



THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

SUMMER 2022

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**The Dedication of
Our Mother of
Perpetual Help Chapel**

**New England Campus
March 7, 2022**

**Feast of
St. Thomas Aquinas**



***Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center
Opens on California Campus!***





*Members of the faculty process toward
Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel for the March 7 Dedication Mass.*

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

A Milestone in the History of Thomas Aquinas College

Dr. McLean's Remarks on the Dedication Day of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel

The Dedication of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel marks another milestone in the history of Thomas Aquinas College, New England.

When the College acquired this campus in 2017, the Chapel needed to be accommodated for Catholic worship. Among some of the challenges we faced was the lack of a center aisle, while what would need to become the sanctuary area was built for choral concerts — with a four-ton organ in the center whose pipes went up to the ceiling.

However, we did not want in any way to harm the architectural integrity of this historic building. Our goal was to plan the renovation for Catholic worship in a way that assured that the final appearance was well integrated with the Chapel's original design. Today, this project comes to completion, and we hope that posterity will agree that we have achieved our objective.

The presence of this beautiful church on the Northfield campus was a major inducement in the College's pursuit of this property and always held the promise that this campus could again fulfill Dwight Moody's hope that it be a long-lasting Christian educational institution — this time by becoming a thoroughly Catholic educational institution: Catholic in its mission, Catholic in its curriculum, Catholic in its community life, and Catholic in its liturgical life.

Today that promise has been fulfilled, and how fitting and providential it is that it should be fulfilled by transforming a non-denominational church into a church under the guardianship and patronage of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Not only is she the best of intercessors, but the name testifies to the unity of this campus with our campus in California, where the chapel is also under the patronage of the Mother of God, there under her title of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity.

We cannot help but believe that Our Mother of Perpetual Help has been shepherding our entrance into New England from our first visits in 2015, to our acquisition of the campus in 2017, to our attainment of approval from the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education to operate and grant degrees in the Commonwealth, to our welcoming our first cohort of students and faculty in 2019, and now to our upcoming first Commencement in May.

Through her intercession, the hand of God has been at work through this entire process. And now, in her honor, we have a chapel whose beauty and magnificence will inspire all who enter it to a greater knowledge and love of God, of His angels, and of His saints.



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President
Michael F. McLean, Ph.D.

Vice President for Advancement
Paul J. O’Reilly, Ph.D.

Director of Communications / Editor
Chris Weinkopf

Communications Manager
Benjamin Trull

Student Writers
Peter King (CA’24), Tam Nguyen (NE’25)

Student Photographers
Daniel Salinas (CA’22), Cecilia Huckins (NE’22)
Tam Nguyen (NE’25)

Correspondence should be addressed to:
Editor, College Newsletter
10,000 Ojai Road
Santa Paula, CA 93060
newsletter@thomasaquinas.edu

Free subscriptions
thomasaquinas.edu/subscribe



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“This Chapel is a Sign of Hope and Trust”

BISHOP BYRNE DEDICATES OUR MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP CHAPEL

The Dedication of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel blooms like the first flower of spring,” proclaimed the Most Rev. William D. Byrne, Bishop of Springfield, at the Dedication Mass for Thomas Aquinas College’s New England chapel. “Winter makes way to summer. Days lengthen, and life prevails.”

Some 500 friends of the College, as well as 25 local and alumni clergy, joined His Excellency at the March 7 liturgy on the Northfield, Massachusetts, campus. “This stone edifice, in which we gather together to celebrate God’s praises, is a sacramental sign of the Body of Christ,” the Bishop observed. “This chapel is a sign of hope and trust.”

Built in 1909, the erstwhile Sage Chapel was originally constructed for nondenominational prayer services at what was then the Northfield Seminary for Young Ladies. When the College prepared for its first academic year on the campus in 2019, however, it began gradually transforming the building for Catholic worship — adding a central aisle, confessionals, and Stations of the Cross, as well as installing two altars, a tabernacle, and a reredos in the sanctuary.

With that work complete, Bishop Byrne came to campus on the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas to administer the sacred Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar. “I thank you for this invitation,” he remarked, “and for this gift that you have given to the Diocese, the Church, and the United States.”

At the start of the 2½-hour Mass, Thomas Aquinas College President Michael F. McLean welcomed the Bishop to campus and entrusted the Chapel to his authority. “While we have been celebrating



“Bishop Byrne, we present to you the architectural drawings of the Chapel. In doing so, we place the College and the Chapel in your service, for our faculty, staff, and students, and for you and the good people of the Springfield diocese.”

the Holy Mass here for the past three years, it was always our intention to fully consecrate the Chapel with the Rite of Dedication, and all of us are pleased that this day has finally arrived,” he said. “Bishop Byrne, we present to you the architectural drawings of the Chapel. In doing so, we place the College and the Chapel in your service, for our faculty, staff, and students, and for you and the good people of the Springfield diocese.”

His Excellency then sprinkled the walls of the Chapel with holy water, inviting God to cleanse the building for holy worship, as well as the faithful, reminding them of their baptism and as a sign of repentance. In his homily, he encouraged students to put their Catholic liberal education to the service of Christ. “You students, who walk in the footsteps of St. Thomas Aquinas, who will worship here each day, must allow yourselves to be built up in Christ,” he said. “You are truly the visible sign that Jesus promises to be with us always. Allow yourselves to be formed so that you can reform our culture.”

To begin the Rite of Dedication, the Bishop placed relics of two beloved saints into the Chapel’s altars. In the main altar, he inserted a relic of St. John Henry Newman — a gift

of an old friend of the College, Raymond Cardinal Burke — and in its high altar, he deposited a relic of the College’s patron, St. Thomas Aquinas, given by the College’s California campus. He then anointed the Chapel’s altar and walls with sacred chrism, incensed the altars, and lit the Chapel’s candles.

After the Liturgy of the Eucharist, His Excellency blessed the crucifix and statues of the Virgin Mary, St. John the Beloved, St.



Left: At the Dedication Mass, student acolytes carry into the Chapel the relics of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John Henry Newman that will be placed within its altars. Right: Bishop Byrne greets friends of the College at a luncheon after the Mass.

Thomas Aquinas, and St. John Henry Newman that appear in the Chapel's sanctuary. He then proceeded to bless the shrine and icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. "Like Our Lady, in whom we entrust this chapel," His Excellency said, "we are to be Christ-bearers — living temples of His love."

The date of the Chapel's dedication is doubly significant: March 7 is the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, according to the pre-1969 Roman calendar. It is also the date on which the College's Califor-

"Like Our Lady, in whom we entrust this chapel, we are to be Christ-bearers — living temples of His love."

nia Chapel, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, was dedicated in 2009. Because the date of a church's dedication is observed as a solemnity within its local community, March 7 will henceforth be a sacred date on both campuses.

"We give thanks to Almighty God for bringing this historic day to completion," Head Chaplain Rev. Greg Markey told the faithful at the conclusion of the Mass, after which the group gathered for a celebratory luncheon in the Tracy Student Center. "We are pleased so many of you could join us." ❖



Top: Visiting and alumni clergy gather outside the Chapel prior to the Dedication Mass. Bottom, from left to right: President Michael F. McLean, Chairman of the Board of Governors R. Scott Turicchi, President-elect Paul J. O'Reilly, and Governor John Guinee

A Window into the Divine

New Icon of Building's Patroness Blesses Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel



As part of the Dedication of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel, the Most Rev. William D. Byrne, Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, blessed a newly installed icon of the building's patroness. The icon hangs in a shrine just to the left of the Chapel's sanctuary.

Through God's grace and after months of searching, Head Chaplain Rev. Greg Markey found a talented iconographer to write the icon: a cloistered nun from the Sisters of Bethlehem in Livingston, New York, some 200 miles south of the New England campus. "We found this one sister, who wishes to remain anonymous, who is especially skilled in Eastern iconography," says Fr. Markey. "She had never painted this image of Our Lady before, and it turned out marvelous."

In Western art, artists paint using their own creativity and for their own merit. In contrast, Eastern icons are described as "written" because they replicate the beauty and richness of the icons before them. "The icons are considered a window into the divine," explains Fr. Markey, "in which the mind and heart are elevated to the throne of God in Heaven."

Our Mother of Perpetual Help, pray for us! ❖

An Edifice of Faith, Hope, and Love

Bishop Byrne's Homily from the Dedication Mass for Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel

by the Most Rev. William D. Byrne



"Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo; facta est quasi vidua domina gentium."

"How lonely sits the city that once was full of people; how like a widow she has become."

