



A Church that Teaches

**A Guide to Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel
at Thomas Aquinas College**

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Second Edition

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Foreword

“This college will explicitly define itself by the Christian Faith and the tradition of the Catholic Church.”

— *A Proposal for the Fulfillment of Catholic Liberal Education* (1969)
Founding document of Thomas Aquinas College

Dear Friend,

In setting out on their quest to restore Catholic liberal education in the United States, the founders of Thomas Aquinas College were determined that at this new institution faith would be more than simply an adornment on an otherwise secular education. The intellectual tradition and moral teachings of the Catholic Church would infuse the life of the College, illuminating all learning as well as the community within which learning takes place.



Just as the Faith would lie at the heart of Thomas Aquinas College, so too would a beautiful chapel stand at the head of its campus. From the time the College relocated in 1978 to its site near Santa Paula, plans were in place to build a glorious house of worship worthy of the building’s sacred purpose. Those plans were long deferred, however, due to financial limitations and the urgent need to establish basic campus essentials such as dining facilities, residence halls, and classrooms.

Thus, for most of the College’s first four decades, its liturgical life was confined to a small, modest chapel housed in the Commons building. It was not until the mid-1990s, under the devoted leadership of my late predecessor, Dr. Thomas E. Dillon, that the College was able to pursue in earnest the creation of a permanent chapel. Thence followed a dozen years of planning, thousands of generous contributions from our loyal benefactors, and forty-two months of construction, culminating in the dedication of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel on March 7, 2009.

Today we consider ourselves blessed to worship our Eucharistic Lord in this internationally acclaimed artistic and architectural treasure. We are further grateful for the opportunity to share the gift of the Chapel with our friends and visitors. It is my hope that through this guide you will come to learn more about the richness and splendor of this sacred space as well as this most unique college it so gracefully serves.

Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, pray for us!

Sincerely,

Michael F. McLean, Ph.D.
President
Thomas Aquinas College

Dr. Thomas E. Dillon

1946–2009

While thousands of benefactors, craftsmen, and artisans contributed to the construction of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, one man, through God’s grace, led and directed their efforts: Dr. Thomas E. Dillon, the late president of Thomas Aquinas College.

For 12 years, Dr. Dillon diligently pursued his dream of establishing a permanent home for our Eucharistic Lord on campus. In keeping with the College’s educational mission, he sought to build “a church that teaches,” one that, through its very form and details, would bear witness to the truths of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Like the College’s classical curriculum, its design would draw upon the best in Western civilization, incorporating numerous elements from the Church’s rich legacy of sacred architecture and reflecting the College’s fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church.



In this pursuit, Dr. Dillon studied ecclesial architecture and visited some of the great churches of Europe as well as the missions of California. He sought out benefactors who would support this \$23 million project and professionals who could execute it to perfection. He personally selected many of the building’s materials, consulted with architects and builders on nearly every decision, and monitored progress closely throughout the Chapel’s three-and-a-half-year construction. He even arranged to transport its 765-pound cornerstone to Rome for the apostolic blessing of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

Writing in the journal *Sacred Architecture*, Duncan Stroik of the School of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame, the design architect for Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, observes: “Behind every great building and its architect there is a visionary patron. Someone who thinks big, takes risks, raises funds, and above all recognizes the significance of architecture.” As the patron of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, Dr. Dillon was “an incredibly busy man, but he found time to do the things that mattered,” says Mr. Stroik. The architect and the patron worked “in the spirit of co-authors,” Mr. Stroik adds, and the myriad artistic and iconographic elements that define this crown jewel of the Thomas Aquinas College campus “all flowed from [Dr. Dillon’s] vision for the church and his own character.”

It was fitting, then, that when Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel was dedicated on March 7, 2009, Dr. Dillon was the first to proclaim the Word of God from its mahogany ambo. Quoting the prophet Ezra, he declared, “Today is holy to the Lord your God” (Neh. 8:9).

It was also poignant that when Dr. Dillon was killed in an automobile accident less than six weeks later, his was the first funeral Mass offered in the Chapel. As Tom Susanka, a friend of the Dillon family and member of the Thomas Aquinas College faculty, remarked in his eulogy, “We kneel before Our Lord in the tabernacle to mourn for Tom and pray for his eternal happiness here in this beautiful chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. It is his work; he built it for us, the tangible, lasting fruit of his determination that we have a fitting place to worship God.”

Dr. Dillon’s faithful leadership, his sacrificial efforts on the College’s behalf, and his tremendous love of God are now memorialized in the sacred building he labored to make a reality. The College remains forever grateful for his life and his presidency, praying for him daily in this, his final gift to the community he faithfully served — a church that teaches.

*Remember your leaders,
those who spoke to you the word of God;
consider the outcome of their life,
and imitate their faith.*

— Heb. 13:7

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“The dedication of the Chapel to Our Lady acknowledges her essential role in God’s plan for our salvation and the Church’s filial love for her as our mother.”

— His Eminence Justin Cardinal Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia
February 2, 2009

The Name

The entire Thomas Aquinas College curriculum is ordered toward the queen of the sciences, theology, and in a special way to the works of the Church’s premier theologian and Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas. Similarly, all of St. Thomas’ theology aims ultimately at the highest object of contemplation, the Triune God, the study of Whom is among the last to be taken up by students at the College.

