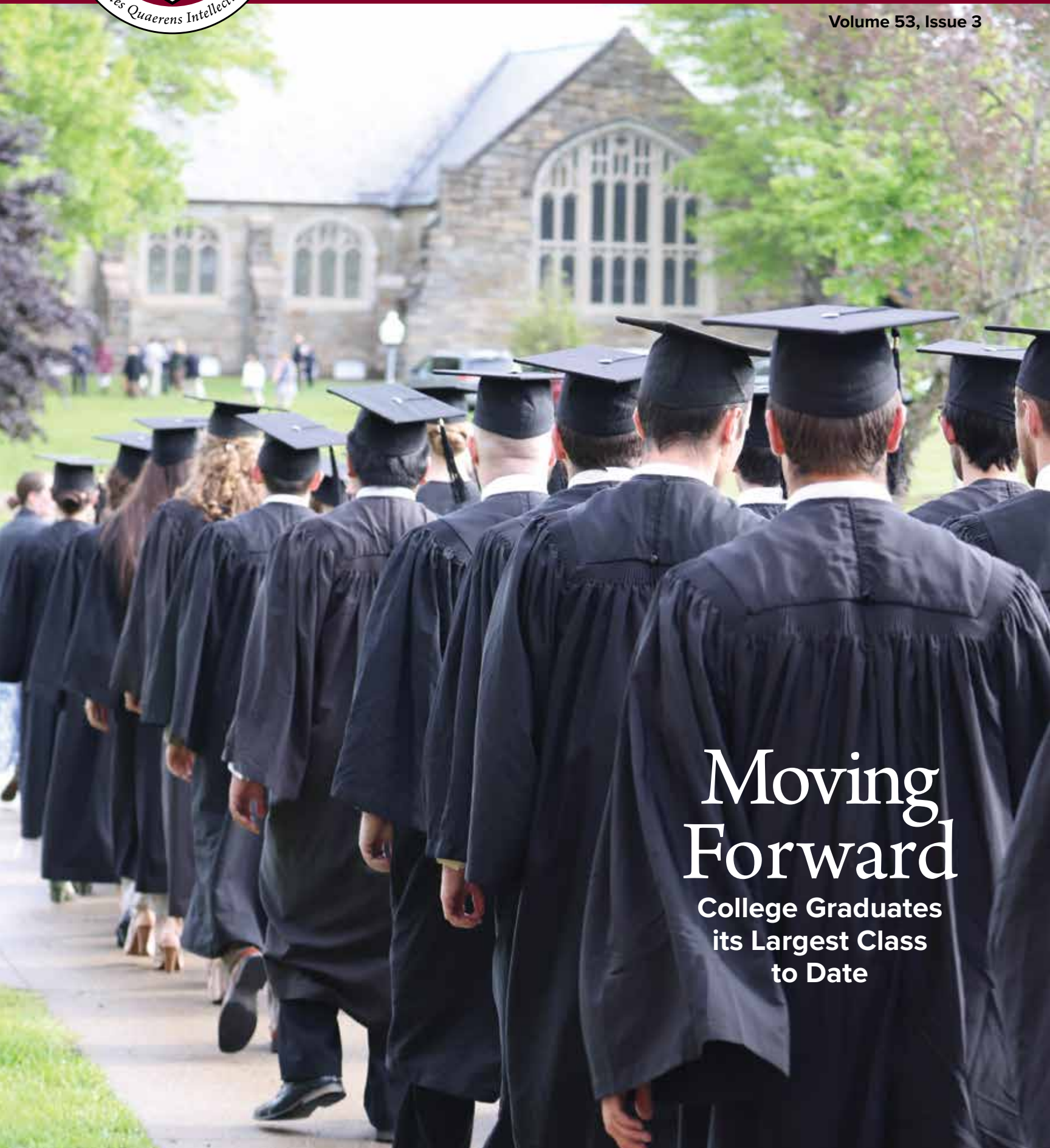




THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT 2025

Volume 53, Issue 3



Moving Forward

College Graduates
its Largest Class
to Date



FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Of Sheep & Wolves, Doves & Serpents

Excerpts from Dr. O'Reilly's Remarks to the
Class of 2025 at the Annual President's Dinner

As you prepare to leave Thomas Aquinas College, you stand at a threshold, not unlike the disciples who were sent out by Christ into the world. So, to you, too, these words from the Gospel of St. Matthew are spoken:

"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

You have spent these past years forming your minds in the light of faith. You grew not only in knowledge but in virtue. Your spiritual lives have also been nourished while at the College.

There will be times when your faith is tested: not always through open hostility, but more often through subtle temptations to compromise. There will be pressure to remain silent when truth demands to be spoken, and the urge to conform when conscience calls you to stand apart. Christ, in His divine foresight, has already warned you. The challenge is not a surprise: It is part of the mission. Jesus told you clearly that you are being sent as sheep among wolves.

Think for a moment about the image He uses. Sheep are creatures of gentleness; they do not have speed or strength; they have no shell or sting. They seem helpless in the face of wolves, who are swift, cunning, and predatory. What hope do they have?

As St. Ambrose put it, "The Good Shepherd has no fear of wolves ... [it is] the watchfulness of the good Shepherd [that] causes the wolves to attempt nothing against the sheep." You are not sent out alone. Christ, your shepherd, watches over you. If suffering should come, it is neither due to His absence nor His ignorance. Rather, it is part of a plan, mysterious and divine. Christ does not promise comfort, but He does promise His presence.

But He also told us how to prepare ourselves: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." St. Thomas tells us that being wise as serpents and innocent as doves refers to prudence and simplicity. The world you enter will require both. You must be alert, discerning, strategically wise: able to recognize evil not only in its gross forms, but in its more seductive disguises.

This is your call: not merely to act with cleverness, but with integrity. Not to manipulate, but to witness. True wisdom is not found in calculated self-preservation, but in joyful fidelity to what is good and true, even when it costs something.

You must be bold in truth, yet never harsh in tone. You must choose fidelity over popularity, courage over convenience, and joy over cynicism. You will not walk this road alone. Christ is with you. His church is with you. Your formation here has given you deep roots, and now it is time to bear fruit.

You are called to enter a world that is broken. Enter it not with fear or bitterness, but with the hope that springs from Christ, the Good Shepherd, who has overcome the wolves of this world.



"True wisdom is not found in calculated self-preservation, but in joyful fidelity to what is good and true, even when it costs something."

— President Paul J. O'Reilly

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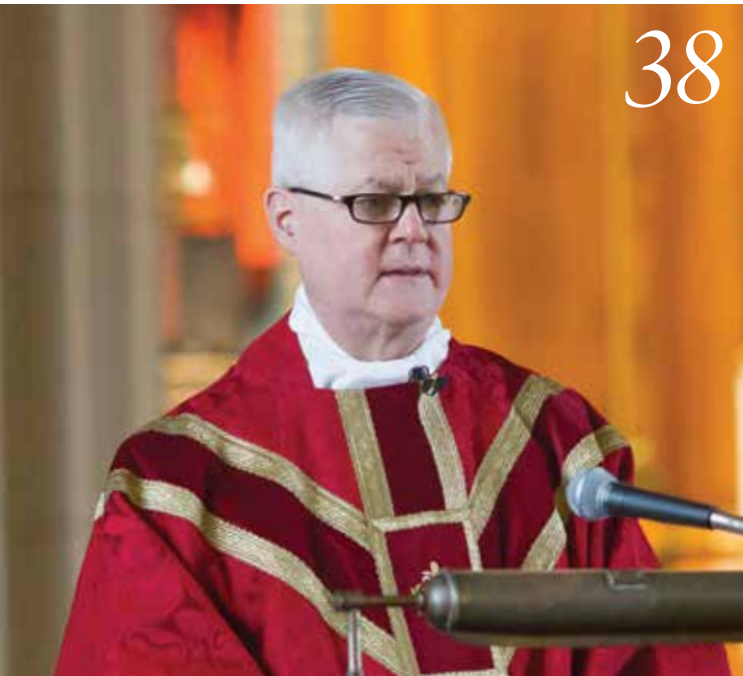
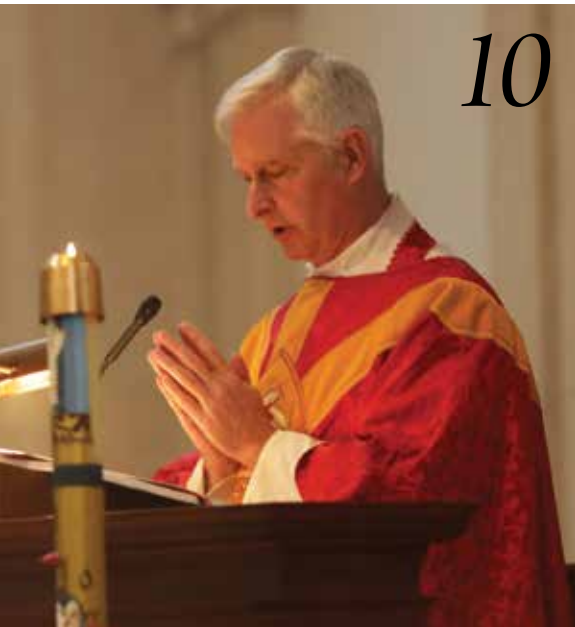
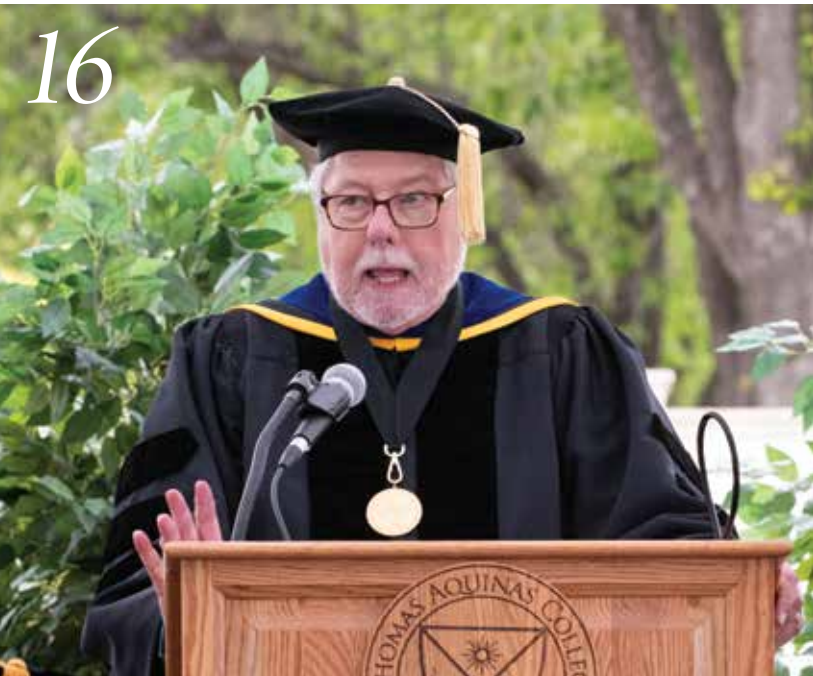
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Commencement 2025

College Graduates its Largest Class Ever



On two successive weekends in May, Thomas Aquinas College graduated its largest combined class to date, with 119 new alumni across both campuses.

These graduates enter the larger world fortified by a rigorous education in theology, philosophy, mathematics, and natural

science; a Catholic life centered around Christ; and an uplifting community of joyous young people with strong intellectual fervor. For all these gifts and for the good that the Class of 2025 will go on to accomplish, this year's Commencement ceremonies marked an exercise in thanksgiving to God.

In his opening remarks on both campuses, President Paul J. O'Reilly thanked all in attendance, especially the graduates' parents and the College's benefactors, for their essential support. "We thank all of you for your help in the noble work of educating the young," he said. "You may be proud of your accomplishments, as they are so richly manifested in this class of graduates. Rest assured that your efforts and sacrifices will be rewarded in years to come."

Gleaning the Wisdom of the Past ...

The California Commencement took place on May 17, the 100th anniversary of the canonization of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, whom the Class of 2025 chose for its patroness. Families and friends came together to celebrate the 80 new graduates.

The day began with the Baccalaureate Mass of the Holy Spirit in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, with Rev. Sebastian Walshe, O.Praem. ('94) — the prefect of studies at St. Michael's Abbey in Silverado, California — serving as the principal celebrant and homilist. In his homily, Fr. Sebastian compared Elijah and Christ, noting that, though their lives share many parallels, the former brought about the Lord's justice, while the latter preached of God's salvific mercy. He urged the soon-to-be graduates to follow Christ and share the spirit of His love and mercy as they go into the world and evangelize.

"It is an interesting facet of human experience that we want to administer justice but to receive mercy," he said.

"Christ has access to a power which Elijah did not have: the power to communicate divine grace to souls, the power to convert sinners, to save what was lost."

At the ensuing ceremony on the academic quadrangle, Anthony Santine (CA'25) delivered the Senior Address, in which he reflected on the desire for truth instilled in the liberally educated. "My friends, what greater gift could we ask of an education?" he asked. "To be human is to be rational, to be rational is to have a yearning for the truth, and to desire truth is to desire God. Even amidst all the pangs of parting and tearful goodbyes, we should be struck with an incredible gratitude for this priceless gift."

Dr. O'Reilly then introduced the Commencement Speaker, former Thomas Aquinas College President Dr. Michael F. McLean, who had welcomed the Class of 2025 as freshmen during his last year in office and now had the honor of sending it off. Dr. McLean exhorted the graduates to make use of the gift of their education — and to follow the example of the College's founders — in the years to come.

"The College has approached its challenges collaboratively and cooperatively, in a way that preserves friendship and mutual respect among colleagues, encourages open and honest conversation, communication, and compromise — building on smaller points of agreement and working toward consensus on the larger issues in question," he said. "It is an approach that has worked well for us and one that will work well for you as you endeavor to serve your families, your communities, your country, and your Church in a culture that is not always friendly or supportive."

... and Bravely Facing the Future

One week later, the New England Class of 2025, which watched the campus's first graduates receive their diplomas in 2022, reached that same milestone. As the last of the campus's first four classes, the 39 seniors witnessed the traditions and culture planted by their predecessors take root and blossom, while also helping cultivate an



atmosphere of studious camaraderie for future generations.

To begin the Commencement exercises, Rev. Gerald E. Murray, a canon lawyer and pastor of St. Joseph's Church in New York City, offered the Baccalaureate Mass of the Holy Spirit in Our Mother of Perpetual

***"We thank all of you for
your help in the noble work
of educating the young. ...
Your efforts and sacrifices
will be rewarded in
years to come."***

Help Chapel. "Dear graduates, I naturally encourage you to live out your Catholic faith with determination and serenity," he said in his homily. "Be the young people who help to revive and enliven the Catholic Church in the United States and beyond, simply by doing what the saints have instructed us to do, day in and day out."

Following a brief reception on the St. Augustine Hall lawn, the Commencement ceremony began in Moody Auditorium. Pedro da Silva (NE'25), the elected Class Speaker, addressed his classmates, likening their liberal education to the example shown by the 40 Holy Martyrs of Sebaste, the Class of 2025's patron saints.

"The exemplarity of the 40 Martyrs lies in them excelling over all other armies because they won the greatest victory, were the most ordered, and had the greatest leader," he said. "I would dare to say that our education here has also excelled others for similar reasons: We have fought a great battle, in the most perfect order, and under the best of leaders."

Commencement Speaker Dr. Kevin Roberts, president of The Heritage Foundation, took the podium next, charging the Class of 2025 to bring its love of the true, the good, and the beautiful into the broader society. "The world is not going to repair itself," he said. "For Christians, retreat is surrender, especially if it masquerades as purity. The whole world is mission country today, just like Northfield, Massachusetts, was for the first people who settled here. And Jesus is very clear that we are all called to be missionaries in it."

In the culmination of the ceremonies on both coasts, members of the Class of 2025 ascended the stage as seniors and descended as alumni, bearing academic hoods and diplomas. When the last graduate returned to his seat, President O'Reilly delivered the College's "Charge to the Graduates," urging all to "live for God alone ... no matter the conditions of the world." The Class of 2025 responded in song: "*Non nobis Domine*: Not to us, O Lord, but to Your name, give glory." ❖



CALIFORNIA COMMENCEMENT



THE CLASS OF 2025



QUOTATION

*"The world is thy ship
and not thy home."*

— St. Thérèse of Lisieux

“A Spirit of Mercy”

Homily from the 2025 California Baccalaureate Mass of the Holy Spirit

by Rev. Sebastian Walshe, O.Praem. ('94)
Prefect of Studies, St. Michael's Abbey

*When the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria
had accepted the Word of God, they sent Peter and John,
who went down and prayed for them that they
might receive the Holy Spirit ...*

This simple passage from the Acts of the Apostles (8:1, 4, 14-17) seems ordinary enough. Just another case of non-Jewish people accepting the Gospel and another opportunity for the Church to add more converts through its missionary activity. It seems to be the constant refrain of the Acts of the Apostles: some Gentiles here, some Gentiles there, all welcoming the good news about Jesus. Meanwhile, the Apostles go out and gather an abundant harvest, though not without some persecution along the way.