These are the first words from the Vulgate translation of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, once sung at the beginning of Tenebrae.

In Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited*, Cordelia quotes this ancient chant when she describes the closing of the family chapel at the family estate. The house itself is a metaphor for the Church; and the novel, a meditation on the work of God's grace amidst the complexities of life and world events. Once full, it is now empty: "How lonely sits the city that once was full of people; how like a widow she has become."

Cordelia, the youngest daughter of the novel's family, describes to Charles Ryder, the story's protagonist with whom we travel, the journey of faith, the deconsecrating of the chapel at the family manor. She says:

They've closed the chapel at Brideshead, Bridey and the Bishop; mummy's Requiem was the last Mass said

there. After she was buried the priest came in — I was there alone. I don't think he saw me — and took out the altar stone and put it in his bag; then he burned the wads of wool with the holy oil on them and threw the ash outside; he emptied the holy-water stoop and blew out the lamp in the sanctuary, and left the tabernacle open and empty, as though from now on it was always to be Good Friday.

A perpetual Good Friday can be our experience as our world shuns faith, and Catholics walk away from their heritage. In this time when we are more accustomed to closing churches, to blowing out the sanctuary lamps, the Church in New England can feel like the manor Brideshead, once beau-

"You students ... are the visible sign of Jesus' promise to be with us always. Allow yourselves to be formed so that you can reform our culture."

tiful but now deserted. This sense of despair is not of God and is a lie of the enemy!

Listen to the words our God speaks to Jacob in our first reading, "Know that I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land. I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you" (Gen. 28:11-18).

God's ways are not our ways. We often judge success by the world's standards. God is almighty and all powerful and all knowing. God is in charge, and Good Friday is not the end of the story.

The Dedication of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel blooms like the first flower of spring. Winter makes way to summer. Days lengthen, and life prevails.

Today's dedication celebrates an ever-current mystery: that God desires to build Himself a spiritual temple in the world, a community that adores Him in spirit and truth. Listen to Jesus in today's Gospel (Jn. 4:19-24):

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth.

This stone edifice, in which we gather together to celebrate God's praises, is a sacramental sign of the Body of Christ. Its dedication is a tangible experience and structure of who we are. It is a sign of our precious religious and historical patrimony. This chapel is a sign of hope and trust.

Pope Benedict XVI, reflecting on the Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, writes:

The beauty and the harmony of churches, destined to render praise to God, invites us human beings too, though limited and sinful, to convert ourselves to form a "cosmos," a well-ordered construction, in close communion with Jesus, who is the true Holy of Holies. This reaches its culmination in the Eucharistic liturgy, in which the "ecclesia," that is, the community of baptized, finds itself again united to listen to the Word of God and nourish itself on the Body and Blood of Christ. Gathered around this twofold table, the Church of living stones builds herself up in truth and in love and is molded interiorly by the Holy Spirit, transforming herself into what she receives, conforming herself ever more to her Lord Jesus Christ.



"You students who walk in the footsteps of St. Thomas Aquinas and who will worship here each day must allow yourselves to be built up in Christ."

She herself, if she lives in sincere and fraternal unity, thus becomes a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God.

To mold ourselves in sincere and fraternal unity to Christ by the Holy Spirit means that as individual disciples, as communities of believers, as families of blood and baptism, we must be like this chapel; sacramental signs and edifices of Faith, Hope, and Love. Like Our Lady, to whom we entrust the Chapel, we are to be Christ bearers, living temples of His love.

You students who walk in the footsteps of St. Thomas Aquinas and who will wor-

ship here each day must allow yourselves to be built up in Christ. You are the visible sign of Jesus' promise to be with us always. Allow yourselves to be formed so that you can reform our culture.

I close again with *Brideshead Revisited*. In the final pages we find our central character, now a Catholic, returning to the manor Brideshead. It is World War II, Charles is an army officer, and the grand home has been commandeered by the Army. As he wanders the great halls where he came of age through his dear friendship with the family, he finally visits the chapel. Because of the Army occupation, the chapel has been re-opened. We read:

Something quite remote from anything the builders intended has come out of their work, and out of the fierce little human tragedy in which I played; something none of us thought about at the time; a small red flame — a beaten-copper lamp of deplorable design relit before the beaten-copper doors of a tabernacle; the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre or Jerusalem. It could not have been lit but for the builders and the tragedians, and there I found it this morning, burning anew among the old stones.

The world may try to snuff the lights of the sanctuary, but it will never succeed. We must burn anew amidst these stones fed by Jesus in the Eucharist, Whose presence the light proclaims. We players in this great tale of grace are called in our world's darkness to be the light. We must be emissaries of hope, living in the Way, the Truth, and Life of Him Who will never die.

Praised be Jesus Christ! ❖

Bishop Byrne was the principal celebrant at the Dedication Mass for Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel, offered on March 7.

"Give Thanks to God for the Gift of Sport"

Students Delight in "Soft Opening" of Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center



For the last two years, Thomas Aquinas College students have eagerly watched as the long-awaited Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center took shape on the southwest corner of the California campus. On Sunday, March 27, their waiting paid off: the Athletic Center — all but complete, save for a few finishing touches — had a "soft" opening for student use, with a formal grand opening and dedication planned for the fall.

"The satisfaction of knowing this would happen for years, and it's finally happening, is amazing," said sophomore Peter Bockrath. "I loved seeing how many people came out to play basketball and volleyball. I'm looking forward to more in the future."

Made possible by a \$15 million grant from the Fritz B. Burns Foundation of Los Angeles, the 17,000-square-foot Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center is easily recognized

by its four-story clock tower, loosely modeled after the one in Santa Barbara's historic City Hall. Within the tower are two 31-foot-high scaling walls and a 13-foot-high bouldering wall, which were put to early and enthusiastic use at the soft opening. Student instructors showed their classmates the literal and figurative ropes, eliciting thrilled grins and laughter.

Meanwhile, two concurrent games of basketball thundered on the indoor courts. A rebound, a pass, a dunk — the games moved quickly as students tested the hardwood floors, the glass backboards, and the electronic scoreboard. Onlookers cheered their friends as the games shifted from one end of the court to the other.

Students also explored the offerings in the men's and women's weight and exercise facilities. Some men spotted each other on the bench press, while



others took to the punching bag. Groups of jubilant students cheered on as one of their friends attempted box jumps. “It’s really nice, especially compared to public gyms,” remarked Max Nunes (’24). “I’m really looking forward to working out with my friends.”

Outside the Athletic Center, the six-lane, 25-yard waveless lap pool awaits its first swimmers, pending county certification. The outdoor tennis and basketball courts still require a finish coat, but the newly installed baseball and soccer fields are complete, along with their bleacher seating. Facing the building’s arched vestibule, the new campus picnic area will host its first College barbeque later this spring. Yet arguably the most important detail remains to be put in place — a statue of the building’s patron, Pope St. John Paul II, which will soon be installed in a niche beside the front entryway at the base of the clock tower.

From the earliest days of the Athletic Center’s planning and design, officials from the College and the Fritz B. Burns Foundation agreed that the late Holy Father — a lifelong athlete who wrote eloquently about what the human body can teach us about its Creator — would be its patron. Words from the Polish saint are etched in the woodwork just below the ceiling in the center’s foyer: “Give thanks to God for the gift of sport, in which the human person exercises his body, intellect, and will ... as so many gifts of his creator.”

Four alumni of the College have played key roles in the development and administration of the Athletic Center. Serving as the

“We hope to utilize the building in a way that honors its namesake, Pope St. John Paul II.”

architect was Anthony Grumbine (’00), principal at the Santa Barbara office of Harrison Design. The College’s vice president for operations, Mark Kretschmer (’99), oversaw the building’s construction with the assistance of Facilities Manager Clark Tulberg (’85), and Director of Student Services Scott Benigar (’02) manages the day-to-day operations of the facility. “It was an honor to be part of the

collaboration to build an athletic center for TAC that expresses strength and beauty, and which will serve well the students for years to come,” says Mr. Grumbine. “The team, including the contractor, RCI Builders, did a great job making a solid, yet refined building, while being mindful of budget.”

The Athletic Center’s soft opening was, by all accounts, a tremendous success, and in the weeks since, the facility has already become a regular part of student life, hosting basketball games and daily workouts. “It’s like a finishing touch to the campus,” says Dominic Andres (’24). “I’m so excited.”