In this enterprise, the Blessed Mother is our model. As Pope John Paul II observed in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Mary’s life is a “true parable,” illuminating the connection between faith and reason: “For between the vocation of the Blessed Virgin and the vocation of true philosophy there is a deep harmony.”

So it is that the Chapel is dedicated to Our Lady in her unique relation to the Trinity — the perfect daughter of the Father, the most admirable mother of the Son, the dearest spouse of the Holy Spirit. The name Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel pays homage to the Triune God we worship and to the Blessed Mother whom we strive to emulate.

“The Chapel of Thomas Aquinas College has been most fittingly dedicated to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to His Mother under her title, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. The Virgin Mary who ... draws us to live in Christ, to live in the Most Holy Trinity, through our life in the Church.”

— Most Rev. Raymond L. Burke
Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura
Thomas Aquinas College Commencement Address
May 15, 2010



Presiding majestically over Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel is an 8-foot, marble statue of the Woman of the Apocalypse. The statue is held aloft by the Chapel's pediment, which, triangular in shape, suggests the Holy Trinity. The pediment bears a relief of the Thomas Aquinas College crest, supported on either side by angels. Etched just below is St. John's description of the Woman of the Apocalypse: ET SIGNUM MAGNUM APPARUIT IN CAELO MULIER AMICTA SOLE ET LUNA SUB PEDIBUS EIUS ET IN CAPITE EIUS CORONA STELLARUM DUODECIM, "A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1). Above the archway appears, in Latin, the name of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel: DOMINA NOSTRA SANCTISSIMAE TRINITATIS.

The Blessings

A fount of grace, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel is, perhaps not surprisingly, the recipient of many blessings from priests, bishops, cardinals, and popes. The first of these came on May 19, 1996, when the Most Rev. Thomas J. Curry, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, blessed the grounds where the Chapel would one day stand. Throughout the construction process, there were other notable benedictions as well. The Chapel's marble columns received a blessing from a College chaplain just before they were hoisted over the exterior walls of the nave and threaded over the steel supports already in place. Another chaplain blessed the statue of the Woman of the Apocalypse prior to its being elevated by a crane to the top of the Chapel's pediment.

Most significant of all these blessings were the three separate benedictions that Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel received from two of Christ's Vicars — His Holiness Pope John Paul II and His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Pope John Paul II blessed the Chapel's architectural plans in 2003, as did Pope Benedict XVI in 2006. Two years later, Pope Benedict also blessed the Chapel's cornerstone. All three blessings took place at St. Peter's, signifying Thomas Aquinas College's commitment to remain always loyal to the Holy Father and faithful to the teaching church.

As an expression of gratitude, the College inlaid the coat of arms of Pope John Paul II, during whose pontificate the building was designed, in the marble floor of the Chapel's central aisle, just inside the main entrance. At the other end of the nave, just outside the sanctuary, lies the coat of arms of Pope Benedict XVI, under whose pontificate the Chapel's construction was completed.

The blessings of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel continued at its Dedication on March 7, 2009. At the start of the Mass, three Princes of the Church walked along the Chapel's aisles, sprinkling its walls in a ritual act of cleansing. The principal celebrant at the Dedication Mass, Cardinal Roger Mahony, the archbishop of Los Angeles, also sprinkled the Chapel's altar with holy water and anointed it with sacred chrism — blessed oil normally reserved for baptisms, confirmations, and ordinations — thus preparing it to be used for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.



Former Thomas Aquinas College President Dr. Thomas E. Dillon and his wife, Terri, present plans for Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel to Pope John Paul II on April 23, 2003.

“To have the Holy Father, the successor of St. Peter, bless the cornerstone of the College chapel right there over the grave of St. Peter in Rome — and this stone will be brought back and inserted in a prominent place in the College chapel building — this builds up our faith.”

— His Eminence Francis Cardinal Arinze
 Prefect Emeritus, Congregation for Divine Worship
 and the Discipline of the
 Sacraments
 September 3, 2008



His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI blesses the Chapel’s cornerstone on September 3, 2008.

The Latin inscription on the cornerstone translates as “For the Greater Glory of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary” and includes the year of its blessing, A.D. 2008. The bronze Thomas Aquinas College crest seals a compartment within the stone for holding scrolls listing the names of the College’s benefactors, governors, students, faculty, alumni, and other friends. These scrolls, too, were blessed by Pope Benedict XVI in Rome, as they were laid alongside the cornerstone at the blessing ceremony.



The coats of arms and papal mottos of the late Pope John Paul II (left) and His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI (right) are inlaid in the marble floor of the main aisle of the Chapel, one at each end.



(Above) The late Rev. Wilfred Borden, O.M.I., a chaplain at the College from 1992 to 2007, blesses Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel's marble columns on October 31, 2006.



(Above) College Chaplain Rev. Cornelius Buckley, S.J., blesses the statue of the Woman of the Apocalypse just moments before it was hoisted some 60 feet to the top of the Chapel's pediment on November 4, 2008.



(Left) Cardinal Roger Mahony anoints the Chapel's marble altar at the Dedication Mass for Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel on March 7, 2009.

Three bishops sprinkle both worshipers and the Chapel walls with holy water at the Dedication Mass. From left to right: The Most Rev. Thomas J. Curry, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles; Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles; and the Most Rev. Salvatore J. Cordileone, Bishop of Oakland.



