



THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE FALL 2024

Volume 52, Issue 3



New Academic Year Begins with Largest Ever Freshman Class — and Student Body
Peter DeLuca on Supporting TAC · Archbishop Broglio in California



“All’s Well that Begins Well”

Excerpts from Dr. O’Reilly’s Matriculation Address to the Class of 2028

Shakespeare’s play *All’s Well that Ends Well* is considered a comedy, at least in part, because it ends with what looks to be a good thing: Helen chooses to be married to Bertram, although they have already been married, and the marriage has come about by deception and a lack of interest on the groom’s part.

When a good is brought about, despite our intentions, and even contrary to our intentions, and despite circumstances, it is not only surprising, but also comic. A more reliable way to bring about the good, however, is with virtue and intention, and that requires a good beginning. It is more true to say: “All’s well that begins well.”

Now, the good that I am particularly interested in today is the good for you freshmen. I can assure you that, if you devote yourselves to the College’s academic program, you will acquire habits of mind, along with other virtues, that should guide you all your life. But how does one begin well here? It sounds obvious: You have to make yourselves ready to be taught. St. Thomas Aquinas emphasizes two virtues that the student must acquire: docility and studiousness.

Docility might be misunderstood as passivity and subservience, but docility involves both prudence and moderation. One way to be docile is to read the readings carefully before class. After all, the authors that you read are the principal teachers at Thomas Aquinas College, and your tutors are your guides.

If you neglect preparation, you lack docility and are not only harming yourself but the community. The intellectual formation that this college provides is not found anywhere else that I know of. So, if you want to take advantage of your time here, you must devote yourselves to being prepared, day in and day out, to learn.

Generally, we think of studiousness as diligence and perseverance, and that is correct, but there is more to this virtue than that. To be studious involves both restraint and effort. Not all pursuit of knowledge is praiseworthy. Generally, St. Thomas treats curiosity — defined as a desire to know things that are silly, superficial, or unworthy of knowing — as not good.

With the development and growth of the internet, social media, video games, and movies, all aided by smartphones and other technology, there has been an explosion of potential distractions for those who want to devote themselves to real learning. So, if you want to begin well at Thomas Aquinas College, you must limit these distractions. And that involves restraint.

The second aspect of studiousness is the willingness to put in the effort to learn. It should not be surprising that any good thing requires effort. Since the program here is an education for a lifetime, it will require discipline and effort.

So, as you begin your freshman year at Thomas Aquinas College, I urge you to cultivate the virtues of docility and studiousness. If you do so, you will begin well — and all’s well that begins well.



“I can assure you that, if you devote yourselves to the College’s academic program, you will acquire habits of mind, along with other virtues, that should guide you all your life.”

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Convocation 2024

College Welcomes Record Freshman Class



On two coasts, two days and 3,000 miles apart, Thomas Aquinas College launched its 54th academic year this August with the largest Freshman Class — and the largest student body — in its history. The new year began with a combined 566 students on the California and New England campuses, with 168 freshmen making up the Class of 2028.

“It’s an extraordinary blessing to witness the steady growth of the College, made possible by an ever-rising number of students and families who are willing to seek out an authentically Catholic liberal education,” observed President Paul J. O’Reilly. “At the first Convocation, 53 years ago, there were 33 students, and the New England campus opened its doors with 58 students in 2019, a number we have more than tripled in just five years.”

While the California student body consistently hovers around the campus’s maximum capacity of 400, the New England campus continues to fill out, with a nearly 13 percent increase in the number of students since last year. At both campuses, Convocation 2024 marked a celebration of this record Freshman Class, whose 168 members hail from 29 U.S. states and 9 countries.

“It’s an extraordinary blessing to witness the steady growth of the College, made possible by an ever-rising number of students and families who are willing to seek out an authentically Catholic liberal education.”

New England

Members of this energetic new class, along with families and upperclassmen, gathered in Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel on August 24 for the New England Convocation Mass of the Holy Spirit, offered by Rev. Joseph O’Hara (’92), a graduate of the College and the founder of Holy Family Monastery in Ferndale, California. “To know God with love brings Him to us, and He forms within us His Home — the Home of the Triune God,” said Fr. O’Hara in his homily, inviting students to embrace the community life of the campus. “There is a strong and manifest family structure here at this Catholic college that is keeping you securely and freely open to the working of the Holy

Spirit to purify and enlighten you.”

Following Mass, the congregation moved to Moody Auditorium for the Matriculation ceremony. After Head Chaplain Rev. Greg Markey led the invocation, the College inducted two new tutors into her ranks: Mr. Sanjay Adhikari and Dr. Richard Berquist, who took the Oath of Fidelity and made the Profession of Faith, as did Dr. Katherine Gardner (’06), a tutor from the California campus now joining the New England faculty.

In his Matriculation Address, Dr. O’Reilly advised the freshmen to start the year out strong. “It has been said that ‘all’s well that ends well,’” he said. “But it is more true to say that all’s well that begins well. One of the best things you can do here as freshmen at TAC is make a good beginning in your academic journey.”

At the conclusion of his address, members of the Class of 2028 made their way, one by one, onto the stage to shake hands with Dr. O’Reilly and Fr. O’Hara, then sign their names into the College’s registry. Fellow students welcomed each new freshman with thunderous applause.

Fr. O’Hara then spoke to the newly enrolled freshmen, calling on them to cultivate the virtue of mercy. “My experience of Thomas Aquinas College was that of an ongoing, many-leveled exchange of mercy,” he said. “I challenge you to be renowned of all the graduating classes of this finest college of Catholic liberal education for being the class of mercy! The class of mercy will be very reluctant to leave one of its own behind. ... It will be close-knit, joyful, and hardworking.”

Many freshmen nodded silently, ready to rise to the challenge. “Class of 2028, be the class of mercy!” the priest concluded. “Fulfill the law of Christ by bearing each other’s burdens in this life so that, together, you may sing in heaven God’s glory and praise, forever and ever. Amen!”

California

Just two days later, on August 26, the California campus matriculated the West Coast members of the Class of 2028. The

community began the morning in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, entrusting the new year into the hands of God. The Most Rev. Timothy Broglio, J.C.D., Archbishop for the Military Services, U.S.A., and president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, offered the Mass of the Holy Spirit, joined at the altar by the College's California chaplains. In his homily, His Excellency urged the freshmen to look for the potential in the upcoming year like a sculptor who sees a statue in uncut marble. "Use your talents to create a masterpiece for God," he said.

After Mass, all assembled in St. Cecilia Hall for Matriculation. Dean Michael Letteney then introduced the freshmen to the faculty and members of the Board of Governors, after which Dr. Daniel Zoumaya — the newest member of the California teaching faculty — took the Oath of Fidelity and made the Profession of Faith, committing to teach in obedience to the magisterium of the Catholic Church.

In addressing members of the Class of 2028, Dr. O'Reilly encouraged the freshmen to be humble and diligent in their studies. "If you want to be an elite athlete,



you make sacrifices," Dr. O'Reilly said. "The good we are proposing is much better than an Olympic medal. It's a pearl of infinite price. It shouldn't surprise you that you will have to make sacrifices. ... But if you make those sacrifices, if you put in the effort, if you restrain yourself from distractions, you will have earned a great good."

After the last freshman signed his name into the College registry, Archbishop Broglio offered words of wisdom to the Freshman Class. "Recognize your potential and also the importance of your contribution to learning, to society, and to our world," he

said. "There are no spare parts in the Body of Christ. ... Everyone is important; everyone has something to contribute. That's how we build up the Church, and through that building, change society as a whole."

At the close of the ceremony, Dr. O'Reilly took to the podium to declare the start of the 54th academic year for Thomas Aquinas College, after which the students erupted into a loud and sustained applause. All sang "Immaculate Mary" as the faculty processed out of the Fritz B. Burns Auditorium, grateful to play their part in the ongoing history of Thomas Aquinas College. □



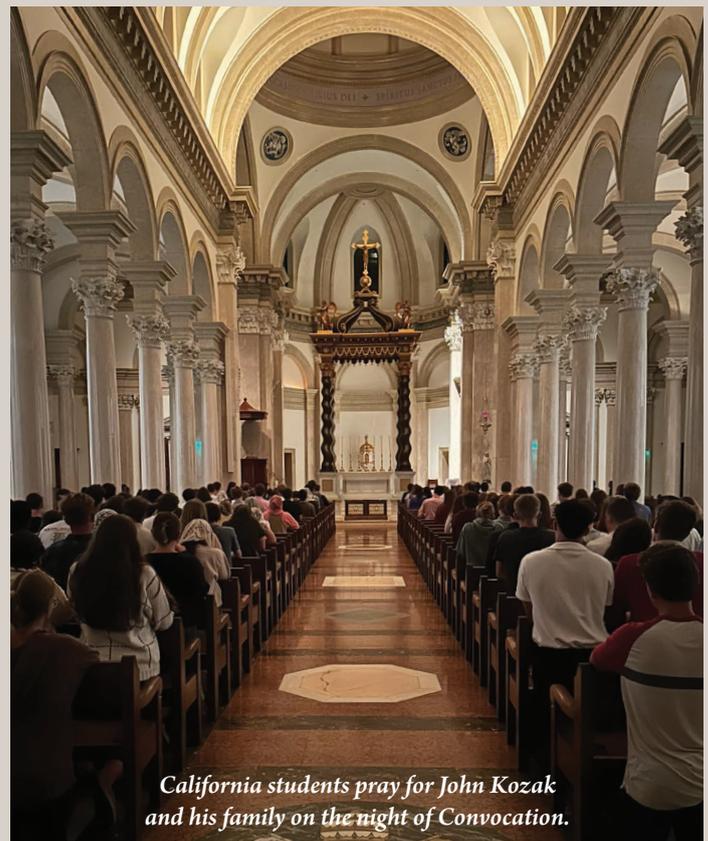
IN MEMORIAM

John Kozak 2000-2024

The eve of the California Convocation was marked by sorrow, as students mourned the loss of incoming freshman John Kozak, who passed away unexpectedly only two days earlier.

"I would like to remind you, freshmen, that you just read and discussed C.S. Lewis's 'Learning in Wartime,'" said College President Dr. Paul J. O'Reilly in his address at the afternoon's Matriculation ceremony. "It's a poignant essay which argues for the value of persevering in one's studies, even — or, perhaps, especially — during times of distress. In that steadfast spirit, we begin our academic year, as planned, at this Convocation."

That same evening, students assembled in the Chapel to pray the Rosary, asking Our Lady to intercede for their would-be classmate's soul and to ease his family's grief. Please continue to pray for John and the consolation of the Kozak family. □



California students pray for John Kozak and his family on the night of Convocation.