Here, in a building named for a champion of sport and physical fitness in the lives of the faithful, Thomas Aquinas College students will train their bodies, refresh their minds, and discipline their souls to better prepare them for the work of Catholic liberal education. “We hope to utilize the building in a way that honors its namesake, Pope St. John Paul II,” says Dr. John J. Goyette, dean of the California campus. “And, in using it, we will always be reminded to pray for the benefactors whose generosity made this new building possible.” ♦



WASHINGTON, D.C.

“Sr. Dede” Helps Celebrate College’s 50th Anniversary

In honor of its 50th Anniversary, Thomas Aquinas College hosted a celebratory reception on April 3 just outside the nation’s capital. The featured speaker for the event was Sr. Deirdre “Dede” Byrne, POSC, a religious sister, veteran, physician, and nationally recognized champion of the marginalized and unborn — who also has many beautiful and surprising connections to the College.

“God has a really good sense of humor,” Sr. Dede told guests, “because I don’t think I would have even graduated from the Thomas Aquinas preschool, and here I am amidst all these academic leaders.”

Yet these words were typical of Sister’s characteristic humility: In addition to being a thoracic surgeon, she served nearly 30 years in the United States Army, retiring with the rank of colonel. She is today the superior at the Washington, D.C., house of the Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which, among its other ministries, provides free medical care to the poor and uninsured. She makes annual medical missions to Kenya, Haiti, and Sudan, and she oversees Heart Pro Bono PT, Washington’s only free physical therapy clinic.

Sr. Dede is best known, however, for speaking passionately in defense of the unborn at the 2020 Republican National Convention. “The largest marginalized group in the world can be found here in the U.S. They are the unborn,” she declared before a nationwide audience. “We are called to stand up for life.”

This commitment to the pro-life cause came up once more when Sr. Dede told some 150 alumni and other friends at the anniversary celebration about how she first came to learn of Thomas Aquinas College. “I was exposed to your beautiful school,” she



began, “through the eyes of a 19-year-old girl who brilliantly shone the love of Christ.”

Early in her medical career, Sr. Dede worked at the Ventura County Medical Center, where she heard from fellow doctors about Angela Baird (’00), a TAC sopho-

“I was exposed to your beautiful school through the eyes of a 19-year-old girl who brilliantly shone the love of Christ.”

more who was treated at VCMC after being gravely injured in a hiking accident in 1997. “Angela kept repeating, ‘I am offering all this up, my suffering, for the unborn,’” Sr. Dede recalled the amazed doctors telling her. “Sadly, she died on the operating room table, but that experience made such an impact ... she

brought brilliance through the hallways.”

After learning about Angela, Sr. Dede decided to pay a visit to the College’s California campus. “I was so touched and moved,” she said. “I kept saying, ‘I wish I could go back to school, go back here and learn.’ It was so breathtaking.”

Nearly a quarter of a century later, she would return to Thomas Aquinas College for Convocation 2021, this time on the New England campus in the Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts, where her brother — the Most Rev. William D. Byrne — was the newly installed bishop. Over the last year, His Excellency has likewise become a good friend of the College, visiting three times, including for the Dedication Mass of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel in March.

“We’re grateful, indeed, for Sister’s friendship, and that of her brother,” President Michael F. McLean remarked to the Washington guests. Added Sr. Dede, “If you have any problems with him, I know his mother very well!” ♦



Honoring the Church Triumphant

Five New England Buildings Renamed for Beloved Saints

From the time of its founding in California 50 years ago, Thomas Aquinas College has been committed to naming its buildings for our heavenly intercessors and guides, the saints. Ever since opening the New England campus in 2019, officials have looked to extend this tradition eastward. Now, with renovations to five of the campus' key buildings complete, these structures will become the first to take on new, saintly designations.

"Our benefactors appreciate our desire to place models of holiness before our students at all times, and they have graciously worked with us to choose the appropriate patrons for each of these buildings," says President Michael F. McLean. "They have also been supportive of our effort to preserve the history of this century-old campus, which is why these buildings' plaques and masonry will continue to feature the names of the people who originally made this campus possible, even as we, in our words and on our maps, give honor to the saints who light our way."



St. Gianna Molla Hall — *Formerly Palmer Hall*

Nearly 100 years old, Palmer Hall has served these last three years as the lone classroom building at Thomas Aquinas College, New England. In light of its age and the weight of near-constant student traffic, it has required some of the most extensive renovations of any of the buildings currently in use. Thanks to the immense kindness of anonymous benefactors, these now-complete renovations have included the installation of a new copper roof, restoration of the building's façades, and new paint for its classrooms and laboratories.

For the hall's patroness, the benefactors urged St. Gianna Molla, who beautifully combined a physician's mind with a mother's heart and the faith of a true disciple of Christ. With this uncommon blend of virtues, she is a model for all students at the College — and a fitting patron of the pursuit of truth which takes place daily throughout the hall named in her honor.

St. Thomas More Hall *Formerly Kenarden Hall*

An exquisite architectural homage to the Italian Renaissance, Kenarden Hall was built in 1913 as an administration building. It continues to serve that purpose for Thomas Aquinas College today, housing offices for the dean, the chaplains, and Admissions, while also serving as the place of welcome for guests to campus.

With the support of the same benefactors who funded the renovation of the Bl. Frassati Student Center, the College was able to refresh the building's paint and carpeting, while also refurbishing its offices and installing a backup power generator. Considering the important yet non-glamorous demands of day-to-day management, benefactors endorsed St. Thomas More as the building's patron — a saintly administrator who regarded all work as the service of God.



Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center *Formerly Meany Physical Education Center*

The 50-year old Meany Center is being rechristened in honor of Pope St. John Paul II, who championed fitness in the life of the Christian. The 20th century saint is also the patron of the newly completed athletic center at TAC-California, and the shared name testifies to the common mission of the two campuses.

It was benefactors June and Jack Heffernan who recommended the new name and who have funded many of the Athletic Center's renovations: resurfacing the gymnasium floor, adding a scoreboard, refurbishing the workout rooms, refinishing the dance studio, and repainting the interior. Meanwhile, College Governor Angela (Ander- sen '87) Connelly and her husband, Jack, have restored the aquatics center, resurfacing the pool and installing new pumps, filter systems, and electrical equipment.

In gratitude, the pool area is now called the Connelly Family Aquatics Center, and it houses a statue of St. Joan of Arc, to whom the Connellys have a strong devotion. And at the Heffernans' request, the Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center's gymnasium has been dedicated to Dr. Thomas E. Dillon, thus preserving the memory of the College's late president — and their dear friend — in New England.



Bl. Frassati Student Center *Formerly Tracy Student Center*

Some 76 years after its construction in 1895, the Skinner Gymnasium — a neo-Victorian building at what was once the Northfield Seminary for Young Ladies — underwent a major transformation, becoming the Tracy Student Center. Some 50 years later, the center was due for another upgrade, which was made possible through the gift of a generous, anonymous couple. Through this couple's support, the College has installed air conditioning, resurfaced the floor, and refurbished the kitchen and restrooms. Moreover, it has restored a balcony running alongside the interior of the center to create a fully unified student space.

The benefactors who funded these improvements proposed a patron to whom they have a special devotion: Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, an early 20th century Italian university student who died at the age of 24. Widely recognized as a patron of young people, and known for his love for God and the poor, Bl. Frassati will provide a strong example and intercessor for the College's students.



St. Augustine Hall *Formerly Merrill-Keep Hall*

Built in 1937 in the colonial style so characteristic of New England, Merrill-Keep is one of two men's residence halls on the Northfield, Massachusetts, campus. Friends of the College Michele and Donald D'Amour generously contributed the funds to renovate the building in 2018, and they also suggested St. Augustine as its patron — a choice enthusiastically confirmed by both the faculty and the Board of Governors.


"In addition to being one of the original doctors of the Church, St. Augustine was a great example of a flawed man who learned the value of seeking the truth," says Mrs. D'Amour. "As the students progress through their college life, they will be reminded of the lessons Augustine learned through his rocky life's journey, and above all that 'to fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek Him, the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement.'" ♦



One Program Two Coasts

RECENT EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

Four Seniors & TAC Grads Headed to Norbertines

 The Norbertine Fathers of St. Michael's Abbey in Silverado, California, have announced the newly admitted postulants who will be joining their community in August. By God's grace, four of them are recent or soon-to-be graduates of Thomas Aquinas College, adding to the already abundant number of alumni discerning or fully professing the religious life.

A religious calling is always deeply personal, and just as no two people are exactly alike, so no two vocation stories are exactly the same. Certainly each of these men — Patrick Cross ('14), Martin McCann ('16), John Greene ('22), and Timothy Wassell ('22) — would agree.