The Four Marks

In the Nicene Creed, Christians profess their belief in a church that is *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic* — the Four Marks that, since the earliest days of Christendom, have identified the Church and testified to Her authenticity. Likewise, since its inception, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel has been predicated on “four marks,” or characteristics, that bear witness to the building’s sacred function both on campus and within the broader Church.

In overseeing the design of the Chapel, late Thomas Aquinas College president Dr. Thomas E. Dillon identified these four marks as *beauty*, which disposes us to what is true and good; *grandeur*, which lifts the mind to contemplate God’s transcendence; *permanence*, which reminds us that God’s word is everlasting; and *tradition*, which connects us to the wisdom of the past.

“I will be united with you in prayer, asking the Lord to bless abundantly all those who worship in your majestic and beautiful chapel.”

— His Eminence Giovanni Battista Cardinal Re
Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for Bishops
October 21, 2008



Beauty

Inspired by the flooring in several of Europe's most magnificent churches, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel's marble floor is exquisitely arrayed in an intricate pattern.



Grandeur

Soaring arches draw worshipers' gaze to the golden crucifix atop the baldacchino; to the translucent clerestory windows which fill the building with natural light; and to the Chapel's dome, pointing ever heavenward.



Permanence

Concealed within the Chapel's marble columns are 31-foot-high steel beams, and behind its limestone façade is a skeleton of steel, concrete, and rebar strong enough to stand up to California's seismic uncertainties. Yet the marble and limestone are themselves also enduring materials, meant to demonstrate, albeit beautifully, that this is a building constructed to withstand the wear of ages.



Tradition

Drawing upon two millennia of Catholic architecture, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel embraces the Church's Early Christian, Renaissance, and Spanish Mission heritage. The quatrefoil window in the Chapel's façade, for example, is a common element in Mission architecture.

The Exterior

“The structure and symbolism of the Chapel is indeed a sign that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is central to the life at Thomas Aquinas College.”

— His Eminence Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, O.P.
Archbishop of Vienna
February 13, 2009

“Its bell tower will be an exclamation point or a kind of lighthouse for the entire campus, indicating that the search for wisdom is basic to this academic community.”

— His Eminence J. Francis Cardinal Stafford
Major Penitentiary of the Apostolic Penitentiary
Thomas Aquinas College Commencement Address
May 17, 2003

The Chapel's cruciform shape resembles the crucified Christ. The sanctuary represents Our Lord's sacred head; the transept, His arms outstretched on the Cross; and the nave, His body.



The dome, rising 89 feet above the crossing of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel's transept and nave, symbolizes continuity with Rome. It is capped by a 16-foot lantern, atop which rests a 10-foot gilded cross, the gift of former chairman of the Board of Governors Maria Grant and her husband, Richard, president of the Dan Murphy Foundation. The dome's 12 windows represent the 12 Apostles.



Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel's 135-foot-high bell tower evokes California's Mission history, calling students and faculty to Mass each day and ringing out the Angelus at noon. It has three tiers that house three bells, symbolic of the Triune God. At the top of the tower rests an iron cross, a sign to all of the sacred place that lies below. As Providence would have it, the top-most tier and the cross were hoisted into place on September 14, 2007 — the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

The Chapel's front façade is seen as a porta coeli, or "gate of heaven," with a triumphal archway through which the faithful enter.

The Doctors

Flanking the Chapel's central archway are niches with two saintly mentors, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. These sculptures call to mind the College's classical curriculum, which culminates in the works of the Church's two greatest theologians, who are called "doctors" from the Latin verb *docere*, to teach.

St. Augustine's teaching pose represents the active life, with his right hand clutching a book and his left pointing outward. St. Thomas' pose, conversely, represents the contemplative life, with his gaze lifted heavenward and rosary beads hanging by his left side. Since both doctors were active as well as contemplative, their respective poses could easily have been reversed. Taken together, they speak to the need for both good works and contemplation in the life of the Christian.



(Left) St. Augustine is shown with a bishop's mitre at his feet and a burning heart on his chest, symbolizing his ardent love of God. He stands atop a pedestal bearing the words DOCTOR GRATIAE (Doctor of Grace). Appearing above St. Augustine's statue is a marble tondo, or circular relief, with a white dove representing the Holy Spirit's inspiration.



(Right) St. Thomas Aquinas is depicted holding an open book, with a quill in his right hand, signifying the transmission of his wisdom through his writings. On his chest is the sun, his symbol. Below, the inscription reads DOCTOR COMMUNIS (Common Doctor), referring to his role as the premier and universal teacher of the Church. The tondo above St. Thomas features a gold solar monstrosity, reflecting his great devotion to our Eucharistic Lord.

The Loggia

The barrel-vaulted loggia is located between the stone arch of the front façade and the great bronze doors of the Chapel. A buffer between the hustle and bustle of the academic quadrangle and the solemn quiet within the Chapel, the loggia will soon house a plaque commemorating the many generous benefactors of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel.

The Chapel's bronze doors feature six panels that will eventually hold bas reliefs depicting scenes from the life of the Blessed Mother, just as the golden door of the Chapel's tabernacle depicts six scenes from the life of Christ.

