

Letter Home

THE THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Spring 2023

An Open Letter to My Parents

Accepting the Challenge

By Camden Tuffile (NE'24)

Dear Mom and Dad,

I remember three years ago, when it was time to start my college search, and you introduced me to Thomas Aquinas College, knowing that it would challenge me in every aspect of my life: educationally, socially, and spiritually. I'm sure you can remember that I didn't see that at first.

"It's too far away," I recall telling you, languishing over the kitchen counter. "I just want to write novels, not puzzle over confusing philosophical texts. Besides, there's far too much math!"

Well, fast forward, and here I am: far from home (but not too far), puzzling over confusing philosophical texts, and doing more math than I ever thought I would have to do in my college career.

Your goal was always to challenge my siblings and me, to help us become well-rounded, caring, and holy people by teaching us to challenge ourselves in everything we do. It was your example that led me to overcome my fears and come to TAC — and I am so grateful.

As it turns out, I really enjoy poring over the *Summa* in the Chapel, asking for the intercession of St. Thomas as I study his most renowned work. I have learned that math can actually be enjoyable, and as I study calculus for the first time, I am amazed at how the ideas of the ancient mathematicians continue to be relevant in modern mathematics.

In terms of writing, I have had the pleasure of working as the New England campus writer for the past year, writing articles for the TAC website and newsletter. In my free time, I have helped found a creative-writing group and try to exercise my creativity as much as possible, in the hope that one day I will finally find the time to write that novel I have been planning for the last two years.

Mom, your love for the natural world has always fascinated me and drawn me to notice the intricacies of God's marvelous creation. Now, whenever I find an interesting insect, a fascinating frog, or an alluring autumn leaf on a trek through the woods behind campus, I am reminded of God's majesty. You cultivated an incurable sense of wonder in me, and as I prepare to write my thesis next year, that wonder takes a prevalent role in my ideas.

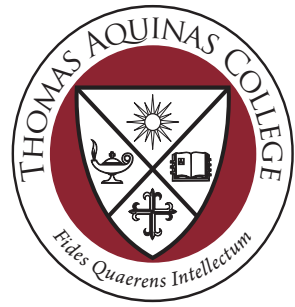
Dad, you taught me patience and the importance of hard work. As the father and math teacher of six rowdy children, your patience was always on full display as you helped me through countless excruciating SAT math problems while simultaneously making breakfast for the family. You constantly stress the significance of working hard to achieve a goal, and you taught me to do everything as efficiently and cheerfully as possible.

Every day, I thank God for your love and support in all aspects of my life. You both taught me to love great works of literature and science, to appreciate the world around me, and to reach out and explore new possibilities. And because you introduced me to the College — and helped me get over my initial reluctance — I now get to spend four years doing exactly that.



“It was your example that led me to overcome my fears and come to TAC — and I am so grateful.”

All my love,
Camden



Alumni & Parent Days 2023

*See the campuses! Discuss Great Books!
Connect with friends old & new!*

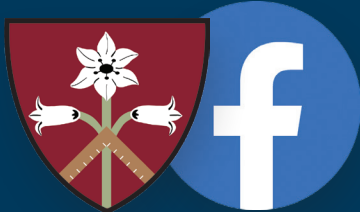


New England
September 23

California
October 7



Open to all TAC alumni and parents, past and present.
For more information, see tac.events



Want to connect with other TAC parents?
Join the TAC Parents' Association Facebook Community!
Photos, updates, discussions & more!
Facebook.com/TACParents

When Dad Comes to Give a Lecture ...

Dr. Daniel Toma: Scholar, Lecturer & TAC Parent

When geneticist Dr. Daniel Toma delivered his March lecture — “From Fruit Flies to Aristotle [to Dionysius]” — at Thomas Aquinas College, New England, at least one listener had likely heard those thoughts before: Dr. Toma’s daughter, sophomore Anastasia (’25).

“I had visited Anastasia a year ago in October,” Dr. Toma recalls. “I met several of the tutors then, and they wound up inviting me back for a lecture.” The faculty was grateful for his willingness — and grateful, too, for the intellectual substance he brought with him upon his return to campus.

“My job as a parent is to put my children in a setting where they will keep the Faith.”

In his lecture, Dr. Toma led listeners on a brief tour of his professional province of genetics, viewing it through both experimental and philosophical lenses and concluding with a glimpse of the field’s theological implications. The talk was well received by students and faculty alike.

As a professor of biology at Minnesota State University, Mankato — the largest school in the Minnesota State University system — Dr. Toma could easily have sent his daughter to a school much, much closer to home. How then, did Anastasia find her way to Thomas Aquinas College?

