

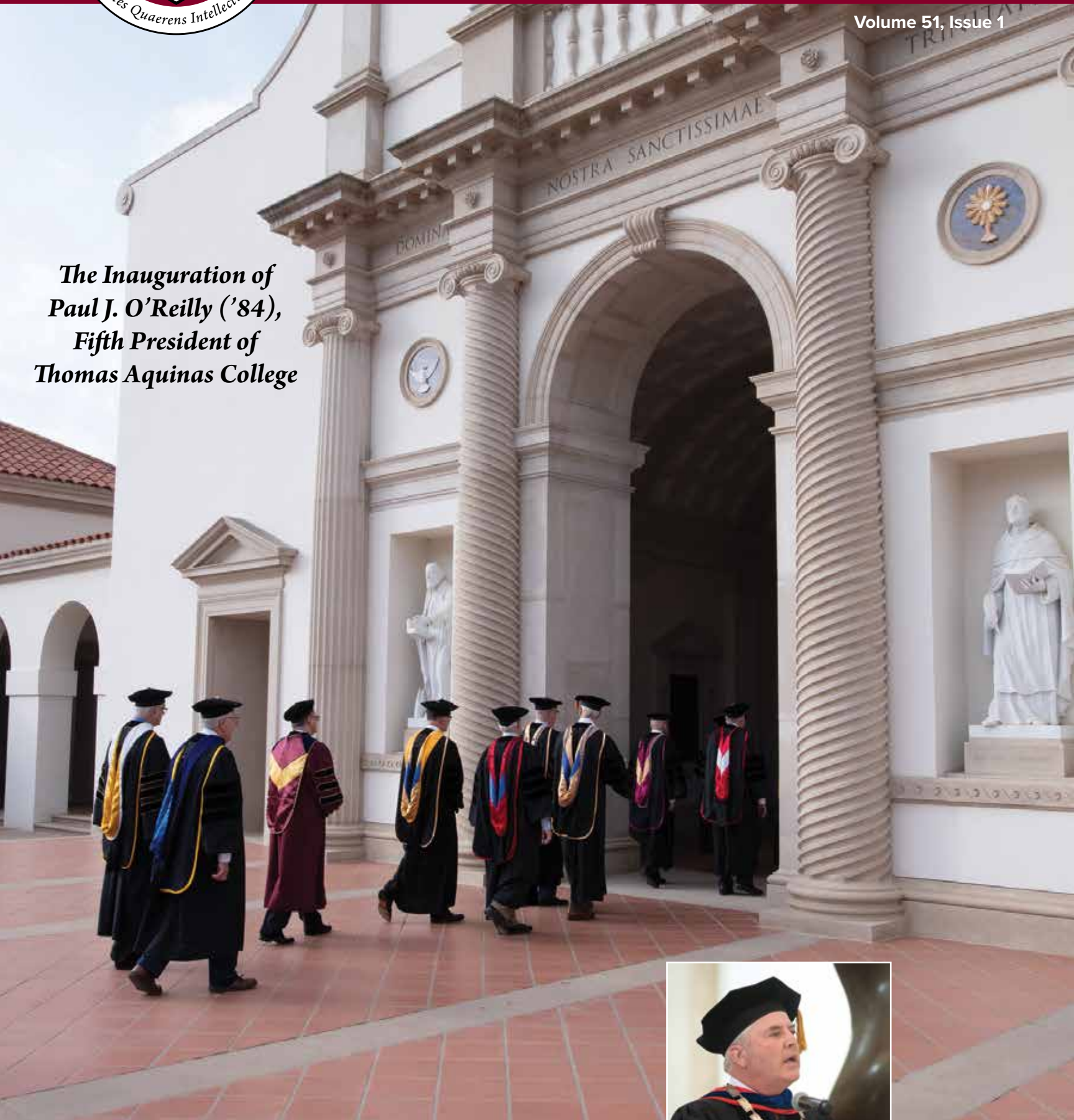


# THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

## WINTER 2023

Volume 51, Issue 1

*The Inauguration of  
Paul J. O'Reilly ('84),  
Fifth President of  
Thomas Aquinas College*



*"We are given today an opportunity to  
re-dedicate ourselves to the College."*



FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Let Us Re-Dedicate Ourselves to Thomas Aquinas College

The Inaugural Response of President Paul J. O'Reilly

Let me begin by thanking you for the honor you have given me by attending this Inauguration. I accept that honor not principally for myself, but for Thomas Aquinas College and for all those who founded and maintained it for more than 50 years.

Dean Goyette just reminded us of one the principal purposes of this ceremony. It is certainly not to celebrate me: I am just an imperfect instrument. But we are given today an opportunity to “re-dedicate ourselves to the College.” To that end, I would suggest to my colleagues, the tutors, that we remind ourselves of the wisdom we have inherited and been entrusted with maintaining.

Dr. Thomas E. Dillon, as dean, once wrote, “The success of the institution will depend primarily upon its teaching faculty — as go the tutors, so will go the school.” He went on to make more concrete what he meant: One “pressing need is the general development of the faculty in Aristotle and St. Thomas. This is of prime importance for the future of the school.”

How should you students re-dedicate yourselves to the College? Our founders saw this clearly:

“The student does his own understanding and reasoning. He is the primary agent in his education; he is led from the known to the unknown only by means of words and other signs. Rather than passively receiving knowledge, the student must strive to apprehend the concepts signified by the teacher’s words and to perceive the relationships that are pointed out to him. If he fails to see for himself, he fails to learn.”

So, students, give yourselves to this demanding program, and we, your tutors, promise you will receive a pearl of great price.

And to you, our Board of Governors, how should you re-dedicate yourselves to the College?

The Polity of Thomas Aquinas College states why the College exists: It exists “for the sake of Catholic liberal education as outlined in its founding document.” The Polity continues: “The Board of Governors is a ... body entrusted with the task of establishing and operating the College in such a way as to achieve that end.”

With that authority comes the responsibility of understanding the principles of education as articulated and defended in our founding document. The Blue Book puts it well: “Liberal education undertaken by Christians and ordered to theology turns out to be liberal education in its fullness.”

So today we re-dedicate ourselves to the College. To do so effectively, the Board of Governors, the tutors, and the students – all of us – must commit to understanding the unique mission of Thomas Aquinas College. As Mr. Berquist put it more than 20 years ago: “There is no better way of expressing ... the mission of the College than this: faith seeking understanding. This defines the conception of the life of learning which animated all the founders long before the College was even thought of, and which animates every page of the Blue Book, and the entire project of founding and maintaining the College.”



*“Students, give yourselves to this demanding program, and we, your tutors, promise you will receive a pearl of great price.”*

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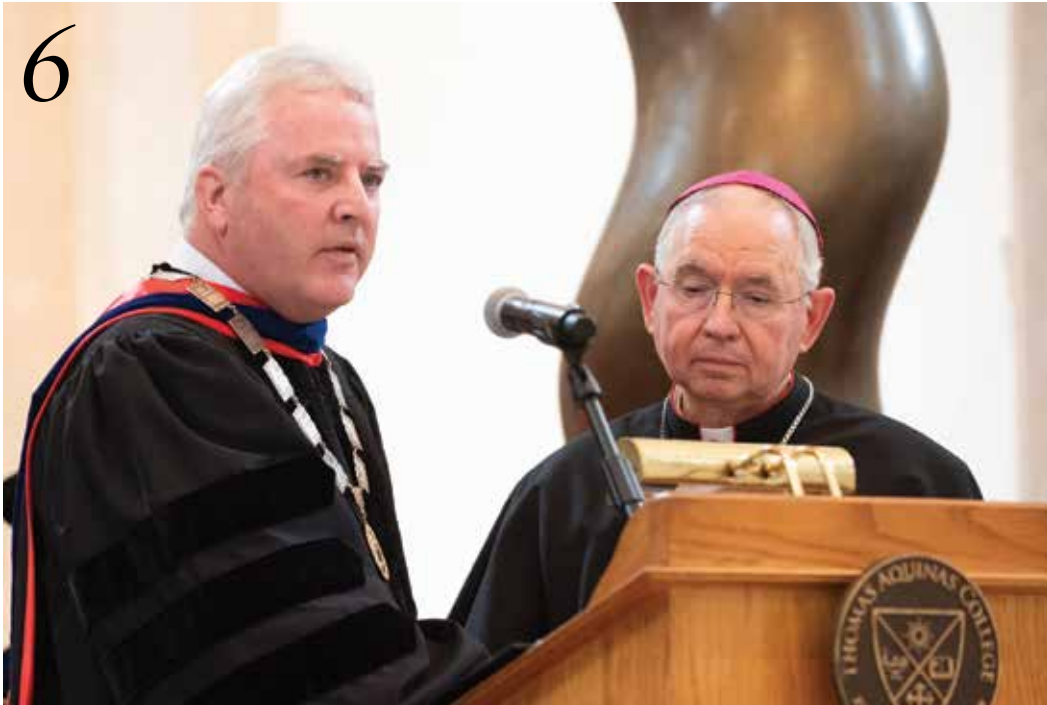
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# “The Lord Entrusts You with this Sacred Responsibility”

**Dr. Paul J. O'Reilly ('84) Inaugurated as Fifth President of Thomas Aquinas College**

Members of the Thomas Aquinas College community — past and present, and from both coasts — gathered on the California campus on October 22 for the inauguration of Dr. Paul J. O'Reilly ('84) as the College's fifth president, the first alumnus to assume the position. Prelates, distinguished academics, and other dignitaries joined the College's Board of Governors, faculty, staff, students, and alumni to witness the ceremony and to encourage Dr. O'Reilly and his family.

Coinciding with the Feast of Pope St. John Paul II, the event began with a Mass in honor of the sainted pope in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Offering the Holy Sacrifice was the Most Rev. José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, joined by the principal concelebrant, the Most Rev. William D. Byrne, Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts — the ordinaries of the two dioceses in which the College operates. Assisting them at the altar were the College's chaplains as well as numerous visiting and alumni priests and seminarians. The Chapel trembled and rang with swelling notes

from organ and trumpet, while the choir gave voice to the pervasive spirit of thanksgiving that filled the space.

In his homily, Archbishop Gomez reminded the College of its ecclesial vocation. “The Lord entrusts you with this sacred responsibility: to feed and tend these young hearts and minds, to give them knowledge of the truth,” His Excellency said. “Only in this wisdom, only in Jesus Christ, can we flourish in this world and know the love that never ends.”

Fortified by Word and Sacrament, congregants mingled briefly after Mass on the academic quadrangle before reconvening in the Chapel for the Installation Ceremony. The academic procession entered the Chapel to the solemn tune of Jeremiah Clarke's “Trumpet Voluntary,” and that solemnity continued as Rev. Robert Marczewski, head chaplain of TAC-California, invoked God's blessing on Dr. O'Reilly, after which all joined in the National Anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The founders of Thomas Aquinas College “envisioned a refor-

mation of liberal education under the guidance of the Truth, Who became incarnate,” said Dr. John J. Goyette, dean of the California campus, in his opening remarks. Dr. Goyette then introduced two speakers to testify to the success, 50 years later, of that founding vision: Thomas Carroll, superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Boston, and Dr. Glenn C. Arbery, president of Wyoming Catholic College.

Mr. Carroll noted that “Thomas Aquinas College has become the cornerstone of our efforts to remake our Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Boston.” He added that, “I have recruited more students from TAC than from any other college ... I have no doubt that TAC will remain ‘the gift that keeps on giving’ to our nation and our Church.”

Dr. Arbery, meanwhile, admired the College's steadfast fidelity to its mission over the years. “I most appreciate stories of the early struggles of TAC, especially when I look now at this beautiful campus and this chapel,” he said. “Last year, when I spoke at the campus in Massachusetts, I had the same feeling, not envy — well, not exactly — but the recognition that obstacles help define us, that God blesses those faithful to Him, and that hope and clarity of purpose draw the beneficence of those who witness them.”