“Use Your Talents to Create a Masterpiece for God”

Homily from the 2024 California Convocation Mass of the Holy Spirit

by The Most Rev. Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
Archbishop for the Military Services, U.S.A.
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

It is said that Michelangelo could look at a block of marble and see the sculpture within it. His David would be a good example — it came from a damaged block of marble with a cut so deep that other artists rejected it. Indeed, the placement of the magnificent David in the Piazza della Signoria, the central square of Florence, marked time. Things happened either before or after the David was unveiled.

At the beginning of an academic year, there are many artists, and all see potential. Mentors, upper-classmen, tutors, administrators, staff, and you, yourselves, perceive the masterpiece in the rough marble of beginnings. There will be mistakes, successes, lessons to be learned, opportunities for growth, and the newness of a fresh chapter. The work on the masterpiece is always progressing.

The powerful Word of God that has just been proclaimed speaks to us, among other themes, about mission, the pursuit of wisdom, and love.

Excerpts from the first song of the Suffering Servant in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (42:1-3) began this banquet of the Liturgy of the Word. This, Isaiah wrote just as the exile in Babylon was ending, and we easily apply this figure of the Suffering Servant to Christ. The Servant is fulfilling his historical mission of restoration in the new dimensions of the experience. The Servant's manner is characterized by humility and kindness: He does not extinguish any positive gesture; He does not carry out the death sentence; He has courage in the trials and sufferings; and His weapons are those of peace. The servant is presented with the prerogatives of a king, priest, and prophet.



“Almighty God not only sees the masterpiece within you, but offers all the tools to bring it out of the raw marble.”

As a king, He proclaims what is right and just with firmness and establishes justice, which means the salvation that comes from God. As priest, He makes Himself a covenant of the people. As prophet, He communicates the will of God and is a light for the nations. His mission will free the human person from all evil in the very depths of His being.

Through baptism you and I share in the mission of priest, prophet, and king. With St. Paul, I can say that I have heard of your faith and good works. The mission obliges us not to be conformed to the expectations of the world or society. We are challenged to *magis*, something more.

I remember reflecting on this passage for the faithful gathered in Holy Family Church in Gaza on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord in 2020. It seemed challenging to talk to them about *magis* in the midst of their tense

situation. How much more would it be now?

At the beginning of this academic year, remember that the baptismal invitation is to soar, to realize our potential as daughters and sons of a loving father, and to invite others into our experience of the Lord. Use every opportunity in the coming academic year to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ and to share Him with others, as the Latin American Bishops reminded us in Aparecida.

When St. Paul speaks to the Ephesians and us about the pursuit of wisdom (1:3a,4a,13-9a), he has a specific starting point. It is that we are sons and daughters of God and, consequently, enjoy a relationship and a dignity that no one can take away. Keep that in mind as you move forward and grow in knowledge.

We gather this morning to ask for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so as to deepen our understanding of God's plan in us. As Paul told the Romans: "Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, and pleasing and perfect" (Rom. 12:2).

Indeed, Almighty God not only sees the masterpiece within you, but offers all the tools to bring it out of the raw marble. It depends on our ability to trust in Him, invoke His assistance, and use our talents and the resources offered to move forward. The whole of this mission, however, moves forward in love.

Inviting us to a profound intimacy with Him, the Lord Jesus speaks to us in the Gospel about love. There are few words so misused in common parlance. We use the word to describe our favorite foods, a beautiful spring day, a magnificent work of art, a favorite sport, a city, and so forth. In talking about love, the Lord means much more than that.

Love is creative, but it is also anchored firmly in actions that evidence its reality. The love of God is expressed in fidelity to the commandments: not some vague sentimental expression, but a concrete putting of the word into practice. Love is a radical commitment to Jesus lived out in visible ways.¹ It is an imitation of God's love for us.

In defining love very clearly around the table at the Last Supper, the setting for this Gospel passage (Jn.14:23-6), the Lord was inviting the Apostles and us to clarify and purify our motives for discipleship: Love must be at the top (not fear, not rote, not mere

altruism). Love of God is expressed by a manner of living. The one who believes, and lives his or her days in fidelity to that belief, becomes the dwelling place of God and experiences communion with Father and Son in the Spirit.

The gift of peace is bestowed by the Lord: not merely the absence of violence, but serenity and justice. This happens in four ways: with God, with self, with others, and with the created world. We continue to open ourselves to that peace and justice. Peace offered by Jesus is a person, eternal life, love. Jesus lives in our hearts to make us capable of loving. Loving, the human person opens himself or herself evermore to God and becomes with Him a cooperator of salvation, irradiation of peace, and prophesy from heaven.

We invoke the Holy Spirit to inspire our actions throughout this academic year. We ask that He reveal the potential hidden in stone. We beg for the grace to collaborate with all of the opportunities that will cross our paths in the coming months. We do not want to be disillusioned in the face of challenges. Remember, Michelangelo was undaunted by the severe gash in the block of marble from which would emerge the David.

In a certain sense, we are all artists with potential. The first Nunzio with whom I served in Africa once gave me a book on one of the art collections in the Vatican Museums, and he inscribed it, "Use your talents to create a masterpiece for God."

May that be the mission for all of us to accomplish in wisdom and love during our lifetime. □

¹ Cf. Daniel H. Mueggenborg, *Come Follow Me* (Liturgical Year C), p. 87.

"We invoke the Holy Spirit to inspire our actions throughout this academic year. We ask that He reveal the potential hidden in stone."



“Be the Class of Mercy”

Matriculation Remarks from the 2024 New England Convocation

by Rev. Joseph O’Hara (’92)
Holy Family Monastery, Ferndale, California

Mercy! Upon reflection upon my years as a student here at Thomas Aquinas College, I discovered that a very dominant element of my education was mercy. Important as mercy is, I fear that all too often we fail to give mercy the attention it deserves.

Yet a distinction is needed. Many a time (as my classmates will attest!), I was ill-prepared for some class or exam, hoping that I would not be called on for a demonstration or that the questions of the exam would just happen to be on issues that I had *actually studied*. That is cheap mercy, and believe me, I begged for that sort of mercy often! The mercy I highlight for you now is a different type of mercy. It is the mercy that God shows us by the Incarnation, namely the readiness to do whatever can be done to break into a loved one’s brokenness to help and heal him.

My experience of Thomas Aquinas College was that of an ongoing, many-leveled exchange of mercy.

At the very highest level in this circuit of mercy is God. His love compels Him to break into our brokenness and weakness, knowing perfectly the extent and character of our neediness, doing as much as He can, while respecting our free will, to heal us and draw us back into His household.

In our better moments, each of us might put ourselves out to help a dear friend break free from some bad habit or stupidity, but no matter how well we know them, we enter their brokenness with only partial awareness of its nature and gravity. God sees our sin, ignorance, fear, laziness, etc., perfectly and traces their causes with great precision to their deepest roots, longing to be there



with us in the very roots of our problems to forgive and heal us. He entered into our brokenness, taking on the flesh, confronting us sinners so that we might repent and ask for His forgiveness, and offering to bear the pain and punishment due to that sin. As St. Paul tells us, Jesus became sin (2 Cor. 5:21),

“Aided by your families and the College, you students are together seeking the sublime aim of an authentic Catholic liberal education in a culture that more and more rejects and undermines it.”

bearing in His flesh and in His human soul all the pain of sin so as to free us from sin.

There is a unique way that His mercy animates the educational mission He inspires in the Church. By becoming flesh, He has access to all that is human to reeducate

mankind and draw us back into His light. He teaches powerfully yet most gently: “Here is My servant in Whom I am most pleased ... listen to Him” (Mt 17:5). “The bruised reed He shall not break, and dying candle He shall not quench” (Is 42:3). So gently does He enter our brokenness — the darkness and confusion in the depths of our understanding, in the deepest recesses of our heart. Only God knows the complexity of our heart and the messiness of our confusion; thus only God can navigate to the very roots of that craziness and darkness. His mercy impels Him into those roots, overcoming our deeply entrenched tendencies to resist outside help, so that eventually He might enlighten and heal us.

The next level of mercy is given to us by the authors of the Great Books, with whom you will strive to converse throughout your studies here. I take St. Thomas Aquinas as a paradigm. Mercy flows through St. Thomas. As he picked up his pen to write, with humility he exposed to God his heartfelt inadequacy to fulfill his duty as teacher. Keenly he felt the weight of his task and begged

God's inspiration to better understand the subject at hand and to write about it to instruct his readers. Having been fortified by God's mercy, he turns and extends it to us, designing his lessons to cut to the depths of our ignorance (our brokenness) and enlighten us with what he himself knew.

As we try to understand St. Thomas, one of the more light-some considerations that we make is, "Why does he develop the lesson as he does; why are the objections laid out in the order that they are?" A lot can be said, but in a certain sense it is his keen mercy that determines that order. He writes to educate, and thus he writes so as to break into the brokenness of his reader — to break into their confusion and ignorance. He is very attentive to that confusion and ignorance, formulating his lessons so that he might securely lead by the hand his reader into the truth he is teaching.

The next level of mercy is that of your administrators and tutors — both the founders and your current ones. Consider the mercy of the founders. The magnitude of the project of breaking out of the educational norms of their day and returning to the tried-and-true ways of the Church sent them to their knees with prayers and tears of supplication, begging for guidance, courage, and strength. They had a few good ideas and, as Dr. McArthur was known to say, "a lot of hot air," but no money, no building, and no students. They begged from God His mercy to face these challenges and then they wisely and generously passed that mercy on, setting this college on a course that the current administration and tutors carry on today.

The current tutors, led by Dr. O'Reilly and his local dean here (my brother-in-law!), Mr. Cain, are the living channels of that wisely established structure of mercy instituted by the founders. No doubt you students will have these tutors on their knees begging God for the light and patience to break into the ignorance and bad habits that you will manifest to them in your time here! They will beg God for the light, the patience, and the tact, and then personally turn to you with love and

strength, breaking into the ignorance and bad will festering in the depths of your souls. Your chaplains here have a very important role in this, as well.

You, the students of the Class of 2028, provide the final level in this college's network of mercy. In a sense you all have the final word: If you are animated by mercy, then the mercy of all the higher levels will bear fruit.

Aided by your families and the College, you students are together seeking the sublime aim of an authentic Catholic liberal education in a culture that more and more rejects and undermines it. Shooting high, you are forced to penetrate deep into the roots of your own convictions and attitudes. This purification is difficult, it hurts, and it takes patience. A merciful companion peers deep into the struggles that his friends are having. Diligently he searches for ways to assist his struggling friend and finds ways to share the insights and virtue that he himself already possesses. In turn, the mercy of the quicker student inspires trust in the slower student, inclining him to accept help. As this trust grows, walls fall and communication between these friends becomes more profound, enlightening, and liberating.



Cheap mercy fosters laziness. It's handy in a pinch sometimes, but generally it hurts in the long run. Holy mercy doesn't foster laziness or an attitude of slavish dependency. The finished work of holy mercy flowing through this college family is not ease of life but fullness of life, that is, the ability to see things for one's self, delighting not only in being able to follow the instruction of our classical masters and local teachers, but to see as they see, to enjoy the truth itself.

