



Chez Martin

An end-of-the-year dance, Chez Martin has become one of Thomas Aquinas College's most popular annual events. Put on by members of the Senior Class, it is a relaxed occasion for the seniors to say goodbye to the underclassmen. It also serves as a fundraiser, with proceeds going toward the seniors' farewell gift to the College.



The Hills are Alive ...



After years of drought, Southern California was blessed with ample rain this winter, resulting in bright green hillsides dotted with wildflowers.

First Educators

Forming Your Children's Literary Imaginations

By Andrew T. Seeley ('87)

Our sophomores have recently completed reading and discussing Dante's majestic *Divine Comedy*. They have encountered, most for the first time, Dante's integration of all human culture in the service of arousing and guiding a soul's journey to God. Throughout the work, Dante employs sense, imagination, intellect, poetry, logic, rhetoric, history, literature, philosophy, theology, and liturgy.

At times like these, I envy students whose prior education, formal and informal, developed in them a powerful, sacramental imagination, one that can respond to the masterful touches of a masterful author like Dante. Today's secular leaders of education, unfortunately followed by most Catholic schools, have systematically eliminated almost all forms of imaginative literature from a typical K-12 curriculum.

Yet the young are even more profoundly affected by their first and most effective educators, their parents. And, as Catholics, our anxiety to pass on the doctrinal truths of our faith can tempt us to neglect the imaginative development of our children. In truth, among the most important things we can do to prepare them for a full experience of the Catholic intellectual, liturgical, and spiritual life is to help them fully experience the great stories and histories and poems and songs that are a part of our cultural heritage.

Parents who read great stories bear witness to the enjoyment and excitement and thought that these works provoke. Beyond this, by reading aloud dramatically, they bring to life characters and incidents, sights and sounds, cadences and nuances for their children, whose limited life experience prevents them from imagining properly Gandalf and Macbeth, or the impact of the sight of the Statue of Liberty on 19th century immigrants, or the emotions of a family whose nation is at war.

Literature well-imagined initiates the young into the breadth and depth of the experiences of humanity, but lack of direct experience of the world hinders its full impact. We may not realize how seeing great cities, suspension bridges, cathedrals, or fighter jets; experiencing a working farm or a canoe trip or the stillness of a field on a winter's day; or closely



Lisa and Dr. Andrew Seeley ('87) with several of their children at the graduation of their son Edward in 2016.

observing a spider spinning a web or capturing a fly immensely enriches the interior life of the young and allows them to enter more deeply into great literary works. My first experience of a metropolitan concert (a performance of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto) changed my world; I never was moved by opera until my wife bought us season tickets in Toronto.

Like beautiful book illustrations, movie and television presentations can also provide great aid in imaginative development. Ken Burns' *Civil War* documentary, the 1981 Granada production of *Brideshead Revisited* (for mature teens only), Paul Scofield's *A Man for All Seasons*, or Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* help all of us enter into worlds we cannot imagine on our own.

Caution should be exercised in these areas, however, not simply because content might be inappropriate, but because it is very tempting to let video creators imagine the world for us. Although productions like Peter Jackson's Tolkien movies

have encouraged many to pick up books, they can make the silent written world seem pale and drab, without color, or sound, or excitement. As one contemporary edu-

cator warns, "Young teachers at the all-boys school at which I teach assure me that ... many male college students are choosing video games over not only their studies, but even over interest in young women."

Think back to Lent — a time which beckons the imagination into the service of devotion. In our Lenten imaginations, we spend quiet, difficult days with Our Lord in the wilderness, we see Him encounter the devil, we picture His stormy confrontations with Pharisees and Sadducees, we feel the press of the crowds, we walk with Him up to Calvary, we stand with Our Lady at the foot of His cross. Imaginations formed by authors such as Dante are ready to be sacramental sources of grace for the Church.

Note: Dr. Seeley, a parent and tutor at the College, is director of advanced formation at the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education.

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Liberal Arts in the Business World

Tech Entrepreneur Michael Ortner Offers Advice to TAC Business Club

In late January software entrepreneur and philanthropist Michael Ortner visited with students of Thomas Aquinas College, presenting a talk entitled, “How to Connect Your Liberal Arts Education with IT Software & Business.”

The founder and former CEO of Captterra, an award-winning technology firm that connects buyers and sellers of business software, Mr. Ortner was quick to assure students that a liberal arts education is good preparation for the business world. “I did not go to college here, but I am a huge fan of the College,” he began. “So the first thing I want to do is commend everyone for *not* majoring in business. That was a great choice! I believe it’s completely unnecessary.”

Indeed, he was speaking from experience. “I learned more in each month on my first job than I did in my entire four years as a business major,” he continued. “So, to me, if you’re going to spend four years studying something, study something like this, what you guys are doing.” Among his current endeavors, he is chairman of Cana Academy, a nationwide organization which supports classical educators at all levels with resources and training.