Dr. Toma’s answer is simple: “We’re practicing Byzantine Catholics.” He and his wife would settle for nothing less than an authentic Catholic education for their children. For high school, the Tomas are fortunate to live near Minneapolis, the birthplace of the Chesterton Schools Network, which, he explains, consists of “high schools built on classical liberal arts, with a Catholic perspective.” But what to do about college?

“There’s been a lot of research on what keeps kids Catholic, and the biggest thing is sending them to a good Catholic high school, as well as keeping them under at least a Catholic ‘umbrella’ through their undergraduate years, which is when, from a modern perspective, the “neurons start hardening,” says Dr. Toma. “While nothing’s certain, it tends to be the best way of making sure that they preserve the Faith — and that’s the most important thing to my wife and me. They can do what they want when they go into the world, but our job as parents is to put our children in a setting where they will keep the Faith.”

Knowing the stakes, Dr. Toma kept his eyes open for schools to which he could entrust the intellectual and spiritual care of his children in their final years of formation. Fortunately, circumstance was on his side. “I did research in California for seven years,” he recalls. “So I had been up to the College’s Cal-

ifornia campus a number of times, where I got to know Tom Kaiser, who has an advanced degree in biology, like I do.”

Those visits convinced Dr. Toma not only of the College’s Catholic credentials, but of its intellectual seriousness and institutional longevity. “TAC has proven itself to be successful at turning out a ‘good product,’” he reflects. He particularly admires the College’s commitment to curricular breadth. “There are a few other institutions like it, but TAC stands out by having a lot of science and math. It’s important, for addressing the problems of the modern world, to really go into the sciences and learn how to deal with them.”

But unlike most institutions of higher education, Thomas Aquinas College balances this commitment to breadth with a fundamental commitment to showing how each discipline sheds light on the others. “I appreciate the fact that all the classes are highly integrated,” he says. “It’s not just the theology and the philosophy which are Catholic; the College knows how to integrate all the other secular disciplines into the tradition of the Church, pulling them together from a Catholic perspective.”

When the College’s New England campus opened in Northfield, Massachusetts — about 1,000 miles closer to Minnesota than California — the option seemed sealed by Providence.

Anastasia now plumbs the depths of the mysteries of both Creation and Redemption as a sophomore, and Dr. Toma could not be happier. “The College gives students the tools to approach and analyze the truth,” he says. “That’s the most important aspect of education. The primary purpose is to give students those tools, and only secondarily to get a job. It’s hard to find that attitude in schools nowadays.”



Campus Life



Rose Dinner

Every February, the men of TAC-New England host the Rose Dinner, an opportunity to celebrate and honor the women on campus.



St. Patrick's Day Festivities



Palm Sunday

Head Chaplain Rev. Greg Markey leads students, tutors, and their families in a procession to Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel.



St. Vincent de Paul Lecture & Concert S

California tutor Dr. Anthony Andres delivers the spring semester's first lecture on the New England campus, "The Role of Dialectic Liberal Education"



Mardi Gras Dance

The juniors bring a luscious "Rainforest Café" theme to the Fritz B. Burns Auditorium in St. Cecilia Hall for one last dance before the start of Lent.





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Spring Play: Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*



Vocations Talk

A visit from Sr. John Paul Maria (Michaela '12) Pape, O.P., and the Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa



Indoor Volleyball Championship

Tutors best students in an exciting season finale!

“Real World Advice”

TAC Parents Share Career, Financial Wisdom with Students

This spring, with the juniors beginning to consider career paths and the seniors preparing to embark on their own, several TAC parents came to Thomas Aquinas College, California, to offer advice about the road ahead. Although discussing a wide range of topics, job fields, and endeavors, the speakers were all keen to emphasize that, on the professional journey to come, TAC graduates should never forget that their Catholic liberal education is one of their most powerful resources.

“TAC moms and dads are an indispensable part of our effort to get students on a sound footing as they graduate and enter the job market,” said College and Career Advisor Daniel Selmeczy. “They help with networking, internships, and job leads, and they can provide invaluable experience and counsel. We are so grateful to all the parents who have offered career advice this year, and we hope to see many more — on both campuses — in the year ahead.”

Personal Finance

On January 18, Raymond Walshe — father of Elaine ('19) and Nicole ('22) — outlined the saving and spending habits that lead to financial independence, drawing on his years of experience as a managing consultant at TÜV SÜD Global Risk Consultants. His two-hour talk included a broad range of basic economic principles, which he supplemented with concrete and practical suggestions.