Aided by merciful friends or masters, we face the hardships of learning and holiness. We are in the pack of those seeking to know: running, keeping up, challenged, and making progress. Emboldened with their friendship, we find courage to face the difficulties inherent in the intellectual life. Learners at their best are at the Cross — seeking evermore insight and clarity,

“The finished work of holy mercy flowing through this college family is not ease of life but fullness of life, that is, the ability to see things for one's self.”

undergoing the trials of acquiring the skills needed in their studies. Learners are at the Cross, and so also are teachers, while knowers are at the Resurrection, rejoicing in the joys of contemplation.

Class of 2028, I challenge you to be renowned of all the graduating classes of this finest college of Catholic liberal education for being the class of mercy! The class of mercy will be very reluctant to leave one of its own behind, dropping out because of the difficulty of adjusting to college life and academic standards. It will be close-knit, joyful, and hardworking. Maybe you won't be the brightest of classes, but you will be masters at exposing your neediness to God and others who are dying to help; and, in turn, you will be masters at noting and effectively responding to the neediness of others.

This makes for the deepest of friendships, which will be for you an exquisite joy and consolation for the rest of your lives. But more importantly, that openness to and expertise of receiving and passing on mercy is the surest route to heaven.

Class of 2028, be the class of mercy! Fulfill the law of Christ by bearing each other's burdens in this life so that, together, you may sing in heaven God's glory and praise, forever and ever. Amen! □

MEET THE FRESHMEN

Members of the Class of 2028 Embrace the Challenge of Catholic Liberal Education

Students who come to Thomas Aquinas College willingly forego much of the typical college experience, such as intercollegiate athletics programs, specialized majors, or curricular electives. Most, however, don't perceive these tradeoffs as sacrifices, but as a small price paid for something much greater — the privilege to study the greatest works ever produced, in an integrated program ordered toward truth, surrounded by close friends in a community animated by the Catholic faith.

Nonetheless, the decision to attend the College does not always come quickly. Many students must spend time weighing the advantages of the College's program of Catholic liberal education against the more conventional offerings elsewhere. Friends, family, and trusted advisers can play a key role, as can the College's High School Summer Programs, which more than 50 percent of this year's freshmen attended.

Below are just a few of the decision-making stories that ultimately brought this new class together.

Josephine Potter (CA'28)

Growing up as an only child in Birmingham, England, Josephine Potter (CA'28) always had an affinity for academics, especially language, mathematics, and the sciences. At age 15, she was one of only 13 students in her country to achieve the top score on all 13 of her General Certificates of Standard Education. In her senior year, she remained at the top, choosing to study mathematics, physics, and French in her A-Levels, the subject-based qualifications British students need to enter higher education.

As she approached college, she was determined to pursue a degree in a STEM field. Around that time, though, she met a TAC representative at a talk about the College's High School Great Books Summer Programs. "I ended up going to the 2023 program in California and really enjoyed it," she says, but was reluctant to let go of her previous plans.

The real game-changer for Josephine came when she start-

ed visiting scientific research centers. Though many of these facilities were world-renowned for their research, and the scientists she met were highly intelligent, she was disappointed in what she found. "Many of the people working at these centers couldn't offer a reason for why they were doing their projects," she remarks. "It was almost as if they were just bashing stones together to get some result. There was no apparent goal or ultimate end to what they were doing."

After this experience, Josephine began to reevaluate her college search. "It seemed to me that the reason those scientists weren't asking themselves the 'Why?' of their projects was because they weren't taught to think critically about what they were doing. I wanted an education that would give me more than just a technical grasp of the sciences; I wanted to be able to understand things at a deeper level."

Her thoughts returned to Thomas Aquinas College, where she had experienced what it was like to inquire into the causes of things, without outside knowledge or personal biases dictating what should be thought. "The seeds were sown for a change of heart, and I was convinced that it was a good idea to try Thomas Aquinas College."

Josephine still plans to study engineering or physics after she graduates, albeit better prepared with four years of logical reasoning under her belt. "Ultimately, I think that going to TAC will better prepare me for this kind of specialization and career than going straight into any of the scientific colleges I considered."

Justin Hoeing (NE'28)

For freshman Justin Hoeing (NE'28), coming to Thomas Aquinas College meant parting with a long-held dream of one day playing competitive soccer at the collegiate level. Although the College offers a robust intramural program, its heavy focus on the intellectual life precludes the busy practice and travel schedules that intercollegiate sports demand. For many athletically gifted TAC students, choosing the College means foregoing the possibility of high-level competition and even athletic scholarships — a



sacrifice that Justin made gladly.

Justin's family learned about the College through friends, and his older sister attended a High School Summer Program. "My sister and I are pretty similar, so when she said I would like the program, I decided to give it a shot," he says. The experience was transformative.

"If I had chosen soccer over this incredible opportunity, I would be losing a lot of the knowledge, wisdom, and formation that you can get here."

"I was drawn to Thomas Aquinas College because of the curriculum," he says. "The way I see it, it's like how Jesus says it's better to build on firm ground, not sand. I think it's really important to build a good foundation and to develop your person and critical thinking skills before you go out into the world."

That kind of educational experience, he decided, was more important than intercollegiate athletics. "I love soccer, but I had a gut feeling that God doesn't want me to invest that much time in sports right now," says Justin. "In deciding to come to TAC, I felt I was setting myself up for success in pretty much anything I do in life. If I had chosen soccer over this incredible opportunity, I would be losing a lot of the knowledge, wisdom, and formation that you can get here."

Fortunately, coming to Thomas Aquinas College has not forced Justin to give entirely up on the sport he loves. "I have joined a group that plays on Sundays, and it has been so much fun," he remarks. "Intramural soccer season is coming up soon, and I can't wait. Just being able to play and be here at all is a gift, and I love every minute of it."

Anna and Louise Guenther (both CA'28)

As more families discover Thomas Aquinas College, it is inevitable that trailblazing, older siblings will pass on their love for the College to their younger brothers and sisters. There are some 45 siblings of current students or alumni in the Class of 2028, and then there are Anna and Louise Guenther (both CA'28): twins who both decided to come to the College, albeit independently of each other.

The sisters grew up in Germany with their parents and older brother. "It was a very secular environment," says Louise. "We struggled to find friends we had anything in common with." When the twins were in middle school, their family moved to Vienna, Virginia, where they attended a parish school, then the Catholic, all-girls Oakcrest School for high school. There, they discovered Thomas Aquinas College thanks to a new friend, Elena Diaz-Bonilla (CA'25), whose older siblings were TAC students and whose father, Mariano Diaz-Bonilla, is a member of the College's Board of Governors.



These friends' testimonies — coupled with an account from the twins' elder brother, who visited TAC as part of his college search — would prove very influential. "I was convinced I wanted to come to the College just based on what I'd heard from the Diaz-Bonillas and my brother," says Anna. "But Louise was not yet completely sold."

Louise would change her mind, though, after she and Anna attended the California High School Summer Program. "Before the Summer Program, I was thinking of applying to other Catholic colleges," she says. "Anna and I both wanted to continue the Catholic education we were getting at our high school, and neither of us wanted to return to the kind of secular environment we had experienced in Germany. The TAC Summer Program showed me that I could find a great Catholic education and a devout community at the College."

The Guenthers were pleasantly surprised that they wanted to go to the same school. "We both individually decided on the College, and when I found out Louise wanted to come, too, we had a double-take moment of 'Wait, we both want to go?'" laughs Anna.

"We both individually decided on the College, and when I found out Louise wanted to come, too, we had a double-take moment of 'Wait, we both want to go?'"

As they near the midway point of their freshman year, Anna and Louise are discovering the College is everything they hoped it would be and more. "We have noticed that Thomas Aquinas College really is the only school that can fully combine classes and community," Anna reflects. "No other school has such a good balance of an incredible education and a beautiful community. It's really a gift that we can share in the TAC experience together." □

New Faces

College Welcomes New Members to the Teaching Faculty



Dr. Richard Berquist ('10) and Sanjay Adhikari ('18) — joined by Dr. Katherine Gardner ('06), a new tutor in New England, having come from the California campus — take the Oath of Fidelity and make the Profession of Faith.

Sanjay Adhikari ('18)

 “I have always wanted to come back to TAC, even while I was a student,” says Sanjay Adhikari ('18), who joined the faculty of Thomas Aquinas College, New England, this fall. After graduating from the California campus six years ago, he has achieved his dream of returning to the community of truth-seekers he loves so dearly.

Mr. Adhikari was born and raised in Lamjung, Nepal. He discovered the College’s website while looking for classical liberal arts schools and immediately knew where he wanted to go for his undergraduate degree. “The first thing that caught my eye about Thomas Aquinas College was how beautiful it looked,” he recalls. “TAC was so different from all the other liberal arts schools I had seen, so I knew it was the place I would go.”

As a student, Mr. Adhikari was enamored with the College’s classical curriculum and its use of the Discussion Method. He was especially struck by the role of the tutor in the classroom. “One of the primary challenges with



“The tutor has to maintain a very fine balance between the freedom of the discussion and the guidance he must give to ensure the truth is found by the end of class.”

the Discussion Method is the number of contingencies in conversations,” he says. “The tutor has to maintain a very fine balance between the freedom of the discussion and the guidance he must give to ensure the truth is found by the end of class.”

He graduated from the College in 2018, then went on to pursue master’s and doctoral degrees in philosophy at the University of St. Thomas’s Center for Thomistic Studies in Houston, Texas. While studying there, he taught undergraduate philosophy courses for three years. He is currently finishing his doctoral dissertation, which is on the relation between immateriality and understanding according to the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Last year, as Mr. Adhikari completed his graduate studies, he began to think once more about joining the teaching faculty at his alma mater. “During my four years at the College, I knew I wanted to come back someday,” he says. “It was always a little overwhelming to think of myself as a tutor, though, since I would always remember how amazing and capable many of my own tutors were when I was a student.”

Nevertheless, he applied. “TAC was the only place I applied to teach,” he admits. “I was nervous beforehand, but I worked very hard on my application

seminar and lecture and thought they turned out well.” Much to his relief, his hard work paid off, and he was offered a teaching position on the New England campus. “Several of my colleagues here were my tutors back in California, and, of course, we studied the exact same

classical curriculum,” Mr. Adhikari observes. “It is both beautiful and surreal to be in such a familiar community, doing the very same kind of work, but in a wholly different place. I consider myself blessed to be part of this next chapter in the life of the College.”

For his first year, Mr. Adhikari is teaching two sections of Freshman Philosophy, as well as Freshman Mathematics and Sophomore Seminar. “I love how serious we are about truth here,” he says. “It is wonderful to be in the classroom with very serious students who all care about the truth. That is one of the things that excites me the most about being a tutor.” □

Dr. Richard Berquist ('10)



The son of TAC founder Marcus Berquist and his wife, Laura ('79), Dr. Richard Berquist ('10) grew up attending his mother's Mother of Divine Grace School in California alongside



“TAC has a rare unity, where the whole faculty generally has the same understanding of truth and what it means to be a disciple of Christ,”

his five other siblings. He entered the College in 2006 and, after four years of discussions, camaraderie, and spiritual formation, graduated in 2010.