But a more careful and complete reading of Scripture reveals a much more dramatic episode. Recall this event recorded in the Gospel according to St. Luke:

When the days drew near for Him to be received up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem. And He sent messengers ahead of Him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him; but the people would not receive Him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from Heaven and consume them?” But He turned and rebuked them, saying: “You do not know of whose Spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save them.” And they went on to another village (Lk 9:51-56 Vulgate).

In its larger context, this passage parallels an event in the life of the prophet Elijah. We read in the book of Kings that, at one point, Elijah has fled to Mount Horeb, where God reveals Himself to him and speaks to him. God tells him that He will find Elisha and anoint him as his successor. Elisha asks permission to say goodbye to his parents before he follows Elijah. As the two of them go on to the place where Elijah is to be taken up into Heaven, they pass through Samaria and are confronted by the troops of the king of Samaria. Elijah calls down fire from Heaven, which consumes them, and they eventually go on to the place where Elijah is taken up into Heaven.



The events recorded in Luke's Gospel closely parallel the life of Elijah. Jesus has just come down from Mount Tabor, where God the Father has spoken to Him. St. Luke notes that Jesus is about to be taken up and is traveling through Samaria, where He does not receive a kind welcome. The disciples ask if they should call down fire from Heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritans. As He journeys farther, Jesus encounters a man who wants to follow Him, but wants first to say goodbye to his parents, to which Jesus responds: *No man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.*

The likenesses between Christ and Elijah are remarkable and unmistakable, but we ought to attend carefully also to the differences: In contrast to Elijah, Jesus rebukes His disciples for wanting to call down fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritans.

The missionary journey of Peter and John to the Samaritans happened only a few months after the event narrated in St. Luke about the rejection of Jesus by the Samaritans. And, so, consider what was going on in the heart of St. John as he looked about and saw the fervent faith of the Samaritans, who only months ago he was hoping would be consumed by fire. I suppose for John it was the occasion of deep contrition.

*“You have been called
by the Lord and sent to
bring His saving Gospel
to every creature.”*

Before, John wanted to call down a destroying fire; now John was sent to call down the saving fire of the Holy Spirit.

All of this is to fulfill what was said about the Lord Jesus in the prophet Isaiah: “A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will

not quench.” Where there is even the smallest hope of healing and repentance, the Lord continues to show mercy. Thanks be to God, for how many times have I been a bruised reed and a smoldering wick?

*“Let no one of you who
graduate today come at last
to Heaven barren, devoid
of an abundant harvest of
souls won for Christ.”*

Since your baptism, dear graduates, and especially since your confirmation, you have been called by the Lord and sent to bring His saving Gospel to every creature. Having been well-trained in the truths of the Faith here at Thomas Aquinas College, that duty is even greater, for to whom much has been given, much will be expected. Let no one of you who graduate today come at last to Heaven barren, devoid of an abundant harvest of souls won for Christ. Yet, in your evangelization, you must have the Spirit of Christ. And that Spirit is more than a Spirit of justice: It is also a Spirit of mercy.

A sense of justice is natural, inborn as it were, to every man. No one has to learn about what's fair. We know it instinctively from the time of small children.

It is therefore understandable that James and John are indignant at the Samaritans' refusal to welcome Jesus. They want justice to be done. They want the punishment of God to come down upon them as when God consumed with fire those who resisted Elijah or those who rebelled against Moses, or when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire.

Justice comes naturally, but mercy has to be learned, and is the work of grace. This is why Jesus rebukes James and John by saying: *You know not of*

what Spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls but to save.

It is an interesting facet of human experience that we want to administer justice but to receive mercy. This is why we find Elijah doing an act of justice in the old Covenant in overcoming the enemies of God, but we find Christ employing mercy in the new Covenant to overcome the enemies of God by converting them into His friends. It is not that justice is bad, it is simply that mercy is better. Christ has access to a power which Elijah did not have: the power to communicate divine grace to souls, the power to convert sinners, to save what was lost.

We live among Samaritans in our own time: those who will not welcome Jesus or His preaching; those who hate the natural order established by God and the truths taught by His church. The unrestrained jubilation in the media over recent decisions by the Supreme Court which reject all that is beautiful and good about natural marriage and the Sacrament of Matrimony is evidence enough that we live in the midst of modern Samaritans. That outcome was predictable.

And I'll tell you what else is predictable: oppression of the Church, imprisonment of Her priests and bishops who will not cease to preach the Gospel. All this will be done in the name of "tolerance" by those who wield power against those whose only weapon is the voice of conscience. But believe me, free speech and freedom of religion will not be tolerated, so long as it is Catholics who are speaking and practicing their religion. Such outcomes seem unlikely in our current

political situation, but Jesus has already told us how this story ultimately ends: The Church must be crucified like Her spouse before it can be raised with Him on the Last Day.

The world, for its part, thinks that its victory is inevitable. That religious indifference, abortion on demand, the enshrinement of impure and unnatural acts as human rights, are here to stay; that the extermination of any religion which claims to be true is only a matter

"The Son of Man came to save souls, not to destroy. And how are these souls to be saved? By Christians laying down their lives out of love for those who persecute us."

of time. The world thinks that the end of the Church founded by Christ is drawing near and cannot be stopped. And we may be tempted, like James and John, to turn to God in frustration and say: "Lord, why don't you destroy them, the way you destroyed the wicked in the Old Testament? Why don't you send down fire from Heaven upon



Hollywood or New York?" To such outbursts of righteous indignation, the Lord responds to us, too: You do not know of what Spirit you are. The Son of Man came to save souls, not to destroy. And how are these souls to be saved? By Christians laying down their lives out of love for those who persecute us.

The Church is not a human institution whose doctrines can be changed, like other human institutions, by enough political pressure. What the world does not know is that every true disciple of Christ will give his or her life in witness to the beauty of chastity and marriage as established by God, to the sanctity of every human life, to the freedom to publicly worship the God Who made us. The Christian soul will die rather than deny the beautiful truths taught by Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, indeed, it may come to that, as it has many times in the history of the Church. For in our heart burns a love for the order of grace and nature which even death cannot extinguish. Love is stronger than death; and every Christian knows that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church founded by Jesus Christ.

In all these tempests of our times, we have the help of Mary, the Star of the Sea. She will guide the Church safely through these treacherous times, as she has so many times before. I sometimes think to myself that on the day of Pentecost, as she prayed together with the disciples in the upper room, she spoke in the depths of her Immaculate Heart to her Son: "Son, shall we call down fire from Heaven to consume them?" To which Jesus responded: "Yes, Mother, for you know of what Spirit you are." ❖

CLASS SPEAKER

"A Lifelong Mission of Pursuing the Truth"

by Anthony Santine (CA'25)
Macomb, Michigan

Good morning. It is a tremendous honor to have the privilege of speaking on behalf of my class today. And so it seems only right that, on behalf of the Class of 2025, I should begin by attempting, however insufficiently, to express our gratitude to all of those who sacrificed to make our four years here possible. To the Board of Governors and our donors; to our president, Dr. O'Reilly; our dean and associate dean, Dr. Letteney and Dr. Baer; our assistant dean, Dr. Cooper; to our beloved chaplains; to all the faculty and staff; and to all the family and friends of the graduates, especially the parents, we owe you an immeasurable debt of gratitude. Thank you, also, to our Commencement Speaker, Dr. McLean, and to Fr. Sebastian for the beautiful Baccalaureate Mass. I would be remiss if I did not place special emphasis on our tutors, who have most directly shaped our formation by guiding us both in the classroom and in general conversation. Your commitment to teaching and care for us students has been a constant inspiration. While the remainder of this address will be directed to my classmates, to begin any way other than with these acknowledgments would be a great injustice; for without all of you, there would be no Commencement today.

"All of us will most likely have some regrets as we reflect on our four years, whether it be an experience we missed, a grade which could have been higher, or anything else that we may wish had been otherwise. But if we can truly say which we have been brought closer to God, what else can we hope for?"

Now, to my classmates. First and foremost, congratulations on completing these four wonderful, challenging, rigorous, sometimes grueling, always uplifting, life-changing, and sacred years. It seems fitting that this speech should in some way encapsulate our experience here and speak to those elements of our education that will have the greatest long-lasting



The Class of 2025 elected Anthony Santine (CA'25) as its Class Speaker.

impact. This would be a daunting task for the best of speakers, for experiences of such personal importance often defy the confinements of words. And, as I am far from the best of speakers, I am acutely aware that my efforts are doomed to fall well short of this goal.

I am reminded of the words of Dante: "How my weak words fall short of my conception, which is itself so far from what I saw that 'weak' is much too weak a word to use!" While giving a Commencement Address is perhaps not quite the same as attempting to describe the Empyrean Circle of Paradise, I can certainly relate to this sentiment. I hope that you will forgive my shortcomings as a speaker and understand that whatever I may leave unsaid is present in my intention.

We have spent four years in a place of retreat from the world to devote ourselves to a life of learning. Surrounded by the natural beauty of the mountains, we became students of the greatest minds of Western civilization. We learned profound and eternal truths in the realm of mathematics, sought to understand the awe-inspiring order of God's creation in the natural sciences, and read works of literature that have impacted society for hundreds (and in some cases, thousands) of years. We investigated the principles and causes of nature,

human action, and being itself. Most importantly, we read the divinely inspired words of Sacred Scripture and elevated our minds to ponder questions of God’s existence, nature, and operation.

There is no disputing the inestimable value of the content we have learned, and if at any point in this address it sounds like I am devaluing this content, you may prepare the proverbial millstone. For to be given this glimpse into the minds and truths that have shaped our culture and lifted men’s souls for generations is already a gift that cannot be fully repaid. With that being said, I believe that the true benefit of this education goes beyond the “facts” or “things” that we learn, however sublime they may be.

I think this for two reasons. First, not everything we read is as edifying and beautiful as the works of St. Thomas. We read authors who say that compassion and charity are signs of sickness, that all of us have the right by nature to kill those weaker than ourselves, and that truth amounts to nothing more than our own perception. Furthermore, if the whole impact and benefit of our education were contained in the content we studied, it would seem that if, in 10 years (or perhaps even now), we find ourselves unable to rattle off Euclid’s definition of “same ratio” or explain the original synthetic unity of apperception, we would have to say, “Well, that time was wasted.” But I think we all recognize that there is something deeper and longer-lasting that has touched us here.

This education has taught us about ourselves. This is not just a cliché or narcissistic claim. Rather, I believe that it expresses, to some extent, one of the most fundamental aspects of our education.

“The memory of this place, this little haven in the mountains, and the memory of these four sacred years, with all of the lasting friendships and experiences that we gained, should serve as a reminder that, regardless of our station in life, we are human persons, charged with a lifelong mission of pursuing the truth and pursuing God.”

I think there are a few important elements of this realization. One of those things which we learn about ourselves is that we cannot live intellectually compartmentalized lives. If there’s one thing we have learned from four years of studying



Daisy Rangel (CA’25) leads the singing of the National Anthem.

philosophy, it’s that the philosophical principles we accept have necessary consequences. For example, we cannot hold a principle of absolute determinism and hope to have a system of morals that operates on free will. If we believe that man’s most fundamental drive is the will to power, Nietzsche is lurking just around the corner. If we, on a philosophical level, deny our ability to know God’s existence by reason and yet claim to subscribe to the teachings of the Church, we are living in denial.

On the other hand, if we accept principles that are well founded and guided by the light of faith, the consequences of these principles will necessarily serve to edify and enrich us, leading us to be well-rounded individuals. In other words, philosophy has a great personal importance, and the principles by which we choose to think and live (and we must choose some) will have necessary implications for our beliefs and actions in every field. This, if anything, should motivate us to continue in a life of reflection and learning.

The personal element of philosophy and the intellectual life in general raises another related point. This education aimed not just to give us the means to learn, but to enkindle in us a true love of learning. I think all of us have experienced the exhilaration of finally figuring out a math proposition, the joy of a conversation with friends after seminar, or the captivating beauty of learning about God’s nature just a short walk away from His true presence. And if men like Plato, Aristotle, and St. Thomas are to be believed, for us to gain a love of learning is to return to one of the most essential parts of our nature.

But no sooner do we develop this passion for learning than we discover that we cannot sufficiently act on this love without developing a profound intellectual humility. Perhaps no one exemplifies this as well as Socrates, whose greatest claim to wisdom was that he recognized his own ignorance.

“We cannot, having honestly contemplated our nature and our purpose, think it permissible to live an unexamined life.”

This is especially pertinent for us today, precisely because we have received such an excellent education. We will naturally be tempted into thinking that we have all the answers because we have been given a good foundation in the search of them. We may even become a little too comfortable thinking of ourselves as members of the “community of those who know,” without remembering the part about “to the degree of a bachelor of arts.” This would be a great disservice to the gift of this education. We would be like the men described in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, who snatched pieces of Lady Philosophy’s robe and went away thinking that they possessed her entirely. In other words, we would be left with knowledge devoid of wisdom. The only way for us to be spurred on in a tireless pursuit of the truth, and thus to act on the foundation laid by our education, is to recognize that we have yet to fully grasp it, and that our desire has not yet been fulfilled.

When we look into our own nature and see this unfulfilled desire for the truth, we cannot help but be directed to the Source of all truth, the only harbor of peace for our restless hearts. My friends, what greater gift could we ask of an education? This education has taught us to ponder our own nature, and one cannot understand a nature without seeing it in light of its end. To be human is to be rational, to be rational is to have a yearning for the truth, and to desire truth is to desire God. Even amidst all the pangs of parting and tearful good-byes, we should be struck with an incredible gratitude for this priceless gift.

All of us will most likely have some regrets as we reflect on our four years, whether it be an experience we missed, a grade which could have been higher, or anything else that we may wish had been otherwise. But if we can truly say that we have been brought closer to God, what else can we hope for? We were blessed, for four years, with the privilege of living in a beautiful community centered on a common goal, where we formed deep friendships and read some of the most profound books ever written. And if any of us has watched the sun set behind the Chapel during a quiet evening and been moved

to a greater love of God’s creation because of it, our joy and gratitude should far outweigh any lingering sense of regret.

With this gratitude comes a feeling of responsibility, for to whom much has been given, of him much will be expected. We cannot, having honestly contemplated our nature and our purpose, think it permissible to live an unexamined life. The memory of this place, this little haven in the mountains, and the memory of these four sacred years, with all of the lasting friendships and experiences that we gained, should serve as a reminder that, regardless of our station in life, we are human persons, charged with a lifelong mission of pursuing the truth and pursuing God.

I would like to close with a quote from Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov*, which is well suited for a time of gratitude and of parting, and which I have paraphrased slightly to fit the occasion. “My dear friends, we shall be parting soon. Soon we shall leave this place, perhaps for a very long time. Let us agree here that we shall never forget — first, what we have learned, and second, one another. And whatever may happen to us later in life, even if we do not meet for 20 years afterwards, let us always remember our lives here, which we came to love so much. And even though we may be involved with the most important affairs, achieve distinction, or fall into misfortune — all the same, let us never forget how good we once felt here, all together, united by such good and kind feelings as made us, too, for our time as students, perhaps better than we actually are.”

May our patron, St. Thomas Aquinas, serve as our guide in living a life of reason enlightened by faith, and may we, through a constant pursuit of the truth, be led ever closer to the one true God. Thank you.

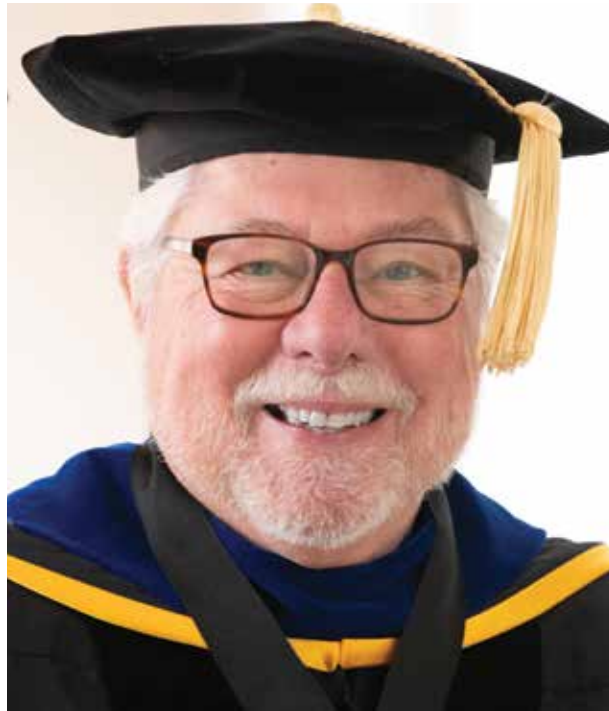
Liam Murphy (CA’25) leads the Pledge of Allegiance.