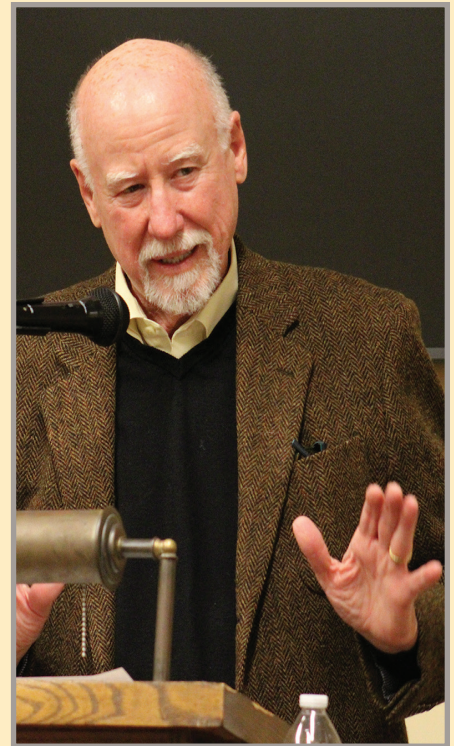
He began by defining financial independence as “having the ability to live without needing the job that you would normally have to go to, but having enough things that are generating income for you to be able to survive.” With that goal, Mr. Walshe went on to discuss student debt, when to rent and when to

buy housing, various saving and retirement mechanisms, and — above all — the importance of including Christian charity in one’s financial plans. “What you do not want to do when you begin investing is become Ebenezer Scrooge,” he said. “At the end of the day, you don’t get to take it with you, no matter what. The parable of the talents is not about financial acumen; it’s about your ability to be charitable.”

Job Interviews

Visiting in January and then again in April, Dr. Tom Krause — a TAC parent and grandparent, College governor, and founding partner at the Krause Bell Group — spoke to students about how to prepare for, and excel in, job interviews. Above all, he dispelled the assumption that interviews are necessarily adversarial. “One thing that people often don’t recognize is the extent to which you have a common interest with the employer,” he said. “Understand that you and the employer have the same objective: ‘Is this a job you’re going to be able to do successfully?’”

Dr. Krause also reassured students that, thanks to their formation at the College, they are “the most viable of candidates” for jobs in almost any industry. “It’s in the current thinking that studying philosophy as an undergraduate is not a bad thing for businesspeople,” he said. “There are even some in the business community who think it’s a *good* thing. They say, ‘Those people have learned about thinking, logic, and reason; they understand the human side of it better than others. We can teach them the stuff we do, but we want them to come prepared in a way that would include philosophy.’”



Dr. Tom Krause

TAC in IT

Returning to campus on March 1, John Birch ('92), father of Claire ('20) and co-founder of Virtual Service Operations (VSO), spoke to students about careers in information technology. Throughout his talk, he also offered broader reflections about how graduates can leverage their Catholic liberal education in the marketplace.

Beginning with his own experience as a TAC alumnus, Mr. Birch cited his freshman encounter with Euclidean geometry as a pivotal moment for his life and career. “Those distinctions become enormously important in the world,” he said. “Few people know how to actually think clearly and concisely.” He brought those indispensable Euclidean habits to IT, eventually co-founding VSO in 2017.

Cultivating the ability to clarify truth is at the heart of the College’s use of the Discussion Method, in which tutors and students grapple with difficult questions and collaborate to craft answers. That

“We can teach them the stuff we do, but we want them to come prepared in a way that would include philosophy.”



Madge ('23), and Lucy ('26) — shared his experience, dating from his TAC graduation to the founding of his own firm, TittmannWeix. He discussed various matters that would-be attorneys should consider, such as qualifications, risks, and integrity. He challenged a notion some may have that law is too practical an art for a TAC education, arguing instead that that law is an application of ethical studies, a key focus of the College's curriculum. "The TAC education is excellent for the practice of law, insurance specifically," he said. "If you can read Aristotle, you can read insurance!"

Closing out the day's events, was Shane O'Reilly ('95), father of Eddie ('22), who spoke about his experience as an entrepreneur, working at a Fortune 20 company, and as a business consultant. Mr. O'Reilly alerted students to the importance of networking in the business world. He also spoke to the risks and rewards of entrepreneurship — how demanding it is,

but also how doable. Finally, he encouraged students, saying, "The TAC education is very appropriate for management consulting. It's a lot of asking questions, and the answers don't come easy."

“The TAC education is excellent for the practice of law, insurance specifically. If you can read Aristotle, you can read insurance!”

ability, Mr. Birch noted, is essential to many fields.

"Data is king," he said. "The world runs on it." For students who spend four years studying thinkers such as Ptolemy and Antoine Lavoisier, interpreting data comes naturally. "This is what you have, what you are bringing to a business: thought."