Possessed with a love for learning, Dr. Berquist was inclined to pursue graduate studies and a career in higher education, perhaps even at his alma mater. “TAC has a rare unity, where the whole faculty generally has the same understanding of truth and what it means to be a disciple of Christ,” he reflects. So, he enrolled at the Catholic University of America, where he earned his Ph.L. in philosophy.

Rather than immediately pursue further studies, however, he decided to discern God's call by testing a religious

vocation with the Dominican Order's Western Province. Greatly influenced by his reading of Aristotle's *De Anima*, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and St. Thomas's *Summa Theologiae* while at the College, he especially looked forward to the intellectual formation the order offered.

“In the first few questions of the *Summa*, you learn that seeing God face to face isn't the result of any particular ability on the part of the person, but the result of an increase in charity,” Dr. Berquist explains. “Intellectually, I saw that I needed to pursue a life that, most of all, would lead to charity. For me, considering my particular abilities and interests, I knew that I would have to be a Dominican.”

In 2014, he made his simple vows with the Order of Preachers and spent two years at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley. While there, he taught a summer course

in philosophy at St. Dominic's Church, an experience which led him to believe his true vocation was teaching. “There's a lot that goes into being a Dominican that is different from being a teacher,” he reflects. “I came to realize that I could be pretty happy as a teacher, but if I were a Dominican and not a teacher, I probably would not be as happy as I am now.”

Upon discerning out of seminary, Dr. Berquist resumed his studies at CUA, this time earning a doctorate in philosophy. He taught at CUA through its First Year Experience Teaching Fellowship, as well as for the Dominican House of Studies and Christendom College. Having thus whetted his appetite for ed-

ucation, he is grateful for the opportunity, at Thomas Aquinas College, to teach the very works that inspired him during his undergraduate days and to lead a discussion-based classroom.

“It's exciting to return to the central texts that were so formative to me as a student,” he says. “Now, I will get to see them as part of a larger whole, in light of the things that I have done and the broader depth of experience I now have.” Like his father, who helped found the first campus, he is one of TAC's pioneers on the East Coast. “I am excited to be joining the growing community on the New England campus. I look forward to contributing to the College's mission of providing a good, Catholic liberal education to a greater number of people.”

In his first year as a member of the teaching faculty, Dr. Berquist is teaching Freshman Theology, Freshman Language, and Junior Seminar. “Thomas Aquinas College is the only school where I have the opportunity to teach Homer, *Don Quixote*, and Euclid,” he says. “Since my degree is in philosophy, that's the only discipline I could teach at most places. But here, since the curriculum is integrated, I get to pass on my love of the Great Books to a much greater degree than I would be able to elsewhere.” □

Dr. Daniel Zoumaya



“My father works for the State Department, so we moved around quite a bit,” says Dr. Daniel Zoumaya, a new tutor at Thomas Aquinas College, California.

Dr. Zoumaya spent most of his childhood living in various U.S. states, Greece, and Turkey. When he was in high school, his sister and brother-in-law enrolled in Florida's Ave Maria University to study in its graduate program. “My parents bought a house in town, and it became our stateside home base,” he recalls. “I got to know the school very well and ended up going there for my



“I was immediately astounded by both TAC’s beauty and its faithfulness to its mission. The College knows exactly what it wants to do, has carefully discerned how it wants to do it, and has stuck to that plan since its inception.”

undergraduate degree.”

Though he originally started out as a physics major, Dr. Zoumaya was drawn toward politics, in part thanks to his father, and switched to a double major in politics and theology. “I had some practical experience with international relations and comparative politics before going to college,” he explains. “When I went to Ave Maria, I was introduced to political philosophy proper through the Great Books. It really changed the course of my life: I fell in love with the Great Books and knew I wanted to go deeper into theology and philosophy.”

After graduating from Ave Maria in 2018, Dr. Zoumaya continued to deepen his knowledge at Hillsdale College’s Van Andel Graduate School of Statesmanship. In pursuit of his doctoral degree in political philosophy, he researched St. Thomas Aquinas’s natural law theory and gave many presentations and discussions on the topic. His studies culminated in the completion of his doctorate and dissertation, titled “St. Thomas Aquinas on the Knowability of the Natural Law and How the Problem of Imperfect Knowledge of the Natural Law Can Be Remedied.”

In 2022, Dr. Zoumaya’s doctoral work led him to the Eleventh International Thomistic Congress at the Angelicum in Rome. He presented a talk on the knowability of the natural law to a room of distinguished Thomists. “It was amazing to be presenting alongside some of the world’s best specialists on the thought of St. Thomas,” he recalls. “It was such an honor and an incredible experience.”

During his time at Hillsdale, Dr. Zoumaya became good friends with a fellow graduate student and TAC alumna, Jeannette Richard (’17), who told him he should look into teaching at Thomas Aquinas College. On hearing about the College’s Thomistic Summer Conference in the summer of 2022, he decided to take her suggestion seriously.

“I submitted a proposal in part as an excuse to visit and check the College out,” he says. “When I was accepted and got to campus, I was immediately astounded by both TAC’s beauty and its faithfulness to its mission. The College knows exactly what it wants to do, has carefully discerned how it wants to do it, and has stuck to that plan since its inception. Based on the impressive alumni I had met over the years, I knew TAC was incredibly effective in achieving the ends it set out for itself.”

Inspired by his time at the conference, Dr. Zoumaya applied for a position on the teaching faculty. This year, he is teaching sections of Freshman Philosophy and Theology and co-leading Freshman Seminar with College President Dr. Paul J. O’Reilly.

“I am really excited about this job because it is going to force me to learn a lot about many new and worthy areas of interest,” says Dr. Zoumaya. “Though I specialized in politics and have done some work in philosophy and theology, I have always been interested in the sciences, math, and music as well. Now, I will have the challenge and pleasure of learning more about all these subjects, which I have always wished to study more deeply.” □



Head Chaplain Rev. Robert Marczewski administers the Oath of Fidelity and Profession of Faith to new tutor Dr. Daniel Zoumaya at the California Matriculation ceremony.

First Stop, Rome

Board Members & Benefactors Honor the Universal Doctor with a Trip to the Eternal City

In honor of the 750th anniversary of the death of St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Aquinas College's incoming vice president for advancement, Dr. John J. Goyette, organized a first-of-its-kind pilgrimage to Rome in April. The trip, which fostered friendship, faith, and devotion to the College's beloved patron, proved so successful that Dr. Goyette is already considering more such excursions in the future.

"The goal of the pilgrimage was to cultivate relationships between the Board of Governors, as well as some of our friends and benefactors," says Dr. Goyette. All in all, some 29 pilgrims — including President Paul J. O'Reilly, members of the Board of Governors, and several benefactors — enjoyed a weeklong stay in the Eternal City. Former TAC Chaplain Rev. Joseph Illo, the pastor of San Francisco's Star of the Sea Parish, served as the trip's chaplain, helping to guide the group through many of the sites it visited.

On its first day in Rome, April 15, the group gathered at the church of Santa Maria della Concezione dei Cappuccini for Mass. The day marked the 15th anniversary of the death of College President Dr. Thomas E. Dillon, and Fr. Illo offered the Mass for the repose of his soul. During his tenure as president, Dr. Dillon made many visits to Rome to study sacred architecture as well as to introduce members of the Curia to Thomas Aquinas College. "It was a blessing to be able to pray for Tom there," says Dr. O'Reilly. "It was as if he had led us to Rome, welcoming us to the city where he did so much to further the mission of the College."

As the pilgrimage was dedicated to the College's patron, the main attractions were places important in the life of St. Thomas



"Christ seemed very close there. In reflecting on it, I was struck by how St. Thomas used that time to memorize the Scriptures."

and the Dominican Order. One such spot was Castle Ducal, where St. Thomas's family imprisoned him for a year. The group attended Mass in the room where the Universal Doctor had been held captive and received the belt of chastity. "Christ seemed very close there," says Rose (Teichert '76) Grimm. "In reflecting on it, I was struck by how St. Thomas used that time to memorize the Scriptures."

Similarly moving was the Carafa Chapel in the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. Designed by Filippino Lippi, the chapel is dedicated to St. Thomas and features beautiful frescoes of the saint's life and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. While saying Mass, Fr. Illo was struck by the presence of a reliquary containing St. Thomas's forearm on the chapel's altar. After Mass, the group took the opportunity to venerate the relic.

Alongside visits to the Basilica of St. Mary Major and the Sistine Chapel, the pilgrims enjoyed a trip to the Vatican Library, where entrance is usually limited to visiting researchers. They were also guests at the Angelicum, where they were graced with a tour and private dinner with two noteworthy Dominicans: Rev. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., the Angelicum's Rector Magnificus, and Rev. Michael Sherwin, O.P., a professor of fundamental moral theology. Both have lectured at the College — once on each campus, for Fr.

Sherwin — and were glad to spend more time with the Board members and benefactors.

While sharing in these experiences, the pilgrims delighted in each other's company. Alumni shared stories over dinners, inspiring friends who were less familiar with the College. "All the stories about TAC are so timeless," says Sarah Jimenez ('10). "The alumni reminisced about their common experience, and some of the College's newer connections were able to get a sense of the bonds TAC alumni share. People really got to know each other deeply during those meals."

"The pilgrimage was a great opportunity to get to know some of our benefactors better and, in many cases, gave us a stronger foundation for our faith."

After their week in Rome, participants came away with a newfound respect and love for St. Thomas Aquinas and Our Lord — so much so that they are already looking forward to TAC's next pilgrimage. Dr. Goyette is considering a trip to Ireland, among other locations, next summer. "It's hard to say what our favorite part of the pilgrimage was," said Nick Cammarota ('84), president of the TAC Parents' Association. "It was filled with so many stellar moments. We are looking forward to the next trip, wherever it goes!"

"The pilgrimage was a great opportunity to get to know some of our benefactors better and, in many cases, gave us a stronger foundation for our faith," says Dr. Goyette. "All its various aspects really brought people together. It was just what we were hoping for." □



Thomas Aquinas College pilgrims enjoy a private tour at Palazzo Orsini, the Knights of Malta's embassy to the Holy See.

“What I Did Over Summer Vacation”

Students Share the Gift of their Education and Plan for Their Futures

Josefine Sedler (CA'26)

When she discovered Fathomwerx on the Port Hueneme Naval Base near the College's California campus, Josefine Sedler (CA'26) was elated. “All I knew was that I wanted to do 3D printing, so when my father told me about Fathomwerx, I already knew I wanted to work there,” she says. For the past two summers, she has worked for the



company through its Naval Research Enterprise Internship Program (NREIP).