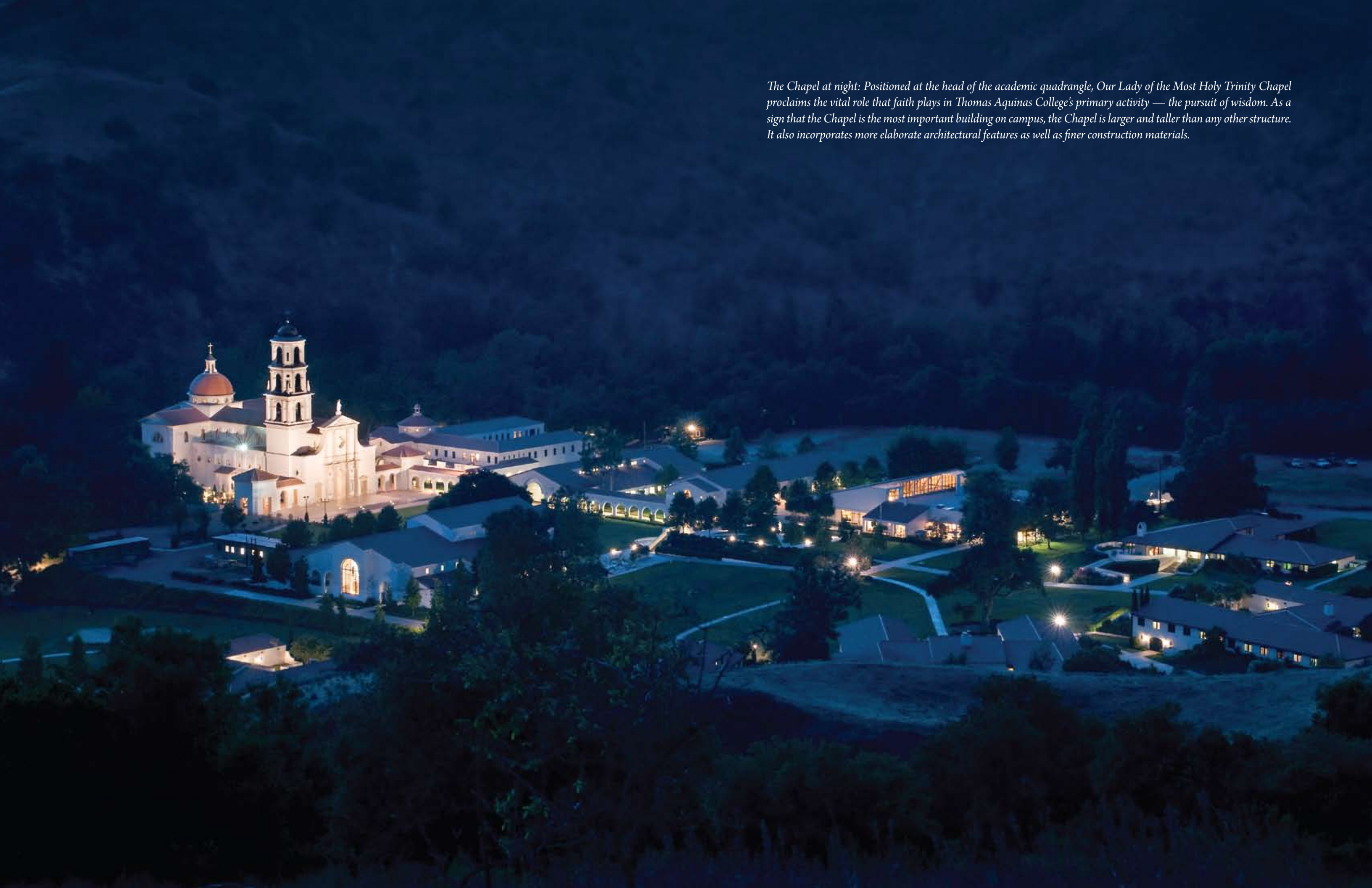


Passing from the loggia into the nave, one sees above the Chapel's bronze doors a bas relief of Our Lady at her Coronation, surrounded by the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

The relief includes four saints known for their devotion to Our Lady: On the far left, St. Dominic kneels in prayer beside a lily, symbolizing his chastity. Beside him stands St. Bernard of Clairvaux with a beehive at his feet, signifying his eloquence. (St. Bernard's words, tradition tells us, were sweeter than honey.) To the right of God the Father is St. Cyril of Alexandria, a doctor of the Church, depicted with his papal mitre and a Bible. (At the Council of Ephesus in 431, St. Cyril passionately and successfully defended the use of the title *Theotokos*, or Mother of God, for Our Lady.) On the far right is St. Louis de Montfort, holding a cross as a symbol of his devotion to Our Crucified Lord.

Just below the relief is the inscription *HIC DOMUS DEI EST ET PORTA COELI* — “This is a house of God and gate of heaven,” the words that Jacob uttered upon awaking from his heavenly dream, when he vowed to build a temple to God on the very spot where he had slept (Gen. 28:17).

The Chapel at night: Positioned at the head of the academic quadrangle, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel proclaims the vital role that faith plays in Thomas Aquinas College's primary activity — the pursuit of wisdom. As a sign that the Chapel is the most important building on campus, the Chapel is larger and taller than any other structure. It also incorporates more elaborate architectural features as well as finer construction materials.