Trust in the Abundant Graces

by Michael F. McLean, Ph.D.

Fourth President and Tutor, Thomas Aquinas College



Thank you for that kind introduction. Time being of the essence, I guess I can't ask to hear it again, as much as I might like to.

Anthony has eloquently thanked the College, the faculty, your parents and our benefactors. I would like to begin by returning the favor, and on behalf of the faculty, thanking you, the Class of 2025.

With you, and in many ways because of you, we have in the past four years experienced the beauty and order of the natural world revealed by mathematics and natural science, learned from Aristotle "to strain every nerve to live in accord with the best thing in us," enjoyed the blossoming of love and the joy of marriage between Pierre and Natasha in *War and Peace*, been moved at the discovery of the redemptive power of love by Alyosha and the boys in *The Brothers Karamazov*, and been enriched by the profundity of St. Thomas's meditations on the mysteries of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Eucharist, which I trust have helped us grow in our knowledge and love of the Triune God and Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

These are but a few examples which show the absurdity of the commonly held view that liberal education — your education — does not prepare you for life. On the contrary, your education has prepared you for a Catholic life to be fully and richly lived, a life of the highest and best kind, a life where engagement with the true, the good, and the beautiful has become second nature.

Thank you, Class of 2025, for your contributions to the spiritual, social, artistic, and academic lives of the College and for everything you have done for the well-being of this community.

I believe there are some lessons to be drawn from the history of the College, lessons I wish to share especially with our soon-to-be

graduates but also with all our guests today who know the College well and, I trust, love it and these seniors deeply.

Intent on implementing a well articulated vision of Catholic liberal education, and reacting to the decline of liberal education in both Catholic and secular colleges, the principal founders of Thomas Aquinas College — Ron McArthur, Mark Berquist, Jack Neumayr, and Peter DeLuca — began by writing a well-crafted and strongly argued proposal for the fulfillment of Catholic liberal education.

Leaving secure employment, and with very little money, they were eventually offered a site not far from here, recruited some donors, a few brave Board members, and an intrepid group of students, and set about educating those students in the truth under the light of the Catholic faith, pursuing a beautifully ordered curriculum and using some of the best books ever written.

The founders' clarity of mission and purpose, their courage, their faith, and their hope and trust in Divine Providence were inspiring then and have inspired all of us who have been blessed to follow in their footsteps. And so should they inspire you, our seniors.

Times were hard in the early years, and our financial challenges remain significant today. Grateful to be hired by the College in 1978, my wife and I, just as I'm sure prospective tutors do today, carefully calculated the financial implications of coming to the College and living in Southern California. With our budget worked out, to California we came, only to discover, contrary to our expectations and plans, but wholly understandable given that point in the College's history, that we would not be paid in the summer.

Mindful, I think, of what the founders had given up, and with

enough piety and respect for them and for their efforts to keep the College afloat, Tom Kaiser and I elected not to form a union and try to negotiate higher salaries but rather to start a small business to help make ends meet.

After distributing some flyers advertising our services, we managed to line up enough roofing jobs to get us through most of the summer. Tom knew something about roofing and was able to teach me enough to get by. To inject a little humor and irony into the situation, we called our small, two-person company Vertigo Roofing from the Latin, meaning "to grow dizzy on a height, like a roof, or on a precipice," like the edge of a roof.

Thanks be to God, the College soon addressed the problem of summer earnings by establishing the tutor summer program to help faculty learn various parts of the curriculum, and some years later by establishing the High School Program to help with student recruitment.

But it was not easy to raise funds for these programs or for anything else the College needed. Our founding president, Ron McArthur, once went to see a donor around Christmastime in an effort to raise \$25,000 to meet the payroll. Sometime during the conversation, Ron revealed that his blood pressure was acting up, and the prospective donor urged Ron to take garlic to address the problem. He led Ron to a closet full of garlic pills, garlic powder, and garlic extract. Surveying this abundance, somewhat impatiently Ron said, "I don't need your [blank] garlic for my blood pressure, I need \$25,000 to meet the payroll!" Suffice it to say, Ron got the \$25,000, met the payroll, the College survived, and his blood pressure improved.

As I'm sure any of you who has tried to raise money knows, it can be a humbling thing.

Now, before I continue, I want to clarify one thing. Ron didn't actually say the word "blank" before he said the word "garlic." He used a different adjective instead. For the sake of the formality expected of a Commencement Address, the phrase "blank garlic" is entirely my own.

Based on this consideration of the relatively mundane topics of roofing and garlic, my hope is that you will be reminded of the importance in all things of humility, piety, and the willingness to make small (and sometimes large) sacrifices for the sake of the common good. And, as well, the importance of a healthy sense of humor to help you accept trials and tribulations with a sense of equanimity and even some joy.

The College has faced many challenges more serious and more threatening than a small shortage of summer money. One such occurred in the mid-nineties when our accreditors were pushing "diversity" at us — an emphasis on racial and cultural diversity in our curriculum and in our hiring and our student recruitment practices. This was before "equity" and "inclusion" joined the party.

To safeguard our mission and educational philosophy we knew we had to resist this push, and one of our tutors, along with President Dillon, led the resistance. Richard Ferrier, a student of mili-

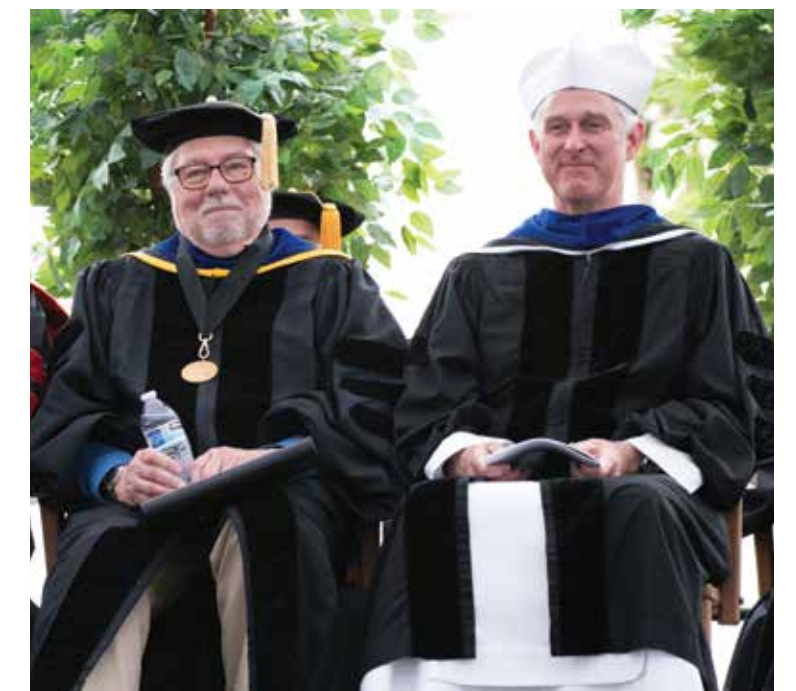
tary history, and never one to shy away from verbal combat, did a wonderful job of opposing this effort, and, by forging alliances with schools such as Stanford University, managed to protect the curriculum and help save the school.

Another watershed moment occurred when the College resisted the Obamacare contraceptive insurance mandate. With leadership from our Board of Governors and the guidance of our legal counsel, Quincy Masteller, along with other outside counsel, we fought this battle, along with the Little Sisters of the Poor, all the way to success before the United States Supreme Court.

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In a similar way, our then-dean, John Goyette, led a successful effort to keep the College operational, and our students and faculty safe, during the Covid crisis, all the while not compromising our pedagogical commitment to in-person classes and class discussions.

Over the years, I have been edified by the willingness of our faculty and friends to take on difficult positions beyond those I have just mentioned, often with some degree of personal sacrifice — Tom and Paula Kaiser agreeing to lead the opening of the Northfield campus, for example, or tutor after tutor stepping up to serve as assistant dean, most recently Travis Cooper and next year, Joe Zepeda, or tutors volunteering to run the Lecture Series, or the tutor talks, or the writing program, or *The Aquinas Review*, or stepping up to teach in the tutor summer program, serve on the Instruction Committee,



Admissions Committee, in accreditation, in advancement, as dean, as president, or as Board members.

All, along with our other faculty members, and all of our staff, are vital to the flourishing of Thomas Aquinas College and all, in their own ways, have helped make this community and your Commencement possible.

I encourage you to imitate the College and always to resist compromising fundamental principles, mission, and faith commitment, even when the opposition to them is strong and the danger great. Remember, too, that the graces of office are real. Trusting in those abundant graces, be prepared, like David in the Scriptures and like so many of our faculty, to accept leadership positions when the occasion calls for it, even if you don't feel particularly well qualified to do so or if it requires some sacrifice. With faith in those same graces, do not fear taking on something new and challenging in the near or distant future or even soon after your graduation.

As most of you probably know, we obtained our New England campus from the National Christian Foundation, an evangelical Protestant organization. The process of acquiring the campus was lengthy and required many meetings and much travel. I was some-

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times called upon to begin meetings with a prayer, and to strengthen our friendship with our evangelical brethren, I often found myself invoking “my personal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,” more than I had ever done before, although I do think I believe that He is my personal lord and savior.

When Foundation representatives on one occasion revealed that they had been hoping to give the campus to a Christian, and not a Catholic, organization, we had to draw the line and gently point out that Catholics are, and always have been, Christians.

The task of gaining permission from the New England Board of Higher Education to open a campus in Massachusetts was time consuming and complicated. To obtain a modicum of religious freedom protection under Massachusetts law, we had to make the significant compromise of admitting only Catholic students to our New England campus. In the language of the law and of certain judicial precedents, a religious organization in Massachusetts can qualify as such only if it serves what they refer to as “co-religionists.”

It's good, when possible, to foster friendship and to find points of agreement with those with whom you might otherwise disagree,



while remaining faithful to your fundamental principles and policies. It is a fact of political life, however, that you may sometimes be required to compromise on an important point for the sake of obtaining a greater good — in our case, the ability to bear witness in largely pagan territory and to offer this education to an increasing number of willing and able students, all the while knowing we can enroll non-Catholic students on our California campus. Compromise is more acceptable, however, when you know the compromise may not be permanent and that you can live to fight another day to attain your ultimate goal.

Throughout its history, in keeping with the culture of discussion on our campus, and with the prayerful support and sacramental sustenance provided by our chaplains, the College has approached its challenges collaboratively and cooperatively, in a way that preserves friendship and mutual respect among colleagues, encourages open and honest conversation, communication, and compromise — building on smaller points of agreement and working toward consensus on the larger issues in question.

These are hallmarks of TAC governance and the College's deliberate approach to its challenges and opportunities. It is an approach that has worked well for us and one that will work well for you as you endeavor to serve your families, your communities, your country, and your Church in a not always friendly or supportive culture.

Now, in closing, let me invite you to recall some encouraging passages from Sacred Scripture. Remember the prophet Elijah, who found the Lord not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in the gentle breeze.

Of course, attend to the advice of your family, friends, and priests, but in prayer, also imitate Elijah and listen to that quiet voice within you as you strive to discern God's will.

With Solomon, pray that God will give you a discerning heart to distinguish right from wrong. With St. Paul, live so that you can say “I have fought the good and noble fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith ...”

Finally, recall St. Peter asking in John 6: “Lord, to whom shall we go?” I hope the answer to this question is, and always will be, as clear to you, especially in times of struggle, as it was to St. Peter, who deep in his heart knew that he must remain close to the Lord, just as you must remain close to the Lord. For when all is said and done, there is nowhere else to go.

Thank you and may God bless you. ❖



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“The Most Important Time in my Life”

by Alex Roberts (CA’25)
Pleasanton, California

Looking back on myself starting freshman year, I seem almost unrecognizable — shy, nervous, and indecisive. I had chosen to come to Thomas Aquinas College for a few reasons. First, I wanted to go to college in a deeply Catholic community. Second, I had visited once and thought the classes, especially the Discussion Method, looked interesting. Third, I did not want to have to pick a major before I knew what I wanted to do with my life. I assumed that I would stick to myself, do my studies, spend most weekends at

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my grandparents’ a few hours away, and then graduate four years later; maybe I would go into a STEM field, like my parents had, or go to seminary after I graduated, and my time at college would be just a short blip on life’s road.

God had other plans! From the moment I began interacting with my classmates, I realized that I was experiencing a community like no other.

Only a few weeks into my freshman year, I was hospitalized for two weeks due to a chronic medical condition. When I returned to campus, I found that the whole school had been praying for me; people I had never even met before were welcoming me back and

saying how good it was to see me. My section-mates spent numerous hours helping me catch up on the studies I had missed.

After getting back on track, I began to move outside my comfort zone. I found a zeal for the Discussion Method and a love of learning that, while it had always been present before, breathed new vigor from the great writings we studied.

That same year, at the prompting of one of my friends, I decided to audition for a role in the spring play, *Much Ado About Nothing*. To my surprise, I received the role of Friar Francis. My experience performing that year led me to perform in the fall play the next year, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and eventually to direct three plays during my time at the College: *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *A Man for All Seasons*, and *King Lear*. If someone had told me before coming to Thomas Aquinas College that I would have been acting, let alone directing, I would not have believed it!

Parallel to my thespian progress, I also became more involved intellectually in the community that had welcomed me. Initially, I had avoided the Q&A periods after lectures, preferring to go back to my room, but sophomore year I began to attend them to hear the discussions, and come junior year I was throwing my hat in the ring with the others! I continued to participate more fruitfully in and out of the classroom, hoping to give back to the community that had given so much to me.

Through these experiences, God showed me my love of teaching, a love of sharing with others the truths that had been given to me. I therefore decided



to set my sights on further studies at graduate school, hoping to continue the intellectual life I had begun at Thomas Aquinas College.

Returning from these reminiscences of past years, I look at my senior year and what lies beyond. I see a man confident in his love of the truth, excited to share that truth with others, and, by the grace of God, given the opportunity to be one of the leaders of his community. After my time at Thomas Aquinas College, I am preparing to study for a master’s degree in theology at Notre Dame.

Who would have thought, looking at me coming in freshman year, that I would be this man? Those four years, which I thought would be uneventful, became the most important time in my life. I will miss my alma mater dearly, but I look forward to bringing her spirit of learning, faith, and compassion to the world.

I could write whole other stories about the deep growth in my spiritual life through my time at Thomas Aquinas College, or the rewarding challenge of trying to reconcile my newfound love of scholastic philosophy with my empirical, materialist background, but as St. John says, “there are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written.”

I know that one of His many works was to bring me to Thomas Aquinas College. ❖

“From a Life of Study to a Life of Business”

by Katherine Ruegemer (CA’25)
Hayden, Idaho

“One of the remarkable things about a home,” G.K. Chesterton once said, “is that it is bigger inside than out.” This is certainly true of a good home, like the one that I grew up in, but I have also found it to be true of Thomas Aquinas College.

When I look back over my life so far, I realize that I was always searching for wholeness, even if I didn’t realize it at the time. To be someone great, to be independent and sufficient to myself — that was what I wanted. This desire was a big part of what brought me to Thomas Aquinas College. I went to a good high school, run by Dominican sisters, and had been raised well in the Faith by my parents. I came to the College searching for intellectual excellence. I already had the seeds of what I needed, but I needed to realize that I had them, and they needed to find an environment where they could sprout and grow.

“I have read harder books and done more math than I would have thought possible, and I can see that the curriculum has really shaped the way I think even about the most mundane things.”

I had never heard of TAC until my sophomore year of high school, when a couple of teachers recommended that I look into it. I applied, was accepted, and forthwith came to visit. Originally filled with doubts about whether it would be a waste of my time, I fell in love with the

Great Books program, the classroom discussions, and, above all, the sense of peace and serenity, of retreat from the noise and business of the world. Although I had my share of the usual doubtful questions experienced by most liberal arts students, I decided to try it out.

During my time here, I found the intellectual excellence I was looking for. I have read harder books and done more math than I would have thought possible, and I can see that the curriculum has really shaped the way I think even about the most mundane things. But it was here that the wholeness I wanted began to shape into reality for me. I grew not only as an intellectual, but as a balanced, interconnected human being. I learned that the emotions really do have an effect on the whole man, that what you believe in your head causes your heart to seek and love certain things.

I learned, too, that I couldn’t pretend just to be an intellect surprised by the needs of a body, but that I was one human, body and soul, and that, as a human, I could not be independent — not really. I needed community, and that was what I found here. The classroom taught me to think, but the life here taught me to relate, to communicate and to listen, to see what kind of a part I am supposed to play in the Mystical Body of Christ. That is where true wholeness is found, and that is what I came to know thoroughly at the College, even if the stage was set for that realization before.