Following these remarks, the prelates offered brief salutations. “My prayer for you, Dr. O'Reilly, is that in everything you do, you would seek holiness and bring love,” said Archbishop Gomez. “If you do this, everything else will fall into place.” Bishop Byrne, meanwhile, took the opportunity to thank the College for its presence

in the Northeast. “My small but beautiful portion of the People of God has suffered greatly in these past decades,” he said. “Yet, thanks to Thomas Aquinas College, I became one of the few bishops in the New England area to actually consecrate, not deconsecrate, a church — and what a glorious celebration it was!”

Then came what Dean Goyette proclaimed “the heart of the matter.” Called from the faculty by past presidents Peter DeLuca and Dr. Michael F. McLean, Dr. O'Reilly entered the sanctuary. There the Chairman of the Board of Governors, R. Scott Turicchi, formally

charged him to execute the office of president. Upon his acceptance, Dr. O'Reilly received the Chain of Office. Then, in the presence of Archbishop Gomez, he professed the Nicene Creed and took the Oath of Fidelity, thereby pledging his fealty to the College's mission of Catholic liberal education under the guidance of the Church's magisterium.

In his ensuing remarks, Dr. O'Reilly considered how the College can rededicate itself to its founding principles. To his fellow tutors, he suggested that “we remind ourselves of the wisdom we have inherited and been entrusted with maintaining,” especially in light of the responsibility the tutors have to the students. And to the students themselves, he said, “Give yourselves to this demanding program, and we, your

tutors, promise you will receive a pearl of great price.”

After Dr. O'Reilly's address, Rev. Greg Markey, head chaplain of TAC-New England, delivered the final blessing, after which choir and guests sang “Immaculate Mary” to conclude the ceremony — thanking Our Lord and His Blessed Mother for their continued protection of Thomas Aquinas College. ❖



**Top: Dr. O'Reilly's children give him a painting of his likeness on Mount Rushmore.  
Bottom: Dr. O'Reilly celebrates with his mother (left) and Mrs. O'Reilly and their granddaughter, Monica (right).**



**After the Installation Ceremony: Vice President for Advancement James Link with Lynn Friess (right) and members of her family; newly inaugurated President Paul J. O'Reilly and Christopher Laconi**



# “Your Mission as a Catholic College”

## Homily from the Mass for the Feast of Pope St. John Paul II

by the Most Rev. José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles



I am honored to celebrate this Holy Mass with you. We pray today that Our Lord’s hand be upon President O’Reilly and his family. And we ask St. Thomas Aquinas to intercede and guide this great college that bears his name. We ask his prayers for the new president and for students, faculty, administrators, the Board of Governors, and all your benefactors.

The Universal Church today remembers St. John Paul II, our beloved pope. So, we ask his intercession today, too. As we know, John Paul was a great champion of Catholic higher education. For many years, he served as a university professor in Poland. The Catholic college, he said famously, is “born from the heart of the Church.”

This week, I was reading his first homily again. I can still remember the excitement when he was elected pope. I was a new priest, ordained for just a few months. I remember first hearing these words; it was on this date, in 1978. St. John Paul said: “Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To His saving power, open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development. Do not be afraid. Christ knows ‘what is in man.’ He alone knows it.”

These words are still thrilling, still powerful. And these words describe the mission of the Catholic Church in our times. In a special way, they speak to your mission as a Catholic college. You are called to raise up a new generation of apostles who are not afraid to open every door for Christ, to shine His light

**“You are called to raise up a new generation of apostles who are not afraid to open every door for Christ, to shine His light into every area of our culture and society.”**

into every area of our culture and society; to bring every heart to the encounter with the living God.

St. John Henry Newman said that a Catholic college gives students the power to perceive how everything fits together in the “circle of knowledge.” This circle includes the knowledge of the sciences and history,

theology, morality, and the arts.

This is your vocation. You are sharers in the work of truth, in the noble work of helping young women and men to see and understand the unity of knowledge, the unity in creation. And in this, my dear brothers and sisters, your work participates in the Lord’s great plan for salvation history.

As we heard in today’s first reading, and again in the psalm, God’s designs for creation and for history are “catholic.”

The prophet Isaiah tells us today: “All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.” In the psalm, we have that beautiful image of all the “families of nations” giving praise and

glory to God. God created this world to be one, and He created the human race to be one. And His plan for the fullness of time is to reconcile all things in Jesus Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.

We are here to be servants of this plan. We are here to unite all things in Jesus Christ — to unite all creation and every nation in the love of Jesus Christ and the praise of His name.

The way of Christ is the way of love, as we hear in the Gospel today. This scene is one of the most tender in all of the Scriptures. As we know, it is after the Resurrection; this is the third and final time that Jesus reveals Himself to His apostles in the Gospel of John. He meets them by the seaside, and He builds a charcoal fire while they are out fishing.

And we remember that it was by a “charcoal fire” that St. Peter denied Our Lord three times on the night He was betrayed. So,

now Jesus asks Peter three times: “Do you love me?”

It is such a beautiful scene of confession, repentance, and reconciliation. We have all experienced this in our own lives. No matter what we might do, no matter how far we might fall away, we know: We can always turn to Jesus and find forgiveness. He is the Lord of second chances, the Lord of new beginnings. For St. Peter, for you and for me; for all humanity. That is a beautiful truth.

So, when we hear this Gospel today, we need to put ourselves in St. Peter’s shoes. Jesus is challenging you and me today: “Do you love me more than these?” Do we love Him — more than we love ourselves; more than we love our securities and comforts? Do we love Him enough to confront our fears and overcome our weakness?

And love is not just words. We can’t just tell Jesus we love Him. He knows that already. “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love you,” Peter says today. The point is that we need to prove our love — by our actions, by the way we live, by the way we give. That’s why Jesus tells Peter, three times, “Feed my lambs ... Tend my sheep. ... Feed my sheep.”

My brothers and sisters, Jesus is talking to you and me. He calls each of us, just as He calls St. Peter, to be a shepherd of souls. We need to feed His lambs and tend His sheep — to serve the people in our lives with love, to give as Jesus gives.

In your vocation as a Catholic college, the Lord entrusts you with this same responsibility: to feed and tend these young hearts and minds, to give them knowledge of the truth — the truth about who we are, and how we are made; about why we are here, and how we ought to live. Only in this wisdom, only in Jesus Christ, can we flourish in this world and know the love that never ends in the world to come. May this wisdom give us the courage to love — to open wide every door for Christ, and to proclaim His salvation.

St. Thomas Aquinas, pray for us! St. John Paul II, pray for us! And may Our Mother Mary, Seat of Wisdom, keep us always close in the love of her son. ❖

## A Western Massachusetts Perspective

by The Most Rev. William D. Byrne  
Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts



As we gather for the inauguration of President O’Reilly as the fifth president of Thomas Aquinas College, I am grateful to offer a New England — or, more precisely, a Western Massachusetts — perspective on the impact of the of College on my part of the People of God.

“Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth — in a word, to know Himself — so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.”

With these words, St. John Paul II begins his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. Prophetically written to speak to a culture suffering from the unnatural separation of faith and reason, it articulated what Thomas Aquinas College had already been witnessing to the world for 30 years.

As the Blue Book states, “Contrary to what is often assumed, liberal education does not take place in spite of or even apart from the Christian faith. Rather, the Christian student, because of his faith, can be liberally educated in the most perfect and complete way.”

I stand before you humbled by the ineffable grace and mercy of God. His providence has deemed it valuable for this witness to be brought to New England, more specifically to the Diocese of Springfield.

My small but beautiful portion of the people of God has suffered greatly.

This once vibrant Church has experienced much pain as not only churches but also hearts and minds closed to the teachings of Christ as well. Yet, thanks to Thomas Aquinas College, I became one of the few bishops in the Northeast to actually consecrate — not deconsecrate — a church, and what a glorious celebration it was!

This is not the work of men and women, as gifted as the collaborators may be. God alone receives the glory and the praise forever and ever! To those who helped make the New England Campus of TAC a reality, thank you for your hard work and for not getting in our Savior’s way.

The presence of the newly renovated chapel is a sign of the presence of Christ found in the faculty, staff and students. Like all who have received the Eucharist, we become tabernacles of His presence in the world. Each of us not only must bear Jesus in our bodies, but also we must be adorned externally with His joy, His mercy, His love for others. But the living, walking, studying, laughing tabernacles that are the students of TAC are witnesses to *fides quaerens intellectum*, “faith seeking understanding.”

Thank you for bringing this sense of wonder to Western Massachusetts, and thank God for Thomas Aquinas College’s New England campus. President O’Reilly, I pray you will be with us often. ❖

**“The presence of the newly renovated chapel is a sign of the presence of Christ found in the faculty, staff and students.”**

## “The Shining College Upon a Hill” Remarks from the Installation Ceremony

by Thomas W. Carroll  
Superintendent of Schools, Archdiocese of Boston

I am honored to speak today surrounded by the awe and wonder of God’s creation, nestled in the majestic mountains of Santa Paula. Thomas Aquinas College is the college I wish I had attended.

In this moment, as our culture collapses around us, Thomas Aquinas College stands as the shining college upon a hill — actually two hills now on both coasts. These two campuses keep alive the good, true, and beautiful.

I have come to know TAC through my work as superintendent of schools. With the support of Cardinal Seán O’Malley in Boston, we are in the midst of rebuilding the future of our church, one student and one classroom at a time. And we are doing this in one of the largest Catholic school systems in the nation, with more than 100 Catholic schools, 32,500 students, and 4,200 faculty and staff.



Aquinas College.

In just three years, I have replaced three dozen school leaders — perhaps the largest intentional turnover of Catholic school leadership in the nation. But no matter whom I put in the front offices of our schools, the magic that happens in schools is what happens within the four walls of the classroom.

That’s why we launched our St. Thomas More Teaching Fellows initiative, where we are recruiting faithful Catholic graduates — mostly from liberal arts colleges — to apply their intellect and missionary zeal in our classrooms. Thomas Aquinas College has become the cornerstone of our efforts to remake our Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Boston. I have recruited more students from TAC than from any other college. And I have spent the last two days on this campus recruiting even more after hosting other TAC students just the week before last in Boston.

But why do I wish I attended TAC, and why do I want to hire its graduates?

First, the quality of teaching here is stellar. The tutors have no rivals. Second, to succeed

here, students have to work hard, be in love with their faith, and be intellectually curious — all qualities in short supply in the broader culture. Third, TAC has created “safe spaces” for students. I don’t mean safe spaces in a politically correct way that attempts to shield students from contrary views or to encourage political orthodoxy. TAC has made its classrooms safe spaces for students to be intellectually daring. TAC tutors eschew the indoctrination too often present on American campuses, instead deftly encouraging the importance of preparation, intellectual risk-taking, and collegiality.

Lastly, TAC has created a strong Catholic culture through study of the Bible, frequent Masses, and Adoration. In the background, inspired landscape architecture provides quiet places for reflection and prayer, my favorite being the Blessed Mother statue with running water surrounded by roses.

One of the TAC graduates we hired this year described how the ready availability of the sacraments here deepened his faith. At TAC, he also cultivated a habit of weekly Adoration, explaining, “I have fallen in love with Eucharistic Adoration. I can say with complete honesty that the happiest moments of my life have occurred before the Blessed Sacrament.” After four years of TAC, he offers: “I now am married to my Catholic faith; one cannot know me without knowing the faith I profess.”

What a beautiful credit to his family, but also to the intentionality of faith formation at Thomas Aquinas College.

Pope Paul VI remarked, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” At Thomas Aquinas College, students are surrounded by tutors who are witnesses. So perhaps it should not be surprising that

so many faithful TAC graduates are following their example and becoming faithful educators in Boston and elsewhere.

Their decision to become educators should be viewed as a high compliment to the impressive roster of tutors assembled here at TAC. Let’s show our thanks now for TAC’s tutors with a round of applause.