The Gardens

Adjoining Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel to the north and south are two gardens which serve distinct but complementary purposes. To the north is St. Thomas Plaza, named for the College's patron, who is also the namesake of the faculty office building on the opposite side of the plaza. This garden, the first sight one encounters upon entering the campus from the visitor parking area below, serves as a place of welcome. Spacious and open, it also provides a charming outdoor reception venue for the College for entertaining guests and benefactors.

To the south of the Chapel is the St. Thérèse Prayer Garden, named for St. Thérèse of Lisieux, whose statue stands in its midst. More secluded than the plaza, this garden, with its private alcoves and benches separated by lush landscaping, conveys the sense of a sacred space or cloister. It is a popular site for students to quietly pray and study. Together, the two gardens, like the statues of St. Thomas and St. Augustine outside the Chapel's central archway, speak of the call to both active service and contemplation for all Christians.

St. Thomas Plaza



At the center of St. Thomas Plaza is a grand fountain inlaid with a tiled pattern of a sunburst, the symbol of St. Thomas Aquinas, whom Pope Leo XIII once likened to the sun because "he heated the world with the warmth of his virtues and filled it with the splendor of his teaching."

Befitting the plaza's role as a place of welcome, a statue of St. Matthew, the first of the evangelists, stands at its head. It is in St. Matthew's Gospel that we read Our Lord's summon to hospitality: "And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?" (Matt. 5:47). In this century-old travertine statue, St. Matthew is portrayed clutching a book, denoting his authorship of his Gospel.



Adorning the Chapel's northernmost exterior wall is a Della Robbia, a devotional relief of glazed terra cotta, depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Our Lady of New York



(Above) Adjacent to St. Thomas Plaza stands Our Lady of New York — a gift of the Honorable and Mrs. William P. Clark, longtime friends of Thomas Aquinas College. Judge Clark has also served as co-chairman of the College's Comprehensive Campaign. The statue is a replica of one that appears in Manhattan's St. Patrick's Cathedral and is a reminder of the College's warm, long-standing relationship with the Archdiocese of New York. The late John Cardinal O'Connor was the Commencement Speaker in 1989 and the Keynote Speaker at its 25th Anniversary Dinner in 1996. Two of the College's alumni now serve as priests in the Archdiocese of New York, which is also home to many of the College's students and governors, both past and present.

(Right) For nearly 13 years, Our Lady of New York watched over the site of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel between the blessing of the grounds in 1996 and the Chapel's dedication in 2009.



St. Thérèse Prayer Garden



A doctor of the Church, St. Thérèse of Lisieux is the ideal patroness for this garden, with its resplendent rosebushes, plants, and vines. She is known as “the Little Flower,” a title deriving from her articulation of “the little way” to love Jesus. “Love proves itself by deeds, so how am I to show my love?” the 19th century saint wrote in her journal. “Great deeds are forbidden me. The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers, and these flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance and word, and the doing of the least actions for love.”

The Nave

Modeled after those of early Christian basilicas, the nave of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel is relatively narrow yet dramatically high. This configuration emphasizes the prominence of the altar and tabernacle and the transcendence of God. On either side of the nave are seven arches, which symbolize the seven sacraments, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven dolours of the Blessed Mother, her seven joys, and the three theological and four natural virtues.

“Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel will be a beautiful addition to your campus and a wonderful setting for the worship and prayer that are the heart of Catholic education.”