For some, the Holy Spirit tugged early and often. A senior on the California campus, Mr. Greene found himself inclining more and more toward the Norbertines throughout his childhood. "The Abbey has long had a place in my heart, and I tried to join them right out of high school," he explains. The Norbertines, however, encouraged him toward Thomas Aquinas College to get his degree and some years of experience. "I'm ever so thankful they asked me to attend TAC first. These have been some of the best years of my life and a splendid preparation for the priesthood, both spiritually and intellectually."

His classmate Mr. Wassell discerned God's intentions more subtly during these last four years, crediting the College with helping him to hear the Lord's call. He puts it simply: "The intellectual and

spiritual development I gained at TAC nurtured a desire to minister to God's people."

In others, however, the Holy Spirit works more slowly and mysteriously. Mr. McCann spent the last few years working for the College as an admissions counselor and dipping his toe into professional sales. Between conversations with the priests and visits to the Abbey, however, he sensed an inchoate longing for the Order and its brotherhood. With time, he realized that this longing was more than sentiment, but a definite invitation from the Holy Spirit.

Mr. Cross also spent several years working for the College's Admissions Office, and even spearheaded the move out to Massachusetts upon the acquisition of the New England campus. An avid artist, he then worked for several years as a political cartoonist. But throughout that time, God was watering the quiet seed of a calling which bloomed at last and prompted Mr. Cross westward once again, to St. Michael's.

For all their differences in discernment, a common thread unites these men, and that is Thomas Aquinas College. Indeed, Rev. Vianney Ceja, O.Praem., vocations director for the Norbertines, has noted the significance of this shared formation. "I believe that many TAC students join us here because they find in the Abbey a natural extension of what they already experience on the College's campus," he says. "To see young men striving together for holiness is an attractive and powerful witness to the world! I am grateful to God for drawing so many alumni from the rich soil of TAC to the harvest of St. Michael's Abbey." ♦



Patrick Cross ('14)



Martin McCann ('16)




John Greene ('22)



Timothy Wassell ('22)

First Seniors Make First Defenses

 On the last Friday of March, students crammed the hallways of Palmer Hall for the latest — and a long anticipated — "first" in the brief history of Thomas Aquinas College, New England: the first Senior Thesis Defense.

The Senior Thesis Defense in many ways marks the culmination of the students' four years. At the start of the academic year, each senior chooses a thesis topic and an advisor. For the next six months, the student then works on a longer-form paper that demonstrates his or her ability to fashion logical, sound, and worthwhile academic inquiries. The thesis topics are of each senior's own choosing and can derive from any of the disciplines presented in the College's classical curriculum.

Sometime after turning in a thesis in mid-March, each senior presents a 30-minute oral defense before a panel consisting of the advisor and two other members of the teaching faculty. In these discussions, the tutors listen to each senior's defense and ask pointed questions, then recess to decide whether the student will pass or fail. It was fitting that the Class of 2022 — whose members spent their freshman year on the California campus, and who have been the vanguard of transplanting the College's traditions to the East Coast — would be the first to undergo this crowning rite of passage.

The significance of the inaugural "defense season" was not lost on the other New England students. They lined up to watch the first senior to face a panel, Simone Kelly ('22), whose thesis, "Marriage Is What Brings Us Together: War and a Piece of Saint Paul," posits that the marriage of Natasha and Pierre in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* perfectly embodies the ideal of matrimony as presented in the Letter to the Ephesians. And they cheered exuberantly upon learning that Simone had passed.

"It was really nerve-racking at first, especially since I was the first person. I was either going to set the standard really low or really high!" Simone laughs. "It was an




"It was really nerve-racking at first, especially since I was the first person. I was either going to set the standard really low or really high!"

awesome, epic moment, and getting my defense done first gave me time to support my classmates in their journeys with their theses."

"When the seniors finish their theses," reflects tutor Steven Cain, "they have a chance to look back and see how far they have come since their first paper here. It's the first step toward graduation." ♦



"Benefits of TAC Education"

 "One of the things you might notice upon visiting Thomas Aquinas College, first, is the strong friendships you see between students here," Dr. Josef Froula, a tutor at Thomas Aquinas College, New England, told guests at a campus open house

in March. "The founders of TAC were of one mind about this, and had the firm conviction that this education cannot take place without strong bonds of friendship — and that's not only friendship among the students, but also friendship between the tutors and the students."

A member of the College's Class of 1992, Dr. Froula presented his talk, "The Benefits of a Thomas Aquinas College Education," to prospective students who had come to visit the Northfield, Massachusetts, campus. The talk — available online at thomasaquinas.edu/benefits — focused on students' social, intellectual, and spiritual life.

"Friendship is a kind of mutual love, and that love is based on knowledge," said Dr. Froula. "Because we know each other so well by having these kinds of classes together, and because we depend on each other for the success of those classes, you are able to know and grow in a mutual love of your friends here in a way that just isn't possible without this kind of education." ♦



College Governor Martha Reichert and her husband, Tim

Alumni Shatter Previous Record at '22 Day of Giving

In a tremendous display of love for their alma mater, the alumni of Thomas Aquinas College came out in force for the 2022 Alumni Day of Giving, shattering the previous giving record for the annual event. “March 7 is an important day for the College for many reasons,” says Dr. Paul J. O’Reilly, vice president for advancement and president-elect. “It is, first and foremost, the feast day of our patron. It is also a solemnity on both campuses, commemorating the dedication of our two chapels. And as the Alumni Day of Giving, it is the date on which our graduates amaze us every year with their devotion and generosity to this school named for the Angelic Doctor.”

This year’s Day of Giving began with a \$75,000 matching gift from College Governor Martha Reichert and her husband, Tim, the parents of one TAC alumna and a junior on the California campus. “The Reicherts had hoped that, by making a matching gift, they would inspire alumni giving, and they sure did,” says Dr. O’Reilly. “By late Monday afternoon, with the whole evening still ahead of us, alumni surpassed that goal and last year’s giving total. Fortunately, an anonymous alumni couple offered a \$10,000 challenge match of their own, so we were able to continue matching gifts for several hours more.” Yet the alumni soon eclipsed that goal as well. By day’s end, including the \$85,000 in matching gifts, they had given \$191,383.21 — besting last year’s record-setting total by more than \$50,000. “It’s astonishing,” says Dr. O’Reilly. “We would have been thrilled if we had merely fulfilled the Reicherts’ initial challenge gift. But our alumni, for the fifth straight year, went above and beyond.” Per custom, there was some friendly competition involved in this year’s Alumni Day of Giving, with graduating classes vying to achieve the highest rate of giving. In addition to bragging rights, the winning class will be honored with a display in the rotunda of St. Thomas Hall on the Califor-

nia campus throughout the next year. Over the course of the day, the Class of 1981 held the lead, but toward the evening, the Class of 2014 grabbed — and never relinquished — the coveted first-place spot. Much of the credit for the Class of 2014’s triumph belongs, no doubt, to Jack

“Our graduates amaze us every year with their devotion and generosity to this school named for the Angelic Doctor.”

Schuth (’14), one of the day’s top influencers, who inspired some 20 fellow alumni — including many of his classmates — to make gifts. Wendy-Irene (Grimm ’99) and Nick Zepeda (’90) likewise inspired 20 alumni gifts, which may explain why Mr. Zepeda’s Class of 1990 had the fourth-highest giving percentage in all. “There was a great push to give, among all classes from all decades,” says Dr. O’Reilly. “And on the Alumni Day of Giving website, we saw many tributes — to deceased alumni, to beloved chaplains and