“My experience at Fathomwerx has been one of constant learning,” she says. “The entire focus in these internships is on giving you opportunities to experience as many different types of projects as possible and on developing you into a potential future employee.” Throughout her summers, Josefine has learned the mechanics of 3D printing, CAD modeling, laser cutting, and other state-of-the-art technology. While interning with NREIP, she toured ships and other areas on the base to become familiar with the greater workings of

the Navy. “No matter how small a project is, everything we do supports our Navy,” she says.

Josefine is looking forward to applying for NREIP again next summer. “Again and again, I have heard managers and even the technical director of the base state that they want to hire people who have a high degree of communication skills, critical thinking, and integrity, who are willing to work and learn, and who can pick up the technical skills along the way. I believe that Thomas Aquinas College students are exactly the sort of people they need.” □

Rome Thomistic Pilgrimage

For the second consecutive summer, tutors Dr. Scott Strader and Dr. Marco Emerson partnered with Altum l'Alto Pilgrimages to lead a group of nine TAC students and alumni on an adventure pilgrimage in Europe. This year, they spent 10 days exploring Rome and northern Italy.

The pilgrimage began in Rome, where the group spent three days visiting the birth and death sites of St. Thomas, various churches and basilicas, and other scenic spots in the city. Next, the pilgrims traveled to the Cinque Terre, the “Five Hills” on the coast of the Liguria region. There, they biked, swam, and kayaked to Marian shrines and chapels nestled within the mountains and enjoyed the picturesque coastal landscapes.

The last leg of the trip included a journey on a portion of the Via Francigena, the historic pilgrimage route from Canterbury, England, to Rome. The pilgrims hiked approximately 55 miles over three days, stopping along the way to admire medieval frescoes in San Gimignano, marvel at Monteriggioni's stark watchtowers, and cool off in the Elsa River. Their final stop was Siena, where they witnessed parades and ceremonies assigning horses for 10 of the city's districts in the July Palio race. They then returned to Rome for one last evening of gelato and camaraderie.

“The pilgrimage was a fantastic opportunity to travel and connect with my faith on a deeper level,” says Jaquelyn Ogden (CA'25). “We encountered God's goodness every day through the sacraments, community with each other, and the beautiful scenery. Going forward, I hope to approach my studies with the attitude of a pilgrim: with humility, simplicity, and faith.” □



William Claeys (NE'27)

"I first learned about the Society for the Canonization of Blessed Karl of Austria from a great friend who told me there was a lot of work to be done for the prayer league this summer," says William Claeys (NE'27). William spent much of his summer planning various events for the North American branch of the Austria-based group, which advocates for the canonization of the last emperor of Austria-Hungary. Bl. Karl is known for dedicating his life to working for peace in his country, caring for his family, and bringing souls to Christ.



During the summer, William helped to schedule a book tour raising awareness about Bl. Karl at parishes across the United States and learned more about the canonization process. "This was my first time working to promote the canonization of a saint," he says. "I think devotion to Bl. Karl, who was a brilliant statesman and a model father, will be very powerful in our culture, particularly at a time characterized by political turmoil, confusion regarding the family, and an identity crisis of the modern West."

While advocating for Bl. Karl's canonization this summer, William found his devotion to the prospective saint growing ever deeper. "I have always had a special

"I have always had a special attachment to Bl. Karl, but working for his cause made the effects of his intercession on my life more visible."

attachment to Bl. Karl, but working for his cause made the effects of his intercession on my life more visible," he says. "I hope I am now better equipped to increase devotion to such an incredible man, and I pray he will continue to intercede for Thomas Aquinas College." □

Luke Atkinson (CA'26)

"Two years ago, my older brother was recruited to work for Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America," says Luke Atkinson (CA'26). After joining his brother in Kansas that year, Luke continued to work for the organization this summer as a door-to-door canvasser and an ambassador to fellow students at Thomas Aquinas College.



Luke spent his summer traveling to

major cities throughout the U.S. with other recruits. "It gave me a great chance to talk to potential voters about their local candidates and the issue of abortion," he relates. "Being part of the ambassador community was also a great experience, since I found myself surrounded by like-minded young men and women, all working toward the same goal."

When it comes to his conversational and critical-thinking skills, Luke thanks the College. "I've learned to present myself respectfully to people with different beliefs or opinions, and I've already had much practice fielding objections on the fly," he

Student Duo Pens and Produces One-Act Play

Over the summer, students, alumni, and friends of the College occasionally put on a play in the community surrounding the California campus. This summer, rather than stage just one play, the group decided to host a two-night one-act play festival consisting of four original plays written, directed, and performed by students and alumni.

"I had written a couple of short movie scripts over the past several years for fun, but this was the first time I actually knew something was going to be produced from what I wrote," says Gregory Haggard (CA'26). His co-writer and director, Augustine "Gus" Seeley (CA'25), had also never written a play before, but was game to try. "We both thought it would be fun," Gus says. "I've been acting in plays for a long time, which greatly aided in writing ours."

The duo worked tirelessly through the school year to finish their script in time for the summer. They worked with other members of the group to cast and execute the production. Gregory acted in and produced the play, *Prince of Lies*, while Gus occupied the director's chair. "It was an odd experience directing people who I first knew when I was a young high-schooler, and they were big college students," Gus recalls. "They were all great to work with, though! Every single actor brought so much life to the lines Gregory and I wrote."

After months of preparation, Gus and Gregory's one-act play took place alongside the three others, written by Benjamin Trull ('19) and John Turrentine ('16), Sharon (Raskob '99) Reiser, and Susana Sedler ('24). "The overall performance was exhausting, but went very well," says Gregory, who performed in some of the other plays as well as his own. "It was a lot of fun not only to act in something I co-wrote, but also to watch the talented actors bring all the plays to life."

Gus concurs, saying, "TAC has helped me to see that the fine arts are for everyone to try their hand at, whether that be acting, writing, or directing. It's a great environment for the arts to thrive." □



Gregory Haggard (CA'26) and Augustine Seeley (CA'25)

says. “I’ve always been more of a thinker than a doer, but the experience with Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America allows me to put my beliefs into action. Although I still value my Catholic liberal education for its own sake, I now also see it as a tool to use in pursuit of a better world.” □

Monica Weinkopf (CA’25)

“I think this was all Our Lady’s doing!” exclaims Monica Weinkopf (CA’25), recalling the first time she came across the women’s ministry



group Blessed is She: on the feast of the Assumption six years ago. During her final years of high school and throughout her TAC career, she continued to return to Blessed is She’s daily reflections, podcast episodes, and community. When she reached out to the organization in 2023,

“After witnessing conversations with many wonderful women asking questions about the Faith, I realize anew what a priceless gift our intellectual and spiritual formation is at TAC.”

she was welcomed as a part of its summer team and continued her work with it this summer through a paid internship.

Monica assisted Blessed is She by responding to community-forum questions, leading a virtual Bible study for college women, and contributing to various multimedia projects. Primarily, she was tasked with adapting a women’s prayer study to create a version for teenaged girls. “My hope is to offer girls something incredibly beautiful and utterly unlike textbooks, something that will teach them how to pray with Scripture and deepen their understanding of the riches of our faith,” she

says. “I long to put in their hands the sort of thing that I wish I had had when I first found Blessed is She at the age of 15.”

In particular, Monica found that her TAC education aided her greatly in navigating small-group leadership and discussions. “Each person brings something different to the table,” she remarks. “Three years of discussions with my classmates and friends set me up to appreciate what everyone has to offer and to take corrections without offense. After witnessing conversations with many wonderful women asking questions about the Faith, I realize anew what a priceless gift our intellectual and spiritual formation is at TAC.” □

Luke Connelly (CA’27)

The son of an attorney, Luke Connelly (CA’27) has been interested in law for as long as he can remember. “I wanted to experience firsthand what it’s



like to practice law and advocate for people who have been seriously wronged,” he said. So, he took an internship with his father’s firm, Connelly Law Offices.

“The experience was incredible,” says Luke. He spent much of his summer intaking new clients with potential cases and listening to their stories. “It is an extremely moving experience, listening to people describe the injustice that they have suffered. To be a witness to that and then to be able to say, ‘I can help you,’ is a beautiful thing and a great blessing.”

After graduation, Luke hopes to pursue a legal career and knows that his summer experience will aid him both in pursuit of that goal and for the remainder of his time at the College. “I have returned to TAC with a desire to grow, particularly in logical reasoning and critical thinking,” he says. “I’m looking forward to employing the skills I’ve learned to help bring justice to people who have lost their family members or livelihoods.” □

Jocelyn Topor (NE’25)

This summer, Jocelyn Topor (NE’25) took the skills she has gained at Thomas Aquinas College to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish’s K-8 school



in Boonton, New Jersey. An alumna of the affiliated Lumen Gentium Academy in Boonton, Jocelyn was happy to return to her home parish’s community. “As I’m nearing the end of college and considering a career in classical Catholic education, I could think of no better place to seek classroom experience than at this local school that is dear to my heart.”

Jocelyn worked as a substitute teacher, from kindergarten through eighth grade, across various subject areas. By interacting with all grades, she ascertained that she was most comfortable teaching at the middle-school level and above. “The humanities, especially literature and writing, are my passion and strength,” she says. “By middle school, students are ripe to begin exploring the Great Books and the timeless, profound questions they raise.”

After a summer of teaching, Jocelyn has gained a newfound appreciation and understanding of the role of a teacher. “Teachers — and tutors — are truly students too,” she says. “In my time working at OLMC School, there were several

“I could think of no better place to seek classroom experience than at this local school that is dear to my heart.”

instances when a student said something that gave me a new perspective on the topic at hand. We really can learn from those younger or less experienced than ourselves, especially from children; in their wonder and simplicity, they are often more attuned to truth, beauty, and goodness than we are.” □

Pedro da Silva and Gerard Behe (both NE'25)

As he prepared to apply for philosophy graduate programs, Pedro da Silva (NE'25) learned about the Witherspoon Institute's summer seminars at Princeton University. "I wanted to get acquainted with places beyond TAC, shake some hands, and spend the summer studying some of the ethical problems introduced in the Junior Year curriculum," he says. Knowing that his friend Gerard Behe (NE'25) would also be interested, Pedro alerted him to the opportunity, and both attended Witherspoon Institute seminars this summer.



Pedro participated in the First Principles seminar and took classes with students with a wide variety of beliefs from all over the country, engaging in discussions and lectures on the first principles of being, knowing, and action. "It was different to see people addressing issues Aristotle brings up, such as marriage and friendship, on the basis of a more modern terminology," he admits. "Nonetheless, those differences humbled me and helped me to understand that the love for truth really requires that one sees all positions and tries to find the truth in them."

"Spending two weeks at Princeton with a lot of different people helped me to understand more fully that Our Lord was really sent for everyone."