— Most Rev. Alexander J. Brunett
Archbishop of Seattle
February 4, 2009

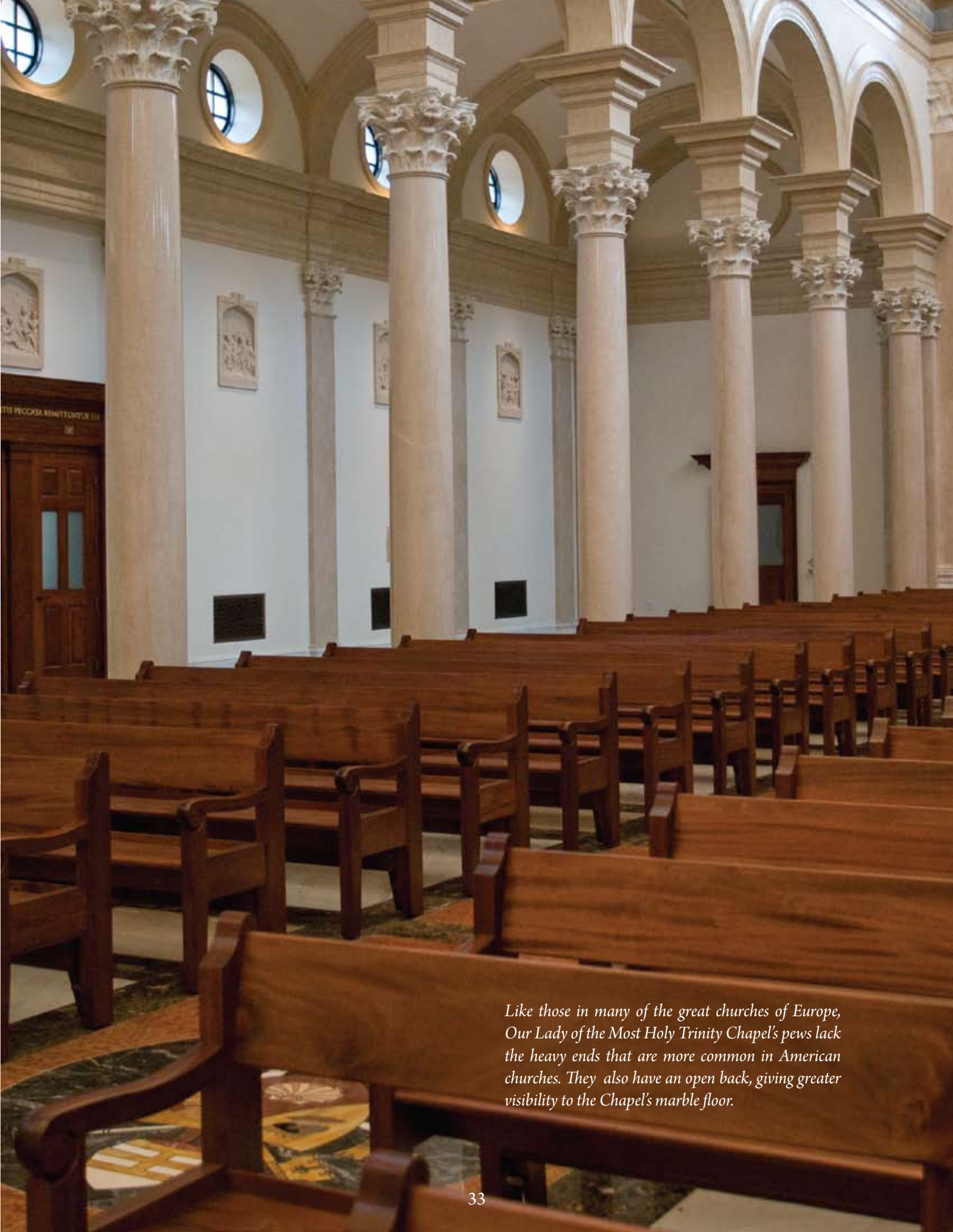


Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel's vaulted ceiling magnifies the elevation of the nave and represents the vault of heaven. The Chapel's windows are translucent, allowing the building to be filled with the sun's radiance, reminding us of the light of heaven. A wide blue, marbled band, honoring the Blessed Mother, lines the clerestory.



Above the interior of the Chapel's main doors is a statue of Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom, flanked by two angels. Below is the inscription QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE, the instruction the Blessed Mother gave to the wedding servers at Cana: "Do whatever He tells you" (John 2:5).

The seven arches on each side of the nave together provide ideal framing for the 14 travertine Stations of the Cross that line the Chapel's side aisles. Each Station is an ornate, rectangular relief vividly recounting a scene from Our Lord's passion and death. Member Emeritus of the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors Ed Mills rescued these 90-year-old Stations in 1996 from a decommissioned church in Milwaukee. The church's name — "St. Thomas Aquinas."



The Chapel's confessionals are made from the same mahogany as its pews and ambo. Above the north confessional is the inscription QUORUM REMISERITIS PECCATA REMITTUNTUR EIS, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John 20:23). The inscription above the south confessional reads VENITE AD ME OMNES ET EGO REFICIAM VOS, "Come to me all you (who labor and are burdened), and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).



Like those in many of the great churches of Europe, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel's pews lack the heavy ends that are more common in American churches. They also have an open back, giving greater visibility to the Chapel's marble floor.

The Dome

“The faculty, staff and students, as well as the benefactors of the College, should be justifiably proud of the magnificent edifice that has been built for the glory of God, and as an enduring symbol of the heart and soul of Thomas Aquinas College.”

— His Eminence Renato Raffaele Cardinal Martino
President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
January 27, 2009



Encircling the interior of the dome are the words the Archangel Gabriel spoke to the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation: SPIRITUS SANCTUS SUPERVENIET IN TE ET VIRTUS ALTISSIMI OBUMBRABIT TIBI QUOD ENIM EX TE NASCETUR SANCTUM VOCABITUR FILIUS DEI, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).



Following a centuries-old tradition in sacred architecture, a dove — a symbol of the Holy Spirit — hovers in the ceiling of the lantern that tops Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel’s dome.

The Evangelists

In front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal. Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. . . . Day and night without ceasing they sing, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, Who was and is and is to come."

— Rev. 4:6-8

Christian tradition has long associated the four evangelists with the four "living creatures" that surround God's throne in the Book of Revelation. In Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, each of the four Gospel writers is depicted with his traditional symbol, using the *trompe l'oeil* technique, on the pendentives that sustain the dome, just as the four Gospels sustain the Church.



(Left) St. Mark is shown as a lion, as his Gospel begins with St. John the Baptist, whose booming voice in the wilderness was like that of a roaring lion (Mark 1:2-8). Often regarded as a symbol of monarchy and courage, the lion also represents Christ's kingship as well as His bold command at the conclusion of St. Mark's Gospel to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).



St. Luke is shown as an ox, as his Gospel both begins and ends in the Temple of Jerusalem, where the priest would sacrifice oxen and other animals. The symbol also speaks to the sacrifice of Christ and His royal priesthood.