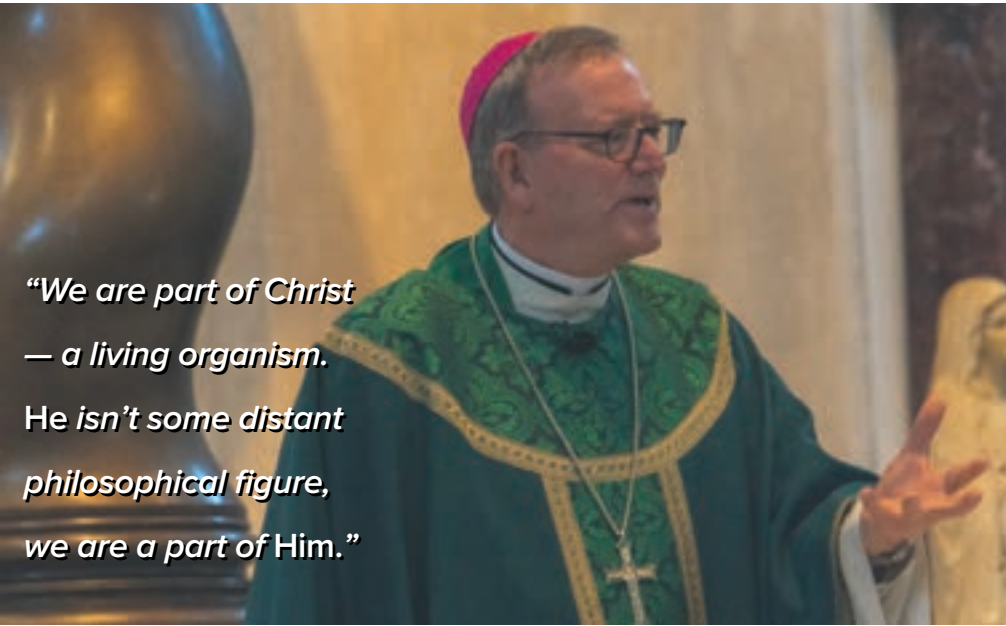
favorite tutors, to old friends, and to future students still to come. In their words and in their deeds, the alumni of Thomas Aquinas College have expressed not only their gratitude for all that they experienced while at the College, but also their fervent desire to extend that gift to future generations. It is humbling and inspiring to see.” ♦

Bishop Barron Pays Visit to TAC Students

The regional bishop for Thomas Aquinas College’s California campus — the Most Rev. Robert E. Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles — visited students February 16 to offer words of inspiration and encouragement. His Excellency arrived on campus Wednesday evening in time to offer the 5:00 p.m. Mass in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. In his homily, he reflected on Christ’s curing of the blind man (John 9:1-41), speaking of spiritual blindness, or “the world’s dissociation from God.” To grow closer to God, the Bishop said, it is important to get away from worldly distractions. “We are part of Christ — a living organism. *He isn’t some distant philosophical figure, we are a part of Him.*” After Mass, Bishop Barron ate dinner with students in St. Joseph Commons, then

answered their questions from a podium at the front of the room. Covering a wide variety of subjects — most notably theology, politics, spirituality, and art — his answers offered wisdom, insight into Church affairs, and various personal anecdotes. Throughout his remarks, he encouraged students to enter the secular world with faith and love: “Don’t be known by the world’s corruption — evangelize to it,” he said. “Go into politics, academia, art, everything.” Calling to mind Plato’s *Republic*, he continued, “Bring it out of the cave.” As his Q&A came to an end, Bishop Barron praised the College’s students. “You

guys are great,” he said. “I always love coming out here.” His Excellency then offered students his apostolic blessing. “Typical of his visits to the College, Bishop Barron presided at a very well attended Mass, joined students for dinner, and then led a lively question-and-answer session, where he responded to a wide range of student questions and comments,” said President Michael F. McLean. “The evening ended with a rousing round of applause for His Excellency and a group of students surrounding the Bishop, reluctant to let him go.” ♦



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL Lecture and Concert Series Highlights from Last Semester*

NEW ENGLAND

January Lecture
Dr. Michael Augros
Tutor, Thomas Aquinas College, New England
The Opening Line of Aristotle’s Metaphysics: Implications of the Natural Desire to Know

St. Thomas Day Lecture
Dr. Bruce Marshal
Lehman Professor of Christian Doctrine, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University
‘From His Fullness We Have All Received’: Understanding the Human Knowledge of Christ



February Lecture
Dr. Michael Behe
Professor, Lehigh University
Science and the Catholic Church: An Epistemological Dilemma?

President’s Day Lecture
Dr. Russell Reno
Editor, *First Things*
Liberalism and Integralism



Spring All-College Seminar
Excerpts from St. Thomas Aquinas’ *Compendium Theologiae* regarding Christ’s salvation of man

March Lecture
Dr. Brian T. Kelly
Tutor, Thomas Aquinas College, California
The Woman Caught in Adultery, John 7:53–8:11

Spring Concert
Selections from Bach, Händel, and Mozart
The Thomas Aquinas College Chamber Orchestra



CALIFORNIA

St. Thomas Day Lecture
Rev. Michael Sherwin, O.P.
Professor of Fundamental Moral Theology, University of Fribourg
The Double Flame: Thomas Aquinas on the Mystery of Love

Spring All-College Seminar
St. Thomas Aquinas’ “On the Crucifixion and Resurrection” from the *Compendium Theologiae*



Presidents’ Day Lecture
Dr. Victor Davis Hanson
Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution
The Dying Citizen: How Progressive Elites, Tribalism, and Globalization are Destroying the Idea of America

Debate: Do Plants Have Sensation?
Dr. Marie George
Professor, St. John’s University
Rev. Nicanor Austriaco, O.P.
Professor of Biology, Providence College

Spring Concert
Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Pirates of Penzance*
The Thomas Aquinas College Choir



*Text and/or audio from select lectures is available at thomasaquinas.edu

Faith in Action

News from TAC’s Alumni Blog

Dr. John DeSilva Finley (’99) Publishes Much-Needed Book on Sexual Identity

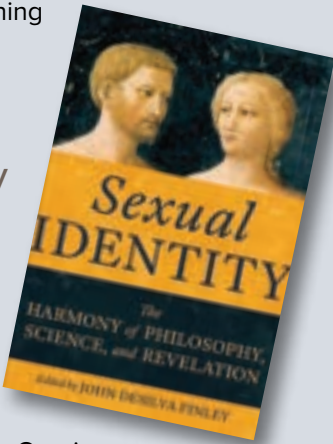
When Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson — widely celebrated for being the first black woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court — said she could not define the word “woman” during her confirmation hearings, the episode brought into sharp relief, yet again, the West’s growing and deep confusion about matters of sexual identity. The evidence is ubiquitous, from male athletes dominating in women’s sports, to the burgeoning multiplicity of pronouns, to nursing mothers professing to be men. Indeed, the court over which Judge Jackson will soon preside not too long ago declared the categories of “male” and “female” irrelevant to the institution of marriage.

In a short time, gender ideology has made the transition from a fringe academic theory to assumed truth throughout much of the media, government, and business world. The term “gender” itself has come to take on an amorphous

men and women are different,” writes Catholic author and apologist Jason Evert. But “such a resource is now available.”

That resource is *Sexual Identity: The Harmony of Philosophy, Science, and Revelation*, an interdisciplinary collection of essays written by experts for non-specialists, intended to bring about some much-needed clarity during these befuddled times. Its editor is Dr. John DeSilva Finley (’99), a Thomas Aquinas College alumnus and professor of philosophy at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis. The work draws upon the biological, psychological, philosophical, and theological sciences to charitably recall audiences to the truth that God “made them male and female.”

The essayists featured in *Sexual Identity* are highly acclaimed professionals in their fields — philosophy, obstetrics and gynecology, endocrinology, psychology, plastic surgery, and theology — who have spoken nationally and internationally on matters pertaining



In a short time, gender ideology has made the transition from a fringe academic theory to assumed truth throughout much of the media, government, and business world.

definition containing an infinite number of possibilities, and words such as “man” and “woman” are widely regarded as little more than preferred forms of self-expression, if not wholly obsolete.

“It’s unfortunate that the world has come to the point of needing a thorough and scholarly defense of the fact that

to the meaning of sexuality. One is another Thomas Aquinas College graduate, Cara Buskmiller, M.D. (’11), a fellow in maternal-fetal medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center.

A one-time member of the TAC teaching faculty, Dr. Finley earned his



doctorate at the University of Dallas and is a member of the Aquinas Institute at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford. He has lectured and published widely on the nature of the human person, sexuality, and the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. In 2017, the John Templeton Foundation awarded him a grant to pursue interdisciplinary research on philosophy, science, and gender. This summer he will be leaving St. Louis for California, where he will become the academic director at a new educational enterprise, the Valor Institute in San Diego. He and his wife, Hilary, are the parents of three children.

Graciously, Dr. Finley credits his alma mater, particularly its integrated curriculum, with inspiring *Sexual Identity’s* intellectual framework. “The character of this book harkens directly back to that interdisciplinary vision,” he says. “I really think that this kind of approach is going to be more and more crucial, because our tremendous advances in scientific discovery have in some ways outstripped corresponding emphases and developments in some of the other disciplines, especially those considered the humanities — philosophy, literature, theology, and so on.”