“The beautiful thing about the liberal arts is it feeds into a couple of huge skills that are greatly needed, particularly in the business world, particularly in the tech world,” said Mr. Ortner. “The more you can understand the nature of humanity, that is only going to help you in building products that better serve man.” Likewise, he continued, the skills learned in the College’s classroom discussions are directly applicable in the marketplace. “Communicating well, verbally and in writing, is a hugely valuable skill that can be translated into the sales side, the client-service side, project management, product development, so many areas.”

“The business world needs liberal arts graduates.”

The key, he stressed, is for liberally educated job-seekers to find those companies whose missions and cultures are best suited to their values and talents. “The business world needs liberal arts graduates,” he said. “There’s great opportunity if you’re smart about it, and you join the right companies that have good cultures and missions and products that you can get excited about. You can make a difference — and have a very fulfilling career.”

Mr. Ortner’s visit was sponsored by the Thomas Aquinas College Business Club, which brings in various speakers throughout the academic year. “You’re a thinker when you’re



here at school,” he told the group of aspiring entrepreneurs. “Now you have to convert yourself into a *doer*, being a person of action. To me, the ideal person of action is also a person who is a good thinker.”

Counsel and Guidance

Recent on-campus Career Events

- Thomas Aquinas College’s vice president for finance, **Dennis McCarthy**, met with members of the student business club to offer advice on career discernment, graduate school, and the post-graduation job search.
- Alumna entrepreneur and professional photographer **Sarah (De Laveaga ’14) Ellefson** returned to campus to deliver a talk entitled, “Five Tips for Starting a Creative Business after College.”
- The president and CEO of MAWD Pathology Group in Kansas City, **Dr. Samuel Caughron (’96)** spoke on the subject, “So You Think You might Want to be a Doctor?”
- The College’s Office of Career Services hosted a panel on journalism featuring two notable professionals: **Sohrab Ahmari**, author of *From Fire by Water: My Journey to the Catholic Faith*, and **Dr. Matthew Peterson (’01)**, vice president of education at the Claremont Institute and editor of *The American Mind*.
- College Governor **Robert Barbera**, founder and CEO of Barbera Property Management, spoke on the subject, “Silver Bullet Critical Thinking: Setting and Achieving Long Term Goals.”



Parent's Corner

An Unexpected Love

By Erica Sanchez

Sitting on the beautiful campus of Thomas Aquinas College for the graduation of our oldest daughter, Emily ('17), I was deeply moved by the traditions and events of the week and weekend. It was hard not to compare the fun and faith-centered happenings to my own impersonal graduation from a large, secular university years earlier. Why hadn't this amazing school been on my radar when I was looking at colleges, I wondered?

Raising our large, active family, my husband and I knew we wanted our children to go away to college, but we hadn't thought much about where. During her junior year in high school, Emily was invited to attend Alumni Day at the College with some friends and came home saying something along the lines of, "This school was made for me!" — and, one year later, she applied. At the time, I thought the school was too small, and I questioned the worth of a liberal arts degree. After a campus visit and reading through the College's newsletters, my heart softened and I began to understand what a true treasure TAC is. The more I learned, the more I loved.

Emily was accepted, and for the next four years we (including her eight younger siblings) watched as she not only received an exceptional education but was immersed in beauty, truth, and goodness daily. I especially appreciated how the College's schedule was set such that students did not have to choose between attending Mass, eating, going to class, or participating in recreational activities. The school felt almost monastic in its rhythm. I could also see the many opportunities it provided for students to grow in virtue, and that students who wanted to become more virtuous were readily supported by most everyone else.

Our second daughter, Grace, sensing a call to a religious vocation, did not want to attend college. I encouraged her to apply to TAC anyway, confident that she would not lose her vocation there. But college was not meant to be for her, and she spent two and a half years in a cloistered monastery.

That brings us to Nicholas ('21). Quite different from his oldest sister, he was a senior in high school during Emily's senior year at TAC, and he was not enthusiastic about applying. But now TAC wasn't just on our radar, it was our top choice, so we encouraged him to apply anyway. The application process changed *his* heart as he spent hours on the College's website, learning more about the curriculum and campus life. Nicholas

“I thought the school was too small, and I questioned the worth of a liberal arts degree.”



The family of Erica and Cash Sanchez

is currently a sophomore, happy and appreciating his time at the school.

First through Emily, and now through Nicholas, I have witnessed the fruits of the strong academics, the beautiful environment, the sports, the fun activities — the formation of the whole person. I am continually impressed by hearing them discuss issues, formulate well constructed arguments, and listen carefully to others. We have been blessed to host many of their friends in our home and have seen these same qualities in them.

When it came to our fourth child, Isabella, no further change of heart was necessary. A senior in high school, she has been accepted to the College's waiting list (my fault on the timing of her application), and we are hopeful she will attend in the fall.

I thought this school too small, but I came to see that it was perfectly sized for fostering the sort of close, faith-filled, and academically focused environment that has allowed Emily and now Nicholas to thrive. I came to see how the rigorous liberal arts program, with its dense works, Socratic Method, and more math and science than we expected challenged and stretched my children.

Unexpectedly, I've fallen in love with this tiny college with its unique degree. I wish I had been blessed to attend! I would be delighted if all of my children have the privilege of doing so.