A few closing thoughts: What TAC has become to its students — and our nation and church — requires constant nourishment: new students, generous benefactors, and leadership committed to continuation of what makes Thomas Aquinas College such a special place.

*“What TAC has become to its students — and our nation and church — requires constant nourishment: new students, generous benefactors, and leadership committed to continuation of what makes Thomas Aquinas College such a special place.”*

With the inauguration as president of Paul O’Reilly (a former TAC student and tutor), with the ongoing support of TAC’s board (capably led by Scott Turicchi), and with an executive staff that includes the likes of the inimitable Jim

Link, I have no doubt that TAC will remain “the gift that keeps on giving” to our nation and our Church.

Thank you. And may God continue to bless Thomas Aquinas College. ❖

## “God Blesses Those Faithful to Him”

by Dr. Glenn Arbery  
President, Wyoming Catholic College

Thank you, Dean Goyette, and greetings from Wyoming Catholic College on this high occasion of the inauguration of Dr. Paul J. O’Reilly as president of Thomas Aquinas College. It is an honor for us to be represented here, because, since its inception, TAC has articulated and lived out a mission that distinguishes it from all others. It has been deeply serious in its ambitions and its rigor, deeply Catholic in its teaching and its practices, and, as a result, its graduates have spread the influence of Thomas Aquinas College and garnered for it a universal respect.

It has been my privilege these past nine years at Wyoming Catholic College to work with your alumni daily, first as colleagues on the faculty and then as my closest advisors as president. The education here has always so clearly informed who they are that I have felt it as a major paradigm against which Wyoming Catholic College measures its own distinctness. When our dean considers the inordinate amount of work that we require of our stu-

dents, he also remembers that his Senior Seminar at TAC spent only two classes on *War and Peace* in a semester that included *Democracy in America* and many other texts. Memories come up so constantly that there have been occasions when I, the only non-alumnus in a meeting, have listened while the recollection of some tutor or classmate carried everyone else away. It is always a pleasure to hear, as it is a pleasure to work with them all. Your graduates have a *habitus* that affects their

*“Since its inception, TAC has articulated and lived out a mission that distinguishes it from all others.”*

approach to everything they do, in ways appropriate to the gifts of each.

As president of a small college now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year, perhaps I most appreciate stories of the early struggles of TAC, es-



pecially when I look now at this beautiful campus and this chapel. Last year when I spoke at the campus in Massachusetts, I had the same feeling, not envy — well, not exactly — but the recognition that obstacles help define us, that God blesses those faithful to Him, and that hope and clarity of purpose draw the beneficence of those who witness them. As St. Paul writes to the Ephesians, “living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into Him who is the head.” May Our Lord bless Dr. O’Reilly and Thomas Aquinas College at the beginning of this new administration in the second half-century of your history. May the friendship between our institutions “living the truth in love” grow ever deeper. ❖

# “Run so as to Win”

## Archbishop Gomez Dedicates Newly Completed Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center



*Rex J. Rawlinson, president of the Fritz B. Burns Foundation, speaks at the Dedication of the Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center on the California campus.*

On October 22, the Feast of Pope St. John Paul II, the Most Rev. José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, dedicated the newest building at Thomas Aquinas College, California — one named in the beloved saint’s honor.

Shortly after the luncheon celebrating the inauguration of Dr. Paul J. O’Reilly as the College’s fifth president, members of the College community made their way to the Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center on the southwestern corner of the campus. Trustees of the Fritz B. Burns Foundation of Los Angeles, whose \$15 million grant funded the building’s construction, joined His Excellency and College officials to celebrate the completion of the Athletic Center, which had a soft opening last spring.

From a podium just outside the Athletic Center’s entrance — and standing before a statue of its saintly patron — Dr. O’Reilly acknowledged the architects, contractors,

and craftsmen who all played important roles in bringing the building to fruition. “But none of this would have been possi-



ble without the generosity of the Fritz B. Burns Foundation,” he added. “It was the Foundation’s goodness, kindness, and trust

that made this Athletic Center possible. It was also the Foundation that suggested we should name it after John Paul II, a wonderful choice.”

Dr. O’Reilly went on to describe the late Mr. Burns as a “visionary businessman and devout Catholic who made his first gift to the College in 1971, when we were first founded.” Over the past 50 years, his foundation has been one of the College’s “most faithful and generous” benefactors. Thanks to its trustees’ support of the College’s mission, the Foundation has enabled the development of the California campus by funding St. Cecilia and St. Gladys Halls, as well as contributing to four other buildings. “We are honored to count them as friends,” said Dr. O’Reilly. “I ask you to keep them in your prayers.”

Designed by alumnus architect Anthony Grumbine (’00), principal at the Santa Barbara office of Harrison Design,

the 17,000-square-foot Athletic Center features a gymnasium for basketball and volleyball, separate men’s and women’s weight and workout rooms, and climbing and bouldering walls. Its outdoor amenities include a six-lane, 25-yard waveless lap pool; lighted outdoor tennis and basketball courts; new soccer and baseball fields; and a campus picnic area.

After his introductory remarks, Dr. O’Reilly welcomed Archbishop Gomez and Rex J. Rawlinson, the Fritz B. Burns Foundation’s president, who took to the podium. “I am a very lucky man to be a part of a project like this, named after the great Pope St. John Paul II, a magnificent athlete,” Mr. Rawlinson said.

“A lot of places you go, they start a project, and then they start padding all the costs, and pretty soon things are out of hand, and then they want more money, and so on,” Mr. Rawlinson continued. “Thomas Aquinas is not like that. They plan everything out, and they come in within budget, and you get more than you thought you were going to get. And that’s what this facility is. You walk around this facility, and we are getting great value for our money.”

The next speaker, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Dr. Travis Cooper, spoke

***“May God, Who brings light to our minds and strength to our bodies, guide us in all that we do, so that each day we may find gladness and friendship.”***

about the important role that the Athletic Center plays in the life of the College’s students. Describing TAC’s four-year program as a “great adventure in pursuit of wisdom under the guidance of the Catholic faith,” Dr. Cooper observed that, in the new gymnasium, students will train their bodies, refresh their minds, and discipline their souls to better prepare them for the work of Catholic liberal education. “The body and soul,” he explained, “work in concert.”

Archbishop Gomez then offered a prayer of blessing, accompanied by two appropriately themed readings — 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (“Run so as to win”) and Psalm 100 (“His steadfast love endures forever”) — before sprinkling the building’s walls with holy water. As Daniel J. Grimm (’76) led the Thomas Aquinas

College Choir in a choral interlude, His Excellency continued the blessing inside the building, sprinkling the gymnasium, weight rooms, and locker rooms, as well as the swimming pool outside. “May God, Who brings light to our minds and strength to our bodies, guide us in all that we do,” the Archbishop prayed, “so that each day we may find gladness and friendship.”

In his concluding remarks, Chairman of the Board of Governors R. Scott Turicchi expressed gratitude “to everyone who made this possible,” especially Archbishop Gomez, “all those involved in the tangible aspects of making this project a reality,” and, most importantly, the Fritz B. Burns Foundation. “We are most grateful and appreciative that you support the mission of Thomas Aquinas College that seeks to nurture the whole person: mind, soul, and body.”

Mr. Turicchi noted how Pope St. John Paul II, a champion of sports and physical fitness, “modeled the virtues that come from engaging in such activity” — such as temperance, sacrifice, teamwork, and humility. “While there will be no national championships generated inside this building,” the chairman quipped, “there will be a lot of great fraternity.” ♦



*The Most Rev. José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, with members of the Rawlinson family*

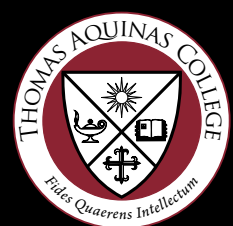


# High School Great Books Program AT THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

New England: July 9–July 22

California: July 16–July 29

*Ask the big questions and explore the answers, forging new friendships to last a lifetime*



## THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

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## With Gratitude

College Salutes, Thanks Former  
President Michael F. McLean  
and his wife, Lynda

On the eve of the inauguration of its fifth president, Thomas Aquinas College took a moment to honor its *fourth* president, Dr. Michael F. McLean, and his wife, Lynda.

“This is a great time to celebrate all that you have done for the College, Mike and Lynda,” said President Paul J. O’Reilly at a reception and dinner in the McLeans’ honor, held October 21 on the California campus. “It has been a pleasure to have a front-row seat, working with you all these years.”

A 44-year member of the College’s teaching faculty, Dr. McLean served as president from 2010 until last spring, when he stepped down to return to the classroom. “In Mike’s 12-year tenure as president, he utilized his academic, managerial, and people skills to elevate the faculty to important positions of responsibility,” said Chairman of the Board of Governors Scott Turicchi, “without compromising the mission of the College ... and positioning it very well for the next 50 years.”

In his invocation preceding the dinner, the Most Rev. William D. Byrne, Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, identified many of Dr. McLean’s most significant accomplishments. “He has helped healing from a tragedy, and he has fought the good fight for religious liberty all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States of America,” His Excellency observed. “He has built and grown the California campus, and he has since brought the blessing of the Thomas Aquinas education to New England.”

*“The moral of this story, especially for  
you young people, is to open your heart  
and mind to God’s providence.”*

Over the course of the dinner, guests — including alumni, faculty, staff, and members of the Senior Class — took turns saluting the McLeans’ generous service of the College. A slideshow, featuring photos of the couple throughout the decades, played in one corner, and the student choral group Chrysostomos blessed those gathered by performing several songs and hymns.

Among those to offer their public thanks were representatives of the College’s alumni and parents’ associations. “You led the College through several significant crises, from the raging inferno



of the Thomas Fire, which scorched these very walls, to the Covid lockdowns,” said Pete LaFave (’13), vice president of the Thomas Aquinas College Alumni Association. “All of us alumni are so grateful for everything that you did to lead this institution that’s so special to us.” Added Paula Cummings, president of the TAC Parents’ Association, “Your adherence to the mission of Catholic liberal education, which leads the students closer to God, was beyond our highest expectation.”

Dr. John J. Goyette, dean of the California campus and Dr. McLean’s onetime student, praised the former president for his willingness to listen and innovate, as well as his and Mrs. McLean’s “true partnership” — as evidenced by their decision to stay on campus together during the 2017 Thomas Fire. He also noted that the former president is, first and foremost, an educator. “Dr. McLean is one of the most gifted tutors at leading the class discussion with a light touch,” said Dr. Goyette. “It really gives me great pleasure to see him return to the classroom to teach, which was his first love.”

In gratitude, Chairman Turicchi and President O’Reilly presented the McLeans with an icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, patroness of the New England Chapel. After receiving this gift, Dr. McLean took to the podium to offer his own reflections from his 44 years at Thomas Aquinas College.

“This campus was an open field when I first saw it and showed it to my mother in 1978,” Dr. McLean remembered. “Looking at four or five cows that happened to be looking around on the open plateau, I told her, ‘This is where I hope to work.’ She then politely questioned the prudence of my decision to major in philosophy, to study the Great Books, and to join a college with so uncertain a future,” he laughed. “But who could have predicted that I would one day be asked to serve as that college’s president and help to open a second campus in Northfield, Massachusetts?”

Looking back, Dr. McLean continued, it is impossible to miss God’s hand at work. “The moral of this story, especially for you young people, is to open your heart and mind to God’s providence. You never know what you will be called to do. This life at this college has been unexpected and a great pleasure — and a great honor — and it’s all due to God’s providence, God’s love, and God’s goodwill.” ♦



# One Program Two Coasts

## RECENT EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

### New England Chapel, Alumnus Architect Honored with 2022 Bulfinch Award

Just months after architect Duncan Stroik won a Palladio Award for his work on Thomas Aquinas College's California chapel, the architects who redesigned the building's New England counterpart claimed a coveted prize of their own.