Two weeks later, Gerard came to Princeton for the Natural Law and Public Affairs seminar. "What stood out to me the most

were the discussions taking place outside of class," he says. "Much like at TAC, neither the students nor the professors were satisfied to keep intellectual discussion confined to the classroom. I had the privilege of talking with many of the other students about their perspectives on Thomistic natural law and their own experiences in practical application of natural law theory."

After two weeks of stimulating discussions on a variety of philosophers and networking with his peers, Pedro was eager to begin his senior year at Thomas Aquinas College. "Spending two weeks at Princeton with a lot of different people helped me to understand more fully that Our Lord was sent for everyone. It gave me a lot of hope and made me happy to share in another intellectual community that is so alive."

Gerard concurs, saying, "It was very formative for me to have my own opinions challenged by fellow philosophers in an environment spurred on by a desire for truth. I will be returning to TAC firmly reminded that our education here really is just the beginning of the intellectual journey to which God calls us." □

Richard Goforth (CA'26)

When the head of Manalive Media Group (MMG) — a Catholic film and media group dedicated to nourishing the soul through cinema — met with a few students at lunch this past year, Richard Goforth (CA'26) became fascinated with the group's work and mission. He interned for the company over the spring semester, and — thanks to his enthusiasm and hard work — his supervisors offered to extend the internship throughout the summer.

Over the summer, Richard attended two meetings a week: one to collaborate with another intern, the other to learn directly from MMG's head, Douglas Dye. "Douglas offered us training not in the creative filmmaking process, but rather in the work of an executive and entrepreneur operating at



a high level," says Richard. "We were given the opportunity to imitate and practice formal communication with advisory board members and potential investors and come up with frameworks to present key project creatives."

Richard is grateful for the opportunity to represent the College at MMG and hopes to continue spreading its mission of turning souls to Christ, as well as to refine the skills he learned through his internship. "We hone skills necessary for business executives around the discussion tables every day at TAC. Fundamentally, an executive conforms contributing parts to a defined vision. To do this, he must comprehend both the vision and the necessary order." □

Anastasia Toma (NE'25)

"This year, I wanted a summer job that was more meaningful, rewarding, and explicitly Christian," says Anastasia Toma (NE'25), who had previously worked in retail. Upon recommendation from her mother and reflecting on her time taking care of her elderly grandparents, she took a job with Visiting Angels, a home-care organization for senior citizens.

With Visiting Angels, Anastasia traveled to the homes of elderly residents in Carver, Minnesota. She assisted clients with errands, cleaning, meal preparation, and other needs. "I absolutely love working with the elderly," Anastasia says. "It's wonderful to serve them and listen to what God wants to teach you through even the smallest tasks."

Her favorite people to care for, she says, are married couples. "Most often, only one of the spouses needs care," Anastasia explains. "The healthy spouse simply loves and dotes on the sick spouse with all their being to show them how much they are still loved despite their health challenges. The elderly are living examples of unconditional love." □





Sam (NE'25) and Dylan Peterson (NE'27)

"I heard about commercial Alaskan fishing from Dr. John McCarthy, one of my tutors at TAC," says Sam Peterson (NE'25). "I was drawn to it because I heard it was hard work, which is something difficult to come by in today's world, but so necessary

for young men to experience if they want to grow in virtue."

Up for the challenge, Sam and his younger brother, Dylan (NE'27), shipped off to the nation's northernmost state for three months. They spent their 17 to 20-hour workdays reeling in huge nets of salmon with a crew of fellow workers. "I found myself leaning more and more on the Rosary," says Sam. "It has been a constant source of strength and grounding for me, reminding me every day why I was there: to practice service to God even in trying times."

Now, the brothers have returned to the East Coast with a renewed wonder for God's grandeur and a zeal to continue

their liberal education. Sam says, "As my time on the boat drew to an end, I became more and more excited to come back for my senior year. I plan to direct the same dedication I gave to my work and prayer life this summer toward my studies." □



Junior Studies, Makes Sacred Art in Florence



"Art has always been a big part of who I am and a talent that I want to cultivate for Our Lord," says Kaitlyn Gallagher (CA'26). This summer, she had the opportunity to pursue her love for art at a four-week intensive workshop at the Sacred Art School of Firenze in Florence, Italy. "It had been a dream of mine to study in Florence for so long, and I believe that I have a gift in art that I needed to cultivate."

Kaitlyn and her classmates spent six hours each day improving their proficiency in sacred art. They started with the basics of drawing and built up to oil painting, color theory, live figure portraiture, and more. Additionally, they toured famous churches and museums in the city with the school's art history professors. "My professors could so easily pull out the Catholic symbolism and history embedded in beautiful frescoes and architecture," says Kaitlyn. "It was so wonderful."

"It had been a dream of mine to study in Florence for so long, and I believe that I have a gift in art that I needed to cultivate."



After her time in Florence, Kaitlyn is excited to read works from the Enlightenment era and return to a community of philosophers. "I now have a greater understanding of the difference between how Aristotle and Plato view forms, especially with regard to how we perceive and come to know things through the senses," she says. "I'm so happy to come back to a community that engages with truth and beauty both intellectually and practically." □



One Program Two Coasts

RECENT EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

President O'Reilly Appoints Dr. John J. Goyette ('90) as VP for Advancement

To serve as Thomas Aquinas College's next vice president for advancement, President Paul J. O'Reilly has selected a long-time member of the teaching faculty who has previously served as dean, assistant dean, and senior advancement officer: Dr. John J. Goyette ('90).

"I am pleased to appoint John Goyette to this role," said Dr. O'Reilly in July. "He is a skillful administrator who has helped lead the College through several challenges."

Upon his appointment as dean in 2017, Dr. Goyette oversaw the reaccreditation of the California campus and, shortly thereafter, the campus-wide evacuation resulting from the Thomas Fire, as well as the subsequent readjustment of the academic schedule. He additionally played a vital role in establishing the College's second campus in New England. He led the effort to gain the approval of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, directed the hiring of the campus's initial faculty, and formulated a plan under which members of New England's first graduating class spent their freshman year in California.

"It is rewarding to meet with the alumni, friends, and benefactors whose support makes it possible for us to offer the best undergraduate education in America."

In 2020, Dr. Goyette led the College through the initial round of COVID-19 shutdowns, managing the emergency move to an online platform to complete the 2019-20 academic year. He then formed a medical advisory board and spent the next summer drafting successful plans allowing for both campuses to open that fall.

"I have witnessed John's leadership skills in the various challenges the College has navigated during his tenure as dean," says Chairman of the Board of Governors Scott Turicchi. "He approaches each as an opportunity with clarity of thought, careful planning, and vigor



Vice President for Advancement Dr. John J. Goyette ('90) at the 2024 Thomistic Summer Conference

in the execution. John is well suited to bring such leadership to the Advancement Office as the College takes its development efforts to the next level."

Dr. Goyette first came to Thomas Aquinas College as a student in 1986, graduating four years later. He went on to earn master's and doctoral degrees in philosophy at The Catholic University of America, then served for eight years as a professor of philosophy at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit before returning to his alma mater as a member of the teaching faculty in

2002. He and his wife, Rebecca (Mathie '90), are the parents of nine children: six are TAC alumni, one is a junior on the New England campus, and another is a freshman in California.

After Dr. Goyette stepped down as dean in 2023, Dr. O'Reilly asked him to work part-time in the Advancement Office. In addition to his time in the classroom, he spent much of the past year visiting with benefactors and raising funds. In July, the previous vice president for advancement, James C. Link, announced that he was stepping down from the position. Looking for a fitting replacement, Dr. O'Reilly asked Dr. Goyette if he would accept the role.

"I look forward to working with President O'Reilly and the Advancement Office to promote the College's unique program of Catholic liberal education," says Dr. Goyette. "My feelings are a little mixed because I will have to sacrifice much of my time with the students in the classroom, but it is rewarding to meet with the alumni, friends, and benefactors whose support makes it possible for us to offer the best undergraduate education in America. Their generosity is inspiring."

As vice president for advancement, Dr. Goyette oversees the College's public relations and fundraising personnel, administers development strategies, and meets regularly with benefactors. "I am confident that Dr. Goyette has the skills and abilities to build on the strong foundation Mr. Link helped lay, particularly in advancing the College's mission among some of America's most generous philanthropists," says Dr. O'Reilly. "He has my gratitude for accepting this appointment." □

COLLEGE GUIDES 2025

The Princeton Review

Thomas Aquinas College continues to offer one of the best undergraduate educations in the country, according to the Princeton Review.

“We salute Thomas Aquinas College for its outstanding academics and many other impressive offerings,” says Robert Franek, editor-in-chief of the Princeton Review and lead author of the 2025 edition of *The Best 390 Colleges*. “It is one of the nation’s best institutions for undergraduates.”

The Best 390 Colleges integrates data from more than 2,000 institutions with surveys of more than 165,000 students nationwide, featuring only the top 14 percent of America’s four-year institutions. The guide features quotes from the College’s students on academics, the student body, and campus life. Students mention their “brilliant, yet down-to-earth tutors” who “are always available to talk and are open to any and all questions [students] may have.” They see that their peers are “animated by a definitively Catholic spirit” and have “a strong desire to do good and help others.”



CatholicVote

CatholicVote recently featured a story by TAC alumna Grace (Miller NE’24) Porto herald-

ing Thomas Aquinas College’s latest ranking, according to the Princeton Review, as the U.S. college with the “most conservative students”—surpassing such right-of-center stalwarts as Hillsdale and Grove City Colleges.

“Unlike Hillsdale, Thomas Aquinas College does not offer majors in political science,” observes Mrs. Porto. “The school also does not study contemporary politics, and instead includes courses on political theory as part of the philosophy curriculum. Students read Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Politics*, St. Thomas’s *On Kingship*, Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, Locke’s *Second Treatise on Government*, Rousseau, Spinoza, the founding documents of the United States, De Tocqueville, Adam Smith, and Marx.”

Yet even though modern politics are absent from the College’s classical, Great Books curriculum, there is much about TAC that would qualify as conservative in the current cultural climate. “Many students attend daily Mass, which is offered at least twice a day,” Mrs. Porto notes, “and the residential rules, like single-sex dorms and limited internet access, encourage students in their intellectual, moral, and spiritual formation.”

Ultimately, these practices spring from the College’s commitment to its Catholic foundation. “Thomas Aquinas College exists to uphold the Church’s intellectual tradition and moral



teachings,” says Executive Director of College Relations Chris Weinkopf, “which is conservative in the truest sense of the word.”

U.S. News & World Report

In addition to earning a coveted spot in the Top 100 of *U.S. News & World Report*’s annual ranking of national liberal arts colleges, Thomas Aquinas College has scored high in the guide’s 2025 edition for a relatively new ranking category: social mobility.

At No. 14, the College is the only Catholic institution to make the top 25 on the magazine’s “social mobility” index, based on schools’ graduation rates for economically disadvantaged students. Although TAC does not provide merit-based scholarships, it maintains a robust financial aid program, reflecting its longstanding commitment to admit and enroll all qualified students, irrespective of financial need.