Career Day

Five other TAC parents were on hand February 9 when the College's Career Center and Alumni Association jointly hosted the first-ever Career Day on the California campus. The event featured visitors from across the professional spectrum for a daylong discussion of the many ways in which the College's students can put their liberal education to use in the business world.

Chief among them was Anthony Grumbine ('00) — father of Joe ('22), Andrew ('24), and Gabe ('25) — who spoke about his passion and career: architecture. A graduate of the University of Notre Dame's School of Architecture, Mr. Grumbine is principal at the Santa Barbara offices of Harrison Design. He walked students through the opposing schools of architectural thought, classical vs. modern, arguing for the superiority of the former due to its principles of beauty, truth, and goodness — with which TAC students concern them-

selves extensively.

Next up was Dr. Alex Lessard, joined by his wife, Angela ('85), who are the parents of six TAC students past and present: Mariclare (Forsyth '14), Madeleine ('16), Serena (Plaisted '18), Michaela ('23), Paul ('24), and Sasha ('26). After completing his formal education, Dr. Lessard undertook a career in business before investing in Catholic education, founding Pasadena's St. Monica Academy in 2001 and working to support the renewal of Catholic education. From there he went on to found Adeodatus, a religious nonprofit dedicated to supporting Catholic education with conferences, consultation, and more. Dr. Lessard discussed the importance and goodness of Catholic education, encouraging students to consider this noble calling.

In a talk titled, "So You Want to be a Lawyer?," alumnus attorney Ray Tittmann ('94) — father of Max ('22),



John Birch ('92)



Parents' Corner

Going Home

by Matt and Anne-Marie Yanoschik

Four of our children are graduates of Thomas Aquinas College. Our fifth child, Margaret, passed away during her sophomore year, in the spring of 2021, on the Vigil of the Annunciation. Her classmates on the California campus will be graduating this May without her — and in her honor.

Living in Michigan, it was a difficult choice to send our children to a college so far away, for we are a close-knit family. This decision was even more complicated in the case of Margaret (or Maggie, as we often called her), because of her fragile medical condition, stemming from an arteriovenous malformation. But her doctors encouraged Maggie to pursue her goals, and knowing that Thomas Aquinas College would provide her with an outstanding formation made our decision much easier.

Margaret especially liked Theology class and had recently been urging us to read St. Athanasius's *On the Incarnation*, which had especially moved her. She also enjoyed the Natural Science labs and looked forward to working in the field of science. It makes us happy that all her wonder and delight in the natural world are now being satisfied at a whole new level.

So, too, is her longing for home.

When Margaret experienced homesickness at the College, her lovely friends were a comfort and gave her much happiness. Still, she always longed for her family and her home. One of the last things she scribbled in large letters in a school notebook was, "I'm a goin' home!" A classmate shared that, in their last Theology class about St. Augustine's *City of God*, Maggie spoke animatedly about the visions of the saints and the joy in heaven. She always emphasized the idea of home and of all of the family being home together.

Yet Maggie's death is a reminder of our true home. We are all on our way, and Maggie was clearly being prepared to go to her heavenly home ahead of us.

When Maggie was first hospitalized, we were in Michigan, but Rev. Paul Raftery, O.P. — then the College's head chaplain — went to the hospital, in spite of Covid restrictions, to anoint her and pray. The Catholic community quickly came together and lifted us up in prayer in a way that we could not have imagined. Students gathered in the Chapel to pray, and they spread the word so that many, many holy hours, Rosaries, and Masses were offered around the world for Maggie and our family. Those prayers sustained us through that difficult time and were a powerful aid and tremendous consolation. Together we prayed Maggie on her way.

Thanks be to God, she spent her last two years on earth surrounded by a community of believers focused on the eternal things, at a college where she was strengthened by the life of prayer and the sacraments, by the good people she encountered there, and by reading works that helped foster in her a deeper love of God.

Thanks be to God, when our family faced the most difficult event of our lives — Maggie's hospitalization and passing into eternal life — we were strengthened for carrying this cross by the outpouring of prayer and support from the College and the worldwide Catholic community. It was powerful and humbling to experience so tangibly the Body of Christ.

Margaret was a great gift to our family, and we miss her very much. She lived with such joy and loved so well. We are very aware that the formation she received, first at Mother of Divine Grace and then at Thomas Aquinas College, helped prepare her for her final end. We are so grateful.

We are grateful, too, for the many in these communities who gave us good examples of how to live when "the Lord has taken away" (Job 1:21). We can bless His name and look forward to being reunited with our precious daughter, now at home in the heart of God.



Remembering Maggie Yanoschik ('23)

“We are all on our way, and Maggie was clearly being prepared to go to her heavenly home ahead of us.”