The Institute for Classical Architecture and Art (ICAA) awarded a 2022 Bulfinch Award to alumnus architect Anthony Grumbine ('00) and his colleagues at Harrison Design for their renovation of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel on the Northfield, Massachusetts, campus. The award, given in the category of Ecclesiastic Design, was presented at an October 29 celebration at the Harvard Club in Boston.

The College took ownership of its East Coast campus, which formerly belonged to a nondenominational preparatory school, in 2017. Shortly thereafter, it contracted Harrison Design to transform the building for Catholic worship. Mr. Grumbine and colleague Nic Charbonneau were thrilled to take up the challenge of breathing new life into a beautiful neo-Gothic building, while also preserving its elegance and heritage. Renovations included the installation of a tabernacle, kneelers, a central aisle for litur-

gical processions, confessionals, a permanent altar and altar rail, Stations of the Cross, and a high altar and reredos.

In addition to its stylistic fidelity, a deeper continuity pervades the fully renovated chapel. Both Mr. Grumbine and Mr. Charbonneau studied at the University of Notre Dame's School of Architecture under Mr. Stroik, who designed Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel on the California campus. These former students, while faithful to the erstwhile Sage Chapel's vernacular, sprinkled visual echoes of Mr. Stroik's design for California throughout their renovation design for New England.

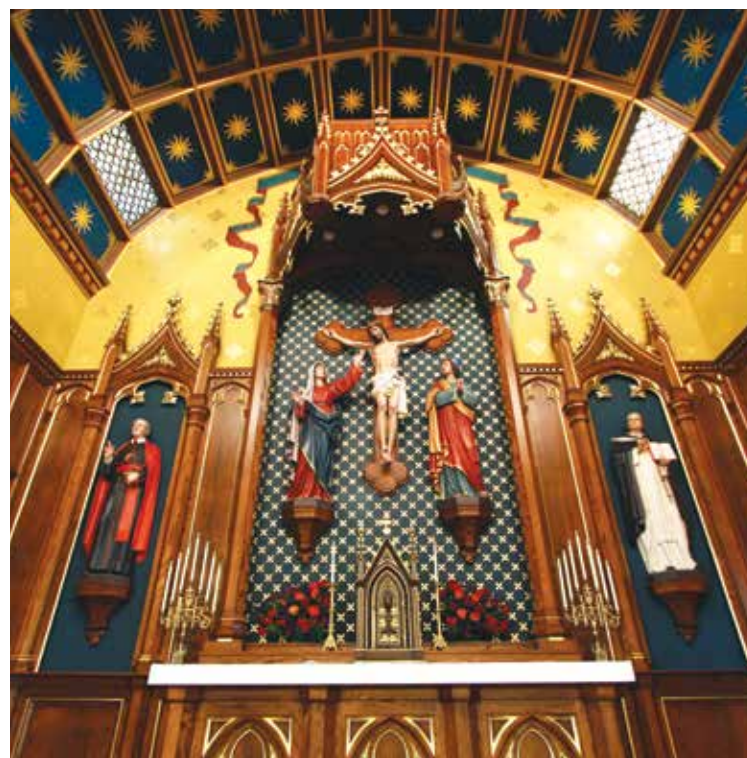
"There's an order-in-exuberance to both chapels," observes Mr. Grumbine. This shared exuberance, Mr. Charbonneau adds, is a testament to the College's single-minded architectural patronage. "Thomas Aquinas College has a real clarity about what is central to the mission of the school: the Catholic faith." ❖

### ACTA Gives TAC Curriculum an "A" for 2022-23

The American Council of College Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) has released its annual report on the curricular strength of American institutions of higher learning and, once again, Thomas Aquinas College is at the very top of the list.

ACTA examines over 1,100 four-year institutions, with more than 8 million undergraduate students among them. But while most guides rank schools based on popularity or reputation, the organization evaluates these institutions solely on the basis of their core curricula. It identifies seven essential areas of study for undergraduates: composition, literature, U.S. government or history, a foreign language (at an intermediate level), mathematics, natural science, and economics. The more, and more substantively, a college or university requires students to engage with these areas, the higher the school's overall ACTA rating.

For the thirteenth time in as many years, ACTA has given Thomas Aquinas College a perfect rating, which lands it among the top 2 percent of American colleges and universities, 22 schools in all, named to ACTA's coveted A-List. Within that list, the College is one of only seven schools, or the top 0.2 percent nationwide, to earn a perfect score for the strength of its curriculum. ❖



## Facing the Challenges of the Modern Marketplace

Robert Agostinelli & Steve Friess Offer TAC Students Professional Advice

When they were visiting the California campus for October's presidential inauguration and Athletic Center dedication, two new friends of the College — one a successful financier, the other a prominent philanthropist — took time to meet with students, sharing their personal wisdom and professional experience. At a packed meeting in St. Cecilia Hall's Dillon Seminar Room, Robert Agostinelli, founder of the Rhône Group private equity firm, and Steve Friess, who manages the Lynn and Foster Friess Family Foundation, shared their life stories, dating back to their childhood and college days.

For Mr. Agostinelli, this first visit to Thomas Aquinas College seemed providential. Growing up in Rochester, New York, he attended a high school that was also named for St. Thomas Aquinas, where he came under the tutelage of the great 20<sup>th</sup> century Catholic evangelist, the Most Rev. Fulton Sheen. Archbishop Sheen, of course, was also a friend of Thomas Aquinas College, having served as the keynote speaker at a major promotional dinner held 18 months before its 1971 opening. "He had a great influence on my life," Mr. Agostinelli reflected. "I feel Sheen's presence helped bring me here."

The speakers also answered questions on a wide range of subjects, from the importance of fostering personal virtue to the challenges facing Christians in the world today. "You're at a school that's teaching you your sense of self and the dignity of man," said Mr. Agostinelli. "If you want to make a difference and make sure you and your children are going to have a right to the pursuit of happiness — I promise you, based on what we're



*"You're a very fortunate crowd here, because you've got great professors and a virtuous environment. You're to be admired for what you're doing."*

seeing in the world today — you're going to be in a fight. You're going to be in a daily fight."

Young people of faith, Messrs. Agostinelli and Friess warned students, will face greater challenges in today's marketplace than in the past, noting political pressures and social decay. "In my business — I'm a private equity person, I manage money for big corporations and big families," said Mr. Agostinelli, "you have to deal with a lot of these evils." Nonetheless, the two men exhorted students not to be afraid, encouraging them to use their education to help society regain its moral footing.

"Whatever you decide to do, do it with

absolute conviction and focus," said Mr. Agostinelli. Added Mr. Friess, "It's on you. Become leaders and re-establish America's moral authority."

Their advice ranged from the practical — "Start a Roth IRA," said Mr. Friess, "put in the maximum every year that you can" — to the inspiring: "Gratitude and humility are very, very vital to one's existence," Mr. Agostinelli observed. "You're a very fortunate crowd here, because you've got great professors and a virtuous environment. You're to be admired for what you're doing."

Although their initial remarks lasted only a few minutes, the longtime friends spoke for more than an hour and a half, as students stayed to ask questions. "We are very grateful to Robert and Steve for the generous way they shared their time and firsthand knowledge of the business and political world with our students," said James Link, the College's vice president for advancement. "What a gift for these undergrads to benefit from their insights, gleaned over a lifetime of living and working as successful Christian professionals in an increasingly secular world." ❖

ONE PROGRAM TWO COASTS

College Hosts First California Alumni & Parent Day in Three Years!

October 8, 2022, marked a homecoming of sorts for many alumni — and a reunion between parents and current students — at Thomas Aquinas College, California. Hundreds gathered on the Santa Paula campus for the return of Alumni & Parent Day after a three-year hiatus.

“Due to a regional power outage in 2019, followed by two years of Covid restrictions, this was our first California Alumni & Parent Day since 2018,” said Robert Bagdazian, the College’s director of alumni and parent relations. “Our Alumni and Parents’ associations did a beautiful job of hosting the event, and it was wonderful to have everyone back on campus once again.” Highlights from the day included Mass in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, an All-College BBQ dinner, and a seminar on the College’s founding and governing document, *A Proposal for the Fulfillment of Catholic Liberal Education*.

The return of this beloved TAC tradition was widely heralded as a great success. As alumna and parent Caroline (Burnham ’00) King put it, “The best part of the alumni day was seeing my children, who are current students, thriving at my alma mater.”



Dorm Tyrants Announced at First-Ever “Coronation”

The dorm tyranny is something of a TAC legend: One student from each residence hall takes it upon himself to unite his dormmates in proving their superiority, usually through elaborate pranks which slip under the radar of official events. Normally, the introduction of the tyrant occurs privately, within the dorm. This year’s TAC-New England tyrants made the tyranny official, however, taking it upon themselves to make their introduction into a full-blown event — a “coronation,” no less, held in October.

The event began with a motorcade down to the athletic field, with the three tyrants — Nick Dighello (’24) for Wilson Hall, Tyler Getlik (’24) for St. Augustine Hall, and Niamh McCann (’23) for Gould Hall — all standing and waving from the flatbed of a pickup truck. At the following dinner and ceremony, Assistant Dean Dr. Patrick Gardner gave a wry address about the tyranny as it relates to the academic program, noting that, no matter how the students rule

their residence halls, their classes will always ultimately be their rulers. “The history of the dorm tyranny is not normally one of public display,” he admitted. “This is a bold move.”

Then, each of the tyrants made their voices heard. Mr. Getlik gave a valiant speech about how his tyranny would accentuate the beauty of the academic program. Mr. Dighello claimed that he, as a spokesman for and the public face of Wilson, would help to cultivate the “strong and virile essence” of his residence hall. Miss McCann, the only senior tyrant, applauded her counterparts for their efforts and hoped for “a peaceful and advantageous relationship between the boys and the women of Northfield.” The speeches were met with bursts of laughter and applause.

College Thanks Benefactors at Christmas Dinner

“As we come together tonight for a Christmas dinner, we thank and bless You, Lord and God of all,” began California Chaplain Rev. John Mary Chung in his invocation at Thomas Aquinas College’s 2022 Christmas Dinner. “We thank You for Your abundant blessings on this college. You are lavish in bestowing all Your good gifts upon us.”

The December 4 gathering in downtown Los Angeles’ California Club was a festive celebration for many of the dear friends who have given generously to the College and its students over the last year. The evening consisted of excellent food, good company, and joyful music.

“It is to all of you that

we at the College welcome and give our thanks for your continued spiritual and financial support,” said Chairman of the Board of Governors Scott Turicchi, who greeted guests and emceed the event. President Paul J. O’Reilly offered a toast of gratitude. “The College’s financial strength depends on your generosity, which funds our program of financial aid,” said Dr. O’Reilly. “I want you to know, on behalf of all our students: We are deeply grateful for your kindness. May God bless you.”

Mr. Turicchi then introduced Admissions Director Jon Daly, who read St. Luke’s account of the Nativity, recalling the angel’s glorious pronouncement to the shepherds who were tending their flock. “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people,” he said. “Today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord.” Student siblings Michaela (’23), Paul (’24), and Sasha Lessard (’26) then performed various vocal selections, joined by Richard Seeley (’22) and accompanist Justas Maknickas (’24), before leading the room in singing several traditional Christmas carols.

“We are gathered here as family, as friends, and every one of us is very committed to preparing the hearts of so many young people to

receive Jesus,” said California Chaplain Rev. Jorge Jesus Lopez, who offered the final benediction. “We share the mission of St. John the Baptist, preparing the hearts of young people to receive Jesus. For that reason, we have to celebrate! For that reason, I am very, very glad to have shared with you this evening.”