My time at TAC has also set the goal of life for me in a way I hadn’t seen it before. Last semester I was scrambling to find a job which would pay the bills, when



by chance — if there is such a thing — a graduate from the previous year reached out. He offered me an interview at an industrial-supply company called McMaster-Carr, which was specifically looking for TAC grads. I took the interview and found that the whole schtick about liberal arts preparing you for all sorts of careers really is true. Impressed by my confidence and critical-thinking-skills, which I owe to my training at TAC, the company hired me as a management trainee.

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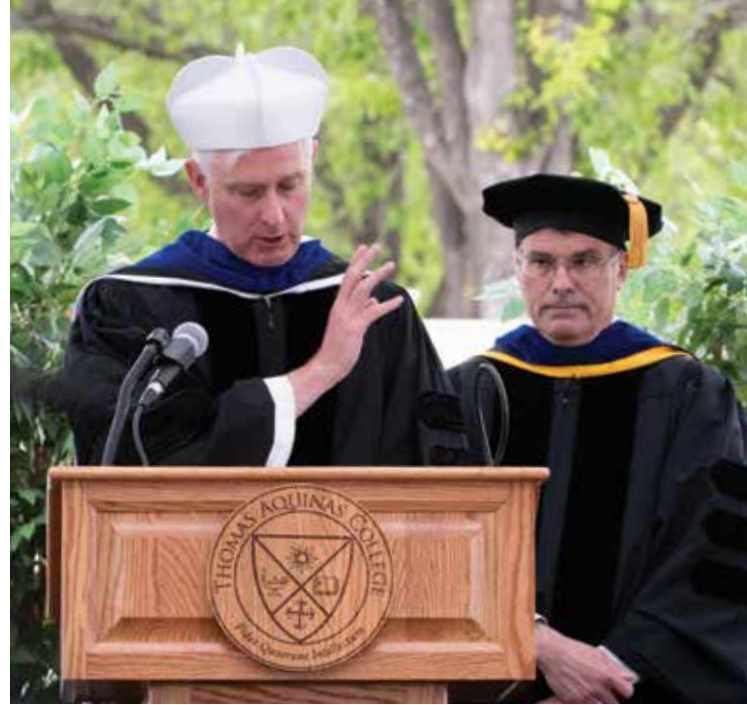
As I am about to cross the threshold from a life of study to a life of business, as I break this four-year retreat, I see this as just another step in this journey on the road to Heaven. We have to form our minds and hearts, then “lift them up to the Lord” in the ways He nudges us. TAC has been a major step in that formation of the whole being for me, and I think all my classmates would say the same.

Now it is a step we must leave behind, but without leaving behind the integrated excellence and balance, the wonder and vision, that we found here. TAC truly is bigger inside than out — the whole world is within its walls, and so we find what it taught us in the whole world, wherever we go. ❖



“Stand Immoveable in the Truth”

An Interview with
Rev. Sebastian Walshe, O.Praem. ('94)



We were grateful to have you on the California campus for Commencement, 31 years after your graduation. What keeps bringing you back?

Well, gratitude, number one, for the many, many goods that I have received through the College, not only in my four years there as a student, but since I have graduated, too. My involvement with the College has always been a blessing for me, and I feel like I have always received more than I have given. It's hard to express just how education orients the whole of your future, but that's really true about TAC in a way that's just not true of other colleges. I have had many opportunities to try and give back to the College, but it's a little bit like paying back a rich friend. Every time you do something nice for the College, you feel like you get something back.

In your homily at the Baccalaureate Mass, you reminded the graduates that, “to whom much has been given, much is to be expected.” What have the TAC students been given through their education, and what do you think Our Lord expects of them in return?

They have been given a kind of perfection, or form of, not only their minds, but of their souls. Obviously, they have been given the fundamental truths in the correct order, so that they can understand reality correctly; not only the reality that's accessible to reason, but the reality that comes through revelation: knowledge about the interior life of God. So, they are able, first of all, to be what I would call a rock in the modern world.

Someone who really knows something is no longer at the mercy of the opinions of the crowds. Even if every other person in the world thinks the opposite, if you know something, you can stand immoveable in the truth, and your mind can stay in touch with reality, conformed to reality, perfected by it. So, that's a formation of the mind that we have received here, but, beyond that, there's also the formation of the rest of the soul: the good moral example of the tutors, the faculty, their families, the priests, the right worship of God that's carried on at the College with a sense of reverence and due honor for the Almighty. And then there are the genuine friendships, which seem to

be deeper than at other places, the genuine friendships that are based upon higher things, better things: not transient, small things, but great things which make for lasting friendship, which is so important for flourishing and happiness.

So, all of those things are gifts that I think the College's students have received after just four short years. And then what's expected? Well, the Gospels say, “You are the light of the world, the salt of the earth.” So, the first thing that's expected is that you have to share what

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you have received with regard to truth, with regard to the knowledge of what's right and wrong, and live a life according to that. It's expected of you to continue to worship God in a worthy way. It's expected of you to contribute to the common good by becoming a husband, a wife, a father, a mother, a religious, a priest. These are all things that are expected of us, in a way, to just be lights in the world.

In discussing the challenges facing our world today, you mentioned “religious indifferentism,” as distinct from atheism. Is the problem of our time not so much that people have stopped believing in God, but that they have stopped thinking that God even matters?

There are two ways that you can talk about that indifferentism. One is, as you say, a lack of care. In other words, there are a lot of people today who relegate religion to kind of a convenience, the way

they relegate sports or something like that. It's a part of their life, but it's not central to their life. There are no crosses to be carried. So, that's one way in which you can have religious indifferentism: a lack of care for the things of God, so that God really isn't the awesome, almighty being who created you and holds you in existence at every moment and to Whom you owe your whole existence, every moment of your life. That's certainly a huge problem, even in those who profess to be faithful Catholics.

The other way in which you can have religious indifferentism is when you think it just doesn't matter what religion you are, and that can take the form of people who are supposedly practicing Catholics. It's considered a kind of charity today, almost a duty of charity, to just believe that other people will be saved no matter what they believe, no matter what their religion is, and that basically says, “Well, you know who's really saving you is you, not Jesus Christ. You're saving you, because it's your religion and we presume that you are in good faith, and sincere, so your sincerity is what's saving you.” Frankly, no, you can't save yourself. Not one of us has the capacity to save himself, and only Jesus Christ can save us. Therefore, only by obeying Him and being members of His church can we be saved, and when someone is saved in another religion, it is in spite of that religion, not because of it.

Therefore, we shouldn't be indifferent to what religion someone is. We should be actively evangelizing. Why did the Apostles go out there and get stoned and beaten and practically all of them martyred? It wasn't because they thought other people could be saved no matter where they were. That doesn't make any sense. They actually thought that it was worth giving their lives to try and lead someone out of a superstitious, false religion to the true religion, and that's been lost in the modern Church.

Regarding conversions, the news these days seems to be conflicting. On the one hand, we hear that many are entering the Church, and we are seeing evidence of renewal. On the other hand, the statistics tell us that the Church is still losing far more members than it's gaining. What is the truth in all this?

Well, I do think this is true: that young people find modern secular society deeply unsatisfying, and some of those young people are finding their way back into the Church and even in more traditional expressions of Catholic faith. Yet many more people, while deeply unsatisfied, are not finding their way into the Church but falling into depression, sadness, and drugs. They are just turning to everything to try and administer emotional anesthesia. They are trying to make the pain of their modern existence go away. They are influenced deeply by an internet culture where they just spend hours and hours living in an artificial world. I think the vast majority of those people are not finding their way into the Church, and part of that relates to the religious indifferentism I mentioned. We are not the saints we should be, and we are not evangelizing the way we should be, so that young people know that they have a way out.

So, I do think that, probably, the numbers are increasing. At least from this perspective, there's a wide dissatisfaction. People aren't deceived into thinking modern secular society has the answers to

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happiness, but there's a bifurcation, and some people are finding their way into the Church, and other people are just living lives of despair. It's our responsibility to reach out and find those people in despair and to bring them the joy that Christ intended them to have. He said, “I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

You wrote a book about keeping children in the Faith. Can you offer any succinct suggestions along those lines?

The whole key to keeping kids in the Catholic faith is to give them experiential evidence that staying Catholic will make them happier. Fundamentally, if you don't do that one thing, they're not going to stay Catholic, right? So, what kind of things does that mean? It means, for example, that they shouldn't associate the practices of the Catholic faith with unhappiness.



So, while I love traditional Catholicism, I have also known some traditional Catholics where they are very good about, you know, everyone goes to the Traditional Latin Mass, the girls have a little mantilla on, the boys are dressed well, and everything like that. They kneel bolt upright in the Church, and then, at home, there's no real affection between Mom and Dad. Dad's an alcoholic, and all you

hear about is “everything’s negative in the world, everything’s negative in the Church.” There’s never any kind of joy at the practice of the Faith. It’s just kind of fear-based Catholicism, where you better stay Catholic, otherwise you are going to go to Hell. That’s not sustainable. It will frighten people for a while, but it won’t keep people in the Faith. They need to see that you are a happy, joyful person, especially in the midst of difficulties and suffering.

Another thing that’s really important is that you are careful with regard to the Catholic education that you give your children. Just because a school has “Catholic” on its label doesn’t mean that it’s going to be truly a Catholic school. In fact, my experience has been that, by and large, the schools that use the name “Catholic” are better at destroying the Faith of your children than public schools. The vast majority of Catholic education in our country is in a very bad state. You absolutely must not let false advertising destroy your children’s education.

Then, finally, just pray together as a family. Say the Rosary together. Children love it when they do things that bring their families together. If you say a daily Rosary as a family, it’s practically impossible that your kids are going to leave the Catholic faith for a long time.



How do you think the election of our new Holy Father changes the landscape of evangelization and preserving the faith in our own families, or is it too early to say?

There are some things that seem to be coming into focus, and it seems like Pope Leo is more patient and calmer than his predecessor; he doesn’t seem to be as impulsive when it comes to certain things, and that’s probably a good thing. My hope is that he will cooperate with the grace of the Holy Spirit, even though it may be unpopular, and he’s not going to get a lot of praise from the secular media. So, we will see. Every pope has to be open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He also has to be courageous enough to teach it.

I will say this: I know some people have complained about a lack of clarity in the modern Church with regard to marriage, family, and sexual morality, together with questions about the nature of the Church. But if ever there was a time when having a lack of

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clear teaching would do the least damage, it’s probably now. Two hundred years ago, if your local priest was a heretic, you would have no chance of knowing what the Church actually teaches, but today you can go online, you can find all the canons, all the writing of St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Catechism. We have resources galore. We already have clear teaching on these issues. It has been reiterated over and over again. We can just stick to that and hope the Pope will bravely reaffirm these things. All we can do is pray for him at this point.

He also seems interested in venturing into areas that are new, and which the Church hasn’t addressed directly, such as AI.

That’s an interesting issue that hasn’t been addressed a lot by the magisterium, and he would probably help us if he could make a serious magisterial contribution about it. It’s fundamentally a question about human art and the relation of human art to Creation. So, at least in certain principles, those matters have been addressed by the magisterium, but I agree that is an area that could use some doctrinal development as assistance to the faithful.

If you look back, the Communists claimed that the most important aspect of a man is that he is a producer, that the practical intellect is the highest faculty, and man finds his fulfillment in owning the means of production. But AI is showing that, well, if that’s all man is, then he’s become obsolete. So, in some sense, this moment presents a real opportunity to return man to know his own nature more as a knower, rather than, primarily, as a maker. Man’s perfection is found in conforming his mind to reality.

I got my first degree in engineering, and I don’t think there’s anything I learned in engineering courses that computers couldn’t ultimately do when it comes to designing circuits and calculating functions. Computers can do that better than I ever could, but they can’t know reality, and that’s where human happiness and human fulfillment are really found. ❖



THE CLASS OF 2025

AND SENIOR THESIS TITLES




Bound copies of the Seniors’ Theses await parents at the President’s Dinner

Each year, the seniors of Thomas Aquinas College create what will be the culmination of their four years of academic efforts — the Senior Thesis, a 20- to 30-page paper demonstrating one’s ability to fashion logical, sound, and worthwhile academic inquiries. Based on a subject of each student’s own choosing, and drawing from the College’s classical curriculum, the thesis represents its author’s effort to apply his or her education to a matter of scholarly and personal importance.


The process of writing the Senior Thesis takes the better part of a year. It typically begins the previous spring, when juniors ask members of the teaching faculty to serve as their thesis advisors. Student and advisor then work together to craft an appropriate topic, one that pursues a deep question in a leisurely and reflective way. Seniors must

submit their topics for approval to the Dean’s Office early the next fall and, once approved, research and writing can begin in earnest. Preliminary drafts are due in November and February, and final drafts are submitted at a celebratory gathering in March.

When the process is at last complete — the research, the writing, and the countless revisions — seniors must defend their theses before a panel consisting of their advisor and two other members of the teaching faculty. For 30 minutes or more, the tutors listen to the defense, ask pointed questions, then recess to decide whether the student will pass, fail, or pass with distinction. Given the amount of time taken to prepare the theses and the guidance of the seniors’ thesis advisors, failures are rare, as are marks of distinction, which are awarded only in instances of truly superior work. ❖



The Good of Pleasure
in the Conjugal Act
PETER THOMAS ALARCON
Lake Forest, California




The Symbolism of Submission:
A Re-Examination of
1 Corinthians 11 and the Case
for Chapel Veiling
MADRYNE MARIE ALARIO
Hermosa Beach, California




"I Am the Handmaid of the Lord ... [Yet]
All Generations Will Call Me Blessed":
The Contrast and Compatibility of
Magnanimity and Humility
JULIANA GRACE BAFUNDO
Ridgefield, Connecticut



Is Place Immobile? Considering
Aristotle's Definition of Place in
Light of Modern Science
**MARY THERESE ELIZABETH
BAKER**
Littleton, Colorado



Why We Call It Prime Matter
GERARD PIUS BEHE
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania




Anchor of My Soul: The Need for Hope
as a Theological Virtue
MARY ROSE THÉRÈSE BERQUIST
Williamsburg, Virginia




Deep Calls Unto Deep: A Defense of
Heroes Making History
ELENA NICOLE BIEGEL
Anchorage, Alaska




"It Is Not Good for Man To Be Alone":
A Reconciliation of Augustine and
Aristotle's Ideas of Friendship
Between Men
CAROLYN ROSE BOCKRATH
Front Royal, Virginia



"Fools Rush in Where
Angels Fear To Tread":
On the Constitutional Contradiction in
Dred Scott v. Sandford and *Roe v. Wade*
**GIANNA MARIE AQUINAS
BRITTAIN**
Phoenix, Arizona




A Catholic Response to the
Immigration Crisis
BRIAN STEPHEN BROWN, JR.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania




It's Just Death: A Defense of
Capital Punishment
STEPHEN BOWIE BROWN
Owens Cross Roads, Alabama



Rationality vs. Animal Intelligence:
Why Humans Think While Apes Just
Monkey Around
THERESA ROSE CAUGHRON
Kansas City, Missouri




"Logos, I Am Your Father":
An Explication of the Perfect Fatherhood
Existing in the Blessed Trinity
TRINITY AIDA-MAY CHESTER
Morgan Hill, California



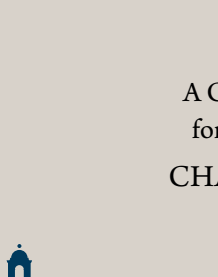
Two Types of Magnanimity:
The Virtue of Magnanimity
According to Aristotle and St. Thomas
**MIGUEL EDUARDO
COLMENARES-CAMARGO**
Mérida, Venezuela




The Shadows of Divinity:
A Consideration of the Evolution
of the Sacraments of Divine Law
Utilizing Plato's Allegory of the Cave
BENJAMIN JOSEPH CONRAD
Colfax, Iowa




Love Is a Refining Fire:
In What Manner Christ Was
Made Perfect Through Suffering
CHRISTINA NATALIE CORWIN
Woodinville, Washington




"This Is My Body":
A Clarification of the Proper Matter
for the Sacrament of the Eucharist
CHARLES JOSEPH DARDAINE
San Marcos, California



Mathematical Physics in
Aristotle and Newton
PEDRO KAIR MEDEIROS DA SILVA
Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil



The Continuity of Christ's Character
in View of His Courage at
the Agony of the Garden
JENNIFER MARIE DE SALVO
Mount Prospect, Illinois




Unity in Mathematics
JOSEPH KOLBE DEMONTE
Seattle, Washington




"Any Fool Can Know.
The Point Is To Understand":
On the Equivocation of Human
and Artificial Intelligence
MARIA ELENA DIAZ-BONILLA
Vienna, Virginia




The Unity of the Sciences:
What Modern Man Misses When
Discussing the Difference
Between Man and Woman
ANA PATRICIA DINAN
San Diego, California




Self-Care Within the Catholic Church:
Why Your Physical Health
Is Essential as a Catholic
ANDREA MARIA DITROLIO
San Antonio, Texas