Among those praising *Sexual Identity* is Ryan T. Anderson, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, who writes, “This book is essential reading for anyone concerned about the truth of our embodiment as male and female and how to promote that truth in our confused era.” ❖

Top Gun: Maj. Louis Conklin, USAF (’11)

After eight years of working as a weapons system officer on the F-15E strike fighter, Maj. Louis Conklin, USAF (’11), is strapping into the pilot’s seat.

“I’ve just graduated from pilot training,” he writes. “Up to now, I’ve been a ‘back-seater,’ like Goose from *Top Gun*. I liked the job and really enjoyed being in a fighter squadron, but I wanted to be a pilot.” Men of Maj. Conklin’s age typically don’t make this transition, and his wife, Monica (Shaneyfelt ’11), is thrilled: “I’m so proud of Lou for working so hard in pilot training and getting his No. 1 choice!”

Maj. Conklin cites his time at Thomas Aquinas College with helping him to balance his vocational obligations with service to his country. “The format of the TAC education deeply influenced my ability to play multiple roles as a husband, father, service-member, and Catholic, and to balance those roles in a stressful environment,” he says. “That way I can maintain a healthy balance in what can otherwise become a completely engrossing lifestyle.”

Having completed his training at the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program in Wichita Falls, Texas, Maj. Conklin is now working to complete combat certification in Goldsboro, North Carolina. “My days consist of training flights and simulators,” he explains. “The majority of the time is spent on brief and debrief, so a typical flight of 1.5 hours can be a 6-8 hour affair!” Even with that hefty training regimen, it will still be upward of a year before he is certified to fly combat missions.

Yet Maj. Conklin enjoys the steps along the way, because he has found that excellence comes by way of a disciplined embrace of the “small things” in life. “I remember studying Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and realizing that happiness can’t be achieved without discipline, which I was aware I didn’t have,” he says. Noticing that defect prompted him to consider military



service: “It seemed an appealing way to acquire discipline, and I began applying to the Air Force as a direct result of that course.”

Maj. Conklin continues to pursue that discipline as he and Mrs. Conklin raise their three sons in North Carolina — in whose skies the pilot will be testing his mettle in the following months. ❖

Publishing Leader: Mara Gawarecki (’13)

Editor & Publisher, the trade magazine of American news publishing, has issued its 2022 list of the “25 Under 35,” honoring the “new generation of publishing leaders” who have made the most of these “difficult times to innovate, perform and stand out from their peers.” Among those included is a graduate of Thomas Aquinas College, Mara Gawarecki (’13), managing editor for digital media at NFR Communications.

“My manager and one of my company’s co-owners had seen some call for nominations and thought of me,” she recalls. “I was on vacation around Christmas and New Year’s, and they called a meeting. I thought it was going to be for some job or project that we were launching, but instead they said, ‘You’ve been nominated for this honor because we think you’re great — and you won!’”

At NFR, Ms. Gawarecki produces content for the company’s website, which offers news and commentary on matters related to community banking. She also manages electronic newsletters, webinars, and social media, while writing occasionally for NFR’s monthly printed magazine. “NFR is a commercial company that focuses on community banking,” she explains. “It primarily serves as a resource on how to run a community bank well — such as how to run a bank when you can’t open your doors during a pandemic.”

One of the most challenging parts of her career, Ms. Gawarecki admits, was bringing herself up to speed, in a short time, on the business and jargon of the banking world. “I didn’t have a background in it at all,” she laughs. “I obviously hadn’t taken any financial classes as an undergraduate, and even if I had gone to a school that offered them, I wouldn’t have taken any — I had no interest! So I had to learn how banks work, what’s the terminology, what does this long litany of acronyms mean that gets tossed around like confetti?”

Nonetheless, she finds, the College’s program of Catholic liberal education prepared her well. “At TAC you’re encouraged to ask questions about everything, and nothing is considered off-limits or unworthy of poking at intellectually,” she says. “My openness to trying new things and tackling challenges outside of my expertise led me to a rewarding role in a relative niche corner of the news world.” ❖





From French Scholar to STEM Entrepreneur: Daina Andries ('09)

When Daina Andries ('09) graduated from Thomas Aquinas College, she thought she wanted to pursue an academic career, studying and teaching French literature. For a time, she did just that, receiving a scholarship with a stipend at the University of Delaware, where she earned a master's degree with honors. While a graduate student, however, she discerned that teaching was not for her. So she considered other possibilities, ultimately choosing data science. Today she is the co-founder of her own company, Epidaurus Health.

Named for an ancient Greek city that's regarded as the birthplace of modern Western medicine — where practitioners first began taking an empirical approach to healing, documenting

which practices worked and which ones did not — Epidaurus utilizes information technology to streamline and simplify the reimbursement of prescription-drug purchases.

"When you go to fill a prescription, it might not be covered by your insurance, but you usually don't know that until you show up to the pharmacy," Miss Andries explains. "What often happens then is that your claim will get rejected, and that rejection starts a process called 'prior authorization' — a mess of hidden, moving parts that can lead to a lot of inflated drug prices that make zero sense to the consumer."

Enter Epidaurus. "Our solution comes in targeting the prior-authorization process to make it run as smoothly as possible on the backend, so that a physician and patient can have more information," she says. "My hope is to get our foot in the door and do some good in terms of making the analytics more transparent to the final-end consumer, the patient, while also making the clinical criteria more readily available to be shared between hospital and payer. We want to make that required clinical data securely and efficiently transmissible but also more complete, so the likelihood of coming to a fairer determination for that patient will go up."

"All serious education is worth it, but TAC students, in particular, have a serious, rigorous education, and there's something more to it — something more special."

The shift from French scholar to STEM entrepreneur was, she admits, not easy. After earning a master's degree in information science at the University of Michigan, Miss Andries worked as a metadata technician at the U.S. Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. From there she was hired on a contract basis, cataloging information for a nonprofit, before landing at Red Oak Strategic, a consulting firm in Alexandria, Virginia.

Her liberal education, she found, served her well in this new line of work. "I was assigned to a client in finance who was building a platform for automating the trading of commodity and weather derivatives — of which I knew nothing to start," she recalls. "But the first time I met him, he did a Finance 101 intro to derivatives for me on a whiteboard — and my mind instantly flew back to TAC calculus and shrinking little rectangles (Newton's

infinitesimals). Of course, I had to brush up on the theory behind the application, but I knew what it was, which made that introduction to finance a lot less intimidating for a French literature major."

When the project came to an end two years ago, Miss Andries launched Epidaurus, a spin-off of Red Oak, whose CEO is her co-founder. "I think the TAC education has helped me in ways beyond words," she remarks. "Instead of mastering a single subject, you take on a variety of subjects in a program that actively encourages you to ponder how these subjects play together — what about math helps you appreciate music; or what about philosophy helps you to get ahead in science or to do math. All serious education is worth it, but TAC students, in particular, have a serious, rigorous education, and there's something more to it — something more special."

Thomas Aquinas College students, she contends, are a natural fit for the multidisciplinary field of data science. "I think in our society right now, and in particular in my industry, which plays at the intersection of tech, business, and science, we need more people like the ones that come out of TAC," Miss Andries observes. "I think the world would be a much better place if there was more of a presence of TAC in it." ♦

A Homily from an Alumnus Priest: Rev. Nicholas Callaghan ('96), JCD

Rev. Nicholas Callaghan ('96), JCD, is a judge on the Metropolitan Tribunal, the Ecclesiastical Court of the Archdiocese of New York. Ordained in 2004, he earned his doctorate in canon law in Rome after serving as a parochial vicar at two New York parishes. While visiting the New England campus for the Dedication of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel, he offered a midday Mass in early March. Below is a transcript of his homily.

It is a great honor and privilege to be able to visit here for the first time and to appreciate the very familiar things and the modified things about this campus, and the work that you are about here, which is very much the work that the founders set out in the Blue Book — which is a wonderfully heartening thing to see.

I had an occasion after the lunch yesterday to talk to a few people familiar with the California campus who are over here now, and people who have lived the TAC life, and something of an observation we shared — certainly I shared with them, and they didn't disagree — was the tremendous value of the experience of community. For myself, I would sum it up as Sunday morning on campus, a sense of community involving a shared purpose in study, but also involving all the different dimensions of the people of God, from the newborn

"Adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I would not be here if I had not eventually been dragged into that habit as a student at Thomas Aquinas College."

to the old: clergy, laity, whoever has to actually mix up the powdered eggs, and whoever has to put the paper plates away in the trash.