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

NEW ENGLAND

Opening Lecture

**Dr. Paul O’Reilly**  
President, Thomas Aquinas College  
“What Can the New Atheists Teach us about our Program?”



September Lecture

**Dr. Jeremy Holmes (’99)**  
Associate Professor of Theology  
Wyoming Catholic College  
“Shaping a Vessel for Mercy: The Life of Abraham”

October Lecture

**Dr. Stephen Smith**  
Dean of Humanities, Hillsdale College  
“Tragedy and Hope: Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and the Education of Leaders”



All-College Seminar

*The Death of Ivan Ilyich*  
by Leo Tolstoy



November Lecture

**Dr. Michael Pakaluk**  
Professor, Catholic University of America  
“Lessons of the *Nicomachean Ethics*”



CALIFORNIA

Opening Lecture

**Dr. Paul O’Reilly**  
President, Thomas Aquinas College  
“What Can the New Atheists Teach us about our Program?”



Opening Concert

**Maknickas Family Duo**  
Works by Bach, Brahms, Schubert & Chopin

All-College Seminar

*Iphigenia in Aulis*  
by Euripides



October Lecture

**Dr. David O’Connor**  
Professor of Philosophy  
University of Notre Dame  
“Socrates in Gethsemane”

November Lecture

**Dr. David Whalen**  
Associate Vice President for Curriculum  
Hillsdale College  
“Shakespeare’s ‘little Academe/  
Still and contemplative in living art’”

Thanksgiving Concert

The Thomas Aquinas College Choir  
Bach’s Cantata 140 and Mozart’s  
“Coronation Mass”



\*Text and/or audio from select lectures is available at [thomasaquinas.edu](http://thomasaquinas.edu)

College Community Gathers to Give Thanks

On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, Thomas Aquinas College celebrated the holiday with students, faculty members, and their families gathering on both campuses to thank God for His tremendous blessings.

In California, President Paul J. O'Reilly honored several tutors who this year are celebrating milestone anniversaries in their service to the College: Dr. Phillip Wodzinski and Dean John J. Goyette (20 years), Dr. John Francis Nieto (30 years), and Dr.

Thomas J. Kaiser (40 years). The College also took a moment to honor tutor Larry L. Shields, who — after 50 years of service — passed away on November 11, and whose eldest son, Daniel ('05), was on hand for the occasion.

In his Thanksgiving address, Dr. O'Reilly paid special attention to the virtue of gratitude and its realization in Jacob of the Old Testament. "What, then, does Jacob teach us?" the president asked. "If we look to the good things we have received, if we reflect that we are not worthy of those things, because they have been given to us, not earned by us, then we must give thanks."

Some 3,000 miles to the East, on the New England campus, the community gathered in the Bl. Frassati Student Center. "By happy coincidence, we are celebrating today, a little in advance, in obedience to our country, a day of thanksgiving, and also, in



obedience to the Church, the Feast of Christ the King," said Dean Steven R. Cain in his Thanksgiving Address.

"Our feasting in this life ought to point to and make us long for the wedding feast of the Lamb; our citizenship in this nation ought to point to and make us long for citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem," said Dr. Cain. "Through our faith, we can see more clearly where and when we will come to 'the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union,' when we enter into the Kingdom of Christ the King." ❖



Preparing for Christmas: Advent Lessons & Carols

To welcome the season of Advent and prepare for Christmas, New England students, friends, faculty, and their families filled Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel on December 2. There, the Thomas Aquinas College Choir and the Aquinas Vocal Ensemble filled the building with jubilant harmony and melody for the fourth annual celebration of Advent Lessons and Carols.

"In a way, Lessons and Carols is a treasury of Western civilization and an exposition of the treasures of the Catholic Church," said Head Chaplain Rev. Greg Markey, who instituted the tradition during the New England campus' first year in 2019. Directed by Stephen Grimm ('75), the service consisted of nine



Scripture readings from the prophets and the Gospels that commemorate the birth of Christ, the promise of the Messiah, and love of Our Lady. Complementing these fervent passages were hymns and choral encomium from soloists of the College Choir.

After the congregants contemplated the coming of the Messiah through the musical reflections and the readings, they welcomed His real presence in the exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. "It was so nice to remember that Christ is coming," said Trinity Duggan ('24). "My favorite part was when the choir was singing 'Adeste Fideles,' and the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, the climax of Lessons and Carols." ❖

New Chaplain  
Rev. Jorge Jesus Lopez Brings Ministry to California Campus

Born and raised in San Luis, Argentina, Thomas Aquinas College's newest chaplain is a globetrotting scholar and a lifelong sportsman.

From an early age, Rev. Jorge Jesus Lopez could regularly be found on the basketball court or the soccer field. As his high school graduation loomed, he found this love for athletics prompting him to consider a career in physical education — until Providence led him in another direction.

"In the last year of high school I was invited for a retreat," Fr. Jorge recalls. When he decided to attend, he had no idea that he would return a changed man: "I found out that God was calling me to become a priest."

Fr. Jorge studied at San Miguel Arcángel Seminary in San Luis, working in a variety of ministries throughout his years of formation. By the time he was ordained a transitional deacon, he was working in campus ministry at the Catholic University of San Luis, tending to the spiritual and pastoral needs of its students. This experience in campus ministry, as well as an impressive academic record, led him to return to the university as a chaplain and professor after his ordination in 2006.

Within three years, it was clear that Fr. Jorge had a special aptitude for academics. His bishop concluded that, to make the most of this gift, he needed to continue his education. "He sent me to Rome, where I studied at Holy Cross University," the chaplain explains. In Rome, Fr. Jorge pursued a doctorate in philosophy, focusing on John Searle's philosophy of language, which he com-

pleted in March 2018. As if that were not enough to keep him busy, he concurrently pursued a master's in bioethics from the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family, which he finished in November 2020. Still, his sojourn in the Eternal City was not over.

"My bishop suggested that I continue my studies and my formation," says Fr. Jorge, "keeping my connection alive in Rome." Accordingly, though returning to active priestly ministry in Argentina, he spent his summers in Rome, again at Holy Cross University. Fr. Jorge's second Ph.D. was in moral theology, which he completed in March 2022 with a dissertation examining Julian Savulescu and Leon Kass's treatment of the ethics of

*"I seriously started to consider that God's providence was behind this, just as He had led me through my academic and pastoral formation."*

human enhancement. Returning to Argentina with two doctorates and a master's degree, Fr. Jorge was named a parish priest last March. He thought it might, at last, be time to settle down in his home country, but this momentary quietude was not to last. "A friend of mine, Fr. Patrick Driscoll from the Archdiocese of San Francisco, knew that Thomas Aquinas College was looking for a chaplain," he says. Thinking of



his friend in Argentina, Fr. Driscoll alerted him to the opportunity.

As he did his research into the College, Fr. Jorge was increasingly intrigued. "I was fascinated by the program of liberal education," he says, adding that, "having an experience serving in my priestly ministry abroad would be very challenging." The more he learned about the College, the more he was eager to apply for the chaplaincy. "I seriously started to consider that God's providence was behind this, just as He had led me through my academic and pastoral formation."

God brought Fr. Jorge to the California campus in early October. Since arriving, he has found the College and its students warmly welcoming. Athlete that he is, he has already availed himself of the myriad intramural basketball and soccer teams. "I wish I were 20 years younger," he laughs, "to match the demanding talents of TAC's basketball players."

As he expected, the chaplaincy has also had its challenges. "I have had to learn more English," he admits. But while that may be so, as a zealous priest, a sophisticated scholar, an avid athlete, and an aficionado of classical music and the lore of Middle-Earth, Fr. Jorge is already well versed in the many "languages" of the College's students. "It's been a good experience so far." ❖

# Setting the Tone

## Student Prefects Aid Peers in Pursuit of Wisdom

When new students arrive at Thomas Aquinas College, the first peers they meet, aside from their fellow freshmen, of course, are the prefects. These are the seniors, juniors, and sophomores who greet newcomers and their families at the welcome tables. They show the wide-eyed new arrivals to their rooms, place nametags on their doors, and host the Orientation icebreakers.

They also lead the nightly prayers of consecration in residence halls and answer the inevitable questions about everything from class schedules to dress code.

As the freshmen soon discover, though, the prefects are more than a warm welcoming committee. “We embrace the curriculum and the life here as much as we can,” says Sophie Cummings (’23), head female

*“The academic program itself already ensconces the principle of self-governance in using the Discussion Method. That principle has also been established in life outside the classroom.”*

prefect on the California campus, “and encourage others to do the same.”

Numbering 28 in all — 18 in California and 10 in New England — at least one can be found in each wing of every residence hall. As peer leaders, they play a vital role in the life of the College.



### Pursuit of Wisdom

“The College was established for tutors and students to pursue wisdom together,” observes Dr. Travis Cooper, assistant dean for student affairs at TAC-California. “But we think of this pursuit as not happening only in the classroom.” Indeed, reading the same Great Books over four years and discussing them attentively with likeminded friends leads to a rich, spontaneous campus life that’s lived out in the residence halls, on the athletic fields, and at dances and on hikes.

“The prefects shape campus life by enthusiastically being involved in many of the activities we put on,” explains Dr. Patrick Gardner, Dr. Cooper’s New England counterpart. “They are involved in such a way that others can see how these activities are ordered toward the principal good we are pursuing.”

Theirs is a ministry of presence. “The prefects are confreres; consultants, sometimes, if students have questions or concerns,” says Dr. Cooper. But other times their duties are more subtle, involving little more than demonstrating — through the well-lived routines of everyday life — that the hard work of Catholic liberal education and the sacrifices it entails are worth it.

“Prefects don’t have to be the best students,” notes Dr. Gardner. “But they are model students in that they are deliberate about trying to live this life well and to ordering the various parts of their lives as students — their recreation, their socialization, their sports — toward the principal good.”

There are as many ways to meet this responsibility as there are prefects. “Not all students are the same,” reflects Michael Bishop (’23), head male prefect in California. “They’re going to have different strengths and weaknesses. Likewise, you get a variety of different kinds of prefects who display, if not the whole, at least aspects of what the College would like its students to be.”

### Rules of Residence

Prefects are also responsible for enforcing the College’s Rules of Residence, which are designed to facilitate students’ pursuit of wisdom. “The academic program itself already ensconces the principle of self-governance in using the Discussion Method,” says Dr. Cooper. “That principle has also been established in life outside the classroom, in our system of student prefects.”

Adds Mr. Bishop, “The fundamental thing comes down to having peers who are responsible for leading.”

The need for peer leadership is all the greater because some of the College’s rules are quite unlike those found at most other American colleges and universities. “Since the world does not always place a high value on the search for truth, the way students live at Thomas Aquinas College can seem excessive to someone looking in from the outside,” admits New England prefect Paul Habsburg (’24).

Some rules, such as the dress code, visually communicate the gravity of classroom discussions. Others ward off the ubiquitous distractions of modern life, such as restrictions on wi-fi access, cell phone usage, and watching movies. Still others — such as a nightly curfew, forbidding illicit alcohol and drug use, and prohibiting visits to residence halls of the opposite sex — combat the excessive or immoral behaviors that have hamstrung most American colleges since the 1960s.

These rules, however, promote a noble and ennobling culture that students come to cherish, even if they were initially skeptical. “The summer before I came to TAC was rough,” recalls California prefect William Deering (’24). “Covid had just started, and we were all back in our houses. I spent a lot of time reading articles and watching YouTube videos. But when I came to TAC, I couldn’t do that anymore — and, at first, I didn’t like that. Then about two months in, I realized I was a lot happier!”

Another junior in California, Paul Lessard, humorously recalls establishing new routines to improve his study habits. “I decided I was going to get to bed early, I was going to do all my homework, and I wasn’t going to stay out late,” he says. “And then it occurred to me: ‘Wait a minute — that’s just what the rules were trying to get me to do, anyway!’”

### Cultivating Community

Modeling and monitoring campus life can be a tall order, but like anything difficult, it provides numerous avenues for growth. Their role as exemplars keeps

prefects mindful of the common good they are pursuing as students. “We are here to help everyone remember that we all chose to follow this way of life,” says Irene Collins (NE’23), “that the rules are not something meant to hinder us but to help us.”

