

# THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

## COMMENCEMENT 2021

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### Triumph and Gratitude

#### Neither Fire, Flood, Nor Pandemic Could Thwart the Class of 2021

At the end of the first semester of Freshman Year, members of the Thomas Aquinas College Class of 2021 encountered the first of several natural disasters that would come to characterize their time at the College: The Thomas Fire imperiled the California campus, and students were evacuated, then forced to go home early for the semester.

When they returned, they would have to contend with the threat of flooding, mudslides, and another evacuation. The next year, high winds — like those that caused the Thomas Fire — led the electric company to cut power to the region, leaving the campus dark, sometimes for days at a time.

Then came Junior Year and Covid-19. Students were sent home early once again, completing their classes via Zoom, a tolerable solution that no one wanted to repeat.

Over the course of Senior Year, members of the Class of 2021 bore graciously the contact-tracing, the quarantines, the county's ever-shifting social-distancing and masking regulations, outdoor Masses, outdoor classes, and limited opportunities to leave campus — all in order to maintain in-person instruction.

Their sacrifices paid off. They completed the year, they completed their studies, and they completed the College's program of Catholic liberal education.

On May 15 the College community gathered on the academic quadrangle to celebrate and to thank God for these accomplishments. The Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop of Springfield in Illinois, presided over a Baccalaureate Mass and graduation ceremony, where



families and friends honored the Class of 2021 for its diligence and perseverance.

#### *Spirit of Thankfulness*

The Commencement exercises began that morning with the Baccalaureate Mass of the Holy Spirit, where His Excellency, vested in red, served as the principal celebrant and homilist. As the seniors, followed by members of the faculty and Board of Governors, processed onto the quadrangle, the Thomas Aquinas College Choir sang, in Latin, of the Holy Spirit: *Come, take possession of our souls, and make them all Thine own!*

“My dear graduates, as you give thanks for the blessings received over the past four years and look with hope to the bright future that God has planned for you, I encourage you to strive to live a coherent life in a world that is often incoherent,” His Excellency told the Class of 2021 in his homily. “Let people see your faith, your hope,

and your love, not only in your words, but also in your actions and your deeds.”

A spirit of thankfulness pervaded both the Mass and the ensuing Commencement ceremony, reflected in the Senior Address of Class Speaker Dillon Raum ('21). While, for some, living on a campus that was at one point literally encircled in flames might elicit comparisons to Dante's *Inferno*, Mr. Raum instead likened the graduates' four years at the College to *Paradiso*.

“If ever someone speaks the word ‘heaven,’” Mr. Raum said, “and before your more educated part has a chance to correct itself, your mind flies back to this place, to the people, to that sometimes green, sometimes yellow hill with the little white cross,

know that it can only be because here we experienced, even if only shallowly, and for a brief time, the life of the mind, which is eternal life.”

As part of the Commencement exercises, the College honored Bishop Paprocki by presenting him with its highest honor, the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion, in recognition of his leadership on issues ranging from the defense of human life and marriage to healthcare and religious liberty. (See story, below.)

Bishop Paprocki, in turn, urged the graduates to show similar bravery in defense of the Faith and neighbor. “I encourage you to be courageous defenders of the truth that has been generously shared with you by the faculty of this great College,” he said in his Commencement Address. “I encourage you to confidently work to promote truth and coherence in the Church and the world, with all the knowledge, wisdom, and skills you have cultivated during your time here.”

### The Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion

#### College Awards Bishop Paprocki its Highest Honor

At Commencement 2021 the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors awarded the College's highest honor, the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion, to the Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop of Springfield in Illinois.

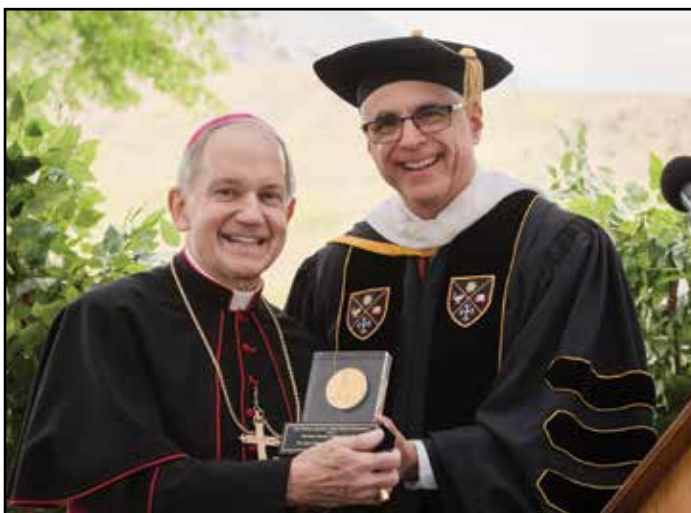
“In 2019, when Illinois passed the most extreme state legislation in the country on abortion, Bishop Paprocki, like a true shepherd, issued a decree to the priests of his diocese, stating that Catholic politicians who had voted in favor of the new law had thereby put themselves outside the Church and could not receive Holy Communion until they were reconciled through the Sacrament of Penance,” said President Michael F. McLean at the Commencement ceremony. “With this decree His Excellency proclaimed the truth with love, seeking to safeguard the souls of all the faithful in his care.”

Over the years the Bishop has demonstrated similar leadership on a wide range of matters, including marriage and human sexuality, Catholic healthcare, and religious liberty. “It is an act of love to

teach the law — the truth about how we are to live,” said Dr. McLean. “This is among Bishop Paprocki's chief objectives: to love, to care for, and to guide the souls in his care by making known to them the truths of the natural law and of revelation.”

Named for the College's patron, the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion

pays tribute to those who have demonstrated extraordinary dedication to Christ and His church, as well as leadership in advancing the teachings of the magisterium. Neither fame, titles, nor offices are sufficient qualifications; fidelity, evidenced over the course of many years, is the essential qualification. Past recipients include St. Teresa of Calcutta; Servant of God Rev. John Hardon, S.J.; and John



Chairman of the Board of Governors Scott Turicchi presents the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion to Bishop Paprocki.

Cardinal O'Connor, the late Archbishop of New York.

Joining this distinguished list, Bishop Paprocki was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Chicago in 1978. He earned a civil law degree at DePaul University College of Law and a doctoral degree in canon law at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University.

On January 24, 2003, Pope St. John

Paul II appointed him to serve as an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Chicago, and in 2010 Pope Francis chose him to serve as the Bishop of Springfield in Illinois. In 2013 His Excellency obtained an MBA from the University of Notre Dame, where he currently serves as an adjunct faculty member at the University Law School.

Bishop Paprocki is the vice president of the Illinois Catholic Health Association. He is also a member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, the Committee on Budget and Finance, and the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

“Today I gave the Commencement Address at Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula, California, where I received their Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion,” His Excellency posted, along with a photo, to his Twitter followers shortly after the graduation ceremony. “This college is an inspiring place of Catholic higher education. Congratulations to all the graduates!”



# “Striving to Live a Coherent Life in an Era of Incoherence”

## Bishop Paprocki’s Homily from the 2021 Baccalaureate Mass

Reverend Fathers, faculty, staff, students, graduates and their family and friends, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ: It is good to be with you today to celebrate this Baccalaureate Mass for the graduating class of Thomas Aquinas College. With gratitude for the many blessings that the Lord has bestowed upon these students over the past four years, we come to the altar to offer our greatest form of thanksgiving to Him in the celebration of the Eucharist.

In his book *A Brief History of Time*, the late theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, who held Isaac Newton’s chair as professor of mathematics at the University of Cambridge, wrote about a “physical quantity called entropy, which measures the degree of disorder of a system. It is a matter of common experience that disorder will tend to increase if things are left to themselves. (One has only to stop making repairs around the house to see that!)”

The theme of my homily for this Baccalaureate Mass is “Striving to Live a Coherent Life in an Era of Incoherence,” and I am starting my discussion of this topic with the issue of entropy because I believe the cultural incoherence and disorder, so characteristic of the world today, are a manifestation of the law of entropy, “that in any closed system, disorder, or entropy, always increases with time.”

**“It must be emphasized that the denial of Holy Communion in such circumstances is a medicinal remedy that is intended not to punish, but to foster a change of heart and encourage the sinner to repent and live a moral life that is coherent with the Catholic faith.”**

This is true even in the Church when we seek to act without being open to the gift of grace. But the Church is a divine institution founded by Jesus Christ, Who assured us that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). The fulfillment of Our Lord’s assurance obliges Christians to conform our human will to the divine will in carrying out the mission entrusted to the Church.