On the Identity of Laws of Nature
with Formal Causes
MICHAEL RICHARD DOLCETTI
Darien, Connecticut



“You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself” — Self-Love as a Necessary Component of the Christian Life
PATRICIA JANE DOYLE
Des Moines, Iowa




The Knowledge of Our Damaged Nature
MATTHEW DAVID DUCHOW
Spokane, Washington




Whether the Word “Organic” Is Appropriately Predicated of the Artificial and the Natural
JOHN ALEXANDER GUTCH
Schenectady, New York



The Absolute Maximum: An Examination of Aquinas’s “Fourth Way”
GWYNITH MARIE MORGANIA HAYDEN
Batesville, Arkansas



Continuity as a Fitting and Beneficial Expansion to Arithmetic
HOPE CHARLOTTE DUFFY
Brownfield, Maine




Ever Ancient, Ever New: The Innate Beauty of Gregorian Chant
TERESA MARY ESSER
Chino Hills, California




Sensi, Saccavi, Scivi: A Comparison of Physical and Mathematical Abstraction
CORDELIA GRACE HENRIE
Exton, Pennsylvania



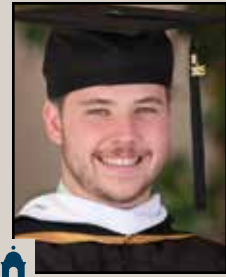
Ubi Amor, Ibi Oculi: The Manner in Which Nude Art Disposes the Soul to Purity
DOMINIQUE LUCIA MARIETTA HUCKINS
Auburn, California




“The Son of God Became Man That Man Might Become God”: A Defense of the Possibility of a Friendship of Virtue Between God and Man
ISABEL MARIE FISHER
El Paso, Texas



The City of God vs. the City of Man: Can They Ever Be at Peace?
SOPHIA KATHREN FONT GOMEZ
Ventura, California




The Erotic Soul: A Journey from Beauty to Beatitude
ELI JOSEPH HUNT
Pleasanton, Texas




Playing God or Perfecting Man? A Natural Law Analysis of Genetic Modification
GABRIEL AMBROSE ISMERT
Belton, Missouri




An Inquiry into the Existence of Aliens from a Theological Perspective
EMMETT DANIEL GALLIVAN
Santa Ana, California



Subjection and Love: The Apostolic Injunction and the Perfection of Marriage
THOMAS AUGUSTINE GARREPY
Burrillville, Rhode Island




Music and Interior Silence
RUSSELL EUGENE JARVIS
Clear Lake, Minnesota




Can Our Prayers Change the Past?
EMILIE GABRIELLE JOST
Algonquin, Illinois




The Necessity of Truthfulness: The Words of God and Man Compared
SARAH ELIZABETH GOMEZ
La Mirada, California




Sweet Harmony: Music as an Affective Quality
THADDEUS MAXIMILIAN IGNATIUS GOTCHER
Franklin, Wisconsin




“There Is No Royal Road to Geometry”: On the Progression from the Nominal to the Essential Definition of Triangle in Book One of Euclid’s *Elements*
EMILY FRANCES KEELER
Lafayette, California




Men Ought To Primarily Rule the State: A Defense of Patriarchy
SAMUEL GRANT KINNEY
Trabuco Canyon, California




Perfection in Subservience: On the Actual Presence of the Atom in Elemental Combination
JAMES ALEXANDER GRIMM
Pasadena, California





Two Incarnations of the Same Metaphysical Solitude: An Explanation of Gender as Two Different Modes of Being Human
MARISA ROSE GRIMM
Bakersfield, California



On the Natural Order of Predication
LUCY JEANETTE LANGLEY
Peyton, Colorado





The Source and Summit of the Christian Life: A Thomistic Defense of the Eucharist
QUÂN HOÀNG LÊ
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam



Causa Nostrae Laetitiae:
How the Visitation Shows That the Cause of Our Joy Is a Fitting Title for Our Lady

ELIZABETH MARIE LIND
Burnsville, Minnesota



Calculusian System of *Reductios*, or Indivisibles? Whether Kepler Makes Use of Calculus in Proving and Applying His Second Law

MICHAEL ROBERT LOEW
St. Mary's, Kansas

Fear and Its Place in the Moral and Spiritual Life

LIAM THOMAS MURPHY
Cheshire, Connecticut


If Mathematical Form Is in Heaven and To Lack It Is To Be in Hell, Then Optics Is in Purgatory and Needs Our Prayers: How the 'Middle Science' Doctrine Fails To Explain Math's Effectiveness in Natural Science, and What We Can Do about It

PATRICK MICHAEL MURPHY
Mission Viejo, California






Sacrament of Charity:
The Heart of a True Friendship with God

SARINA MARIE LOPEZ
Eastvale, California



Aristotle vs. Hobbes:
The Role of Human Nature in the Purpose of Government

ANNE KATHERINE LYNCH
Orrtana, Pennsylvania



"My Flesh Is Food Indeed":
Understanding the Mass as an Elevated Earthly Meal

JULIA ANN NICELY
Ventura, California



The Price of Progress:
Against the Dialectical Science of History

JOZEF ANTONIO NIJS
Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania



A Comparison of Bacon's and Lavoisier's Methods of Natural Science

PETER THOMAS LYONS
Ventura, California



Ascent to Filial Love of God from Conscience

ANDREW JOSEPH MAZZA
Brookfield, Wisconsin


The Tragic Elements of Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

MARTIN O'HEIR
Castleton, Virginia

"All a Body Would Have To Do There Was To Go Around All Day Long with a Harp and Sing, Forever and Ever":
On External Acts of Religion in the General Resurrection

ACATIA FAYE OAKLEY
Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada




Human Beings in Society According to Rousseau and Aristotle

KEVIN PATRICK MCCANN
Desha, Arkansas




"Sanguis Christi, Inebria Me.":
On the Most Precious Blood of Jesus

CHRISTINE MARIE MCMASTERS
San Luis Obispo, California






Reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris Caesari et quae sunt Dei Deo:
On the Relationship of Church and State

EVANGELINE ROSE OAKLEY
Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada






Pious Inquiry and Impious Doubt:
An Investigation into the Proper Disposition Required To Ask Theological Questions

JACQUELYN WRIGHT OGDEN
Vacaville, California

The Thread Which Is Spun for Him:
How the Stoic Philosophy of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* Imparts Its Principles to Catholicism

JOHN HENRY MERING
Ventura, California

"For Now We See in a Mirror Dimly"

GEMMA CHRISTI MOHUN
Caldwell, Idaho





"The Happiness of Love":
How Pierre and Andrei Reveal a Unified Account of Happiness in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*

ISABEL ROSE OLESON
Santa Paula, California




"Let the Little Children Come to Me":
The Role of Childlike Suffering in Attaining Sanctity According to St. Thérèse

TERESA MARIANA PADILLA AMADOR
Fort Wingate, New Mexico

"I WANT YOU" To Agree with My Thesis:
An Exploration of Propaganda's Role in Society and How To Combat It

HELEN PERPETUA MOREY
Bellevue, Washington




"Yet You Have Made Him Little Less Than the Angels":
A Defense of Man's Dignity as the Perfection of Creation

ANNETTE MARIE FELICITY MORLINO
Danbury, Connecticut





The Story of a Contemplative Friendship in *My Antonia*

MARIA CATHERINE PELSTER
Northfield, Massachusetts





Aristotle's Missing Friendship:
Friendship with God

EMILY NICOLE PETER
Preston, Connecticut



Thomistic Constitutionalism:
A Critique of Originalism from
Principles of the *Treatise on Law*
SAMUEL CLAYTON PETERSON
Lineboro, Maryland




“Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself”:
A Distinction Between
Selfishness and Self Love
SUZANNA PFEIFFER
Waterford, Wisconsin




“You Have Ravished My Heart”:
How the Emotional Force of the Song
of Songs Is Its Revelation
ELLIOT LUCIE PINTOR
Eagle, Idaho




Ignorance of the Scriptures Is
Ignorance of Christ”:
An Inquiry into the Causes
of Sacred Scripture
LUCAS QUINTINO PORTO
Sao Paulo, Brazil




Ens Unum: Thomas Aquinas’s
Doctrine of the Natural
Conceptualization of Being and Unity
MARCEL THOMAS PRYOR
Topeka, Kansas




The Intelligibility of an Evolving Cosmos
CLAIRE MARIE QUACKENBUSH
Ojai, California




“Johnny, Be Good!”:
An Explanation, through Music,
on How Artistic Imitation
Paves a Path to Virtue
DAISY ANGELICA RANGEL
Elk Grove, California




A Call to Home:
An Exploration of the Central Event
in Plato’s *Ion* and Its
Correspondence to Reality
CLAIRE ELIZABETH REA
Ventura, California




“The Little Butterfly Has Died with the
Greatest Joy at Having Found Rest at Last
and Now Christ Lives in Her”:
How St. Teresa’s Schema of Prayer Helps
Us Understand the Life of Christ in Us
ELENA REYES MENDOZA
Fairfield, California




Vera Virtus, sed Imperfecta:
The Limitation of Virtue in
the Absence of Charity
ALEXANDER JAMES ROBERTS
Pleasanton, California




On the Practicality of
Epictetus’s *Encheiridion*:
An *Organon* for Christian Living
GREGORY VINCENT RODRIGUEZ
ROBERTS
Costa Mesa, California




De Imagine Sapientiae
ANDREW EMMANUEL ROY
Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada




If Aristotle’s Kid Had Netflix:
How Story Influences
the Moral Formation of Children
KATHERINE MARIE RUEGEMER
Hayden, Idaho




Yours, Mine, and Ours:
Private Good in America
ELIZABETH ANNE RUSSELL
Ojai, California




Complementarity, Not Competition:
How the Catholic Church
Upholds Women’s Dignity
CLAUDIA SOFIA SALCIDO
San Antonio, Texas




Reason’s Last Step
PATRICK JAMES SALINAS
San Antonio, Texas




On the Novelty of Kantian Epistemology
in Light of Ancient Philosophy
ANTHONY JAMES DIEGO PIO
SANTINE
Macomb, Michigan




The Necessity of Curiosity
in Earthly Happiness
PATRICK RYAN SAUDER
Glendale, Arizona




Perhaps an Accident, Perhaps an Intention:
The Problem of Suffering in the Book of Job
and *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*
ANNA VERENA GABALDO
SCHOELEN
Tucson, Arizona




“I Die the King’s Good Servant, but God’s
First”: Civil Disobedience in a State
Promulgating Laws Hostile to
the Christian Way of Life
ISABELLE MARY
SCHOENBORN-BUCHHEIM
Goellersdorf, Austria




Neither Angel nor Beast, but Man:
On True Religion and the Nature of Man
AUGUSTINE JOSEPH SEELEY
Ventura, California



*Non Foenerabis Fratri Tuo ad
Usuram Pecuniam, nec Fruges,
nec Quamlibet Aliam Rem*
GREGORY EDWARD SHORT
Ojai, California



The Evil of Death
MICHAEL GREGORY SIMIA
Green Bay, Wisconsin




Sacrificial Love as an Essential Element
to a Happy Life: An Examination of the
Ideologies of Lucretius and Aristotle
HANNAH MARY SMILLIE
Lancaster, Massachusetts




A Thesis on Why Catholics
Commit Mortal Sin
TRINITY LOBO SOLIS
Chula Vista, California




Curiosity Killed the Catholic
LUCY BEATRICE STOUTZ
Steubenville, Ohio



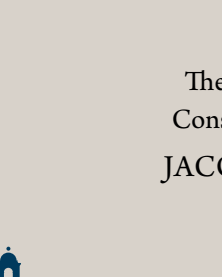
An Evaluation of the Morality
of Preemptive War and War of Conquest
According to the Ethical Frameworks of
Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas
BENJAMIN STURKIE
Oceanside, California



The Objectivity of Beauty and Its Role
in Leading Man to the Divine
MADELEINE ROSE SWEENEY
Lander, Wyoming



Is the Doctrine of Purgatory
Strictly Biblical?
IAN PATRICK TALTY
Oak Lawn, Illinois




The Crossroads of Grace and Sin:
Conscience in *Brideshead Revisited*
JACOB NATHANIEL TEMPLE
Wake Forest, North Carolina



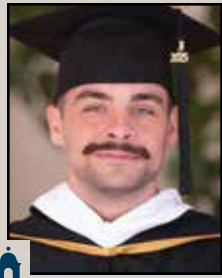
An Investigation into Capitalism's
Conformity to Human Nature:
How the "Invisible Hand"
Handles Humanity
ABIGAIL LANE THERIEN
Upland, California




Deifying the Little Ones: A Defense in
Line with the Theology of Deification of
the Position That the Three Sacraments of
Initiation — Baptism, Chrismation, and
Communion — Are Most Fittingly Given
at Birth in the Aforementioned Order
ANASTASIA ROSE TOMA
Carver, Minnesota




"I Have Been Crucified with Christ":
An Exploration of Why God Permits
His Faithful to Suffer
JOCELYN JANE TOPOR
Boonton, New Jersey



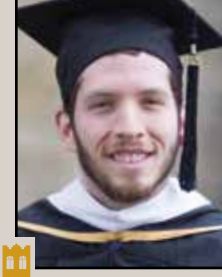
Confinement or Correspondence?
An Examination of the Indemonstrability
of God in *Pensées*
REUBEN CHRISTOPHER TRULL
Saint Louis, Missouri




How the Infinite Exists —
and Does Not Exist
AGNES GUADALUPE UMAÑA
Mont Clare, Pennsylvania




"Offer It Up": The Redemptive Value
of Christian Suffering Through the Lens
of Christ's Passion
KARINA ISABEL VELA
Bellflower, California




Learning the Five Ways:
Explaining the Natural Order
of Learning with a Special Application
of It to the Five Ways
**MARCO ROSSI DE MEDEIROS
VELOSO**
Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil



On the Nonexistence of Void:
Aether, the Material of Vacuum
PETER N. VIGIL
Reno, Nevada




Blessed Are the Pure of Heart,
for They Shall See God
MARY CATHERINE WASSELL
Laurel, Maryland



The Beloved One Sleeps:
An Argument for Sleep as Sacred
MONICA JEAN WEINKOPF
Santa Paula, California



For the Sake of the Kingdom:
Why the Active Life Is Necessary
for the Mystical Body of Christ
CALEB DAVID WHITE
Anaheim, California




"He Hath Made a Decree, and It Shall Not
Pass Away": The Reconciliation of Freedom
and Natural Necessity Through St. Thomas
Aquinas's Account of Eternal Law
ISAAC JAMES WILLIAMS
Gosport, Indiana




Cogito, Ergo Deus Est!
Whether Proceeding *A Priori* Is
Sufficient to Prove the Existence of God
**CHRISTOPHER GORDON
WOLFENDEN**
Cumbernauld, Glasgow, Scotland




God Within Me:
The Proper Role of Imagination in Prayer
KATELYN NICOLE WOODS
Draper, Utah



The Epic as an Ennoblement
of the Common Good
MATTHEW ROBERT ZABLOCKI
Essex, Connecticut



A Geocentric Girl in a Heliocentric World:
A Defense for Learning Geocentrism
Prior to Heliocentrism
in the Study of Astronomy
CATHERINE ANN ZBIEGIEN
Scottsdale, Arizona



The Insufficiency of Boethius's
Account of Musicianship
LUKE EMMANUEL ZEPEDA
Alhambra, California

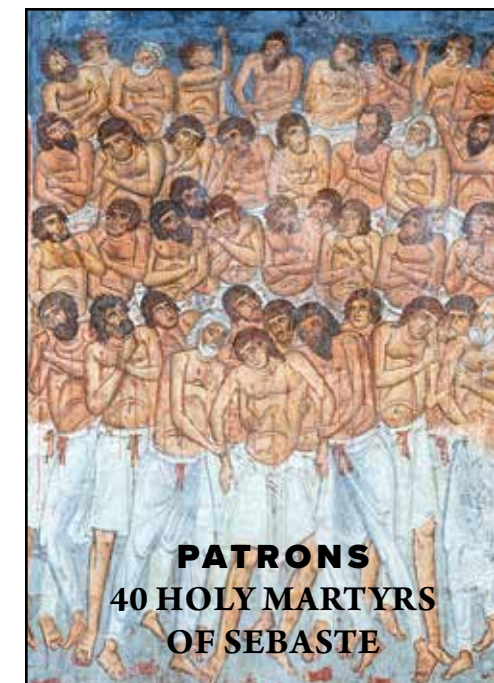
***Congratulations to
the Class of 2025!***



NEW ENGLAND COMMENCEMENT



THE CLASS OF 2025



QUOTATION

"We must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best things in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything."

— Aristotle

“Remain Faithful to God and Defend the Truth, Come What May”

Homily from the 2025 New England Baccalaureate Mass of the Holy Spirit

by Rev. Gerald E. Murray, J.C.D.
Pastor, St. Joseph's Church, New York City



“Let anyone who thirsts come to Me and drink” (John 7:37).