Importantly, the prefects’ responsibility as exemplars takes precedence over mere rule enforcement. “My role is to be present as a person whom people know and can come to for help — and less about the day-to-day enforcing of particular rules,” says Mr. Bishop. This responsibility, moreover, compels prefects and, in turn, the student body more broadly, to avoid falling into cliques. “Prefecting has made me talk to people I would probably never encounter otherwise,” says Miss Cummings. “Even if

*“We are here to help everyone remember that we all chose to follow this way of life, that the rules are not something meant to hinder us but to help us.”*



the first occasion is not a happy one, like enforcing dress code, I meet a lot more people, and I try to befriend them.”

Many prefects actively cultivate social life in their residence halls, from leading hallmates in praying the Rosary to informal discussion nights and off-campus outings. They help at campus events, lock the doors at night, and drive injured students to the emergency room. In countless ways large

and small, the prefects contribute to building “a noble culture for the students, suitable to the intellectual life they’re living,” says John Metilly (’23), head male prefect on the New England campus.

The community that the prefects help to create is a key ingredient in Thomas Aquinas College’s distinction among Catholic institutions of higher education. In 2019, *Catholic Herald* commended the College’s culture for promoting “properly ordered relations between the sexes that spark early and fruitful marriages.” Last year *College Fix* noted that, amidst the vocational crisis wracking the Church throughout the Western world, TAC “continues to produce priests, nuns and other religious vocations year after year.”

But while this intentional cultivation of a healthy moral and spiritual life sets Thomas Aquinas College apart from most other academic institutions, its purpose transcends merely creating a “safe space” for Catholic families to send their children. Rather, the culture which the prefects uphold is inseparable from the pursuit of wisdom under the light of faith, which has defined the College since its founding in 1971.

“To live in freedom is to live by the truth,” proclaims Thomas Aquinas College’s founding and governing document, *A Proposal for the Fulfillment of Catholic Liberal Education*. Fifty years later, this conviction remains the animating impulse of the College’s students. “I’m here looking for truth,” says Mr. Bishop. “Having a curriculum worth pursuing and the support of my peers, I’m beginning to find it.” ♦

# Faith in Action

## News from TAC’s Alumni Blog

### Dr. Sean Kelsey (’92) Publishes New Book on Aristotle’s *De Anima*

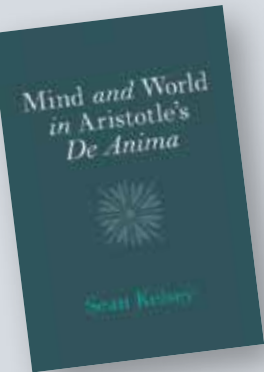
“Why does it seem to be the mind’s specific function to know the world?” asks Dr. Sean Kelsey (’92) in his book, *Mind and World in Aristotle’s De Anima*, published in 2021 by Cambridge University Press. For Dr. Kelsey, however, that question is much older than his book. He’s been grappling with it in one way or another since he attended Thomas Aquinas College some 30 years ago.

“It was at TAC that I first encountered the authors I work on the most as a scholar, Plato and Aristotle,” he says. “I began to learn firsthand that their texts repay careful study: The harder you push them, the harder they push back.”

Pushing these great texts continued at Princeton University, where Dr. Kelsey earned his Ph.D. in 1997, with a focus on ancient philosophy. He taught at the University of California, Los Angeles, from 1998 to 2009, then joined the University of Notre Dame’s philosophy faculty. He continues to focus his scholarship on ancient philosophy, especially Aristotle and Plato.



“*Nearly all of Aristotle is hard. But the ideas and texts at the heart of this book are some of the hard hards.*”



In all that time expounding these masters, Dr. Kelsey has been especially fascinated by Aristotle’s treatise about the soul, the *De Anima*. Now, thanks to his years of pushing Aristotle, Dr. Kelsey’s new book distills the philosopher’s potent understanding of the soul and, in particular, the rational soul.

“My question, roughly put, is about Mind and World,” writes Dr. Kelsey in the book’s introduction. “What about the one

makes it such as to know the other — that is, to perceive and to understand honest-to-God truths about honest-to-God beings? My principal contentions will be, first, that the question is Aristotle’s, and second, that the nub of his answer to it is that in a way *Mind is World*.” Dr. Kelsey deploys this contention to elucidate some of Aristotle’s more perplexing positions in the *De Anima*, such as the notion that sensibility is a ratio, or that the intellect is separate and incorporeal.

Given his years of assiduous attention to Aristotle’s philosophy, it is no surprise that Dr. Kelsey’s book has been well received by his fellow scholars. “Nearly all of Aristotle is hard. But the ideas and texts at the heart of this book are some of the hard hards,” writes Evan Keeling in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*. “I learned much reading it. This book is a worthy addition to the growing literature on Aristotle’s *De Anima*.”

The book’s success has not dispelled Dr. Kelsey’s fascination with the masters of ancient philosophy. “I have come to think that both Plato and Aristotle, in addition to their transcendent excellence, really lend themselves to *teaching* philosophy,” he reflects. “Their ‘world’ is not so familiar that we feel complacently at home there; but neither is it so alien as to be of purely antiquarian interest.”

### Faith and Finance: Bob Murphy (’89)

Alumnus real estate broker Robert Murphy (’89), principal broker at Station Cities, Connecticut, recently sat down for an interview for the Catholic Finance Association’s “Faith and Finance Forum” podcast. Over the course of the exchange, he discussed the intersection of his faith and professional lives — and how Thomas Aquinas College has prepared him for both.

Mr. Murphy began his real estate career with the firm of William Raveis, where within five years he had risen to the top 5 percent of the company’s brokers. Emboldened by his success, he opened his own brokerage in 2007, which met with similar success — until the Great Recession of 2008. Recovering with the rest of the world, he became increasingly involved with the corporate relocation market, helping companies establish headquarters in different states.

As a businessman, maintaining integrity demands respect for truth and a firm moral compass — and Mr. Murphy found both at Thomas Aquinas College. “I fell in love with the academic life,” he says, with a special regard for the College’s use of the Discussion Method. “I had an epiphany. I never thought you could actually



understand this way, and this clearly ... it’s just engaging in the best way.” Moreover, authentic Catholicism infused every discussion. “It’s a great place to be for four years to really deepen your love for Christ and the Catholic faith!”

The full podcast is available at [thaq.co/murphy](https://thaq.co/murphy).



### Running in the Footsteps of the Saints: Elizabeth Mazza (’16)

Though St. Paul’s exhortation, “Run so as to win” (1 Corinthians 9:24), refers to the spiritual race for heaven, Elizabeth Mazza (’16) decided to take it literally. On All Saints’ Day, she joined more than 2,000 contestants in the 14<sup>th</sup> annual 10K Race of the Saints in Rome, known to denizens of the Eternal City as the *Corsa dei Santi*. Runners passed the Colosseum, the Spanish Steps, and other Roman attractions, treading the same ground that so many saints have walked for millennia.

Miss Mazza has been an adopted Roman for a few years as a graduate student in theology at the Angelicum, from which

“*Running that physical race course reminds us of the physical excellence that God made us for. But it also pushes us toward spiritual excellence.*”

she recently graduated with her S.T.B. Living and breathing the words of the saints as a theologian, this year she decided that, by running the *Corsa dei Santi*, she could encounter the saints in another fashion.

“Running a race pushes us to do something that we are made to do,” she told the Catholic News Agency. “But it’s not necessarily easy. You know, God made us for health in mind, body, and soul. Running that physical race course reminds us of the physical excellence that God made us for. But it also pushes us toward spiritual excellence.”

The pursuit of such physical and spiritual excellence on November 1 was, indeed, a *pursuit* — and an exhausting one! “Running a race like this completely humbles you and makes you realize that you can’t finish it without God’s help.” Ever the theologian, Miss Mazza highlighted the spiritual lesson of her run. “That’s the most fundamental thing. You’re just running. It’s just you and God, and only His grace sustains you to the end.”

Whether steeping herself in the words of the saints or running in their footsteps, Miss Mazza credits her zeal to the example of the tutors at Thomas Aquinas College. They “taught me what it meant to be a true Catholic theologian, to have the humility to find the Truth and the courage to fight for it, in faithfulness to the Church and her mission. I hope to do them proud.”

### Joseph Andres (’12) Awarded Notre Dame Law School Fellowship

The University of Notre Dame’s School of Law recently announced a new fellowship for aspiring legal scholars, and among its four inaugural fellows is TAC alumnus Joseph Andres (’12).

The Murphy Fellowship aims “to support students exploring the area of law and religion,” according to the school’s website. Fellows will conduct that exploration by following a program of studies that blends pre-existing tracks at Notre Dame Law School, including the Program on Church, State & Society and the Religious Liberty Initiative.

For Mr. Andres, the intersection of these rich strains of inquiry naturally complements his study of theology, in which he earned a master’s degree from Ave Maria University. “My primary purpose in going to law school is to put myself in a position to build up Catholic community at the natural level,” he says. “Law is an essential piece of that goal, and since the Murphy Fellowship is about exactly those things — Church, law, and society — I’m excited that there’s already an entire fellowship devoted to the goals I came here with.”



## ALUMNI PRIESTS & RELIGIOUS

### Sr. Mary Josefa ('07) Builds “Spiritual Oasis”

“The contemplative is the stay-at-home mother within the Church,” reflects Sr. Mary Josefa (Kathleen '07) Holcomb, O.S.B. in a recent YouTube video. “The stay-at-home mother has a role that is not seen, and probably not appreciated, by many in the world ... but how many families need that mother’s presence! The Church is a family, too. It needs the presence of a mother.”

Sr. Mary Josefa belongs to the Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles, who aspire to provide just such maternal care by praying for the priestly successors of the Apostles, imitating Our Lady in the last years of her earthly life. Since its founding in 1995, the congregation has attracted dozens of aspiring young women, including two other TAC alumnae: Sr. Sophia (Gina '08) Eid, OSB, and Gwyneth Owen ('08). In response to this rapid expansion, in 2019 the Abbess sent seven adventurous sisters to establish the congregation’s first daughter house, the Monastery of St. Joseph, in Ava, Missouri — and among them was Sr. Mary Josefa.



“I had a sense early on, even when I was a child of seven or eight, that perhaps God wanted me to be His,” she recalls. But as a child in a traveling military family, opportunities to visit religious congregations were limited. “It was only when I went to Thomas Aquinas College that I met other people who not only wanted to become religious, they knew *where* you could.”

Sr. Mary Josefa’s time at the College also planted the seeds of her distinctly Benedictine vocation. “When I was younger, I thought, ‘Maybe I’ll be like the Dominicans and I’ll teach, or I’ll be like the Missionaries of Charity and I’ll help people on the street,’” she says. “But at Thomas Aquinas College, I learned to contem-

plate truth for its own sake ... I also realized the importance of the liturgy, the importance of having people dedicating their lives to worshipping God, being His intimates in His own house, keeping Him company all day.” She joined the Benedictines of Mary soon after graduating, professing solemn vows in 2016.

As they set about establishing the new Monastery of St. Joseph, however, Sr. Mary Josefa and her fellow adventurous sisters have been very active for contemplatives. Their cheerful, can-do presence has caught the notice of more than the local Catholics. “There’s a need,” she observes, “for a spiritual oasis in the modern desert.” ❖

### Newly Ordained Alumnus Returns to TAC

In mid-November an alumnus priest, Rev. Matthew Maxwell, MC ('08), returned to the California campus to visit his alma mater, offer the Sacraments, and visit with the students.

Born in San Diego, Fr. Maxwell was ordained to the priesthood in 2020. He is a member of Miles Christi, a young order of priests founded in Argentina, but with a burgeoning presence in the U.S. The community is dedicated to helping the laity grow in holiness through spiritual direction, Ignatian

spirituality and sound doctrinal formation.