### Coherence in the Christian Life

Christian teaching promotes coherence between faith and action, and consistency between thoughts, words, and deeds. Such coherence is especially important when it comes to the reception of Holy Communion. What we do when we go to Mass and receive Holy Communion should not be disconnected from what we do during the rest of the week in all the activities of our daily lives. If our actions do not reflect the beliefs we profess as Christians, then our lives are incoherent.

Coherence is defined as “the quality or state of cohering, such as systematic or logical connection or consistency.” The verb “cohere” comes from the Latin *cohærere*, which means “to cling together, to be united.”

Coherence, then, in the ecclesiastical context, refers to the logical connection and consistency between the faith that is professed and the actions that flow from that faith. Coherence in the Church also refers to the faithful clinging together as part of a community, united in their beliefs and in the moral dimensions of their behaviors.

With regard to coherence as it relates specifically to the reception of Holy Communion, George Weigel, distinguished senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., called attention, in an article in *First Things*, to the use of the phrase “Eucharistic coherence” by the Latin American bishops in their 2007 *Aparecida* document, in which they insisted on “Eucharistic coherence” in their Catholic communities. It should be noted that then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, played a crucial role in the development of the *Aparecida* document.



### Worthiness for Holy Communion

The Bible is clear about Eucharistic coherence as stated by St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians (11:27): “Whoever eats unworthily of the bread and drinks from the Lord’s cup makes himself guilty of profaning the body and the blood of the Lord.”

Since we are all sinners, who then is worthy to receive Holy Communion? The answer is in the declaration that we make during Mass when the priest holds up the consecrated host, the Body of Christ, for all to see and says, “Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.” We respond, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

Thus, when we have committed any grave sin, before going to Holy Communion we should truly repent and confess our sins to a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, who will give us absolution pardoning our sins.

In seeking Eucharistic coherence in an incoherent era, it is important to remember that the ultimate goal is conversion and readmission to communion, not exclusion and permanent expulsion from the community of faith. Even when a difficult decision must be made not to admit someone to Holy Communion until there has been repentance and reconciliation, such discipline does not contradict the love by which it is motivated.

### The Obligation of Lawmakers

Since being appointed Bishop of Springfield in Illinois in 2010, I have been asked many times about the question of Holy Communion for pro-abortion politicians in light of Canon 915 of the Catholic Church’s Code of Canon Law, which states that those “who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to Holy Communion.” In our 2004 Statement on Catholics in Political Life, the Bishops of the United States said, “Failing to protect the lives of innocent and defenseless members of the human race is to sin against justice. Those who formulate law therefore have an obligation in conscience to work toward correcting morally defective laws, lest they be guilty of cooperating in evil and in sinning against the common good.”

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine and the Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance (on which I serve as a member) are preparing a document on Eucharistic coherence at the direction of USCCB President José Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles. Unfortunately, the forces of evil are already conspiring to derail and block the drafting and publication of this much-needed document. Please pray for Our Lady, Mother of the Church, and St. Joseph, Terror of Demons, to intercede along with St. Michael the Archangel and all of our guardian angels to safeguard these efforts to protect the integrity of the Eucharist and promote respect for the innocent lives of unborn babies.

### Living a Moral Life

In his May 7, 2021, letter to the Catholic bishops of the United States, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, S.J., Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, wrote that “the Congregation advises that any statement of the Conference regarding Catholic political leaders would best be framed within the broad context of worthiness for the reception of Holy Communion on the part of all the faithful, rather than only one category of Catholics, reflecting their obligation to conform their lives to the entire Gospel of Jesus Christ as they prepare to receive the sacrament (Doctrinal Note art. 4). It would be misleading if such a statement were to give the impression that abortion and euthanasia alone constitute the only grave matters of Catholic moral and social teaching that demand the fullest level of accountability on the part of Catholics.”

In this regard, Cardinal Ladaria is absolutely correct. For example, those who engage in homosexual activity should refrain from receiving Holy Communion until they repent and reform their lives.

Heterosexual couples who cohabit and engage in sexual relations outside of marriage should refrain from receiving Holy Communion until they repent and reform their lives.

Married persons who have divorced and remarried without having received a declaration of nullity of their previous marriage should not present themselves for Holy Communion unless they pledge to live as brother and sister and can do so without giving scandal.

Those who willfully miss Mass on Sundays without having been lawfully dispensed or excused for a good reason, such as illness, should refrain from Holy Communion until they repent, confess their sins, and receive sacramental absolution.

It must be emphasized that the denial of Holy Communion in such circumstances is a medicinal remedy that

**“Question the secular consensus. Be a true follower of Christ, not just an admirer from afar. Let people see your faith, your hope, and your love, not only in your words, but also in your actions and your deeds.”**

is intended not to punish, but to foster a change of heart and encourage the sinner to repent and live a moral life that is coherent with the Catholic faith.

Living a life that is coherent with the Catholic faith may make you the object of hatred and bring you scorn and ridicule. But Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms, in the words of today’s Gospel passage from St. John, “If the world hates you, realize that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you” (John 15:18-19).

My dear graduates, as you give thanks for the blessings received over the past four years and look with hope to the bright future that God has planned for you, I encourage you to strive to live a coherent life in a world that is often incoherent. Let people see your faith, your hope, and your love, not only in your words, but also in your actions and your deeds. Be one in mind and holiness, for we are one through our communion in the sacred flesh of Christ, and through our sharing in the one Holy Spirit. Be one in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

*This text is adapted from the address that the Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop of Springfield in Illinois, gave at Thomas Aquinas College’s 2021 Commencement. For audio and the full text of the address, see [thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2021](http://thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2021).*



# “We Loved Something Good”

## The 2021 Senior Address by Dillon Raum ('21)

To begin, I would like to thank, on behalf of the graduating Class of 2021, everyone whose sacrifices have made this experience possible for us, above all the teaching faculty and parents. I would also like to thank Bishop Paprocki and the Board of Governors for joining us today. Now, I will address my classmates..

Friends, I would like to have a word with you, here, on this very spot. Dear friends, we shall be parting soon.

It seems natural that this address should offer some reflection on our recent education and the different ways it has profited us. Since to do this exhaustively would be an impossible task for any speech, I will attempt in this



*The Class of 2021 elected Dillon Raum as its Class Speaker ...*

address to weigh out just two or three of the most valuable benefits we have received from our time here, and see which of them is the greatest.

I am not hoping to say what might have been most valuable to any given one of us. I know that this place, like all sacred and sunny hollows, has produced many private experiences of inestimable value. Perhaps one among us was given in solitude an intimate moment of peace while following diligently the wanderings of a distant star; perhaps another, sitting alone before the Blessed Sacrament, was granted the solution to a problem which had frustrated his faith, just as Rosy Dawn stained the glass windows of our beautiful chapel; I myself remember a moment of absolute adoration, inspired by the brilliant green that consumed our Cross Hill, when the grass grew back after the fire. That experience might have occurred with any other shade of green, and yet, I think it had to have been that hill — our hill, somehow intimately involved in the life we live here.

These experiences are difficult enough to translate from one's own memory, and so, again, though each or some of us might remember some such moment dearly, and hold it as the most profitable gain of these last four years, this is not what I am aiming to describe. I am searching, in this address, to identify what might be the most valuable possession which each and every one of us holds in common as graduates of Thomas Aquinas College.

### Our Pursuit of Truth

The first candidate, of course, must be the knowledge we have gained here. The best of us came to this place because, although the Truth is everywhere, here also there are those who can teach us to see it. The rest of us at least hoped and expected to walk away in some way wiser than we came. Clearly, since we came here in pursuit of the truth, if we have now caught up with it, and possess it, this must be the greatest thing we have received.

This point is clear enough; I will not draw it out: We are not yet in possession of the truth. Some of you may feel indignant at my saying this, but more likely the greater part would agree — perhaps this is even something that we all already know, but is nonetheless better said, lest anyone should think we are ignorant of it.

On some level, this should not be surprising. Aristotle says in the *Ethics* that because young people lack experience they cannot be good students, not only of politics, but also of natural science and metaphysics. He says that

young people, concerning the first principles of these sciences, “have no conviction, but merely use the proper language.” I am inclined to think he is right. Perhaps there are a few wise old souls among us, but based on my own internal experience, I am inclined to say we are all still very young.

Again, in some way this is not surprising. It even seems as though the primary intention behind the Senior Year curriculum, introducing us to metaphysics and the summits of revealed theology, was to remind us, before we leave, how much still remains beyond our understanding. I think the same intention has been well served every day of our four years by the Socratic Discussion Method. It often seems (sometimes frustratingly), that no matter how well we discuss a given topic in class, the conversation is never complete.