Our Divine Savior issued this invitation to the multitudes that came to hear Him speak as He made His way through Galilee and Judea. They were thirsting for knowledge of God's truth. They came seeking to experience the power of God's redemption promised by the prophets to the people of Israel, and indeed to all mankind.

Man was created by God to know and to love the truth, the truth that sets us free from ignorance and error, from fear and superstition, from nihilism and despair. Knowing the truth satisfies our yearning to find our proper place in Creation. Loving the truth enables us to live at peace, to live in harmony with God and to fulfill His purposes for us.

Man thirsts for more than water. He thirsts for answers to the inescapable questions we all face: Where did I come from, why am I here, what am I supposed to do during my time on planet Earth, what happens to me when I die? Thirsty souls find those answers in the Church, and especially in those places where the Church's teaching is faithfully and lovingly handed on.

Four years ago, you, dear members of the Class of 2025, were all smiles when you learned that you had been admitted to Thomas Aquinas College, New England. A great adventure in learning lay ahead of you. A deep and profound immersion in the inheritance of divine and human wisdom was the mission you embraced when you matriculated in this college named in honor of the Angelic Doctor. A joyful and demanding life of Christian prayer and service would instruct you in the reality of grace. Divine Providence brought you here for a reason. You had four years to experience the goodness of God who satisfies our thirst for union with the One Who made us in His image and

redeemed us by becoming a man, like us in all things but sin.

Now, your four years of studies here have come to an end. Yet I assert, with deep respect for your tutors, that your thirst for knowledge has only been partially satisfied. There is so much more to learn. We are all life-long learners who



“You have been blessed with a Catholic education that is hard to find in our world today. Deepen that knowledge and put it to good use.”

turn to God each day to enlighten us, to teach us the marvels He has revealed.

Dear graduates, you now embark on your chosen path, serving God in your life. The “rivers of living water” of God's grace will always be with you. It is your great blessing to know that you never walk alone, that you always can count on God's assistance. Never let go of that conviction, and never resist the promptings of the Holy Spirit to seek holiness as you blaze your trail in life.

In our second reading today, from the Acts of the Apostles (8:1, 4, 14-17), we hear of the “severe persecution of the Church in Jerusalem.” The Church has always faced opposition.

Yet we also hear that “those who had been scattered went about preaching the Word.” Such is the story of the Church in all ages, including our own. Those who attempt to crush the Church end up causing the spread of the Faith through the heroic example of those who remain faithful.

Dear graduates, I naturally encourage you to live out your Catholic faith with determination and serenity. Be the young people who help to revive and enliven the Catholic Church in the United States and beyond, simply by doing what the saints have instructed us to do, day in and day out. I remember, as if it were today, hearing the great Jesuit Fr. John Hardon tell a group of graduate students almost 50 years ago: “You cannot imagine the good you do simply by living out your Catholic Faith.”

Yet I want to add a specific recommendation, meant as an encouragement, to you who have had the privilege of studying at this fine college. My advice: find ways to promote and defend the perennial teaching of the Church through teaching, writing, and speaking. You have been blessed with a Catholic education that is hard to find in our world today. Deepen that knowledge and put it to good use. God will favor you in these endeavors. Many grateful souls will thank you when, God willing, you hear those words spoken to you by the Good Lord: “Come you blessed of my Father, share my life with me.”

Young men and women of the Class of 2025, God has blessed you in so many ways. Turn to Him with gratitude each day, drinking deeply from the waters of divine grace as you live lives pleasing to God, shining the light of Christ in the midst of the darkness that will never overcome it. ♦

“We Were Part of one of the Greatest Endeavors in the World”

by Pedro da Silva (NE’25)
Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil

President O'Reilly, Dean Cain, Fr. Murray, Dr. Roberts, ladies and gentlemen of the Board of Governors, members of the faculty, families and friends of the College:

Throughout these four years, one gets used to the ebb and flow of the daily routine; one falls into a schedule that usually starts before 7:30 a.m. and for many ends around 11 p.m. Day to day, we have followed our routine, and so it is very easy to miss the forest for the trees. Today we ought to take a step back and realize that we are part of something great here at the College, something to be proud of.

I want to start by thanking all of you for all the support, love, and care throughout these four years. Nothing of what we have done would have been possible without your prayers, efforts, and dedication. I want especially to thank all the families, who formed us, prepared us, and endured our not being home for four years. Thank you in the name of the Class of 2025. Now, you must excuse me for addressing particularly my classmates.

My dear friends, we have won. We have won the race of the past four years. We have completed our education. And this is why you have put me in a very difficult situation by choosing me to speak and praise you today. I knew from the very beginning that I could neither do justice to the love I have for you, nor could I properly express how good this college and all of you are. As I think many of you, myself included, have been realizing in the

“We have fought the great battle of trying to perfect ourselves and live according to the most divine part in us, reason.”

past few days, there is always more that we could say to each other. Words seem to be insufficient to explain what happened here and how much we love this place and one another.

Nonetheless, as I was writing this, thinking of my lost cause, many of you came to my mind, as an encouragement, through your examples and words. Therefore, trying to follow your example, I will try my best, knowing that the purpose of this speech is to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in



The Class of 2025 elected Pedro da Silva (NE’25) as its Class Speaker.

heaven” (Mt. 5:16). Because of the difficulty and the greatness of the task, I will ask the intercession of our patron saints, the 40 Holy Martyrs of Sebaste, who in a lost battle did not stop encouraging each other to keep fighting in order to achieve the crown of martyrdom.

And in reflecting more, I already see my prayers being answered, for looking at the 40 Martyrs I see an example and model of what we did at Thomas Aquinas College. They were one army, one whole, ordered to one end. And as we learned this year, the good of the whole universe is likened to the good of an army, so I hope that, by using the exemplar of our 40 Martyrs, I may be able to praise not only you and our education, but somehow also to speak of something greater than all of us. I will try to show here that the exemplarity of the 40 Martyrs lies in their exceling over all other armies because they won the greatest victory, they were the most ordered, and they had the greatest leader.

They won the greatest victory because they won the crown of martyrdom and now share the glory of God in Heaven. They were the most ordered, first in the order of nature, for they were the most disciplined and accomplished Roman legion. But more than that, they were also the most ordered in the order of grace, for the Holy Spirit was their bond, charity directing all their actions to the heroic acts of virtue. They were the greatest army principally because they had the greatest of leaders, for when obliged to worship Caesar and deny Christ, they chose the true king of the universe, Who, being a real general of the Christian people, knew already the victory that was to come and lead their charge to the Heavenly City, opening its gates to all of us.

“More than anything, let us love each other deeply, and never forget what we have learned here.”

As you can see, the 40 Martyrs were truly great. Now, I would dare to say that our education here has also exceled others for similar reasons: We have fought a great battle, in the most perfect order, and under the best of leaders.

We have fought the great battle of trying to perfect ourselves and live according to the most divine part in us, reason. We can call this truly a battle because we see how hard it was. We struggled learning mathematical propositions, understanding Latin stems, and observing the heavenly spheres. More than that, we struggled to understand the proofs for God’s existence, the Trinity and the Incarnation, and the presence of Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament. We struggled with the lowest of subjects and the highest of mysteries. But we did it, we achieved the goal, we made a beginning in the path of knowing and loving Wisdom itself.

And friends, we not only fought the greatest of battles, but we fought it in the most perfect order. To know order is to know what comes before and what comes after, and we always started with what we knew first and moved to what is more known in itself. We started talking about the way that things can be said of others, to the cause of being itself. We ordered our minds with the *Organon*, whose end was to bring about in our minds the formation and order of a phalanx. From there we started to study the causes and principles of all mobile beings. We raised our minds to the most perfect of material beings, men. We compared and analyzed discoveries in physics, chemistry, and biology. We completed our studies of this world with a consideration of its creator, His properties known by reason, the Mystery of the Trinity and its unfolding in the story



Matthew Duchow (NE’25) leads the Pledge of Allegiance

of salvation.

But, above all, we have fought under the greatest of leaders. As Mr. Berquist taught so well, what defines this college is discipleship, which implies that one leads and the other follows. But it was Christ Himself who came to lead us in this education. How good is our leader that He wants to share His leadership with so many people? His causality is so powerful that He also causes others to be causes. He is such a master that He makes others to share in His teaching. He

gave us a wonderful leader on earth, the Pope (and here we add our joy and love in having Pope Leo XIV elected so close to this day), and all his captains, the bishops and priests; two in particular have led us so well throughout these four years.

Our Lord has also given us tutors, who partake in His leadership through their guidance of our intellects. He gave us the authors of the Great Books, who we call professors. He gave us especially St. Thomas Aquinas, who is one of the greatest of



Benjamin Conrad (NE’25), Thaddeus Gotcher (NE’25), Gerard Behe (NE’25), and Thomas Garrepy (NE’25) lead the singing of the National Anthem.

soldiers of Christ’s army, and whom we take as our great leader. More than that, Our Lord gave the power of teaching and leading to each one of you, who many times helped me to learn and seek virtue. I hope, I was able to do that for you.

With these, my friends, I can then say, with confidence, that during these four years we were part of one of the greatest endeavors in the world: a great battle, with a great army, under the greatest of leaders.

But lest any one of you thinks that the battle is done, we must remember that we are about to depart. You know how much this makes me sorrowful, how much I will miss you and of what we did. But the world needs us. Remember that we are soldiers of Christ in virtue of our confirmation and that we need to defend the Church. But please, do not misunderstand me if I sound too militaristic. This war that I speak of is won by love, prayer, and sacrifice. We need to bring all men to Christ, our leader, for He thirsts for all souls.

Let’s use all that we have achieved here as the tools of this holy war, to sanctify ourselves and bring the whole world under the banner of the Cross. More than anything, let us love each other deeply and never forget what we have learned here so that at the end of our lives we can say together with the 40 Martyrs and Our Lady, Help of Christians, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the Faith.”

May God bless the Class of 2025. ❖

The New England 2025 Commencement Address

“Carry the Flame of the West”

by Kevin D. Roberts, Ph.D.

President

The Heritage Foundation and Heritage Action for America



I’m sorry to add so much pressure at the very beginning.

In a matter of minutes — a matter of minutes — your time as a student at Thomas Aquinas College will come to an end. Do me a favor and don’t start weeping, because I have a hard time getting through graduations as it is. They are joyous occasions, and it’s good to exhibit joyous tears.

Your relationships with each other — in spite of the fact that life changes when you exit those doors soon — will not. You’re sitting with men and women who will be in your wedding party. You might even be sitting with your spouse.

The point is, and you get it, among your classmates are friends you will treasure for the rest of your lives. The same goes for your former tutors, who are now your future friends, your future mentors, your future life coaches. As an old professor myself, I know how much it means to hear from my students. I hear from them every week. So, stay in touch with them. Make that phone call; even if it has to be an email or a text message, send it. Especially a few months from now, after your first summer of entry-level work has you suddenly discerning that you, too, are being called to be ... a professional academic. (I say that as one!)

No one will give you more thoughtful, honest, or illusion-shattering advice. Take it.

So, thank you. Not only for hosting me, which really is an honor, but most of all for the heroic lives of work, witness, and service you are about to embark on. And, since I am, in fact, an old history professor, let me say: What an incredible place to be embarking from!

Northfield, Massachusetts, is not just another beautiful, quaint, quiet New England town, where visitors like me come to take a look at the fall foliage. Throughout its history, Northfield has been a colonial outpost — a garrison for civilization — and a stronghold for Christianity.

In the 1670s, when this town was founded, it was one of the most remote settlements of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. During its first decades, it was abandoned and resettled multiple times because of

violent conflicts with the French and American Indians.

In April 1775, 250 years ago last month, dozens of men from Northfield — some of them younger even than you — responded to the Lexington Alarm, the call to arms after the first shots of the American Revolution rang out just 75 miles from here.

And in the 1880s, as you know, Northfield once again found itself at the center of a different kind of revolution. Dwight L. Moody, one of the most influential evangelists of the 19th century and a central figure in America’s Third Great Awakening, was born right here. For the past four years, you have all studied the best of what has been taught, and said, and thought on the grounds where Moody’s school, the Northfield Mount Hermon School, was founded.

Today, I hope you remember his words, “faith makes all things possible ... love makes all things easy.” And, in the coming years, I hope that you will put his missionary zeal and his home’s pioneer spirit in service of Mother Church and work to evangelize the whole world for Jesus Christ.

I remind you of this legacy because Northfield’s history is your inheritance. Today, it is your turn to carry the flame of the West.

And on this sometimes-beautiful spring day, in the middle of Eastertide, during a year of Jubilee, right here in historic Northfield, Massachusetts ... we stand at the dawn of what I believe will be an era of cultural resurrection for the Catholic Church in the United States, across the West, and around the world.

As a conservative think-tank president working in Washington, I’m not prone to unrealistic optimism. But like the apostle Thomas, I can’t deny what is plain to see.

Reports of record numbers of conversions here and vocations there. Pews filling, even in the United Kingdom, especially in traditional churches — to the incredulity of the corporate media. The ongoing self-discrediting of the secular, globalist post-Christian elite around the world. A whip-smart Catholic convert sworn in as the vice president of the United States. A new Holy Father installed in Rome, as Mr. da Silva observed, and an American named Leo XIV!

But something is afoot in this great republic. Thirteen months and a few days from now, we’ll celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of the greatest experiment in civil society in the history of the world. And you, my new friends, get to be at the center of resurrecting it, of revitalizing it, with all of these green shoots in almost every arena of public life.

The world certainly remains fallen, as it always has been. But I am here to tell you, there has never been a more exciting time to be a young Catholic in the United States than right now. And to keep in mind, you aren’t just a young Catholic in the United States, you are armed with an education and formation from Thomas Aquinas College.

So, back to my earlier comment, I’m sorry for the pressure. God has given you an incredible opportunity, and I know that you are grateful for it. Remember that this school has certainly given you an excellent education, an excellent formation, and, therefore, the only question now is, “What do you do with it?”

What do you do with it?

The way I see it, there are only two ways to answer this question. And no, I’m not referring to the choice between married life and religious life — a very important decision, to be clear — both of them, obviously, noble vocations. I’m confident you will decide appropriately with the formation that you have with your own very rich spiritual lives (and know of my prayers).

I’m also not talking about what you will do for work. Let’s be honest, too many of you will become professors. (The tutors were already a little skeptical of me. Now they really are! There’s a lot of self-criticism in that comment, too, remember.) Others will go into business. The best of you might even come to work on an unknown presidential transition project at a little think tank in Washington, D.C.

*“Put simply, the world is not
going to repair itself. Neither can it
be repaired from safe remove.
For Christians, retreat is surrender —
especially if it masquerades as purity.”*

God willing, every single one of you will become a saint.

The choice I’m talking about is one you will have to make no matter where you go, whom you marry, what your vocation is, what you do for a living. It’s a choice about how you will use your education and live out your faith.

So, what are the options?

The first option — which far too many well-educated Catholics are choosing today — is to lock themselves in the Ivory Tower and wash their hands of the modern world. They argue that the modern world is full of temptations. And, Lord knows, it is. They see heresy and corruption around every corner. And heresy and corruption do run rampant. (Remember, I work in Washington.)

But their response, which is well intentioned, is to walk away from the world and hoard their inheritance, our inheritance, for themselves — and to do so is to live in an illusion. A false sense of safety. The work of a prideful intellect that has forgotten Pope Benedict XVI’s words: “You were not made for comfort, you were made for greatness.”

These Catholics think they are like Medieval monks, tending the flames of our patrimony. But I think they’re more like the Jews who said, “nothing good can come from Nazareth” — so stuck in their manuscripts and so prideful in their own legalism that they can’t see God’s plan unfolding right in front of them.

So that brings me to the second option. To become — to continue, because I know you are — a true disciple of Jesus Christ and put your education in service to the Great Commission.

This is what a genuine liberal education that teaches us to love

*“We stand at the dawn of what
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and around the world.”*

Let me be really blunt up front. What your generation does — what you choose to do, starting when you walk out of this building — will determine the course of the American Republic and the Catholic Church in this country and beyond. And I also want to be really blunt: I couldn’t be more optimistic about the future of both. God bless you for what you have already done!

the good, the true, and the beautiful is really for. Not to simply know that the modern world is broken. But to love God so much that you’re going to spend every day trying to fix it, trying to repair it, in good cheer.

To restore Christian culture, we must be, as you know, “*in the world, but not of it.*”

Now, usually, when Christians employ this maxim, it’s to emphasize the second half, and with good reason. To avoid the temptations of the flesh. But, in my experience, it’s very often the first half — the admonition to “be in the world” — that smart, young, liberally educated Catholics from excellent colleges like yours really need to hear.