Offering a midday Mass in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, Fr. Maxwell said it was “a great grace” that he was marking his “first time back on campus since becoming a priest.” He invited the congregation to offer thanks to God for the College and the formation it provides its alumni. “Who knows where I would be if I didn’t have everything I received here?”

The young priest encouraged students to take advantage of the opportunities the College affords its students to “grow closer to God” and develop “a strong Catholic heart” through their studies. “These four years are the best opportunity you’ll probably have to start living that out,” he added.

After two years in the Archdiocese of Detroit, Fr. Maxwell recently returned to San Diego as a chaplain for several Catholic high schools. ❖



Rev. Matthew Maxwell, MC ('08)

## VOWS & ORDINATIONS

### Sr. Maria Johanna Barrett ('14)

Nearly eight years since she joined the Dominican Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary in Summit, New Jersey, Sr. Maria Johanna Barrett ('14), O.P., made her Solemn Profession on August 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration.

Sr. Maria Johanna’s journey to the Dominicans began when she stumbled upon the book *One Mind and Heart in*

steadily more in love with the monastic life and her monastery’s charism of “hidden apostolic fruitfulness.” She is overjoyed at last to pledge her life totally to Christ.

Present at the Mass were Sr. Maria Johanna’s parents and all nine of her siblings, including alumni Philip ('07) and Marguerite ('22), as well as several alumni friends. “It was a lovely ceremony,” reports Andrea McCann ('13). “One could see the joy on Sister’s face!” ❖

### Rev. Mr. Eric Patrick ('11)

By God’s grace, Rev. Mr. Eric Patrick ('11) was ordained to the transitional diaconate for the Diocese of Sacramento on November 19, with his priestly ordination to follow in the spring.

Deacon Patrick’s journey to the priesthood began in high school, as he came to take his faith more seriously. “A desire to do something more with my life transitioned into a desire to serve the People



of God,” he says in an interview conducted for the Diocese of Sacramento. “To bring them the joy, the mercy that I was experiencing through

the sacraments, through my relationship with God.”

He found that desire becoming more articulate during his time at Thomas Aquinas College — and yet he spent several years working in construction after graduating in 2011, delaying his application to the seminary. He attributes that delay to a sincere, but ultimately misguided, sense of unworthiness. “I think every seminarian at some point deals with that. How can we possibly be worthy to become a priest?” says Deacon Patrick in the interview. “The answer is: We are not! God is not calling us because we are perfect.

God is calling us because we are humans. We are sinners who are able to bridge the gap and bring God’s mercy to others.”

As Deacon Patrick prepares to bring that joy and mercy more fully to the people of God in his new ministry, may God, beginning this good work in His new deacon, bring it to completion. ❖

### Sr. John Henry Eddyblouin ('19)

TAC Mom Allison Eddyblouin passes along the joyful news that on July 27 her daughter, Mary Catherine ('19), made her first profession of simple vows with the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist. “She received her black veil in the Dominican Order,” says Mrs. Eddyblouin, “is herself now a sacramental (of which she loves to remind



her younger siblings), and can now sign her name ‘Sister John Henry O.P.’”

Sr. John Henry joined her community shortly after her graduation three years ago, then entered the novitiate in 2020. Soon after professing simple vows this summer, she began living her Dominican charism as a teacher at Father Gabriel Richard High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

“Her primary class is senior Shakespeare, which she is reveling in!” writes Mrs. Eddyblouin. “She has already passed one of her exams for her teacher’s license” and expects to soon be fully certified. Thanks be to God! ❖

### Rev. Br. Patrick Rooney, O.P. ('15)

By God’s grace, and at the hands of the Most Rev. Jaime Soto, Bishop of Sacramento, Rev. Br. Patrick Rooney, O.P. ('15), was ordained to the transitional diaconate on September 24, 2022, entering the

final phase of his formation to become a Dominican priest.

“I wanted to become a monk, but I also wanted to be a philosopher,” said Br. Patrick in 2016. “I found out that I could be both in the Dominican Order.” Building on the foundation he acquired at Thomas Aquinas College, he has grown as a philosopher over six years of subsequent study. But he has also, and more importantly, pursued philosophy within the sacramental rhythm of conventual life as a Dominican friar.

As a deacon, Br. Patrick may now begin formally living his order’s charism of preaching the Gospel — and begin looking forward to his priestly ordination next spring. ❖



Photo: Vincent Escueta

“The Starting Point for Reflection  
on Virtue and the Good Life”

# A Reason for the Study of Nature in the TAC Curriculum

by Dr. Glen Coughlin  
Tutor, New England campus



I thought that it would be a good idea to discuss why Thomas Aquinas College, in contrast to every other Catholic liberal arts college, spends so much time studying natural philosophy and natural science. We spend four full years in our Natural Science courses studying nature. In the first year, we study natural history and the principles of biology; in the second year, the development of the periodic table and of the atomic theory; in the third, Galilean and Newtonian classical mechanics; and in Senior Year we study electromagnetism in the first semester and the modern evolutionary synthesis in the second.

Besides these courses, much of our mathematics curriculum could be characterized as natural science: In the Sophomore Year, we study astronomy, starting from Ptolemy and finishing with Kepler, and in the Senior Year, we study Einstein's theory of relativity. In addition to working through the original texts in these Natural Science courses, we read almost all of Aristotle's *Physics*, all of his *De Anima*, and selections from several others works in natural philosophy. Why all the emphasis on nature? One might think we should do as they do at many other Catholic liberal arts colleges — read more theology, history, literature and so on.

What made me reflect on this was the discussion we had at the last Board of

Governors meeting. The issue of “wokeism” came up, and there was some question about how we were preparing our students to confront this destructive philosophy. On reflection, I think our entire emphasis on nature is the answer.

There are many errors in the worldview of the “woke,” but the deepest is the belief that one can simply replace nature with art; that gender, for example, is a “construct,” subject therefore to our whim. Marriage is what we make of it, and self-identification



*“To offend against  
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trumps reality. This is an extension of what we see in some areas of modern medicine, where the natural biological processes of reproduction are simply bypassed and replaced with artificial techniques largely separated from natural reproductive functions (though the natural processes can never be completely removed).

The belief that technology can substitute for nature is a widespread one, one which Charles De Koninck, who taught many of our founders at Université Laval in Quebec City, was much concerned with refuting. Of course, I don't claim that the founders had in mind “wokeism” as a particular political movement, but they knew from their wide reading that the desire to master and even to replace nature was a significant theme in modern philosophy, going back at least to Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) and Descartes (1596–1650).

In essence, the attempt to supersede nature is an attempt to be as gods, knowing good and evil. As our first parents ate of the tree of knowledge in the hope of a freedom of license, so we all in our own lives go astray by seeking independence from God and nature. In particular, we seek to make our own choices the principle of good and evil, replacing the criteria of goodness inherent in our natures and in nature as a whole with our own desires.

Sin is always unnatural in some way. Lying is opposed to the natural function of speech, which is to let people know what we are thinking; theft is opposed to man's nature as one who, being rational, provides for himself and others, insofar as private property is a necessary tool for such provisioning; adultery is opposed to man's nature as political and social, insofar as it makes impossible peaceful family structure and the unimpeded education of children; and so on. Because of what we are, certain things are good for us to do and to have, and others are not. Just as the nature of a horse determines what sorts of things cause it to flourish, so does the nature of a human being determine what should be sought and what avoided.

Not only does nature mark off the limits of good and evil, in doing so it also specifies the direction of grace. What I mean is that grace, as a gift of God intended to perfect us and make us happy, must be a perfection of our nature, not something merely attached to us accidentally, like what kind of car we have. Grace makes us more perfect as human beings, as rational animals; it is not something which utterly changes our nature. If it did, why would we want it? It would then not be we who are saved, but some other sort of thing having only a historical relation to ourselves. While we can never put a limit on how much grace a person can have and so how close to God a person can be, we can say that grace can only perfect someone if it perfects him as a person — this is why I spoke of the “direction” of grace rather than its goal. In short, grace builds on nature.

The most basic reason that the study of nature has such large implications is that nature is, as St. Thomas puts it, “the divine art impressed upon things.” To offend against nature, especially human nature, is to offend against God; to respect that nature and cause it to flourish is to promote the divine plan.

The consideration of nature, then, is central to any consideration of ethics, politics, or revealed theology. While this is always true, it is particularly important that we who live in the shadows of modernity take it into account.

In a more innocent age, it may have been possible to ground our understanding of good and evil on a basic common-sense understanding of the natural, but now we have, in the form of “wokeism,” biotechnology, corporate manipulation of choices, etc., attacks on just that common sense. These attacks make it necessary to be more conscious of the reasons that undergird that common sense, because those who reject common sense and those who are listening from the sidelines have either deliberately or through bad intellectual training come to doubt what common sense teaches. We need to show that that common sense is well founded, that it is not just a cultural prejudice. And in order to do that, we need to go beyond the cultural to the natural, that is, we need to study nature itself.

These attacks on nature come from various quarters, but we can pretty easily divide them into philosophical attacks and scientific attacks. The latter are, in reality, also philosophical: Those who interpret scientific discoveries in certain ways use it to bolster their claims about the mutability or unreality of nature. But it is their interpretations that cause the problems, not the science itself. They will say, for example, that the atomic theory shows that man is not really one thing, but just a “bundle of events,” to quote Bertrand Russell, and conclude that we need not worry about good or evil as understood through common sense because the thing for which those things are good or evil does not really have a nature — it is only a peculiar collection of elementary particles. How should we respond to such an attack? We have to study the theory of atomism and its moral implications closely, reflecting on how it both helps us understand human nature and yet leaves untouched our basic understanding of humanity.

The most overt philosophical attacks probably come from Nietzsche and Marx,

two philosophers who have had a huge impact on contemporary thought. Despite very different philosophies, both imply that man is simply not able to know things, that, in fact, people hold the positions they do due to economic factors (Marx) or due to the mere will to control others (Nietzsche).



They reduce truth to power, either individual or societal — we never think what we think because it is true, but only because it advances our position or that of the people who control society. But what is the reason they reject the ability to come to objective truth? Here again a careful study of their assumptions is needed, a study which would have to focus on the natures of sensation and thought.

To return to the issue of “wokeism,” then: We study nature in a large part of our program because nature is the starting point for reflection on virtue and the good life. Recognizing this, the founders saw the need to include in our program a generous consideration of Natural Philosophy and Natural Science. Their foresight was not that of a prophet, it was that of a wise man who sees the necessary order of studies, the path to wisdom.

While there are also other reasons to study nature, certainly among the most pressing is the need to prepare our students to face the modern world. ♦

*A member of the New England teaching faculty, Dr. Glen Coughlin presented the above talk to the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its fall 2022 meeting.*

## Laurence L. Shields

1944 – 2022

After 50 years at Thomas Aquinas College, beloved California tutor Laurence L. Shields, known to his friends as Larry, died peacefully on November 11 while preparing for his afternoon class. His passing came as a sudden blow, but the community was quick to convene in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel to pray for the repose of his soul.

The third of four children, Larry was born in 1944 in Salt Lake City, Utah, to Helen and Francis Shields. His family soon relocated to the Bay Area in Northern California, where he would spend his youth. He attended St. Mary's College High School in Berkeley, and during that time met Linda Mahy, who lived a street away. Their friendship soon became a romance: By the time he entered St. Mary's College in Moraga, California, they were dating.

Attending St. Mary's was a decisive step in Larry's life. He studied philosophy with Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, who would go on to become the founding president of Thomas Aquinas College. He also fell in love with Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia*, which inspired a lifelong fascination with natural science and its relationship to theology and philosophy.

*“Despite decades spent teaching the curriculum before my arrival, it was clear that none of it had worn thin; he only continued to peel back the layers, marveling at what he uncovered.”*

Following his graduation in 1966, Mr. Shields took yet another decisive step in life, marrying Linda. Over their 56 years together, the couple would be blessed with 7 children, 35 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren. He also enrolled in graduate studies at Princeton University, where he earned a master's degree and completed doctoral studies in the history of science.