In discussing the rationale for its annual rankings, *U.S. News* explains that they are based on “17 key measures of academic quality,” ranging from graduation and retention rates to faculty resources and the average federal loan debt of graduates. The College ranks at No. 63 among the nation’s top 211 liberal arts colleges, and No. 62 for “Best Value Schools.” The guide further rates Thomas Aquinas College as having the highest possible proportion of classes with under 20 students (100 percent) and the lowest proportion of classes with more than 50 students (0 percent).



CNBC

To help families better manage the cost of higher education, CNBC compiles an annual listing of the

“Top 10 Colleges for Financial Aid” and, once again, Thomas Aquinas College has made the list. Perhaps not coincidentally, the College is also featured on the business news network’s rankings of “The 10 Colleges with the Happiest Students.”

Drawing upon Princeton Review data about the amount of financial aid that schools offer and students’ satisfaction with their aid packages, CNBC identifies the College as one of the 10 schools in the country that “not only deliver on assistance, but also on calming concerns about college affordability.” The College, CNBC notes, meets 100 percent of all demonstrated student financial need.

In its rating of student happiness, CNBC observes that “plenty of students are happy at private colleges that might offer a more personalized or specialized experience,” particularly those that, like Thomas Aquinas College, “have religious ties that may be important to students’ well-being.” □



ONE PROGRAM TWO COASTS

Third Thomistic Summer Conference

Building on the success of its first two Thomistic Summer Conferences, Thomas Aquinas College hosted scholars from across the United States for the third conference from June 13-16. Old friends and new came to the California campus to contemplate the moral life, under the guidance of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Organizing the event was Dr. John Goyette ('90), the College's vice president for advancement, who traced the inspiration for the gathering to the late Dr. Ralph McInerny's summer conferences at the University of Notre Dame. The theme of this year's conference, "Virtue, Law, and the Common Good," centered around St. Thomas's teaching on morality and politics. "The aim of the conference," says Dr. Goyette, "is to bring together scholars from around the country — young and old — to discuss the thought of St. Thomas in a spirit of friendship and collaboration."

Some 27 presentations addressed questions about the relationships of virtue to happiness, of natural to human law, of law to justice, and of the political common good to the common good of the heavenly city.

Representing a wide array of institutions, such as Ave Maria



"This conference was a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, develop answers to some questions, and walk away with new questions."

University, Baylor University, The Catholic University of America, the University of St. Thomas (Houston), St. John's College, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the University of Dallas, Loyola Marymount University, and Wyoming Catholic College, the visiting scholars spent the mornings and afternoons listening to and discussing each other's papers. Titles included "Religio as a Natural Virtue," "The Wisdom of Human Things," and "Law as Ineluctably Moral."

But the conference was more than an academic exercise. Guests attended daily Mass in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel and nurtured friendships over conversation at shared meals and receptions. This friendly atmosphere, together with the beauty of the campus and surrounding hills, made the conference an unforgettable experience for all in attendance.

"This conference was a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, develop answers to some questions, and walk away with new questions — all in the pursuit of the Truth," reflected LTC Joshua Lehman, an instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. "I loved it." □

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



CALIFORNIA



Opening Lecture

Dr. Travis Cooper

Tutor, Thomas Aquinas College
"The What and Why of Literature"



September Lecture

Rev. Daniel Moloney

St. Thomas More Newman Center, Ohio State University
"Contemporary Catholic Errors About Being 'Merciful' and 'Pastoral'"



Fall Concert

Paul Galbraith

Classical Guitarist
Selections from Bach, Schumann, Granados, and others

Fall All-College Seminar

Philoctetes, by Sophocles



October Lecture

Dr. Alexander Pruss

Baylor University
"God, Mathematics, and Beauty"

November Lecture

Dr. Angela Knobel

University of Dallas
"The Relation Between Infused and Acquired Virtue"

* Videos, podcasts, and texts of select lectures are available at thomasquinas.edu.

Neals' Ferrari Honors TAC on the Racetrack

After four years on the sidelines, Rob Neal — a managing partner with Hager Pacific Properties and a recreational racecar driver — is back on the track. And prominently displayed on the side of his racecar is the Thomas Aquinas College crest and motto, *Fides Quarens Intellectum*.

Mr. Neal and his wife, Berni, a member of TAC's Board of Governors, were introduced to the College over 20 years ago. Friends of late president Dr. Thomas E. Dillon, they soon became acquainted with TAC's unique teaching method and faithfully Catholic community. They also became benefactors, whose steadfast generosity includes a \$500,000 matching gift for the College's recently concluded Friends Week of Giving.

In decorating his Ferrari 488 EVO, Mr. Neal found a way to combine two things he loves: TAC and racing. "Racing is a hobby that brings me joy," he says. "When you're going down a straight at a high rate of speed, you're not thinking about anything else. That ability to quiet the mind is valuable, at least to me, because I have a tendency to be thinking about a few things at once."

"We thought this would be a wonderful way to display our passion and perhaps begin to catechize some who otherwise might not hear the message."

Four years ago, due to medical issues, Mr. Neal had to leave the driver's seat. But, in April of this year, on his 65th birthday, he returned to the track with a new car, ready to test himself at the Ferrari Challenge on the world-class Circuit of the Americas track

in Austin, Texas. His return vehicle, shining bright and cherry red, featured the TAC emblem emblazoned on its side, as well as one for The Catholic University of America, where Mr. Neal chairs the Board of Trustees.

"We wanted to invite conversations," he says, explaining the decision to place the logos on the car. "The racing world is full of passionate people, but there's not a lot of faith there. Some of these people are hungry for something more. We thought this would be a wonderful way to display our passion and perhaps begin to catechize some who otherwise might not hear the message."



Despite finishing the sprints with competitive times, Mr. Neal does not consider this challenge a proper race. He intends this year to be a reintroduction to his passion, a challenge to himself to see if he can return to more serious competition. "We call it reconnaissance," he explains. "We'll see how it goes, then make a decision for bigger involvement next year." □

Endowed by Barbara and Paul Henkels

NEW ENGLAND

Opening Lecture

Dr. Paul Shields

Tutor, Thomas Aquinas College
"On the Freedom of a Theologian"



September Lecture

Dr. Andrew Dinan

Ave Maria University
"The Aeneid as an Apology"

Fall All-College Seminar

"As You Like It," by William Shakespeare



October Lecture

Rev. Ronald Tacelli

Boston College
"Why Does God Hide? Pascalean Reflections"

November Lecture

Rev. Cajetan Cuddy, O.P.

Dominican House of Studies
"Why is the *Secunda pars* Second in the *Summa Theologiae*?"

Fall Concert

Floriani — Men's choral group

Traditional and original Gregorian chant



Campus Celebrates Silver Jubilee of Head Chaplain



Saturday, May 25 marked the 25th anniversary of the ordination of Rev. Greg Markey, head chaplain of Thomas Aquinas College, New England — and to celebrate his Silver Jubilee, many of Fr. Markey’s friends, family members, students, and former parishioners came to campus for a Mass of Thanksgiving and a festive luncheon.

Some 20 priests helped to serve at the morning Mass in Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel, while a choir of nearly 30 students, faculty, and alumni filled the building with heavenly music. Serving as homilist was Fr. Markey’s spiritual director, Rev. Robert Nortz of the Most Holy Trinity Monastery in Petersham, Massachusetts. Fr. Nortz reminded worshippers of the beauty and importance of the priesthood, urging them to pray for our priests’ service and for the sufferings they are called to endure.

In honor of the sacred occasion, Fr. Markey offered Mass using the paten and chalice that his parents gave him for an ordination gift 25 years ago. The chalice, first used by Pope Saint John Paul II, contains the diamond of his mother’s engagement ring at its base.

Immediately after the Mass, the luncheon followed on the Gould Lawn, accompanied by the music of a string quartet. Several speakers took turnings toasting Fr. Markey and reminiscing about his life and ministry. The chaplain “embraces the mission of Thomas Aquinas College,” said tutor Dr. Josef Froula, who introduced Fr. Markey to the College five years ago. “What an amazing privilege it is to be able to stand before all of you,” said Fr. Markey, addressing his guests, “and spend the whole afternoon with people that I am close with, people I have served, people I have loved, people I have wept with, people I have built churches with, people whose confessions I have heard, whose children I have baptized and married. It is a fantastic life.” □

Friends Experience TAC Life at Great Books Seminars

Members of the Thomas Aquinas College President’s Council and other friends got a taste of life at the college they so generously support, first at July’s Summer Great Books Seminar on the California campus, and then at October’s Fall Seminar in New England. Participants stayed in the residence halls, engaged in the classroom discussions, and enjoyed the same warm collegial atmosphere that shapes the life of the College’s students.

“We were delighted to welcome so many friends once more to the Seminars, where they could get a firsthand experience of Thomas Aquinas College, especially our program of Catholic liberal education,” explains Dr. John J. Goyette, vice president for advancement. “Just like our students, they attended seminars led by members of our teaching faculty, where they read the kinds of texts we study and participated in our classroom discussions.”

The theme of this year’s seminars was “Grace, Justification, and Merit,” for which attendees read and discussed St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, selections from Martin Luther’s *Commentary on Galatians*, and St. Thomas Aquinas’s writings on free will and merit. “Our guests

“Our guests found that their understanding and appreciation of these texts increased dramatically when they were able to discuss and analyze them together.”

found that their understanding and appreciation of these texts increased dramatically when they were able to discuss and analyze them together,” says Dr. Goyette. “They gained a whole new appreciation of how this academic program teaches the skills of critical analysis and intelligent conversation — all in the pursuit of truth.” □





Top: The interior of St. Albertus Magnus Hall, after student workers repaired cracks from last summer's earthquake. **Bottom:** Members of the student work crew: Ben Sturkie ('25), Owen Sweeney ('27), Josh Rosales ('27), and Evan Graham ('27)

Student Crew Repairs Earthquake Damage

After over 200 hours of damage repair following last fall's earthquake, St. Albertus Magnus Science Hall is finally looking more like itself again, thanks to the efforts of a small team of Thomas Aquinas College students.

Ever since the 5.1-magnitude quake struck the California campus last August, College officials have been working hard to restore the damaged buildings. Thanks to a \$1 million grant from the Fletcher Jones Foundation, staff and student work-study crews have been able to get a head start on some \$4 million worth of estimated repairs, doing their best to economize along the way.

"We are grateful to the Fletcher Jones Foundation and deeply appreciative of its generous grant," says Mark Kretschmer, vice president for operations. "We aim to be good stewards of these funds and to accomplish as many repairs with them as we can."