Put simply, the world is not going to repair itself. Neither can it be repaired from safe remove. For Christians, retreat is surrender — especially if it masquerades as purity. The whole world is mission country today — just like Northfield, Massachusetts, was for the first people who settled here. And Jesus is very clear that we are called to be missionaries in it. (Mr. da Silva, once again — what a wonderful, rousing reminder of that truth.)

As Our Lord said, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

Your patron, St. Thomas Aquinas, understood this, as you know. In fact, he echoes the commission of the Order of Preachers, writing that “even as it is better to illuminate than merely to shine, so is it better to give to others the fruits of one’s contemplation than merely to contemplate.”



Today, graduates, we need you to remember this when you walk out those doors. Our fallen world — mired in the twofold darkness of sin and ignorance — needs you to reject the illusion of the Ivory Tower and instead illuminate it with the light of Truth that this school has instilled in you.

Illuminate your homes. Most of you will be called to marriage and, God willing, to the gift of children. Few things will shine more

brightly in the world than the home you build. As I have become fond of reminding friends in Washington and beyond, home life, truth, good joy start around the family dinner table. Honor it.

Illuminate your local parishes. Give generously of your time, and not just on Sunday. Play on the softball team. Mentor young couples. Work the Lenten fish fry. Build a community in your parish. Do as my wife reminds me when I’m trying to scurry home and violate all of the advice that I just gave you: “Go to Doughnut Sunday, Kevin.”

Get out of our shells. Some of us, believe it or not, are natural introverts, but our parishes — as you know, your families are witnesses of this — are, of course, where we go to be fed and hopefully experience beautiful liturgies like we did today. But they’re also more than that. They’re communities for us to live out the Gospel Commission.

“Christ’s love for us makes fighting for Him an adventure and a gift. Let us act like it. Celebrate each new dawn as another day that the Lord has made and another opportunity to serve the King of Kings.”

Illuminate your workplace. Here you have two missions. First, let the Holy Spirit shine through your work — be honest, be humble, and especially attentive to those at the bottom. Lift them up. Second, pursue excellence. Be the best at what you do, whatever you’re doing, whether you’re a teacher, lawyer, a plumber, or yes, as your tutors personify, even excellent professors.

Illuminate your country. Don’t take for granted the freedom America offers us. You know that our ancestors fought and died for it. And you know that it is up to us to keep it. “Make disciples of all nations,” Christ says, and as our great vice president reminds us, the *ordo amoris* compels us to start with this one.

Finally, illuminate your heart.

Don’t mistake being right for being good. Christ’s love for us makes fighting for Him an adventure and a gift. Let us act like it. Celebrate each new dawn as another day that the Lord has made and another opportunity to serve the King of Kings.

And how can we best serve Him?

In Matthew 5, Christ declares, “A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.” Today, as it has been many times before, Northfield is that city. This piece of land, where we sit, is that place. Thomas Aquinas College is that community, which means that you — you — are that light.

In the name of Christ and in the company of the saints, go forth and drive out the darkness.

God bless you! ❖

Cooperators of the Truth

College Inducts D’Amours into Order of St. Albert

Dr. Donald H. D’Amour always imagined he would become a full-time professor. By 1969, he was well on his way, having earned a doctorate in philosophy and taught at the University of Notre Dame, when filial duties led him, instead, to a career in business. But he never gave up on his passion for learning about nature’s order and its Maker — a passion he and his wife, Michele, share to this day as devout, generous benefactors of Thomas Aquinas College.

At its fourth annual New England Commencement ceremony on May 24, Thomas Aquinas College inducted Dr. and Mrs. D’Amour into the Order of St. Albert in honor of their extraordinary support.

The couple grew up in Western Massachusetts, both children of French immigrants. In 1936, Dr. D’Amour’s father opened a small grocery shop: “Y Cash Market,” located at a fork in the road in Chicopee. Over the years, the business gained popularity and expanded into a Northeast supermarket chain, Big Y Foods. Mrs. D’Amour got her start as a cashier at the Springfield location, saving up to attend Westfield State College, where she earned her BA, before obtaining a master’s degree in education at American International College.

Dr. D’Amour attended Assumption College for his undergraduate degree, then continued on to Notre Dame. While taking a break from his studies and working for his father, he met Mrs. D’Amour in the grocery store. In 1973, they married, and they have since been blessed with 5 children and 11 grandchildren.

Under his father’s guidance, Dr.



Chairman of the Board of Governors Scott Turicchi welcomes Michele D’Amour and her husband, Donald (in absentia), into the Order of St. Albert at Commencement 2025.

D’Amour quickly picked up the nuances of running a business. “He developed a culture of caring within the company,” says Mrs. D’Amour. “His education in the Catholic intellectual tradition gave him the tools necessary to address all the different facets of a business and develop relationships.”

“At the core of the D’Amours’ beneficence is a firm belief in the value of Catholic liberal education here at Thomas Aquinas College.”

In 2019, both spouses retired after a half century with the company, Dr. D’Amour having served as its chairman of the board and CEO, and Mrs. D’Amour as its educational partnership administrator.

As their children neared college age, the D’Amours began searching for suitable schools, but were frustrated to find so many drifting from their Catholic principles. In-

spired by Pope St. John Paul II’s 1998 encyclical on faith and reason, they co-founded the *Fides et Ratio* grant competition for small Catholic colleges in 2001. Later, the D’Amours hosted the *Fides et Ratio* summer seminars to train faculty from around the country on how to blend faith and reason in the classroom.

As native New Englanders, the D’Amours were delighted to learn of the College’s plans to launch a campus in Northfield, Massachusetts. Since its opening in 2019, they have given extensively to facilitate building restorations and purchases. They

have also helped fund the next generation of TAC-New England students through the College’s financial aid program.

“A TAC education arms students with right thinking and right actions in all aspects of their lives, so they can be ordinary people who do extraordinary things, just like Jesus wants us to do,” says Mrs. D’Amour. “It looks to take kids who are willing to engage in intelligent inquiry and still their minds to receive God’s wisdom. That is what colleges are supposed to do, and we look to support institutions we can help grow stronger in this mission.”

While inducting the D’Amours into the Order of St. Albert at Commencement, Chairman of the Board of Governors Scott Turicchi thanked the couple for its enduring friendship. “At the core of the D’Amours’ beneficence is a firm belief in the value of Catholic liberal education here at Thomas Aquinas College,” he said. “Those of us who have labored on this campus and for this campus must express our deepest thanks to them for blessing our community with their generosity.” ❖

To Live Life Joyfully, Fearlessly, and Fruitfully

by Claire Quackenbush (NE'25)

Ojai, California

I do not have a first memory of Thomas Aquinas College, because this school has been a constant part of my life: My father has taught at the California campus since 1991. I always knew I would attend TAC because I always had the sense that this school was tailor-made for me; I still believe that, but now for more profound reasons.

I had an unconventional schooling experience growing up. From about seventh grade onward, I was self-directed in my education: I would choose which books to read, which areas of math and

“Right from the beginning of my freshman year, I realized there was something I had forgotten to factor in: the other students in my section.”

science to focus on, and which resources to use. I do not remember having an explicit goal I was trying to achieve through my choices; I simply wanted to learn about things which interested me.

Because of my approach to education in general, TAC was the natural choice for me. I saw it as a school where learning was ultimately self-directed due to the Discussion Method, and where learning was for its own sake — which, in my mind at the time, basically meant “just for fun.”

Right from the beginning of my freshman year, I realized there was something I had forgotten to factor in: the other students in my section. I remember that this presented itself as a delightful side chal-

lenge: how to get a quorum of people on the same page so as to function efficiently as a group. I distinctly remember sometimes perceiving my section as a machine of sorts, whose parts needed to be well greased and organized to produce the result I wanted: my understanding.

This understanding regarded my own learning as the ultimate purpose of what I was doing, but the methods I had to employ in order to achieve that ended up — thankfully — reversing the order of priorities.

The nature of the Discussion Method necessitates helping others. In almost all cases, even prioritizing your own learning requires you to help others: You simply cannot move on to the material you wish to discuss unless your classmates are first helped to understand what comes before. It is entirely possible, of course, to engage in that process and still maintain a self-oriented approach to learning; but it is extremely difficult to perform actions that are inherently oriented toward others and not to become other-oriented yourself.

It was still early on in my freshman year when I realized coming to knowledge myself was absolutely wonderful, but bringing others to that same knowledge had become the true source of my joy. Before I knew it, it seemed as if that was the ultimate reason for my studying: coming to know something, loving it, and then sharing it with others.

Knowledge and the intellectual life as a whole are intimately bound up with charity. We know that Truth is a person Who desires to give Himself to us, and desires that we share Him with others. I



think this calling is beautifully manifest in the classrooms here. Even in endeavoring to learn just for its own sake, you cannot help but be drawn to share your knowledge with others, to encourage them, and to form a connection with them through that knowledge.

I am so grateful for the gift of that experience, and I will treasure forever the realization that it gave me: The intellectual life cannot properly be called a life unless it is animated by love. Wherever I go in life, whatever I pursue, I have learned from my time here that I am called to share what I gain with others, and to see myself and my life as a participation in a community united in charity.

Specifically, I am drawn to share the truth with others as a clinical mental health counselor, and that is what I will be going to school for after I graduate. Our country and our world are undergoing a mental-health crisis. The people who generously answer the call to help others in that struggle are often ignorant of the fundamental principles of human nature, of the inherent value of life, and, heartbreakingly, they lack the hope necessary for real improvement. I have a strong desire to help others grow and heal, so as to allow them to live life joyfully, fearlessly, and fruitfully.

The education I have received at this school has given me a tremendous foundation for this task, due both to the authors I have read and to the people with whom I have read them. ❖

A Lifelong Blessing

by John Gutch (NE'25)

Schenectady, New York

“All men by nature desire to know.” These are the words with which Aristotle begins his *Metaphysics*, and they speak directly to the reason why I found myself at Thomas Aquinas College. I have always had a strong desire to know the truth, and this desire has certainly been satisfied by being here.

I am the oldest of four children and grew up in a Catholic home in upstate New York. I graduated from high school in 2018, and my first exposure to the College was from *The Newman Guide to Catholic Colleges*. Most everything about the school intrigued me: the all-encompassing curriculum focusing on theology, philosophy, and mathematics; the liturgical reverence; the beautiful architecture; the upright culture as well as the affordability.

I decided, however, not to explore it much further, mainly due to the distance. California is far from New York, and I preferred to stay closer to home. So, I

“This school has fostered in me a tremendous faith and a great love for God in Jesus Christ. I have come to know the Truth, and to love the Truth, more than anything.”

decided to attend a local community college and pursue an associate's degree in environmental science. However, Thomas Aquinas College came to my attention again after my first year, when I heard that a new campus was being launched in Massachusetts. I went to visit, and I fell deeper in love, but I thought it more prudent to finish my two-year degree first.

Covid hit in the spring of 2020 before my graduation, which further obscured what I should do next. Thinking practically, I thought it more reasonable to complete my bachelor's degree at a different Catholic college, rather than start again as a freshman at Thomas Aquinas. Yet TAC-New England came back into my awareness, and I returned for a second visit. It did not take much convincing. I finally knew that this was the place to which God had always been calling me.

Aristotle is certainly correct that all men by nature seek knowledge, and the College has offered me that. It has provided me with a much deeper and more complete education than I could find anywhere else, allowing me to gain knowledge of the highest things, even knowledge of the Divine. But it has offered me something greater still that Aristotle could not have fathomed: This school has fostered in me a tremendous faith and a great love for God in Jesus Christ. I have come to know the Truth, and to love the Truth, more than anything else.

In short, Thomas Aquinas College has helped me to become a better man, not only through the formation of my intellect, but by helping me to grow in virtue, without which knowledge means very little. It has prepared me to see reality as it truly is, ultimately disposing me to live a truly happy and holy life in full commitment and love for the Truth.

My next step after TAC is to work as a missionary with FOCUS, a Catholic organization which seeks to evangelize colleges and universities across the country. I will be assigned to live on a campus with other missionaries, working to bring students there to Mass and the Sacraments.



I will be leading Bible studies, in which my experience of the Discussion Method and knowledge of theology and philosophy will be paramount.

In a world darkened by sin and false philosophies, souls are eagerly yearning for love and truth, and some of the deepest desperation and profound spiritual poverty are to be found in our own nation. Equipped with the formation I have received at TAC, I want to give the world the light that I have been given. I am placing full trust in God that He will continue to take care of all my needs, as He already has.

Our class marks the last of the four pioneering Classes of TAC-New England. In addition, 2025 marks the 800th anniversary of the birth of our beloved patron, St. Thomas Aquinas. Just as he has been a beacon of angelic wisdom in the Church, may we, too, be rejuvenated in a new birth of understanding, knowledge, truth, and beauty to transform the world to Christ. This I pray through the power of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I want to thank God, my parents, President O'Reilly, the entire Board of Governors, all the tutors, the benefactors, and everyone else who has made TAC a reality for me. This tremendous gift, which has benefitted me and so many others, is only made possible by those who, through their generosity, time, and countless efforts, make Thomas Aquinas College continue to flourish. For this lifelong blessing, I am overwhelmingly grateful. ❖

“A Counterrevolution is Underway”

An Interview with Kevin D. Roberts, Ph.D.

We were grateful to have you serve as this year’s Commencement Speaker in New England. Do you have any thoughts about your time on campus?

It was a great joy and a profound honor to be among the Thomas Aquinas College community in New England — a place that so clearly manifests what is still possible in American education when truth, beauty, and goodness are placed at the center. My time there reminded me that renewal begins not with policy but with formation of the mind and the soul.

As someone who led a Catholic liberal arts college and has worked alongside many extraordinary TAC alumni, I know firsthand the fruits of this education. You can see it in the discipline of thought, the joyful piety, and the courage to live counterculturally — hallmarks of the kind of citizen-leaders our nation desperately needs.

“The students I met gave me great hope. They are preparing for careers and participating in the restoration of the permanent things.”

President O’Reilly and the Board of Governors embody the fidelity and fortitude that mark all great institutions. They are stewarding TAC through a moment of enormous consequence — not just for the Church, but for Western civilization. What they are building in New England is not merely a school, but a bulwark against the collapse of meaning that afflicts so much of modern life.

The students I met gave me great hope.

They are preparing for careers and participating in the restoration of the permanent things. And when the hour demands courage, as it now does, I am confident they will prove ready for the task at hand.

New England is home of the American Revolution, and you have said that America is now in the throes of a “second revolution,” this time against its cultural elites. How will we know when this revolution has been won?

We will know we’ve prevailed not when the headlines are kind to us, or even when we win a string of elections — but when our republic is once again aligned with eternal truths and anchored in the permanent things.

Victory in this “second revolution” will not be measured in legislative tallies or media cycles. It will be visible in the texture of American life: when fathers come home from work to lead family prayer; when mothers are honored as the heart of a flourishing home; when children know their identity is found not in screens, slogans, or sports teams, but in the truth that they are made in the image of their Father in heaven.

It will be clear when the home reclaims its rightful role as the first school, the first parish, and the first government. When public education directs our nation’s children towards ordered liberty instead of license. When civic life is animated once again by gratitude for inheritance and a hunger to build a society worthy of our children.

How did elite control of Catholic higher education arise, and what is the way out?

In recent decades, too many Catholic colleges and universities, under pressure



to pursue prestige and market share, ceded governance to secular technocrats — leaders who saw faith not as a foundation, but as a branding exercise. The result has been devastating: an academic monoculture increasingly hostile to the very tenets of the Catholic faith it once existed to uphold.

The crisis of fidelity did not happen overnight. Beginning in 1967 with the Land O’Lakes Statement, once-great Catholic institutions turned away from the Church’s teaching authority, choosing instead to mirror their secular counterparts. In doing so, they abandoned their mission — the formation of saints — in favor of worldly acclaim. The outcome is no surprise: These institutions now stand alongside elite universities as some of the most powerful engines of leftist ideology in America.

The path forward is clear — and it is already underway. First, governance must

be re-anchored in the Church’s teaching authority so that every policy, program, and hire serves the mission of forming saints and virtuous citizens. Second, we must elevate and expand institutions that have remained true to this mission — like those affiliated with the Cardinal Newman Society — where classical education and authentic Catholic identity flourish. These institutions are already forming the next generation of faithful leaders who will rebuild American civil society — grounded in gratitude, responsibility, and the common good.

Why has Washington done so little to combat modern addictions, and how do we turn the tide?

Too many of our political elites profit — materially and politically — from keeping the American people distracted, dependent, and docile. The consequence of that profit is a ruling class that has little to no interest in self-governing citizens; it prefers sedated and addicted people. Whether it is Big Pharma pushing pills, pornographers hollowing out the souls of our youth, or sports betting apps flooding every smartphone with digital vice, the message is the same: stay numb, stay passive, and surrender control of your life.