(Below) St. Matthew is shown with a human face, as his Gospel begins with Christ's human genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17), representing both Our Lord's Incarnation and His human nature.



St. John is shown as an eagle, as His Gospel begins with a soaring hymn to Christ, the Incarnate Logos (John 1:1-18). The eagle also represents Our Lord's Ascension and His divine nature.

The Transepts

The transepts of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel contain four shrines, each of which houses a replica of a classical painting that depicts a key moment in Salvation or Church History. (See photos on the following page.) In the two shrines beside the sanctuary are paintings that either portray or symbolize the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. To the south is the Annunciation, with the infant Jesus descending from God the Father in the presence of a dove, representative of the Holy Spirit. To the north is St. John's baptism of the Lord, with "the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon Him," and the Father's voice coming down from above (Mark 1:9-11).

The painting in the northernmost shrine recounts the temptation of St. Thomas Aquinas and is located on the side of the building that, appropriately, faces St. Thomas Hall. The painting recalls the story of how Thomas' brothers, angry over his entering the Dominican Order, hired a temptress in an effort to defile his purity. She is shown fleeing after St. Thomas has rebuked her, while angels bind him with the girdle of chastity.

Finally, the art in the Chapel's southernmost shrine depicts St. Teresa of Avila — a doctor of the Church known for her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament — receiving Holy Communion. It hangs on the wall that separates the Chapel from the prayer garden outside, where there stands a statue of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who chose St. Teresa as her patroness and namesake.

The Shrines

The pilasters that encase the northern and southern shrines in the Chapel's transepts are made from Turkish Rosso Laguna marble. This is the same kind of stone from which the altar in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles was fashioned, signifying Thomas Aquinas College's loyalty to the seat of the Archdiocese and its bishop.



"The Annunciation with God the Father"
(1615-1620)
by Jacopo Palma il Giovane
(1548-1628)



"Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist"
(1698)
by Carlo Maratta
(1625-1713)



"The Temptation of St. Thomas Aquinas"
(1631-1632)
by Diego Velázquez
(1599-1660)



"Teresa of Avila Receiving Communion"
(1683)
by Livio Mehus
(1630-1691)

The Sacristy

To the south of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel's sanctuary is the sacristy, where celebrants prepare for the Mass. In addition to providing suitable storage for vestments, vessels, and lectionaries, the sacristy includes a sacrarium, or sink that drains directly into the earth for washing sacred vessels, rinsing altar linens, and disposing of water that has been used for a sacred purpose.

Beyond its practical uses, however, the sacristy is also designed for prayer and worship. It houses a small altar for offering private Masses as well as a large collection of saintly relics. Elegantly appointed with mahogany cabinets and illumined by large windows that look out on the natural beauty that surrounds the campus, the room provides an ideal setting for celebrants to contemplate and pray.

"As we contemplate the glory of the Lord in this beautiful dwelling place of His that so lifts our minds and hearts to Him, let us ask Him for the grace to listen and respond to His call in our life — for the sake of our own salvation and for that of the whole world."

— Most Rev. Salvatore J. Cordileone
Bishop of Oakland

Dedication Weekend Mass for the Alumni of Thomas Aquinas College
March 8, 2009

Along the sacristy's north wall stands a white marble altar that once belonged to the mausoleum of Bernardine Murphy Donohue, a papal countess and the daughter of the late Dan Murphy, whose foundation contributed the lead gift of \$10 million for Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. When Los Angeles' Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels was completed in 2002, Countess Donohue's remains were transferred to its crypt, and her husband, Dan Murphy Foundation President Emeritus Sir Daniel Donohue, graciously donated the altar for use in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel.

The altar features a relief of a lamb, representative of Christ, "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). It also holds a first-class relic of St. Candidus, a 3rd century Roman officer in the Theban Legion who, along with some 6,600 of his fellow Christian soldiers, was martyred under the Emperor Maximian when he refused to offer sacrifices to the pagan gods.

Just above the altar hangs a replica of "Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac" (1636) by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–1669). The painting portrays an angel of the Lord staying Abraham's hand, thus preventing the patriarch from giving up his only begotten son (Gen. 22:1-18), a prefiguring of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, which is re-presented during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.



Over the years, through the generosity of numerous benefactors, Thomas Aquinas College has acquired an extensive collection of saintly relics, including a fragment of the True Cross and relics of the 12 Apostles. On the designated feast days, these precious gifts are venerated in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Throughout the rest of the year, they reside in a fine, mahogany reliquary that hangs in the Chapel's sacristy. The reliquary has a large glass door that enables visitors to examine and admire these sacred items more closely.

The Sanctuary

"The completion of the Chapel marks an important moment in the life of the College, and I am confident that it will become a true spiritual home for students and faculty."

— His Eminence William J. Cardinal Levada
Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
January 21, 2009





A baldacchino is a permanent canopy made of wood, stone, or metal that rises over a free-standing altar to show its importance. While medieval in origin, it harkens back to the tent that Yahweh commanded the Israelites to erect over the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25-27). The baldacchino's bronze, Solomonic columns reference the Temple of Jerusalem and are reminiscent of Bernini's Baroque masterpiece in St. Peter's Basilica, thus testifying to the College's fidelity to Rome.