Mr. Shields taught briefly at the New Jersey Institute of Technology until 1972, when he and his family returned to California. There he rejoined Dr. McArthur as a tutor at the fledgling Thomas Aquinas College, then beginning its second year, and he remained a faithful tutor for the next half century.

Over the course of his tenure, Mr. Shields taught many students who would go on to become his colleagues: They appreciated his

example as students and echoed it as teachers. “He never considered a topic closed while unanswered questions lingered,” observes tutor Dr. Andrew Seeley ('87). “He would track me down weeks after a discussion, bringing in a book that pertained to an argument I had forgotten.”

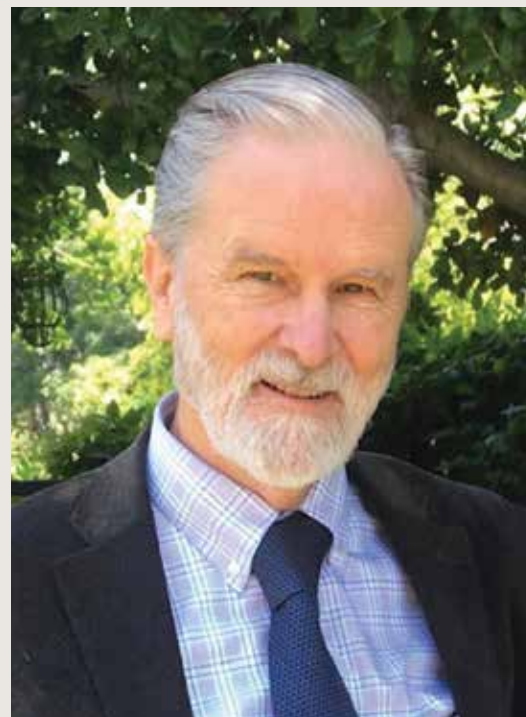
For Mr. Shields, great conversations about the Great Books would endure well beyond the end of class. “I got to know him better from his frequent lunch table appearances,” recalls David Trull ('13). “I came to see that his mind never rested. Despite decades spent teaching the curriculum before my arrival, it was clear that none of it had worn thin; he only continued to peel back the layers, marveling at what he uncovered, and delighting to share it with those taking their first steps on the journey. Socrates would have been proud.”

Yet Mr. Shields' energies were not confined to academics. “In the '80s, basketball was really the only sport on campus,” recalls tutor Dr. Anthony Andres ('87). “There were no lights for the court, so students played almost every afternoon, and tutors — especially Larry — got in on the action much more often. What I remember about Larry is his shooting. I was taller, and if I was covering him closely, I could block his shot, but whenever I slacked off, even just for a moment, he would take this incredibly quick shot that almost always went in.” In addition, Mr. Shields was for years a formidable player in the annual Tutors v. Seniors Softball game.

But beyond his many gifts, which he deployed generously for so many years, Mr. Shields maintained a soft-spoken humility and a sincere, self-effacing love for Jesus Christ. These qualities, above all, made his friendship such a treasure — and his passing such a loss.

“Larry was a fine man and a gentleman. He was the first tutor I met over 20 years ago, and we remained friends ever since,” says R. James Wensley, a member of the College's Board of Governors.

“Larry was one of the longest-serving tutors at the College,” reflects President Paul J. O'Reilly. “He was a man of deep faith and loved reading and discussing the Scriptures. All who knew him saw how much he loved the students here. Our prayers are with his wife, Linda, and their family, as we pray for the repose of his soul.” ❖



## Marilyn Patricia McArthur

1929 – 2022

With heavy hearts, Thomas Aquinas College mourns the death of Marilyn McArthur, wife of the College's late founding president, Dr. Ronald P. McArthur. Mrs. McArthur passed away at her home in Santa Paula on October 21, after receiving the Last Rites.

Born to Marie and Douglass Lawder on November 14, 1929, Marilyn grew up with her family in the Forest Hill neighborhood of San Francisco. She attended high school at the Convent of the Sacred Heart and college at the San Francisco College for Women. She met her future husband at a discussion group organized by her older sister, and the couple married soon after her graduation in 1950. The newlyweds spent their honeymoon driving to Quebec, Canada, where the groom pursued a doctorate at the Université Laval under the eminent Thomist Dr. Charles De Koninck.

When Dr. McArthur completed his studies, the couple returned to the United States. Mrs. McArthur made their home while her husband began a career teaching in the Bay Area, eventually settling into a position as a professor of philosophy at St. Mary's College in 1958.

Over the ensuing years, Dr. McArthur and his colleagues, including Mark Berquist and Jack Neumayr, as well as his for-

*“Marilyn McArthur was truly the First Lady of Thomas Aquinas College, a devoted, faithful wife to Ron through all the phases of his life, and the beloved matriarch of this community, especially in its formative years.”*

mer student, Peter DeLuca, regarded the spectacle of putatively Catholic education with mounting frustration. Mrs. McArthur recalled often providing a friendly ear for her husband's exasperation. “When Ron would be upset about this or that, he would just throw up his hands and say, ‘I'm going to do something else; this isn't education. It's not good,’” she recalled. “I would say, ‘But there isn't anything else you can do!’ He would say, ‘Oh, I'll be a carpenter!’ And I would say, ‘Ron, you can't be a carpenter!’ There was nothing he could do that would mean anything.”

When this circle of friends decided to found Thomas Aquinas College and elected Dr.

McArthur as its first president in 1971, he and Mrs. McArthur forsook their native San Francisco, moving to Southern California to establish the campus.

Just as Dr. McArthur was a father figure for the College's first students, Mrs. McArthur provided a much-needed motherly presence on campus. “While Ron poured wine and tried to convince us that Mozart was really the only true composer of classical music, with a pound on the table for emphasis,” recalls one former student, “Marilyn would hand him a tray of cheese to pass around, then strike up a conversation with the girls gathering around her kitchen counter asking eager culinary questions and listening to stories about her beloved horses while she made the dinner. She listened to our chatter with a good-natured grin and an open ear.”

The McArthurs would serve as the College's first couple for 20 years until Dr. McArthur retired in 1991. They then relocated, along with lifelong friend Cathy Walsh ('80), to a modest ranch in Northern California, where they kept six horses. Mrs. McArthur constantly sought new ways to live out the maternal role she had played at the College, opening the door of their home to parish study groups as well as planning, cooking, and serving meals for the local soup kitchen.

When Dr. McArthur returned to teach at the College in 2002, Mrs. McArthur set up what would become the couple's final home, back in Santa Paula. Dr. McArthur fell ill in 2012, and Mrs. McArthur was at his side, caring for him until his death in 2013. Thereafter, she devoted herself to daily Mass at the College and a weekly Rosary beside her late husband's grave, all the while continuing a life of hidden kindness, delivering meals to the elderly and praying the Rosary every Wednesday in front of the local Planned Parenthood.

“Marilyn McArthur was truly the First Lady of Thomas Aquinas College, a devoted, faithful wife to Ron through all the phases of his life, and the beloved matriarch of this community, especially in its formative years,” says President Paul J. O'Reilly. “Her example of humble service inspired not only the faculty and students, but all she encountered. We pray that she and Ron are reunited once again at Our Lord's heavenly banquet.” ❖



IN MEMORIAM

**Marie Curry**  
June 16, 2022  
*Mother of Matthew ('06) and Steven ('08)*

**Marilyn McArthur**  
October 21, 2022  
*Wife of the College's founding president,  
Dr. Ronald P. McArthur*

**Mark Flanders**  
October 25, 2022  
*President's Council member*

**Nelly Hopkins**  
October 25, 2022  
*Mother of Rev. Peter, L.C. ('79),  
Rev. Ed, L.C. ('80), Sr. Catherine  
Marie, O.P. ('82), and Stephen ('86)*

**Laurence L. Shields**  
November 11, 2022  
*Tutor; father of David ('92), Laura  
(Guy '97), Michael ('99), Julie (Zepeda '04),  
and Daniel ('05); grandfather of Sarah ('24),  
Kaitlin ('25), and Nathaniel Shields ('26)  
and John Paul ('22) and Gianna Guy ('24)*

**Paul Keating ('98)**  
December 7  
*Brother of Gene ('91) and  
Eileen (Douglass '93)*



*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.*

Because the future needs the wisdom of the past ...




Please contact Paul Blewett, Director of Gift Planning  
pblewett@thomasaquinas.edu | 805-421-5924


... help shape  
the future  
with a  
legacy gift  
today.




The St. Thérèse of Lisieux  
Legacy Society

UPCOMING EVENTS

 **Lecture: Dr. John Goyette..... February 10**  
Dean, Thomas Aquinas College, California  
“The Mystery of the Trinity in the Prologue  
to the Gospel of John”

 **Lecture: Pater Edmund Waldstein,  
O. Cist. ('06).....February 17**  
Member of the Institute of Moral Theology  
Hochschule Heiligenkreuz  
“The Primacy of the Common Good”

 **President's Day Lecture:  
Dr. Wilfred McClay.....February 24**  
Victor Davis Hanson Chair in Classical  
History and Western Civilization  
Hillsdale College

 **St. Thomas Day Lecture:  
Rev. Michael Sherwin, O.P. .... March 7**  
Professor of Fundamental Moral Theology  
University of Fribourg

 **Lecture: Dr. Therese Cory.....March 17**  
John and Jean Oesterle Associate Professor  
of Thomistic Studies, University of Notre Dame

 **Lecture: Dr. Daniel Toma .....March 17**  
Professor, Minnesota State University, Mankato  
“The Fruit Fly and Aristotle: What Genes Can  
and Cannot Do”

More events: [thomasaquinas.edu/events](https://thomasaquinas.edu/events)  
Campus Mass schedules:  
[thomasaquinas.edu/masstimes](https://thomasaquinas.edu/masstimes)

THIS SPRING

*Honor Thy Father & Mother*

WITH A NOVENA  
OF MASSES

Beginning on Mother's Day (May 14)  
and Father's Day (June 18), the  
chaplains of Thomas Aquinas College  
will offer a novena of Masses for  
mothers and fathers, respectively.  
Each parent included in the novena  
will receive a beautiful, personalized  
card from the College.

Cost: \$5 per card for shipping and  
handling. Mother's Day names must  
be received by May 12; Father's Day  
by June 16.

[thomasaquinas.edu/novenas](https://thomasaquinas.edu/novenas)



STUDENT LIFE



**1.** James Blewett ('24) donates a pint at the annual mid-semester blood drive. **2.** Jack Mering ('25) helps the underclassmen eke out a narrow victory over the upperclassmen, 34–29, in the 2022 Turkey Bowl. **3.** Students perform Orlando di Lasso's "Matona, mia cara" at the Fall Schubertiade. **4.** The TAC Art Club hosts a weekend art exhibition along the academic quadrangle. **5.** Isaiah Martinez ('22) and Susanna Sedler ('24) rehearse for a student-run production of Cyrano de Bergerac. **6.** Students dress as the characters from *The Princess Bride* at the Halloween Dance. **7.** Seniors welcome freshmen with a trip to the beach.



**1.** Sophomores greet — and race — incoming freshmen at a welcoming dance. **2.** Intrepid students hike New Hampshire's Mount Monadnock. **3.** The Scooby-Doo gang make an appearance at the Halloween Dance. **4.** Freshmen Sophie Habsburg and Margaret Scheurer discuss Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* at the Fall All-College Seminar. **5.** Competitors vie in a log-splitting contest at Oktoberfest. **6.** Thomas Aquinas College narrowly defeats the St. Thomas More College of Liberal Arts at the "Thomas Bowl" ultimate frisbee match. **7.** Matt Bohrer ('26) and Giancarlo Coccia ('26) wow their peers at Open-Mic Night.



THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

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