Now, there is a temptation, in this reflection, to conclude therefore, that we have gained no certain knowledge beyond the Socratic truth: “I know that I know nothing.” I do not mean to espouse or encourage this position. Although we can only benefit from the humility of this ethos, to deny having gained any certain knowledge would be a gross injustice to our teachers and ourselves. If we, having drawn near to receive the nourishing truth, had gained nothing of the kind, we would not love our alma mater.

It is my firm belief that if, after these four years, there is nothing you can point to as your own, certain, intellectual possession, nothing but your own failings can be held responsible for this. That being said, it is not too humble to say that the knowledge we are taking with us is only a beginning, or the seed of a beginning, of Wisdom.

### Sacred Memory

This being the case, it seems to me entirely possible that we may have received something else more valuable than this knowledge. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says that “it is absurd to seek at the same time knowledge, and the way of attaining knowledge,” and that “neither is easy to obtain.” Let us assume, for argument's sake, that our teachers' primary intention was not for us to gain knowledge, but instead the way of attaining it. If they have been successful, and we now possess the intellectual dispositions, or habits, or whatever else may be necessary to gain the experience which will one day allow us to truly know, these, then, must be our most valuable possessions.

For most of us, this is the end of our life as professional students. Beyond this point, there will be no curriculum. We will need to choose our own intellectual endeavors and investigations. We ought to take heart and hope; our universal success in this program is a sign that we are equipped to carry on our intellectual pursuit and someday reap the fruits of our labor, in the Wisdom of old age.

But how reasonable is this hope? We have been living an almost consecrated life here, protected by these fair hills from the practical cares of adult life. In a very real way, we have been living something like a second childhood. In the first, we lived for no other reason beyond our own childhood; we ate and drank, and slept, and ran around as children, and because we were children — in doing so we have become men and women. Here, in our second childhood, we read and talked — and still ran around, and ate and drank — as human beings, and precisely as an exercise of our humanity. In doing so, we became, even if only for a time, a true community.



*... Christopher Macik ('21) to lead the Pledge of Allegiance ...*

What if, however, without the protection of this life, the greater part of us are unable to carry on the pursuit? What if we become satisfied with the pseudo-intellectualism of the world, and never again open, on a Monday, or a Thursday night, a foolish but charming leather-bound book? What if we should do something and not think about it? God forbid, but perhaps we shall do this many times, and never once think of what we have done. I am speaking about the worst case, about if we become bad.

But why should we become bad, friends, when what we have seen is so good? Perhaps our seeing has been more like touching, but how much more, therefore, should we be moved? What I mean to say is this: When something touches you, it is very difficult, from this sense alone, to say what that thing is. There can be no doubt, however, that something has touched you. Our meeting with the light of truth has been like this — something much greater has touched us, and though we, being so young, have trouble saying what it is, no one can say he has not felt it.

Even if one of us should want, at some later time, to deny ever having such a feeling, he will not be able to escape wondering, if he can remember how good were the times we had here and the friends we made: Why were they so good, if not because we loved something good?

Truly, there is nothing higher, or stronger, or sounder, or more useful than some beautiful and sacred memory. For most, this sacred memory takes the form of some imperfect but immaculate childhood memory from the parental home. Perhaps this is because, for most, this is their most recent recollection of a life lived for its own sake.

We at Thomas Aquinas College have been given another childhood, another opportunity — this time in the bloom of our humanity — to drink, and eat, and think, and live! To live and to learn that to think is to live! If only, by some grace, we can remember how here, we all learned to love and tried to love what we could only begin to learn, why should we become bad?

Nor should it cause us to stumble, if, holding dearly these sweet memories, we should find among them something bitter, should find that at times we were mistreated, or what is worse, that we mistreated another. Instead, let us thank God that we never did more than this, that we lived here, we truly lived, that we loved, and were loved, and so became, for a time, perhaps better than we actually are.

To conclude: If ever someone speaks the word “heaven” and, before your more educated part has a chance to correct itself, your mind flies back to this place, to the people, to that sometimes green, sometimes yellow hill with the little white cross, know that it can only be because here we experienced, even if only shallowly, and for a brief time, the life of the mind, which is eternal life.

If we can preserve within us this sacred memory of the life we lived here, surely we ourselves will be preserved from that life which is not worth living, the unexamined life. If even only once, God should use the memory of this place to remind us that the act of thought is life itself, and so save us from acting without thinking, from doing something we are afraid to think about, surely, this will be of infinite profit to us. Thank you.



*... and Kathryn Beckman ('21) to sing the National Anthem.*

Mr. Raum is from Anthem, Arizona. For audio of his address, see [thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2021](http://thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2021).



# “Question the Secular Consensus”

## Bishop Paprocki’s 2021 Commencement Address

Reverend Fathers, faculty, staff, students, graduates and their families and friends, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ: It is good to be with you today to deliver this Commencement Address for the graduating class of Thomas Aquinas College. We give thanks for the many blessings that the Lord has bestowed upon these students over the past four years.

In my homily at this morning’s Baccalaureate Mass, I spoke on the theme, “Striving to Live a Coherent Life in an Era of Incoherence.” I would like to build further on that topic now in my Commencement Address with more specificity as indicated in the subtitle: Question the Secular Consensus.

Back in the 1970s when I graduated from college, it was fashionable to hear the mantra, “Question Authority.” You may still see that slogan on the bumper sticker of some Baby Boomers today. There is nothing inherently wrong with questioning everything, including authority, since that is the way we learn, from the young child who keeps asking “why?” to the Ph.D. student in philosophy who searches for the reasons for all of life’s questions. After all, Greek philosophers like Socrates and Christian scholars like St. Thomas Aquinas based their pedagogical methodology on asking questions. But they were careful to make sure their answers comported with right reason, not just personal prerogatives, whims, or fancies.

In our age and our culture today, rather than simply question authority, I think it is more crucial that we question the consensus, because while many people disrespect and disregard institutional authority these days, many of these same people are beholden to the tyrannical authority of the so-called consensus of experts, even when that supposed consensus has not actually been scientifically established.

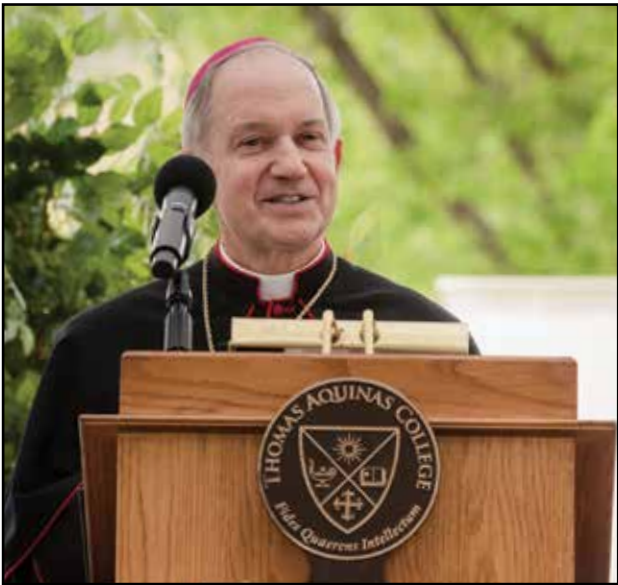
### “Scientific Consensus”

An example would be what used to be called “global warming,” but which is now often referred to simply as “climate change,” given that the world has actually stopped warming over the past couple of decades. A helpful book in this regard is, *Why Scientists Disagree About Global Warming: The Report on Scientific Consensus of the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC)*, published by the Heartland Institute in Arlington Heights, Illinois. Its authors are Craig D. Idso, Ph.D., a climatologist and chairman of the Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change; Robert M. Carter, Ph.D., a geologist and environmental scientist and author of *Climate Change: The Counter Consensus*; and S. Fred Singer, Ph.D., a physicist, chairman of the Science and Environmental Policy Project and founder of NIPCC.

Doctors Idso, Carter, and Singer note that politicians and “government agencies including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) claim ‘97 percent of scientists agree’ that climate change is both man-made and dangerous.” The authors refute the claim of “scientific consensus” about global warming. As they point out,

Science does not advance by consensus, a show of hands, or even persuasion. It advances by individual scientists proposing testable hypotheses, examining data to see if they disprove a hypothesis, and making those available to other unbiased researchers to see if any arrive at similar conclusions. Disagreement is the rule and consensus is the exception in most academic disciplines. This is because science is a process leading to ever-greater certainty, necessarily implying that what is accepted as true today will likely not be accepted as true tomorrow. Albert Einstein was absolutely right when he said, “no amount of experimentation can ever prove me right; a single experiment can prove me wrong.”