What’s tragic is Washington hasn’t just failed to act — it has actively subsidized this moral rot. While communities collapse under the weight of fentanyl overdoses, loneliness, and suicide, our federal government has shielded the corporations responsible from liability and too often looks the other way as digital cartels monetize addiction. It’s not simply a policy failure. It’s a betrayal of the American people by those elected to govern according to their best interests.

But the good news is this: A counterrevolution is underway, and it is being driven by the American people. As I said in my address at Thomas Aquinas College, I can’t deny what is plain to see.

We will win not by waiting for Washington to change but by changing the nation so profoundly that Washington has no choice but to follow.

When do political compromises become too great, and how do we know when to withdraw?

The short answer is: We don’t. We do not withdraw. The stakes are too high, and the hour too late, for disengagement. If our Republic is to be restored — if we are to recover what Russell Kirk called “the permanent things” — then retreat is not an option.

“We will win not by waiting for Washington to change but by changing the nation so profoundly that Washington has no choice but to follow.”

Fidelity to Truth, especially in a decaying culture, demands presence. It demands courage. And above all, it demands joyful defiance rooted in hope.

This doesn’t mean we abandon prudence. Quite the opposite. As I’ve said many times, prudence is not passivity — it is strategy in service of conviction. We must be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, building coalitions where we can, drawing bright lines where we must. We may compromise on tactics, but never on Truth.

So, when do we know a compromise has gone too far? When it undermines the dignity of the human person. When it degrades the family. When it surrenders the sovereignty of our nation or the inheritance of our faith. In those moments, we do not negotiate. We draw swords — spiritually, intellectually, and politically — and we fight.

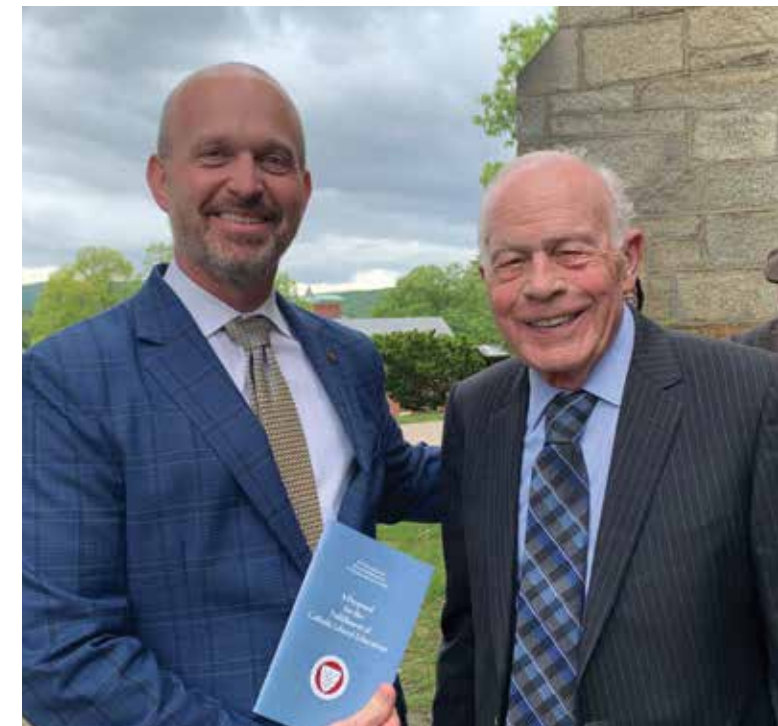
Victory is not assured in our lifetime — but obedience is. And God does not ask us to win every battle. He asks us to fight them faithfully.

What role will our first American pope play in this movement, and what does it mean for the world?

I have been impressed with Pope Leo XIV’s leadership of the Church so far. He is bringing together the missionary zeal of Pope Francis — which I have always respected — with the intellectual clarity and joyful orthodoxy of Saint John Paul II. And as the first of our countrymen to occupy the chair of St. Peter, he is doing it all with a distinctly American grit and a natural appreciation for the ordered liberty that made our country great.

To me, this synthesis isn’t merely refreshing; it’s providential. Truth is under siege in our time — not just ignored, but deliberately distorted. From the denial of biological reality to the rise of artificial intelligence training, we are witnessing a full-scale rebellion against the very concept of objective truth.

This isn’t just cultural decay — it’s a spiritual crisis. And I believe that we are witnessing the emergence of a pontiff who understands what time it is and is ready to lead us with courage into the future. ♦



TAC co-founder Peter L. DeLuca III presents Dr. Roberts with a copy of the College’s founding and governing document, A Proposal for the Fulfillment of Catholic Liberal Education.



Illuminating the World

What's Next for the Class of 2025

“This school has given you an excellent education ... the only question now is: What do you do with it?”

So asked Dr. Kevin Roberts in his Commencement Address to this year's graduates at Thomas Aquinas College, New England. His answer? “Become true disciples of Jesus Christ and put your education in service to the Great Commission. ... Our fallen world — mired in the twofold darkness of sin and ignorance — needs you to reject the illusion of the Ivory Tower and instead illuminate it with the light of Truth that this school has instilled in you.”

Business

After four years of rigorous education and developing critical thinking skills, many graduates seek to enter the marketplace. Jacquelyn Ogden (CA'25) will join Patmos, a tech company focused on data-centered solutions and website hosting, as the executive assistant to its leadership team. “TAC's program gave me a great foundation in logic: I can see a problem and figure out the steps to fix it,” she says. “I use that every single day.”

Katherine Ruegemer (CA'25) and Jennifer De Salvo (CA'25) will become management trainees for



Christopher Wolfenden (NE'25)



Top: Patrick Murphy (CA'25), Emmett Gallivan (CA'25), Andrew Mazza (CA'25), and Jacquelyn Ogden (CA'25); bottom: Jennifer De Salvo (CA'25), Trinity Chester (CA'25), Katherine Ruegemer (CA'25)

Dr. Michael McLean echoed Dr. Roberts' charge in his own address, given one week prior, urging the California graduates to “always resist compromising fundamental principles, mission, and faith commitment, even when the opposition to them is strong and the danger great.”

From business, to education, to marriage, the Class of 2025 ventures into the world to inspire others in the light of Christ. No matter what path its members choose, Thomas Aquinas College's newest alumni will forge ahead in faith and action.

McMaster-Carr, an industrial supply company. Emmett Gallivan (CA'25) will take a step into the world of insurance with a job at Starr Insurance in Los Angeles as an underwriter, along with Christopher Wolfenden (NE'25), who is working for State Farm in Keene, New Hampshire. Meanwhile, Trinity Chester (CA'25), will help to support nonprofit organizations around the country as American Philanthropic's business-development coordinator in Denver.

Finance

A significant portion of the Class of 2025 seeks opportunities in the financial sector. “I've always loved math, and TAC made me love it even more,” says Emily Peter (NE'25), who plans to go to school for accounting. Her classmate Anastasia Toma (NE'25) never slowed down from her studies: She started a prerequisite course while completing her last TAC finals in preparation for a forthcoming master's degree in statistics.

In California, Benjamin Sturkie (CA'25) heads to Ameriprise, where he will serve as an associate financial advisor. On the analytics side, Andrew Mazza (CA'25) will be a financial analyst for Staple Investments, a private equity firm, and Patrick Murphy (CA'25) will serve as an investment analyst for the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, which is based in San Bernardino, California. “In finance, you have to work through deals and get down to the nitty-gritty of mathematics,” says Mr. Mazza. “It can be difficult material, but I think TAC prepares you well for this kind of work.”



Emily Peter (NE'25)

Graduate School

After gaining a beginning in a variety of disciplines during their four years at the College, graduates often wish to further their education in one or more subjects, heading to universities around the country in pursuit of that goal.



Anthony Santine (CA'25), Alexander Roberts (CA'25), and Eli Hunt (CA'25)

that I wanted to study the vast tradition and great minds that preceded him to understand his works in a greater way.”

Also earning a full ride, Andrew Le (NE'25) heads to Houston, Texas, and the University of St. Thomas's Center for Thomistic Studies to pursue a master's and doctorate in moral philosophy. “Eventually, I hope to go into teaching, because I believe my life's vocation is to help bring Christ to others,” he says. “I hope to show people that the Faith is not contrary to reason, but an ennoblement

Alexander Roberts (CA'25) will study sacred theology at the University of Notre Dame on a full scholarship, concentrating on the history of Christianity and works of the Church fathers. “St. Thomas Aquinas is one of the most wonderful authors I have ever studied,” he says. “I decided

Passing on the Love of Learning

A common next step for many Thomas Aquinas College graduates is back into the classroom, where they can share the knowledge they acquired with the next generation.

Carolyn Bockrath (CA'25) will teach for Mother of Divine Grace (MODG), a distance-learning academy. Joining her is Cordelia (Henrie CA'25) Brown, who, in addition to teaching at the Catholic Learning Resource Center, will work as a MODG enrollment counselor alongside classmate Teresa Padilla (CA'25).

Some graduates seek out classical Catholic schools, such as Agnes Umana and Matthew Duchow (both NE'25), who will teach at St. Michael's School in Brattleboro, Vermont. Two of their classmates are also staying in New England: Thaddeus Gotcher (NE'25) will teach at a Chesterton Academy in Warwick, Rhode Island, and Russell Jarvis (NE'25) heads to the all-boys Sparhawk Academy in Millis, Massachusetts. Augustine Seeley (CA'25), is returning to his high school alma mater, St. Augustine Academy in Ventura, California.

Others find unconventional routes to teaching. Elizabeth Lind (NE'25) will help to homeschool a family of sev-

and perfection of reason.”

Katelyn Woods (CA'25) takes a more cooperative approach, participating in the University of Notre Dame's Echo graduate service program, during which she will simultaneously earn a master's degree in theology and help reform the catechesis program at Immaculate Heart Academy in Washington, New Jersey. “TAC definitely helped prepare me for the workload!” she laughs.

Other graduates take a break before heading to graduate school. Anthony Santine (CA'25) and Eli Hunt (CA'25) both plan to spend a year crafting applications while working for their alma mater; the former as the men's resident director in New England, and the latter as an admissions counselor in California.

Missionary Work

Inspired by Jesus's command to go out and serve all nations, some graduates embark into the world as missionaries, hoping to share the light of Christ. John Gutch (NE'25) and Monica Weinkopf (CA'25) both begin two years as FOCUS missionaries. They will each be sent to a secular college campus, where they and their fellow missionaries will work to grow and enhance the schools' Catholic communities and invite students to learn more about God's great mercy. “I feel called to reach out to those people who don't know what the Church teaches or have a personal relationship



Monica Weinkopf (CA'25)

en children in Minnesota. “I love teaching children,” she says, “especially because it helps me better understand the things I know in order to teach them.”

Making the move across the country, Reuben Trull (CA'25) is TAC-New England's newest admissions counselor, while Mary Rose Berquist (CA'25) will serve as the the campus's resident director for women. “I want to help TAC students open their eyes to all the wonder the curriculum offers, so that they fall in love with the truth, like I did,” says Miss Berquist. ♦



Front: Elizabeth Lind (NE'25), Agnes Umana (NE'25), Dominique Huckins (NE'25); Back: Andrew Le (NE'25) John Gutch (NE'25)

with God,” Miss Weinkopf says.

Voyaging beyond the 50 states, Dominique Huckins (NE’25) will head to Belize, where she will serve as a teacher and mentor at John Paul the Great College, a liberal arts school run by the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. “Once you know how to see the truth through liberal education, it’s very hard to deny Catholicism as the one, true religion,” she says. “I think bringing the liberal arts into other countries is a great way to catechize.”

Medicine

Others branch out into the sciences after gaining foundations in biology, chemistry, and physics; in particular, the medical fields. “The community at TAC really built up my love of helping others,” says Suz Pfeiffer (NE’25), who plans to become a physical therapist. Michael Simia (NE’25) will take a more specialized route as an echocardiography technician, using sound-based equipment to study the heart, while Theresa Caughron (CA’25) starts two years of prerequisite courses as she prepares for veterinary school.



Michael Simia (NE’25), Suz Pfeiffer (NE’25), Abigail Therian (CA’25), and Theresa Caughron (CA’25)

Abigail Therian (CA’25) will pursue a master’s degree in counseling at Divine Mercy University. “The world needs better counselors who have a Christian approach to the persona and understand the patient as more than just the body and mind: There’s a soul present there as well,” she says. “My TAC education really made that clear to me, and I want to do good things with this knowledge.”

Marriage

Alongside their professional or educational endeavors, numerous members of the Class of 2025 have also discerned vocations to marriage. Some tied the knot last summer, such as Ellie (Osmer CA’25) and Rafael Pintor, as well as Jacob Temple (CA’25), who wed Sophia (Ferri CA’23). Many others waited until graduation — but not too long after, as just one week later, Caroline (Armstrong CA’26) and Eli Hunt (CA’25) exchanged their vows. A week after that, Maria (Pelster NE’25) and Bernard Akaawase followed suit. Rounding out the month of June



Eli (CA’25) and Caroline (Armstrong CA’26) Hunt



Cordelia (Henrie) and Benjamin Brown (both CA’25)

... and More!

Still others blaze their own trails, sharing their gifts in a variety of career paths and places. Isabel Oleson (CA’25) has taken a job with the Alvarez Firm in Camarillo, California, where she will pursue an interest in law as a legal assistant. “I’m interested to explore what the legal system looks like and participate in it in a small way,” she says. “I learned a lot about how to spend my time and stay organized while at TAC, and I think those skills will be of great assistance to me in this position.”



Isabel Oleson (CA’25)

Two California graduates will serve the College in unique ways on both coasts. Julia Nicely (CA’25) will beautify the California campus as its grounds manager. On the New England campus, Patrick Sauder (CA’25) will join the dining services team as a special event planner and kitchen manager.



Patrick Sauder (CA’25)

Entering the writing world is Christina Corwin (CA’25), who hopes to write novels centered around Catholic values and themes. “Reading books by the variety of authors we study here has helped me to see a lot of different styles in action and pinpoint things I do or do not like about them,” she says.



Mary Wassell (NE’25)

In a similarly creative vein, Mary Wassell (NE’25) will travel to Europe to hike the Camino de Santiago before heading to CatholicTech in Italy, where she will serve as the campus music minister. “I want to help bring about a renewal of sacred music in the Church,” she says. “Having a background in the Great Books is great for giving a sense of beauty and proportion to what I’ll be doing.” ❖

were the nuptials of classmates Sarah (Gomez) and Andrew Mazza (both CA’25) and Cordelia (Henrie) and Benjamin Brown (both CA’25). And 10 more weddings are still in the works!

“The variety of people we meet and tasks we have to do at TAC, from education, to work study, to hanging out with friends, prepares you for anything that might hit you in marriage,” says Mrs. Brown. “You really learn how to manage your time and solve problems well.”

Commencement 2025 Keepsakes!

Order photos and portraits at thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2025



UPCOMING EVENTS

More events: thomasaquinas.edu/events

 Opening Lecture August 29 Dr. Sean Cunningham, Tutor	 Lecture: Dr. Amy FaheyOctober 17 Director of the Center for the Restoration of Christian Culture, Thomas More College
 Opening Lecture August 29 Dr. Sean Collins, Tutor	 Alumni & Parent Day October 18
 Concert September 12 Sterling String Quartet	 Lecture: Dr. Daniel McInerny November 7 Associate Professor of Philosophy, Christendom College
 Lecture: Rev. Isaac Morales, O.P. September 12 Associate Professor of Theology, Providence College	 Lecture: Dr. Matthew Walz November 7 Director, Philosophy & Letters and Pre-Theology Programs, University of Dallas
 Lecture: Dr. David O’Connor September 19 Professor of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame	 Lecture: Rev. Patrick Carter, O.S.B. (’05) November 21 Collegio Sant’Anselmo, Rome
 Alumni & Parent DaySeptember 27	
 Fall Concert October 3 Ilya Yakushev, pianist	 Concert December 5 The Thomas Aquinas College Choir

STUDENT LIFE



1. The Chrysostomos student choir, led by Anthony Santine (CA'25), performs its 20th anniversary concert. 2. Members of the faculty and staff celebrate the soon-to-be-graduates at the President's Dinner. 3. Students refuel at Freshman-Senior Snack Night. 4. Members of the Class of 2025 boast of their four years' accomplishments. 5. The Junior-Senior Dinner offers a beautiful evening of good food and even better company. 6. Seniors jump in the pool after finishing their last final exam. 7. A creatively structured draft hovers over the flames at the Senior Thesis Draft-Burning Party.



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2



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1. A seafood dinner with seniors and their families marks the eve of Commencement. 2. Cheers erupt during a toast at the Junior-Senior Dinner. 3. Ice cream elicits smiles at the Freshman-Senior Snack Night. 4. The Class of 2025 heads to the river to celebrate the end of final exams. 5. Sophomores pose for the camera as they serve the Sophomore-Senior Brunch. 6. Mary Wassell (NE'25) serves as pitcher for her class during its softball match against the faculty. 7. Seniors boast about finishing "One Senior Thesis!" in Gould Commons.



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