It was of tremendous value to me, I know, as a student at Thomas Aquinas back in the twilight of the last millennium, but it has been, over the last 26 years, I would say also, a great value in later life. I think it has helped me in various dimensions and saved me from mistakes I might otherwise have made, both as a layman and then as a priest, to have experienced that community. And it is, I think, especially a precious thing to maintain.

The Bishop gave an excellent sermon yesterday, and this is not a *sed contra*. It might be a little bit of a *respondeo*. But he did at the end more or less charge you with the task of reviving the Church in the Northeast of the United States. I would encourage you not to think about that very much, in the sense that that is not the first goal that you need to keep



in mind. The goal you need to keep in mind, if you're a student, is your studies, and through that your soul.

For that end, speaking from experience, I would say, firstly, please, go to Confession, even when it annoys and frustrates the priest who otherwise would be getting out to say Mass on time. Adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sac-

rament. I would not be here if I had not eventually been dragged into that habit as a student at Thomas Aquinas College.

And on the monitory side, be very prayerful and very careful before you begin or enter into any quarrel in the community. There are always those. There are some quarrels that are more or less institutions within the life of

Thomas Aquinas College. They sort of have to exist. They're there all the time. You would feel uncomfortable if they weren't going on. But what your role needs to be is not, first, in that. That is not to talk about the classroom. The classroom is a place that needs fools and villains and people saying outlandish things. The classroom is a place of play, the most important and most instructive play you may ever engage in, but there all sorts of fights are possible. But within the community outside, I would beg your great care about those fights.

Mother Teresa very famously said that we cannot do great things, but only small things with great love. Thomas Aquinas College is in the scale of the world not a great thing. It is a rather large and important small thing, and in that regard — and for the sake of what fruit it may bear; for the sake of what the Bishop commissioned you all to do in the years to come — it demands great love. ♦

IN MEMORIAM

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.*

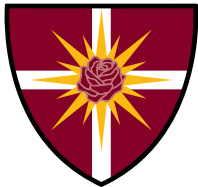
Kell Khattar ('89) March 28, 2021 <i>Alumnus</i>	Mary Therese Barry April 14, 2022 <i>Mother of Pat Barry ('88) and California Nurse Cathy Collins; grandmother of Liam ('13), Paul ('14), Sophie ('16), Maura ('18), and Irene Collins ('23)</i>
Robert Chance October 29, 2021 <i>Husband of Colleen (Cools '83); father of Hannah (O'Brien '13) and Thomas ('18)</i>	
Francis Shivone March 30, 2022 <i>Father of Tutor Stephen</i>	David Whelan May 1, 2022 <i>Benefactor</i>



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IN MEMORIAM

Clifford P. Hackett
1930-2022

“Cliff Hackett had great passions and was devoted to the mission of Thomas Aquinas College,” reflects College General Counsel Quincy Masteller, a longtime friend. “His participation in the life of the College was wide and deep — and truly was a blessing from God.”

It is perhaps only fitting, then, that Mr. Hackett passed away on March 7, the feast of the College’s patron, St. Thomas Aquinas. “He became good friends with many of us here over the years,” Mr. Masteller adds. “He will be deeply missed, but never forgotten.”

Mr. Hackett was born to Christine and Thomas Hackett of West Haven, Connecticut, on April 15, 1930. He studied philosophy and history at Saint Louis University, where he developed an intense, lifelong devotion to his Catholic faith. Motivated by a strong sense of justice, Mr. Hackett worked during his college years to end racial segregation at local dining establishments.

After graduation he joined the Army at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He also began dating Beatrice Nied, whom he had met in his senior year in St. Louis. The couple had their first date in February of 1954 and were married on Labor Day that same year. Mr. Hackett soon thereafter joined the U.S. Foreign Service and began a life of world travel, living in several German cities (Bonn, Hamburg and Munich), as well as Bern, Switzerland, and in Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo.

*“His participation in the life of the
College was wide and deep — and truly
was a blessing from God.”*

— College General Counsel Quincy Masteller

The Hacketts were blessed with seven biological children and decided to share that blessing by fostering and then adopting an eighth. After his Foreign Service career drew to a close, Mr. Hackett moved the family to Washington, D.C., and began another career as a Capitol Hill staffer, working for Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes and then Reps. Don Fraser and Ben Rosenthal. He even found time to write several well regarded books about the life and work of Jean Monnet, father of the European Union.



“He was an eternal optimist, always looking on the bright side of things,” says Mr. Masteller. “I don’t think I ever heard Cliff say a bad thing about anybody — except maybe an in-transigent former tenant, but even then he cloaked his frustration with his natural charity.”

Mr. Hackett began attending the College’s Summer Seminar Weekends nearly 20 years ago and was a frequent attendee ever since. He was especially enthusiastic about the opening of the New England campus in 2019, taking it upon himself to research and write an extensive history of Northfield, Massachusetts. “I will most remember Cliff,” says Mr. Masteller, “for his happy nature, his loyalty, and especially his kindness and charity.”

A member of the College’s Washington, D.C., Board of Regents, Mr. Hackett was also a generous benefactor. Among his many gifts over the years was establishing the Clifford P. Hackett Endowment for Faculty Development, which sustains the annual tutor-development program on both campuses. As a member of the St. Thérèse of Lisieux Legacy Society, he even continues to support the College’s students after his death, having included Thomas Aquinas College in his estate plans.

Mr. Hackett was predeceased by his beloved Beatrice and youngest son, Roger. He is survived by his seven remaining children, 13 grandchildren, and five great grandchildren.

“Cliff was a good man and a great man,” observes Mr. Masteller. “He has finished the race. He kept the faith. May Our Lord, the Good Shepherd, grant him eternal rest, and may perpetual light shine upon him.” ❖

“We Have to Look at Ourselves as Missionary Evangelists”

An Interview with the Most Rev. William D. Byrne

By opening a New England campus, Thomas Aquinas College hopes to help to bring the light of faith back to a region that has become largely secularized. Would you say that is also the mission of your diocese?

This is now a mission diocese, and as such we are missionaries. So it's not like it was for my predecessors, coming into a well-established church. We are re-creating, and not necessarily going back, but moving forward into a new, beautiful future. But just like all the missionaries who came before us, such as St. Francis Xavier, we are setting off into very exciting territory — scary at times, but also very exciting. So I think we have to look at ourselves as missionary evangelists.

What does that entail?

I think that's the beauty of Thomas Aquinas College. The answer is found in the formation of our own Catholics, so that we can understand the Faith. If we understand the Faith, then we can explain the Faith. And after nearly half a century of failed catechesis, our people are unable to do that, and they don't even remember what some



The Most Rev. William D. Byrne, Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, presided at the Dedication of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel at Thomas Aquinas College, New England, on March 7, 2022.

of the answers are, or even that the Church has the answers. So the secret is not just preaching the Word, but preaching the Word to those who claim to be Catholics, and giving them adequate formation to share the Faith.

“Whether it be in the courtroom or the operating room or the classroom — or wherever Thomas Aquinas College graduates find themselves — they are going to be called to bring Christ to a place where He has been excluded.”

You were once a college chaplain. Can you talk about what's entailed in ministering to college students?

I was the chaplain at the University of Maryland from 1999 to 2007, a radically different experience than Thomas Aquinas College, a very secular university in a very secular state. The thing that I discovered was — in a culture where everything is possible and everything is permissible, and where tolerance is somehow seen as the only virtue — the Gospel stands out as something radical and new that many of the students hadn't experienced before.

So I didn't have to re-create the product. We have the Way, the Truth and the Life of Jesus Christ; it was about placing

Him in the center. I started to do Eucharistic Adoration and made our retreats centered on the Eucharist, Adoration, and Confession. Things started to change immediately. We tripled the number of students from a few hundred to nearly 1,000 in my time there. We had vocations, about 14 priestly vocations, about 5 vocations to religious life. It was a valuable lesson that if you want to change things, put Jesus in the center, and it will all take care of itself.

What do you think it means for the College's students to be “missionary evangelists?”

Some of them are going to be called to the priesthood and others to religious life; however, I think the true work of Evangelization is an informed and empowered laity. That was the inspiration of the Second Vatican Council, where the so-called “power of the laity” began. Graduates of Thomas Aquinas College are called to be the leaven of society. I am a firm believer that we are called to move into the world and transform the culture from the inside, and not just preach to those on the outside. But whether it be in the courtroom or the operating room or the classroom — or wherever Thomas Aquinas College graduates find themselves — they are going to be called to bring Christ to a place where He has been excluded.

It seems we live in a society of widespread distrust, and that creates an especially challenging climate for sharing the Gospel. How do you think that challenge can be overcome?