Thus, the authors conclude that the “most important



fact about climate science, often overlooked, is that scientists disagree about the environmental impacts of the combustion of fossil fuels on the global climate. There is no survey or study showing ‘consensus’ on the most important scientific issues, despite frequent claims by advocates to the contrary.”

### Question — and Reject

My point here is not to enter into the debate about climate change *per se*, but to offer an example of the importance of questioning the consensus. In terms of striving to live a coherent life in an era of incoherence, we Christians find ourselves today often at odds with the current secular consensus on many issues.

The secular consensus is that if you have an unwanted pregnancy, you can go ahead and terminate it — what Pope Francis calls the “throw-away culture” and what Pope St. John Paul II had called “the culture of death.” Our Christian faith says to you: Question and reject that consensus.

The secular consensus is that sex is for recreation, not procreation, so cohabiting is all right because marriage and children impinge on my freedom and pursuit of pleasure. Our Christian faith says to you: Question and reject that consensus.

The secular consensus says that there is no God, but even if you do believe in a Supreme Being, religious institutions are stifling to your spiritual expression and church hierarchies are obstacles to your freedom. Our Christian faith says to you: Question and reject that consensus, because Christ gave us the Church as His mystical body, founded on the rock of Peter and the Apostles, whose successors today are the Pope and the bishops.

“Whether you follow the secular consensus or adhere to the truth of our faith may very well depend on how you answer the question, ‘Are you a follower of Christ or just an admirer of Christ?’”

### Be a Follower of Christ

Whether you follow the secular consensus or adhere to the truth of our faith may very well depend on how you answer the question, “Are you a follower of Christ or just an admirer of Christ?” This distinction between followers of Christ and mere admirers of Our Savior is explained in a recently published book by Rod Dreher, entitled *Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents*. He tells the story of an artist who is painting images of Bible stories on the wall of the village church. The artist laments his own inability to paint a true representation of Christ. He says that his images comfort believers, but do not lead them to repentance and conversion. The painter says regretfully, “We create admirers. We do not create followers.”

Dreher traces this distinction between admirers of Jesus and followers of Christ to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Chris-

tian existential philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who wrote that

The admirer never makes any true sacrifices. He always plays it safe. Though in words, phrases, songs, he is inexhaustible about how highly he prizes Christ, he renounces nothing, will not reconstruct his life, and will not let his life express what it is he supposedly admires. Not so for the follower. No, no. The follower aspires with all his strength to be what he admires.

In other words, as Dreher puts it, “Admirers love being associated with Jesus, but when trouble comes, they either turn on Him or in some way try to put distance between themselves and the Lord. The admirer wants the comfort and advantage that comes with being a Christian, but when times change and Jesus becomes a scandal or worse, the admirer folds. ... The follower recognizes the cost of discipleship and is willing to pay it.”

In the First Letter of the Apostle John (1 John 2:15-17), we read:

Have no love for the world, nor the things that the world affords. If anyone loves the world, the Father’s love has no place in him, for nothing that the world affords comes from the Father. Carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show—all these are from the world. And the world with its seductions is passing away but whoever does God’s will endures forever.

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop and Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt from 412 to 444, wrote:

If we have given up our worldly way of life and submitted once for all to the laws of the Spirit, it must surely be obvious to everyone that by repudiating, in a sense, our own life, and taking on the supernatural likeness of the Holy Spirit, who is united to us, our nature is transformed so that we are no longer merely men, but also sons of God, spiritual men, by reason of the share we have received in the divine nature. We are all one, therefore, in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are one in mind and holiness, we are one through our communion in the sacred flesh of Christ, and through our sharing in the one Holy Spirit.

### Let People See Your Faith

My dear graduates, as you give thanks for the blessings received over the past four years and look with hope to the bright future that God has planned for you, I encourage you to strive to live a coherent life in a world that is often incoherent. I encourage you to be courageous defenders of the truth that has been generously shared with you by the faculty of this great college. I encourage you to confidently work to promote truth and coherence in the Church and the world, with all the knowledge, wisdom, and skills you have cultivated during your time here. I encourage you to listen with great trust and respond with generosity to the vocation to which the Lord is calling you.

Question the secular consensus. Be a true follower of Christ, not just an admirer from afar. Let people see your faith, your hope, and your love, not only in your words, but also in your actions and your deeds. Be one in mind and holiness, for we are one through our communion in the sacred flesh of Christ, and through our sharing in the one Holy Spirit. Be one in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

*The Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop of Springfield in Illinois and Adjunct Professor of Law at Notre Dame Law School, served as Thomas Aquinas College’s Commencement Speaker on May 15, 2021.*



# *The Class of 2021*

## and Senior Thesis Titles



“And God Bring All of Us to Kingdom Come”: An Argument for the Redemptive Quality of Sexual Humor

**CELINA MARIE  
ALARCON**  
Lake Forest, California



In Fear and Trembling:  
A Refutation of Calvin’s View  
That the Predestined Know That  
They Are the Elect

**ANNA MARIE ASPER**  
Front Royal, Virginia



On the Proper and Common  
Sensibles

**EVELYN ROSE AUGROS**  
Santa Paula, California



To Infinity and Beyond:  
An Exploration of the Infinite

**GARIN JOSEPH  
BALLARD**  
San Jose, California



A Citizen by Nature: Against  
Hobbes’ Notion of Man’s Essence

**ANDRES BARRANTES  
HERNANDEZ**  
Alajuela, Costa Rica



“Be in the World but Not of  
the World”: A Christian’s  
Guide to His Role in the Universe

**BRIGID ROSE BAUGH**  
Merriotte Park, Illinois



On Man’s Duty to Obey  
Human Laws

**ADAM HENRY  
BEBERWYCK**  
Halfmoon, New York



“Before I Formed You”:  
A Defense of the Rational  
Ensoulment of the Unborn from  
Conception

**KATHRYN ELINOR  
THÉRÈSE BECKMAN**  
Canton, Georgia



Wisdom Calls Her Handmaidens  
to the Tower: Whether Man’s  
Certainty in God’s Existence  
Decreases Upon Knowing It by  
Reason If Faith Is a More Certain  
Mode of Knowing

**CECILIA MARIE BOCKRATH**  
Front Royal, Virginia



Say What You Mean and Mean  
What You Say: The Dangers of  
Imprecise Language

**JULIA MICHELE  
BURAGINO**  
Post Falls, Idaho



Is Artificial Intelligence Possible?  
The Beginning of a Thomistic  
Path to the Answer

**JOHN HYNAN BURNHAM**  
Irvine, California



Man vs. Reality:  
The Battle for Truth

**PATRICK EDWARD  
CAUGHRON**  
Kansas City, Missouri



On the Intrinsic Worth of  
Every Human Being

**SARA BRIDGET  
CAUGHRON**  
Kansas City, Missouri



The Order of the Beautiful As  
Directive to the Life of Virtue

**RANDLE FRANCIS  
COKER**  
Beaumont, Texas



“At Work in Human Hearts”:  
A Comparison of the  
Accounts of Grace of  
St. Augustine and St. Anselm

**REGINA ANNE COLLINS**  
Santa Paula, California



*A Sola Scriptura* Argument  
for the Infallible Authority  
of Bishops

**BENJAMIN JONAS  
COOKE**  
Glendale, California



Who Is My Neighbor?  
An Enquiry Concerning  
the Order of Charity

**STEPHEN JOSEPH CYR**  
Grand Prairie, Texas



A Defense of C.S. Lewis’ Claim  
That Courage Is the Form of Every  
Virtue at the Testing Point

**ISAAC JOSEPH DEBATES**  
Chandler, Arizona



Music: Communicative,  
Though Not a Language

**CLAIRE MARIE  
DEMPSEY**  
Newbury Park, California



Eating As a Participation  
in the Divine

**MARGARET KERWIN  
DILLON**  
Lunenburg, Massachusetts



“Weeping May Endure for a Night,  
but Joy Comes in the Morning”:  
A Defense of the Emotions’  
Role in Our Perfection

**HANNAH ROSE ESHELMAN**  
Alexandria, Virginia





“Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”:  
An Argument for the Justice of the American War of 1776

**THERESE CELINE  
MARY EVICH**  
Cedar, Michigan



An Exploration of the Spiritual Complementarity of the Sexes in the Light of Sacramental Marriage

**AURORA ANNAKAYE  
FARRELL**  
Eureka, California



“Our Hearts Are Restless Until They Rest in You, Oh Lord”:  
A Supernatural Solution to the Problem of Happiness