Like the Ark of the Covenant, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel's baldacchino is surmounted by golden cherubim (Ex. 25:18-21), who are depicted bearing grapes and wheat, symbols of the Holy Eucharist. Above the structure is an exalted gold crucifix — an image of the Crucified King, Who is made present in the sacrifice that takes place on the altar below.

In the very center of the baldacchino's underside is a painted, hand-carved wooden dove, an emblem of the Holy Spirit, appearing to hover above the altar.

Extending around the sanctuary is a white marble altar rail supported with coral-hued balusters made of Rosso Coralito marble. The rail is separated at the transept by a bronze gate bearing the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega*, recalling the prophecy of St. John: "I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*," says the Lord God, Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8).



An elevated pulpit from which the Word of God is announced, the ambo recalls both Mount Sion, where Moses received the Ten Commandments, and the Mount of Beatitudes, where Our Lord is believed to have delivered the Sermon on the Mount. First introduced into Christian churches in the 4th century, ambos are believed to be modeled after the raised platforms from which Jewish rabbis proclaimed the Scriptures.



Thomas Aquinas College founder and Vice President for Finance and Administration Peter L. DeLuca lights the sanctuary lamp at the March 7, 2009, Dedication Mass for Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel after the Blessed Sacrament was reposed in the tabernacle for the first time. A lighted sanctuary lamp is the outward sign of a church's holiness, announcing to all who enter that the Eucharistic Lord is present in the tabernacle, and as such, these are sacred grounds.



Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel's marble altar is white, the color of a lamb, to symbolize Christ, the Lamb of God Who is offered up in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The tapered legs on each of the altar's four corners suggest it also serves as the table of the Lord.



Five crosses have been carved into the top of the altar and finished with gold leaf.



(Left) In the back of the altar is a compartment housing a first-class relic of the College's patron, St. Thomas Aquinas. The relic was deposited, and the compartment sealed, at the Chapel's Dedication Mass.



Inlaid in the sanctuary's marble floor between the altar and the tabernacle is a compass rose, a medieval navigational tool which takes its name from the flower it resembles, the rose — a symbol of the Blessed Mother.

The Tabernacle

The tabernacle is the heart and soul of a Catholic church. It is the dwelling place of the Blessed Sacrament, where Our Lord abides, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

In light of the tabernacle's extraordinary purpose, it shares with the altar the most honored location in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Situated on the Chapel's central axis, the tabernacle rests atop a five-foot-high, ornate, marble pedestal so as to be visible above the altar. Its gold edging and dome, topped with a foot-high statue of the Risen Christ, make it stand out against the sanctuary's white wall.

The tabernacle's golden arched door, measuring 8 inches wide by 12 inches high, features six bas-reliefs of the life of Christ. Inscribed below the dome, in gold, are Our Lord's words of consecration: HOC EST ENIM CORPUS MEUM, "This is My Body" (Matt. 26:26).

The tabernacle's interior is fittingly august, with golden walls. Engraved on the inside of the door is an angel bearing a scroll that contains lines from St. Thomas Aquinas' paean to the Holy Eucharist, *Panis Angelicus* ("Bread of Angels"). On the wall opposite the door is the opening verse from another of St. Thomas' Eucharistic hymns, *Adoro te devote, latens Deitas* ("Hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee"). With mirrors for a floor and ceiling, the inside of the tabernacle creates the impression of an infinite, gold shaft uniting heaven and earth, just as the Eucharistic Lord bridges the infinite gap between God and man.

Longtime friends of the College Carol and John Saeman donated the funds for the tabernacle in honor of a dear friend of theirs — and of the College — Francis Cardinal Arinze, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Cardinal Arinze was Thomas Aquinas College's Commencement speaker in 2004.

"This chapel of the College of Saint Thomas Aquinas was built for the Holy Eucharist, source and summit of the Church's life."

— His Eminence Marc Cardinal Ouellet
Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops
May 16, 2009

In Thanksgiving

The design and construction of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel would never have been possible without God's abundant grace, made manifest through the many generous benefactors who have contributed to the building of this magnificent *Domus Dei*.

No words could ever suffice to express the gratitude of the governors, faculty, staff, and students of Thomas Aquinas College to the nearly 2,500 individuals and foundations who, for the greater glory of God, have thus far contributed to the Chapel project. Perhaps, then, it is best to repay these works of *charity* through works of the two other theological virtues: *faith* and *hope*.

In this building, through God's grace, the *faith* of Thomas Aquinas College students is nurtured. Here, conversions, baptisms, and confirmations take place; sins are forgiven; souls are nourished with Christ's Precious Body and Blood.

Here, young men and women discern their vocations and dedicate their lives to the service of Christ and His Church. Some hear the call to the religious life or the priesthood. Others answer the call to marriage, and some of them stand before the Chapel's marble altar to be united in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

In all of this there is great *hope*. The young people who worship at Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel at Thomas Aquinas College — both today and for generations, even centuries to come — will, like the alumni before them, help to build up the Body of Christ. Their good works, passed along through the souls to whom they minister and the families they raise, will be the fruits of our benefactors' prayers, penances, and contributions offered for the completion of this chapel.

In thanksgiving, the College keeps its benefactors in its prayers, especially during the four Masses that are offered daily in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. May God reward richly these selfless and generous patrons, in both this world and the next.



We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith, and labor of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.

— 1 Thess. 1:2-3