Satan is the great scatterer, so it's not difficult to see his work at hand. Because we have gotten less religious — by the hour, almost — we see the confusion grow along with a loss of the sense of the common good. Overcoming that is not a matter of coming up with the right branding or the correct message. It's about just bringing in Jesus Christ and letting Him do the work through us. I think an essential character for either laity or clergy should be a deep, deep prayer life, an ability to rely on the Lord, to

“We need people like Thomas Aquinas College graduates to enter politics, to be effective lawyers and judges, to bring faith and truth to our common discussion.”

know the Lord, and to be able to be used by the Lord. I am not sure the magic formula is anything more complicated than fidelity — and also the courage to endure persecution, which our church has always faced, and which is the seed of even greater faith.

How do we avoid falling into acrimony, and instead find ways to pursue the common good?

Well, we are already there. I mean, that's the problem within the Church. The acrimony has gotten into the roots of some people's faith, so that people have the capacity to pick and choose what they think is true, and that again is the work of the Scatterer. That's why we need people like Thomas Aquinas College graduates to enter politics, to be effective lawyers and judges, to bring faith and truth to our common discussion. But I think it also requires us to stand up and speak the truth, whether it's in fashion or out of fashion.

You have spoken of the need to boost vocations in your diocese. How do you hope to do that?

First of all you pray and you get people to pray. We try to do Holy Hours for vocations, to bring guys in front of the Eucharist, to allow the Lord to speak to them. In addition to

that, it's about re-creating a culture within the clergy, to make priests realize that each one of them is a vocations recruiter and that they are called to welcome guys into discernment. Almost every priest will tell you that, at some point in his life, another priest said to him, “You know, you would make a good priest,” and that confirmed that the Lord was speaking to his heart. It's about helping to create a culture of joyful priests who share that gift.

In your own life, what did your parents do to prepare you for your vocation? What advice would you offer parents to help their children hear and respond to that call?

I had an uncle who was a priest, so that made it all normative in our huge family. He was a beloved priest of the Archdiocese of New York, Fr. John Byrne, and my father very much admired him. We would have priests to dinner at the house, that kind of thing, making the exposure to priests common and positive.

The other thing is parents encouraging their children to think about the idea of vocation. Thomas Aquinas College is blessed in that many of the families are larger, so parents are less likely to be fearful of the prospect of not becoming grandparents. The family that is open to life in every way will be more open to the



will of God and to produce vocations. I am confident of that, especially in the community of Thomas Aquinas College.

Do you have any advice for our students who are discerning vocations?

The thing to remember is: The first call is not to priesthood, the first call is to the seminary, and it is in the seminary that you discern a call to the priesthood. So to take some pressure off you, if you feel the Lord might be calling you, it's important to give it a try.

First of all, make sure to enter into spiritual direction beforehand. Make sure you are going to confession regularly, trying to live a virtuous life so that you can hear the Lord speak to you. Then, at the seminary, it's a seven-year process of discernment. And the day a guy leaves the seminary is as joyful as the day that someone gets ordained, because it means that the Lord is calling someone, not to be a priest but, maybe, the father of a priest.

You are still relatively new to your diocese. How would you describe it and your acclimation to it?

Western Massachusetts is a beautiful place in every way. I think the people are lovely; they're far enough away from Boston that it has its own warm and welcom-

“Get out there. Get out into the world and bring the Lord and what He’s given you as a gift to share with others.”

ing culture. It has a variety of experiences, from urban poor to suburban to beautiful countryside, farming communities. The Berkshires are lovely. There are many, many different Latino communities. It



Bishop Byrne with his beloved black Labrador, Zélie, the “Episco-pup,” whom he calls “an evangelization machine, drawing people to her all the time.”

also has many different cultures in which to bring and define Christ, so I think it's a beautiful place to be a bishop.

You even have some Ukrainian Catholics in the Diocese, is that right?

Yes, and a very large Polish community. What I think is really beautiful amidst the ugliness of this horrible war is that, in Poland they have received millions of refugees, but there are no refugee camps. The refugees are being taken into people's homes and cared for in their homes.

In my own diocese, I have seen an outpouring of generosity to the cause, from people going over there to help Ukrainians defend themselves, to items given in parish collections, to amazing financial contributions in every parish toward Catholic Relief Services and helping with the refugees. I am not amazed — my people are generous and good people — but I am very moved by the response to the ugliness of war with the beauty of love and generosity.

What is your vision of Catholic education in your diocese, and what role, if any, do you think this college might play in it?

Covid gave our schools a boost, a much-needed boost, and I am a firm believer in the power of Catholic education. The challenge is to make sure that it's not just “public school in a uniform,” but authentically Catholic. That's why I hope that, should some TAC-New England graduates decide to go into Catholic education — what a beautiful place to be! — they will look into some opportunities for opening schools in this area. I have been in preliminary conversations with folks from the College, and I love seeing what we can do to support a classical academy for the families here. My hope for the future is to *open* schools, and not just maintain them.

The College is still very much new to the Diocese. Do you have any suggestions for what it can do to be a good neighbor?

I think it would be a shame if Thomas Aquinas College were an island, as opposed to being a place where the community — students, tutors, and staff — actually engaged themselves in the lives of the various churches in the area. There are some beautiful churches all throughout Franklin County, some beautiful communities of all varieties of people. I hope that

you make it a home that you go out into the world from and engage and uplift that community with your faith and your own formation.

You have published a series of YouTube videos and a book about “Five Things” Catholics should know or do. What are “five things” TAC students should know or do as they prepare for lives of service in the Church and the world?

No. 1 is get holy. Spend time before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and make daily Eucharist a necessity of your life. No. 2, stay holy. Make sure you are going to Confession on a regular basis, and stay away from things that are going to keep you from the Lord. No. 3 is get smart. Learn the Faith, learn the culture, and learn the philosophy that's going to help you bring truth to a culture that's in error. No. 4, have fun. College is not just about mental learning, it's about learning the beauty of friendship that will sustain you throughout your life. So get friends. And No. 5, get out there. Get out into the world and bring the Lord and what He's given you as a gift to share with others.

One last question: Who is Zélie and why is she important?

Zélie is my four-year old black Labrador retriever. I haven't brought her to Thomas Aquinas College, but I will sometime. She is the Episco-pup. She goes with me to many, many places and is an evangelization machine, drawing people to her all the time. She has been my canine companion during Covid, and she is definitely worth meeting.

Zélie is a *Laudato Si'* reminder, for me, of Pope Francis — the experience of God in creation. In my book, I have a whole chapter on “5 Things I've Learned from my Dog” and how my dog is completely dependent on me, so I have to remind myself to be completely dependent on God. My dog doesn't complain when we go somewhere; she's just happy to be along for the ride. I need to just be happy to go along for the ride with Jesus Christ. ❖

UPCOMING EVENTS

-  Thomistic Summer Conference..... **June 16 - 19**
-  TAC & Sacra Doctrina Conference **June 23 - 25**
-  West Coast Alumni Dinner & Reunions **June 25**
-  Summer Great Books Program for High School Students **July 10 - 23**
-  Summer Great Books Program for High School Students **July 24 - August 6**
-  For Mass schedules on both campuses, see: thomasaquinas.edu/masstimes

Monthly Dispatches from Both Campuses!

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STUDENT LIFE



1. Sophomores gather for an intra-class athletic competition, the “Section Games.” **2.** The freshman class hosts a New Orleans-themed Mardi Gras Dance. **3.** Students perform for their friends at the mid-semester Open-Mic Night. **4.** ZoëAnna Gibson ('23) and Eli Hunt ('25) are received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. **5.** Members of the Class of 2022 celebrate at their Senior Thesis turn-in party. **6.** The student choral group Chrysostomos performs at its March concert. **7.** The St. Genesius players perform Shakespeare’s Much Ado About Nothing.



1. A little snow can't keep students from an afternoon football game. **2.** The men of Wilson Hall serenade the women of Gould. **3.** Alumna Olympic ice dancer Siobhan Heekin-Canedy ('18) offers a Saturday-morning ice-skating clinic. **4.** Members of the community pray for the consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. **5.** TAC thespians stage a performance of Shakespeare’s Macbeth. **6.** Students delight in Irish dancing at the St. Patrick’s Day Dance. **7.** Recruiters appeal to prospective teachers at April’s Catholic Education Job Fair.





THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

10000 Ojai Road

Santa Paula, CA 93060-9622

thomasaquinas.edu | 800-634-9797

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