**RACHAEL MARIE  
FLANDERS**  
Muscatine, Iowa



“I Can Will What Is Right, but I Cannot Do It”: Limitations of Human Freedom and the Need for Grace

**JUSTIN GREGORY FOX**  
Milford, Michigan



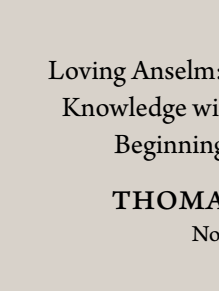
“His Delight Is with the Sons of Men”: A Defense of the Suitability of Human Nature for the Incarnation

**SARAH CATHERINE  
FRANCIS**  
Suffolk, Virginia



Put on the Humor of God: Humor and Its Aim towards Humility

**MADISON ROSE FREDETTE**  
Vista, California



Loving Anselm: On the Value of a Psychological Knowledge with Respect to Making a Fruitful Beginning to the Pursuit of Wisdom

**THOMAS GABRIEL FROULA**  
Northfield, Massachusetts



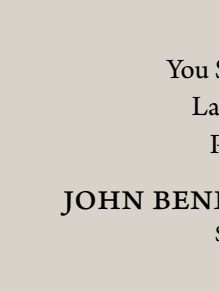
There Was Nothing Lacking: An Exploration of the Marriage between Mary and Joseph

**LESLIE ROSAMARIA  
GALVAN**  
Fillmore, California



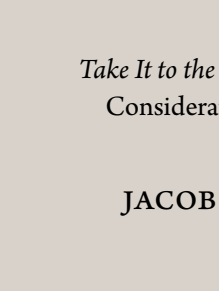
These Pigs Were Made for Bacon: An Exploration of Man’s Relation to Nature in Light of Bacon’s *Novum Organum*

**MARYA ANGELIQUE  
GARNEAU**  
Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada



You Should Have Failed Me Last Year: A Defense of Pre-Emptive Strikes

**JOHN BENEDICT GARTONZAVESKY**  
Santa Clara, California



*Take It to the Limit, One More Time*: On the Consideration of the Limit Operation as a Function

**JACOB MICHAEL GASPERI**  
Oxnard, California



Is Virtue Conventional? Habituation and Moral Knowledge in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*

**MARIA CLARE GOYETTE**  
Santa Paula, California



Virtue from Suffering: The Preparation for Odysseus’ Successful Homecoming

**WILLIAM MARTIN  
GOYETTE**  
Sterling, Virginia



Don’t Worry, Be Happy: Whether the Christian Should Be Motivated by a Duty or Happiness?

**BRIGIT IRENE GRIMM**  
Alhambra, California



Making Sense of Perceptions

**MICHAEL FRANCIS  
GRUMBINE**  
Pasadena, California



One Who Is in the Army of a King Should Wear [His] Emblem: The Emblem of Christ Is the Emblem of Charity

**JOSEPH TIMOTHY  
GUINEE**  
North Andover, Massachusetts



Don’t Hate the Player, Hate the Game: An Exploration of the Morality of the Practice of Law

**EMILY CLARE HALSELL**  
Orcutt, California



The Mystic Chords of Memory: Guilt and Glory for All and before All

**MIKAELA ANN HEAL**  
Tucson, Arizona



“Put Out Your Hand, and Place It in My Side; Do Not Be Faithless, but Believing”: We Need Sensation for Faith

**SHELBY MARIA HEATON**  
Kalispell, Montana



“Those Who Sow in Tears Shall Reap Rejoicing”: Comedy as the Truest Teacher of Love

**EMILY MARGARET MAE  
HURTADO**  
Perris, California



Aristotle’s Definition and Newton’s Inertia: Will the Controversy Continue Forever?

**ERICA PEARL JOHNSON**  
Moscow, Idaho



Let’s Fit That Camel through the Eye of a Needle: A Defense of the Use of Wealth as a Catholic

**BENJAMIN OLGUIN  
KASAK**  
Orangevale, California



Change Is Perfection: A Defense of Aristotle’s Account of Motion according to the *Physics*

**CECILIA MARIE LEON**  
Santa Paula, California



The Middle Path: An Examination of What It Means to Be “In the World but Not of the World”

**CASEY REBECCA  
LOCKHART**  
Houston, Texas





Friendship and the Theosis of Man: Whether Man's Ultimate Happiness Depends on Friendship with God

**CHRISTOPHER  
ATHANASIUS MACIK**  
Brecksville, Ohio



Exploring the Animal Kingdom for Glimpses of Rationality: An Ethological Account of How Human Learning Can Be Said to Differ from the Learning of Other Animals by Degree

**ANTHONY ROBERT JOHN  
MARRAMA**  
Phoenix, Arizona



Everything Works for Good for Those Who Love God

**ELIZABETH THERESE  
DAMIEN MATTHEWS**  
Joseph, Oregon



"The Heat without the Light": Whether Poetry Should Be Considered a Liberal Art

**THOMAS MICHAEL MAY**  
Vine Grove, Kentucky



Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me: Suffering as an Invitation to Become Like God

**FELICITY MARIA  
THÉRÈSE GIANNA  
MCCANN**  
Chesapeake, Virginia



Descartes' *Geometry*, or Is It? A Consideration of the Subject and Method of *La Geometrie*

**AMELIA KATE MCHATTON**  
Anthem, Arizona



"The Musical Times": Can Modern Music Be Judged by Ancient Standards?

**TIMOTHY ISAAC  
MCNEIL**  
Reno, Nevada



An Imitation Not of Persons but of Action and Life: The Hidden Genre of Aristophanes' *The Clouds*

**DOMINIC JAMES  
BENEDICT MORLINO**  
Danbury, Connecticut



The Relationship between Common Goods and Private Goods

**CLARE THERESA O'REILLY**  
Santa Paula, California



"I Arise Today through God's Word to Speak for Me": The Influence of Speech on Spiritual Recollection

**ELANOR MARIE  
PIQUETTE**  
Camarillo, California



*On the Relation between the Infused Virtues and the Acquired Virtues*

**JOSEPH ANDREW  
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Anthem, Arizona



And Such an Origin of Action Is a Man: An Examination of Aristotle's Psycho-Ethical Principle That "One Element in the Soul Is Irrational, and One Has a Rational Principle," and Its Application to the Notion of Incontinence

**DILLON WILLIAM RAUM**  
Anthem, Arizona



Artificial Morality: Can Artificial Intelligence Make Moral Decisions?

**AYLA KATRYN RICE  
NULTY**  
Anthem, Arizona



Aristotle on the Good a Citizen Seeks

**JOSEPH PATRICK  
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Kansas City, Missouri



"Make Disciples of All Nations": A Consideration of God's Will for Diverse Cultures in the Church

**DANIEL PAUL SABA**  
Portage, Michigan



A Defense of the Existence of Natural Law against Hobbes' Claim of a Natural State of War

**NICHOLAS JON  
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Limits and Loci: On Motion's Role in the Definition of Curved Lines

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Dr. Schoenberg, or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Atonal Music: A Defense of Atonal Music

**JACOB FRANZ SCHERER**  
Oxnard, California



Subordination in the Sacrament of Matrimony as the Fulfillment of Woman's Natural Desires

**TAHLIA JUSTINE  
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"Felix Culpa": God and His Omni-benevolence against the Problem of Evil

**MICHAEL JAMES  
SCRIBER**  
Battle Creek, Michigan



"What Shall Cordelia Speak? Love, and Be Silent": A Consideration on Seeking to Love and Seeking to Be Loved

**ELIZABETH CLAIRE SIMIA**  
Green Bay, Wisconsin



"Clothes Make the Man": Adornment As Proper to Man's Rational Nature

**CIARA MAUREEN  
SMILLIE**  
Lancaster, Massachusetts



The Church's Governance of the Faithful: Perfecting the Virtues of Obedience and Equity

**VINCENT LOBO SOLIS**  
Chula Vista, California



"As the Geometer Struggles All He Can to Measure Out the Circle... So Did I Stare": A Defense of Dante's Use of the Circle to Depict God in the Beatific Vision

**HANNAH ELIZABETH  
STOUTZ**  
Steubenville, Ohio





“God’s Temple is Holy, and that Temple You Are”: On the Role of the Body in the Quest for Complete Happiness

**GEORGE EDWARD STYPA, III**  
Tucson, Arizona



“A Sword Shall Pierce Your Heart”: An Exposition of the Feminine Love Shown in Our Lady’s Suffering

**MARY ELIZABETH TOMBELLI**  
Hillsdale, Michigan



Rhetoric: Tool of the Statesman

**DAVID ANDREW URBANCIC**  
Chardon, Ohio



Whether Lady Philosophy, Virgil, or Beatrice Was the Better Teacher according to Saint Thomas Aquinas

**CELTA VINCENT**  
Sacramento, California



I Can Do All Things in Him Who Strengthens Me: An Exploration of the Active Life of a Christian

**CECILIA ROSE WALSH**  
Yerington, Nevada



Why Men Come Together: The Supremacy of the Aristotelian Notion of the Common Good over Adam Smith’s Notion of the Same, As Shown by Their Economic Philosophies

**NICHOLAS MICHAEL WALSH**  
Banks, Oregon



Whether Friendship Is Essential to the Achievement of Happiness in the Political Life

**TRAVIS KELLEY WELCH**  
Alpharetta, Georgia



An Analysis of Aristotle’s and Kant’s Moral Theories and Critique

**ANDREW ROMAN YOUNGBLOOD**  
Spring, Texas



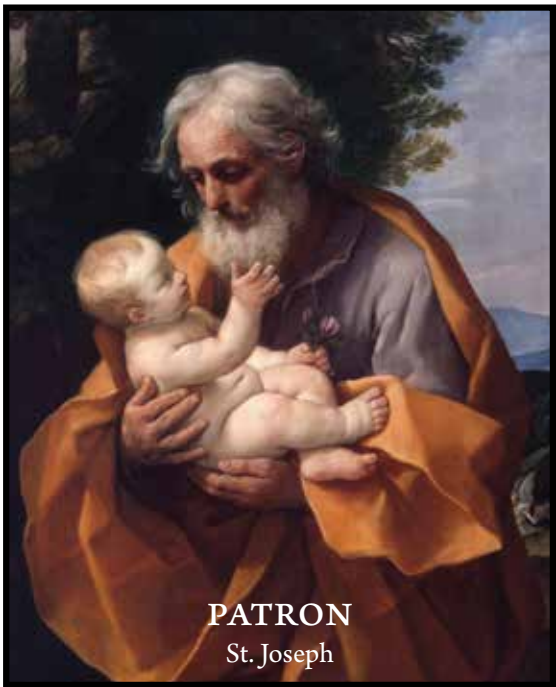
Waugh’s Paradoxical Beauty: An Examination of Beauty As Seen in the Conversion of Charles Ryder

**RENATA ALMA ZEPEDA**  
Alhambra, California



“Oh Say Can You See”: A Defense of the Revolutionary War As Justified in the *Declaration of Independence*

**GRACE ELIZABETH ZWEMKE**  
Tempe, Arizona



**PATRON**  
St. Joseph

**QUOTATION**

“Bad times, hard times —  
this is what people keep saying,  
but let us live well and times  
shall be good. We are the times.  
Such as we are, such are the times.”  
– St. Augustine of Hippo





# Priest, Lawyer, Bishop & Athlete

## An Interview with the Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki

*Note: The Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop of Springfield in Illinois, was Thomas Aquinas College's 2021 Commencement Speaker.*

**What prompted you, as a newly ordained priest some 40 years ago, to pursue a law degree?**

I went to law school as a parish priest, right after my ordination. I got my bishop's approval, but it was totally my idea. It raised questions among some! People assumed that if I was going to law school, I had to be on my way out of the priesthood, even though I was just ordained. And I said, "No, no! I'm not leaving the priesthood, I'm getting a law degree as a tool for ministry." And that's what I wanted to do; I wanted to help the poor. I co-founded a legal clinic, and I was doing immigration law with immigrants.

Cardinal Bernardin was the archbishop at the time, and he let me do that, but after a while he asked me if I would help at the chancery office. He thought the law degree would be helpful, and of course I said yes. Then, after a couple of years, he said, "Well, you're doing more canon law than civil law." So that's when he sent me to Rome for my canon law degree. And that put me on an entirely different track, so I came back and became chancellor of the archdiocese. Around that time I started teaching at Loyola Law School, and I did that for a number of years. I then began teaching at Notre Dame Law School in 2016.

**You teach a class on bioethics. What do you make of the bioethical issues surrounding Covid-19?**

When they developed the vaccine, the question was: Is it morally acceptable to take the vaccine? I wrote about that and basically came down to the conclusion that it is morally acceptable; the Vatican has said this, as has the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Catholic Bioethics Center. They are relying upon established principles of Catholic moral theology — the difference between formal cooperation and material cooperation and between proximate and remote participation. In the case of these stem-cell lines that were developed years ago, babies are not being aborted now in order to get these stem cells, so it's remote enough to remove a person from moral culpability.

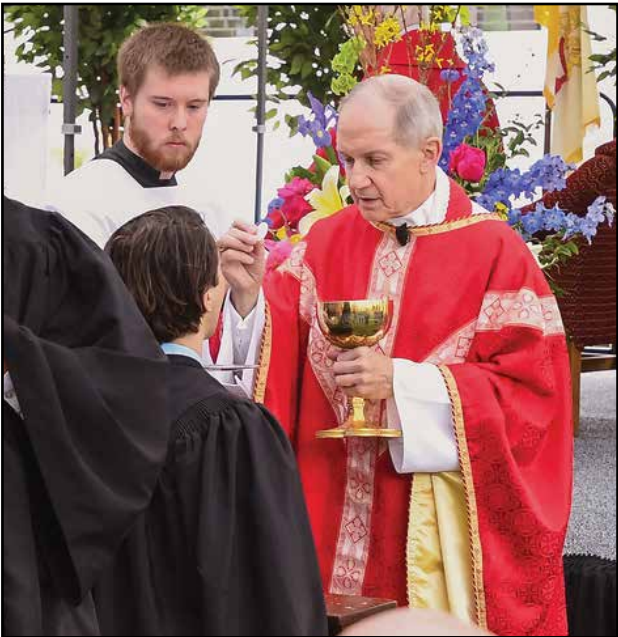
**What about vaccine mandates?**

I coauthored a piece about this for the student newspaper at Notre Dame when the school adopted a vaccine mandate last year. I questioned that, because last year the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said that it is morally acceptable to take the vaccine, but it should be voluntary. And Notre Dame, without backing down, has since pledged to be very generous with giving exemptions for anybody who has an objection to getting the vaccine.

**We often hear that, the law aside, there is a moral obligation to get vaccinated. Do you agree?**

Well, I think there's something to be said for the argument, yes. Both in moral theology and in canon law, we talk about the common good. Canon law says that, at times, your exercise of rights should give way to the common good. So that should be taken into account. But on this issue there are still a lot of question marks. I could see people, of whatever age, saying, "I don't want to take this vaccine until it's been studied more and I can be assured that there aren't going to be some lasting side effects." That question is even more pointed when you are dealing with children.

Then there's also the question of giving witness. Some people say, "Even though I know I can morally get the vaccine, I just want to give a witness to these children



who have been aborted and whose stem cells are being used. I want to give a witness against abortion." There's something to be said for that as well. It's kind of going over and above the call of duty, and in this regard I would use the example of St. Gianna Molla.

But I would say, in general, I lean toward people getting vaccinated. I have been vaccinated myself. I just think that, because of my contact with the public and my position, it was the right thing to do. At the same time, we have to respect individual consciences. If somebody sincerely believes that they just don't want to take this vaccine because they have some objections of conscience, we should not make them feel guilty about that. That's a legitimate option.

**This issue, like so many others, has been complicated by the polarization of our age. How do we overcome that polarization?**

Well, this might sound a little ironic, but I think we have to confront the divisions and not paper over them. Sometimes we gloss over differences because we don't want to appear to be divided. But, sometimes, holding our tongue when we see something that is not right actually allows divisions to perpetuate.

There are some matters that are vexing us in the Church today, such as the question of contraception. That obviously is a great challenge because, from what the pollsters tell us, the majority of Catholics are not abiding by that teaching. So it's uncomfortable to talk about. If I bring it up in a homily, some people may just stand up and walk out. But it's a false sense of unity to say, "I don't want to introduce division into the congregation, so I just won't talk about these controversial issues." The division is already there, and if I don't talk about it, it's just going to be submerged.

**Our society's ability to reason things out collectively seems to have waned. Have we reached a post-reason moment, an irrational time?**

We live in an era where a lot is driven by emotion and sentimentality. Sometimes I ask my *confirmandi*, "What does it mean to be confirmed?" They say, "Well, when I'm confirmed I'll be nice to people." And there's nothing wrong with being nice, but Jesus did a lot more than be nice to people. He was kind; there's a difference between being kind and being nice. Being nice has that sense of just kind of glossing over differences, but kindness sometimes is even saying something, not in a harsh way, but maybe in a challenging way, to someone, "This may be a deficiency that needs to be addressed."

**As a hockey goalie who has run 24 marathons and written books about athletics, can you speak about the relationship between physical fitness and the spiritual life?**

There's a strong relationship on a number of levels, starting with the connection between body and soul. The ancient Greeks separated the two, believing that the body was almost like a shell that you used during your lifetime and then, when you died, you discarded it and lived forever without it. But Christians, coming from the Jewish tradition, have a very different sense of the connection between body and soul, and so our Christian belief is in the resurrection of the body.

I like to remind people of that. When I do confirmations and we have the renewal of baptismal promises, I say, "'The resurrection of the body' — that's not talking about Jesus. That's earlier in the Creed, or the baptismal promises, where we say, 'Jesus suffered, died, and was buried, rose from the dead.' That's when we talk about Jesus' resurrection. At the end of the Creed, we say, 'I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.' We're talking about *our* bodies. Our bodies will be raised up when Jesus comes again at the Second Coming."

So that's kind of a starting point, but there are many other connections, such as the need to review your progress and rest, developing stores of fortitude and endurance, and the reward that waits at the end of a race, or the end of this life.

**Like other bishops, you have made it a priority to reverse the longstanding decline in Mass attendance. How do we do that?**

I commissioned a study from Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois, of people who were not going to church, about why they were not coming. And then I commissioned a survey of people who are coming to church. Why are they coming? I think it's important to know that, too.

With those not coming, there were some of the predictable answers of people who disagree with Church teaching on sexual ethics, or abortion, or things like that. But the one area where I thought there was commonality between most surveys was about sense of community. Some said they stopped going to church because they didn't feel a sense of community. They would go there, and nobody would talk to them. On the other hand, for people who did come every week, the Eucharist was, of course, the No. 1 reason, but they also talked about community and the sense that, by coming to church, they felt part of a community. So trying to establish a firm sense of community is key.

In my diocese we have additionally begun the process of restoring the order of the sacraments of initiation — restored in the sense that the traditional order is Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, but that got changed about 100 years ago when Pope Pius X called for a younger age for Communion. He wanted children to receive Communion at the age of reason. Unfortunately, he didn't say anything about Confirmation, so they brought down the age of Communion, but they left Confirmation at a later age, which inverts the order.

So we're going back to the restored order by bringing down the age of Confirmation. I am now confirming and giving First Eucharist at the same Mass for third graders. I think that's important for a number of reasons. Our children need the sacramental graces and the gifts of the Holy Spirit at a younger age. They are being bombarded with all kinds of temptations; they need the strength of the Holy Spirit to deal with that. The other aspect is that, by delaying Confirmation until eighth grade or even high school, in many cases Confirmation is viewed as graduation. So now, in my diocese, sacramental prep is done by third grade. After that, our focus will be "How do you become a disciple of Jesus?" The hope is that, by trying to instill the sense of discipleship in children at a young age, it will carry with them for the rest of their lives.



# Senior Reflections

## New Eyes with which to See the World

*Note: The following essay is adapted from remarks made to the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its meeting on May 14, 2021.*

By Maria Goyette ('21)

First of all, I would like to thank you all for all the work you do to make Thomas Aquinas College possible. Being here for four years has been such a blessing for me.

My parents and siblings went to the College, and my dad works here. So I have always known about it and heard a lot about TAC growing up, but I wasn't sure it was for me until I attended the High School Summer Program. Immediately the classes seemed more engaging and enjoyable than any of my high school classes had ever been. I loved the discussions and the readings, though at the time I don't think I fully realized what made classes at TAC different, better, than what I had experienced before.

In my time here I realized that at least one thing that makes classes more interesting is that they all begin with a real and deep question, for example, what is force? This is something I had never considered in high school physics. We knew it was mass times acceleration, but we had no idea what that meant.

Or another question is: How do we come to know things? It is only through pursuing this question here that we began to see the importance of our sense experience and our knowing. One of the greatest gifts TAC has given me is the ability to even have questions and to see their



weight and difficulty. I think this is the beginning of truly being able to think and to grapple with reality and to have ideas.

Thinking carefully about real and deep questions with the guidance of the tutors also helped us begin to find real answers. This education has not only affected my thinking but also my friendships and my faith. I have had closer friends here than I had ever had before, and I think that's in large part because here we are all together figuring out how to have good and interesting conversations. Together we are realizing the value of being genuinely open with each other and, through doing this, we come to know each other well.

The theology classes here have also deepened my faith. I remember Freshman Year hearing a talk by chaplain Rev. Robert Marczewski, and he was talking about how humility is the beginning of all the virtues — and I remember thinking, "oh shoot!" That summer I remember praying and just asking, what is humility?

Sophomore Theology felt like the answer to that question and the answer to that prayer. The writings of St. Augustine helped me see that part of humility is realizing that everything — everything we have, including our prayers and our good actions — are gifts from God. Learning this changed the way I see my faith and the way that I pray. It has helped me begin to pursue true humility.

While I have been here I have also realized a particular interest in studying human nature and government. Reading Aristotle's *Ethics* impressed upon me the complexity of human life and the difficulty in determining

"At the College I have had many good teachers who have changed my way of thinking, and by doing so have changed my life. I really hope to do the same one day for others."

what happiness consists of. Reading de Tocqueville gave me questions about the dangers of democracy and the meaning of true freedom. So, I have enrolled in Baylor's political philosophy doctoral program for the fall. I am excited to delve deeper into the questions that were raised for me here.

After I graduate I hope to teach at the college level. At the College I have had many good teachers who have changed my way of thinking, and by doing so have changed my life. I really hope to do the same one day for others. I also think that the political climate right now is particularly ripe with passions and lies. Through teaching, I hope to help students think more carefully about American politics and human life in general. I think that our country would be stronger if more citizens had a better understanding of our founding principles. In graduate school I hope to deepen my own understanding of our founding and to then share it with students.

Once again, thank you all for everything you do. Being here has really changed me; it has given me new eyes with which to see the world. I hope and pray that I can use what TAC has given me for the glory of God and the good of our country. Thank you.

Miss Goyette is from Santa Paula, California.

## Confessions of a Know-it-All

*Note: The following essay is adapted from remarks made to the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its meeting on May 14, 2021.*

By Patrick Caughron ('21)

I am the oldest of 14 children, born and raised in the Midwest as a Catholic country boy. My parents and all my aunts and uncles graduated from Thomas Aquinas College, so I always took for granted that I would finish my homeschooling, start TAC, and that would be the way that life would go. Reflecting on my journey, I realize that this complacency led me to have an understanding of myself and of the curriculum which was incomplete and immature.

Growing up, I fancied myself a philosopher, and I greatly enjoyed reading. As a result, I came to TAC with a high opinion of myself and a determination to show other people how great I was. I once commented in Natural Science that I enjoyed catching other people in error. One time after Euclid class, I told a girl whom I liked — after she had just perfectly demonstrated a Euclidean proposition — how she could have improved it, how she stumbled in the presentation, and other such things. For some reason she didn't enjoy my comments. But the story has a happy ending, don't worry: We're getting married this summer!

Not everything ended up so well, though. To put it bluntly, I was a know-it-all, and a pretty obnoxious one. But fortunately Freshman Year quickly knocked that out of me.

The beating really began with the first philosophy class, when we read Plato's *Meno* and talked about



Socrates' dialogue about virtue. I exited that discussion shaking, realizing a question that I had considered simple was in fact more complicated than I had ever imagined. I remembered instances when I argued with my section, convinced that I was the one who was right — when in fact I was the one who was in error.

I was humbled, and slowly began to have a new disposition, a disposition of true humility. This opened me up to real learning. I no longer fought to be always right. I began to look more deeply into the Great Books, diving below the surface-level understanding that had always satisfied me before. I allowed the truth to speak to me rather than attempting to make the truth conform with my own opinions. I became truly a student where I had before only been scratching at wisdom.

This change of disposition not only opened me to learning, it also allowed me to truly grow as an individual. I developed friendships that before had been hard to form. I no longer saw people as rivals but as others pursuing the same goals as me, the intellectual life and the virtuous life. The Discussion Method taught me to work with others, to communicate my thoughts clearly and to think critically, wrestling with the Great Books rather than being spoon-fed facts. Crafting my own arguments and thoughts — and, in particular, writing a Senior Thesis — gave me a confidence that I had never possessed before. I had done work well, I had created something of my own, and it had been judged favorably by those for whom I have the utmost respect.

My growth was not limited to academics, however. Once I had been made humble, God was able to enter my life. It became easier to surrender to His will. Having easy access to the sacraments was an incredible blessing, and

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more and more I came to appreciate my faith and, especially, the Eucharist. As my understanding of the Faith deepened, so did my prayer. I can truly say, never before have I been so close to Christ.

Thomas Aquinas College has prepared me well, but preparation is only the beginning. I fully intend to take the blessings of my college experience and apply them to the two huge endeavors which I will undertake next: marriage and medical school.

One of modern science's most ignored questions is: "Now that we are able to do this thing, should we do this thing?" Before, I doubted my own ability to satisfactorily answer this question; however, now I am confident — when the time comes — I will be able to answer that question and make the right decision.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to this school. I can truly say that coming here has been the best decision of my life, and it would not be possible if it were not for you. Thank you.

Mr. Caughron is from Kansas City, Missouri.



# Actions and Deeds

## What's Next for the Class of 2021

“Let people see your faith, your hope, and your love,” the Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop of Springfield in Illinois, told members of the Class of 2021 in his homily at their Baccalaureate Mass. “Not only in your words, but also in your actions and your deeds.”

Whether choosing a career in education or entertainment, whether answering the call to marriage or to the priesthood, these new alumni are taking His Excellency's words to heart. In a wide range of vocations, fields, and disciplines, they are determined to show their faith, hope, and love — not only in words, but in actions and in deeds.



### Medicine

“I like helping people,” observes **Stephen Cyr**. “I want to do that.” Mr. Cyr is now working at a mental-health clinic in Frisco, Texas, to determine whether he would like to undertake graduate studies in psychology. ... Three members of the Class of 2021 are taking prerequisite classes for future medical studies: **Sara Caughron** in preparation for nursing school, **Emily Hurtado** either for nursing or to become an ultrasound technician, and **Patrick Caughron**, with plans to attend medical school. ... **Anthony Marrama** is pursuing a master's of public health degree in biostatistics at the University of Arizona.



### Education

“Teaching is a good way to both keep up the intellectual life and pass it on to the next generation,” says **Thomas May**, who is teaching in New York City with Seton Teaching Fellows. ... **Elizabeth Matthews** is working as a private tutor in Massachusetts. ... **Anna Asper** is teaching in her hometown of Front Royal, Virginia, and **Mary Tombelli** at St. Joseph Academy in San Marcos, California. ... **Julia Buragino** is teaching English in South Korea. ... **Cecilia Bockrath** has accepted a position as the bookstore manager, and **Rachael Flanders** as a teacher, at Mother of Divine Grace School, the widely heralded distance-learning program founded by alumna Laura Berquist ('75).

### Marriage

“We met, technically, at the High School Summer Program,” says **Maggie (Dillon) Goyette** of her husband, **Liam**, whom she wed on September 18, 2021. “Then we were in section together Freshman Year, seminar section Sophomore Year, and regular section again Junior Year” — when they first began dating. “Basically,” she laughs, “I couldn't escape him.”

Inescapability appears to be a common theme among Class of 2021 couples, who — thanks to Covid restrictions — were unable to leave campus much of Senior



Year, and who credit increased time together with accelerating their romances. Since graduation, six couples have already wed, including **Celta (Vincent) and Adam Beberwyck**, **Annie (Collins) and Patrick Caughron**, **Mikaela (Heal) and Dillon Raum**, **Tahlia (Schrock) and Randle Coker**, and **Ciara (Smillie) and Phil Meckley ('19)** — and at least four other weddings are in the works!

### Priesthood

Five years ago, when he was 17 years old, **Michael Scriber** served at the Ordination Mass of two Thomas Aquinas College graduates, Rev. Jeffrey Hanley ('13) and Rev. Maximilian Nightingale ('13), in his home diocese of Kalamazoo, Michigan. He had met the then-seminarians at the introduction of another priest, and they, in turn, told him about Thomas Aquinas College. “I knew little to nothing about the College, and I came here basically on their suggestion,” he says. “I never regretted it.”



Five years later, Mr. Scriber is teaching high school and living for a year in Kalamazoo's discernment house while he prayerfully considers whether he, too, has a vocation to the priesthood. ... **Joseph Poznecki** is teaching at a high school in Arizona in order to pay off his student loans, after which he hopes to enter the Dominican Order's Eastern Province.

### Business

During her Freshman Year, **Mikaela Raum** began an Etsy embroidery business called Tangle and Poke, specializing in botanical and sacred art. “It really took off over Covid,” she reflects. Now that she has graduated, she aims to expand the business, which is developing its own website and has begun advertising on Catholic podcasts. ... Working on grounds crew for her student-scholarship job has given **Tahlia Coker** an expertise in floristry, which she aims to bring to the marketplace by starting a business that grows flowers and sells them to local retailers.



### Technology

**Randle Coker** is working as an infrastructure technician with GeoLinks, a telecommunications provider in Camarillo, California. ... **Garin Ballard** is a CNC machinist at Caliber Plastic Solutions, Inc., which makes custom plastic parts and does fabrication, primarily for the semi-conductor industry in Silicon Valley. ... **Michael Grumbine** has been taking online classes in various computer languages with the goal of getting into software development. “Programming is a creative thing,

where you create an order that has complicated, detailed parts, but it is unified,” he says. “I find that a beautiful reflection of what God does and a gift He's given to us.”

### Law

“Going to TAC really prepares you to read texts and think about them — see whether they're true or false, see where their weaknesses and strengths lie — and it also prepares you to be a great listener,” notes **David Urbancic**. “So after going to TAC and learning how to think critically and convince people, I felt like law was a very clear choice for me.” Mr. Urbancic enrolled this fall in the Moritz College of Law at Ohio State University. ... **Mia McHatton** is also considering a career in law, which she is now exploring as an executive assistant at the Alvarez Firm, founded by Justin Alvarez ('97).



### Graduate School

“I guess I've always liked philosophy and wondered how things worked and why they were,” says **Erica Johnson**. “Coming to TAC I got to think about it much more deeply and realized how much more there is to these questions. So I want to continue asking fundamental questions and understand reality more deeply.” In that pursuit, Miss Johnson has enrolled in the Ph.D. program at the University of Dallas. ... This summer **Jon Scheaffer** worked on agricultural economics through an internship with AgIS Capital while also studying data analytics at the University of California, Davis. Next he intends to pursue a master's degree in economics. ... **Maria Goyette** is working toward a doctorate in political science at Baylor University.

### Entertainment

After graduation, **Dominic Morlino** and **Jacob Scherer** headed off to Atlanta, Georgia — where Mr. Scherer's father works for the TV series *Stranger Things* — with plans to break into the industry. “We're going to be making short films, which is what we've been doing here at TAC for the last couple of years; we were some of the guys who made all the entertainment for the dances,” Mr. Morlino explains. “We have ideas for scripts that we're going to be writing, with the goal of eventually breaking in as writers and directors in our own right.”



### ... and More!

Some members of the Class of 2021 are following professional paths that are wholly unique: **Adam Beberwyck** has moved to Northfield, Massachusetts, to become an operations supervisor at Thomas Aquinas College's New England campus. ... **Hannah Stoutz** is working for Catholics United for the Faith, where she is helping to organize the apostolate's research resources. “I learned so much here,” she says. “I've been so blessed to have this knowledge given to me that I would like to pass it on any way that I can.”



# Commencement Festivities



1. Members of the Class of 2021 boast of their accomplishments to the underclassmen during an end-of-the-year lunch in St. Joseph Commons ... 2. ... and go for a celebratory swim in one of the College's ponds. 3. Seniors take on their tutors in the annual softball game. 4. The soon-to-be graduates cheer as their classmates exit their last final exam. 5. Members of the student choral group Chrysostomos sing for Seniors and their parents at a dinner with President Michael F. McLean and the Board of Governors on the eve of Commencement.

## Commencement 2021 Keepsakes!

Order photos and portraits at [thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2021](https://thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2021)



### Calendar of Events

Dedication of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel ..... March 7 The Most Rev. William D. Byrne Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, presiding	California High School Summer Program.....July 10-23 <a href="https://thomasaquinas.edu/summerprogram">thomasaquinas.edu/summerprogram</a>
California Commencement.....May 14	New England High School Summer Program .....July 24-August 6 <a href="https://thomasaquinas.edu/summerprogram">thomasaquinas.edu/summerprogram</a>
New England Commencement.....May 21	For more information, please see <a href="https://www.thomasaquinas.edu/events">www.thomasaquinas.edu/events</a>