One of these crews is composed of students who have been tasked with repairing the many cracks in the drywall of campus buildings: Marie Carey ('24), Patrick Salinas ('25), Ben Sturkie ('25), Max Alvarez ('26), Gianna Langley ('26), Michael Rivera ('26), Carmen Bishop ('27), Joey Esser ('27), Evan Graham ('27), George Powell ('27), Josh Rosales ('27), and Owen Sweeney ('27). "There are some repairs that require hiring contractors, but training the students to do drywall is definitely a great way to steward our funds," says Operations Project Manager Thomas Becher.

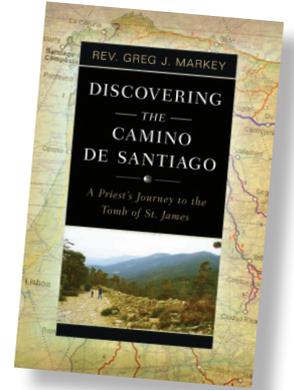
Working as a team, the crew finished repairing an entire hallway in one Saturday. It spent weeks starting work early in the mornings, sacrificing precious sleep to accelerate the process. Thanks to the students' efficiency and devotion to the project, they even managed to keep their material costs under \$1,000 by finding creative ways to reuse

pricey products. These fixes did not cheapen the overall effect, however, as St. Albert's looks better than ever. The crew sought to restore the science hall as closely as possible to its former glory, repainting entire walls and ceilings to ensure the patches blended seamlessly.

"This is a testament to the dedication of our students," says Mr. Kretschmer. "They are gaining a good work ethic and valuable skills, as well as helping us keep our costs down so we can continue to offer them an excellent education for an affordable price." □

New Book: Fr. Markey Reflects on the Camino

"If there is a powerful lesson on the Camino, it is that I am no longer in control; and just when I have no more strength and no more options, He catches me, reminding me He is ultimately in control," writes Rev. Greg Markey, head chaplain of Thomas Aquinas College, New England, in his newly republished book, *Discovering the Camino de Santiago: A Priest's Journey to the Tomb of St. James*.



When the Diocese of Bridgeport granted him a five-week sabbatical on the tenth anniversary of his priesthood in 2009, Fr. Markey decided to use some of that time to walk the Camino de Santiago. While on the ancient pilgrimage route that spans from France to the Santiago de Compostela in Spain, he kept a journal and periodically sent emails detailing his journey back to his parishioners at St. Mary Church in Norwalk, Connecticut. When he returned, he discovered his emails had spread far beyond his parish, and, two years later, what was once a series of personal reflections and emails became the first edition of *Discovering the Camino*.

"I think one of the reasons the Camino continues to draw people is because our life is a pilgrimage toward our Father's house."

The book chronicles Fr. Markey's journey along the Camino to the ancient tomb of St. James. He walked 496 miles in about a month, ending his pilgrimage at the tomb on July 25, St. James's feast day. Throughout the book, he describes his interactions along the trail. "I wore my collar the whole time, which was basically a sign around my neck saying, 'Come talk to me about God,'" he laughs. "I had a lot of conversations with people from all over the world about where they were in life and why they chose to do the Camino."

Fr. Markey sees the overall story of his book as a metaphor for life: "I think one of the reasons the Camino continues to draw people is because our life is a pilgrimage toward our Father's house. We're all going somewhere in our lives, and the pilgrimage is symbolic of that." □

Faith in Action

News from TAC's Alumni Blog

Dr. Michael Ferri ('00) Helps Bring Catholic Healthcare to Nashville

“**M**edicine should be aimed at seeking the truth.” This maxim is one of Dr. Michael Ferri's ('00) fundamental principles, both in his own psychiatry practice and in helping found Fiat Integrative Health.

A firm believer in an integrated approach to healing the human body, Dr. Ferri, a clinical psychiatrist in Tennessee, was excited when nurse practitioner Caroline Hartley, FNP, came to him in 2022 with a novel idea for a Catholic family medical practice, where providers could offer excellent healthcare in harmony with their faith. Within five weeks, Fiat Integrative Health opened its doors and, after a year, moved to a larger space to accommodate the clinic's rapid growth. The practice is composed primarily of Catholic providers from all areas of medicine, and the facility features an in-house chapel open to staff and patients.



“Fiat integrates family medicine, pediatrics, mental health, and other allied health professions, like physiotherapy and chiropractic care,”

“Fiat integrates family medicine, pediatrics, mental health, and other allied health professions, like physiotherapy and chiropractic care,” explains Dr. Ferri. “In starting Fiat, we wanted to give the providers a space where they can flourish together and have good personal and professional formation, but still be guided primarily by the truths of the Gospel. They are free to explore better treatment options that are more in line with what patients need and can sift through the evidence for treatments before prescribing them.”

In addition to his work with Fiat, Dr. Ferri works as the medical director of InSight Recovery and Wellness, a mental-health clinic based in Franklin, Tennessee. His main area of focus is addiction treatment, though his practice also offers counseling and care for various mental conditions and disorders. He enjoys working with his team to broaden the scope of their care while upholding the tenets of Catholic teaching. “It's been fun to develop protocols

and practices that we can all agree with and commit to,” he says. “There's a good, healthy demand for the kind of service, professionalism, and team approach that we embody.” □

The Very Rev. John Berg ('93) Elected to Third Term as FSSP Superior General

The Very Rev. John M. Berg, F.S.S.P. ('93), has once again stepped up to the challenge of becoming the superior general of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP).



The Fraternity's General Chapter first elected Fr. Berg to be its superior general in 2006, when he was just 36 years old — one of the youngest priests ever to hold the position.

Initially, he was surprised and reluctant. “All of our priests want to be in parishes or seminary formation, not doing administrative duties,” he said. “I was reassured by one of our founders, who told me my youth would be on my side. Still, I knew I would have to pray harder for wisdom and prudence.”

Six years later, the General Chapter elected him to a second six-year term, after which he stepped down as superior general in 2018. For the next three years, he served as pastor of St. Mary's Church in Providence, Rhode Island, followed by three years at Immaculate Conception Church in Omaha, Nebraska. On July 9, the General Chapter of the FSSP elected Fr. Berg a third time, naming him as Superior General for another six years.

A member of the Thomas Aquinas College Class of 1993, Fr. Berg entered the seminary for the Fraternity shortly after his graduation. He spent three years completing his theological studies at Santa Croce, the Opus Dei seminary in Rome, receiving a pontifical licentiate in theology. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1997 and served as the first chaplain for the Fraternity's church in Rome, San Gregorio dei Muratori. He has also worked as a professor at the International Seminary of Our

“I must also protect the three pillars of the Fraternity: the study of St. Thomas, the traditional Mass, and fidelity to the Holy See, the Seat of Peter.”

Lady of Guadalupe in Denton, Nebraska.

“My main duty,” says Fr. Berg of his responsibilities as superior general, “is to the priests and seminarians of the Fraternity. I am responsible that they have the means set out by our constitutions — and, therefore, the Church — to achieve holiness. I must also protect the three pillars of the Fraternity: the study of St. Thomas, the traditional Mass, and fidelity to the Holy See, the Seat of Peter.” □

Dr. Pia de Solenni ('93) Brings Moral Guidance to Catholic Investing

“A for-profit business hired a moral theologian to be ... a moral theologian,” remarks Dr. Pia de Solenni ('93), who earlier this year joined IWP Capital as its senior director of corporate engagement. She has advocated for the Catholic perspective to secular companies and even met with His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

In her new position, Dr. de Solenni aids IWP, a Catholic investment screening company, in engaging with other businesses to promote Catholic values. “The engagement part is so important,” says Dr. de Solenni. “Many times, companies will say, ‘We’ve never heard from people with values like yours and didn’t know you

“We don’t see ourselves as activists, but as stewards. We’re helping people manage their financial assets in accordance with their faith.”

care.’ If you don’t speak up for yourself, then you allow others to become your voice, so it’s important that Catholics, Christians, and all people of goodwill step up and voice their concerns.”

One highlight of Dr. de Solenni’s career with IWP Capital was her visit with Cardinal Turkson, author of *Mensuram Bonam*, which aims to help Catholic investors develop guidelines consistent with the Church’s teachings while still yielding financial return. Dr. de Solenni and the CEO of IWP Capital, Sam Saladino,



Dr. Pia de Solenni ('93), senior director of corporate engagement for IWP Capital, with IWP CEO Sam Saladino, his wife, Cara, and His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences

no, met with the Cardinal to discuss what their company was doing and why it worked.

“His Eminence was very pleased with our concrete methodology and the work we’re doing in corporate engagement,” Dr. de Solenni says. “We try to show companies that, after providing good and ethical products or services, their job is to return dividends to their shareholders to gift where they please rather than take that money to make big corporate gifts. Cardinal Turkson was especially supportive of our goals and offered to work with us in the future, so we’re very excited about that.”

An ethicist and theologian, Dr. de Solenni is an expert on issues of human life, women in the Church, and culture. After graduating from Thomas Aquinas College in 1993, she earned a Sacred Theology Doctorate, *summa cum laude*, from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. In 2001, Pope St. John Paul II awarded her the Prize of the Pontifical Academies for her dissertation analyzing feminist theories in the light of St. Thomas Aquinas’s teachings.

“We don’t see ourselves as activists, but as stewards,” says Dr. de Solenni on her work with IWP Capital. “We are helping people manage their financial assets in accordance with their faith, which is why institutions and individuals are drawn to what we do.” □

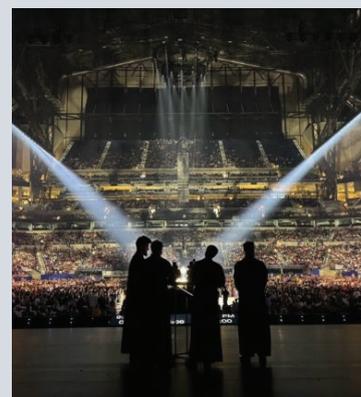
Alumni Choral Group Performs at National Eucharistic Congress

Floriani, the men’s choral group formed by four Thomas Aquinas College alumni, had the honor of singing before some 50,000 pilgrims during Adoration at July’s National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis.

As the Most Rev. William Byrne, Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, brought out the monstrance, TAC graduates

Thomas Quackenbush ('14), Giorgio Navarini ('17), Joseph Daly ('19), and Graham Crawley ('20) began the *Pange Lingua Gloriosi*, solemnly singing as the Blessed Sacrament came to rest on the altar. Throughout the hourlong Adoration, the four sang a mix of traditional and original sacred music, their voices filling the enormous arena and helping to lift attendees’ hearts to God.

Founded in 2017, Floriani began as a TAC student group. As undergraduates, its members sang both on and off campus for liturgies, workshops, and feast days. After graduating, they pursued other paths individually until 2021, when they re-formed and decided to perform professionally. Since then, Floriani has gone on to perform and record sacred music and conduct retreats for church choirs, all to introduce Catholics to the Church’s rich heritage of beautiful liturgical music. □



Floriani sings at the National Eucharistic Congress

ALUMNI PRIESTS

Rev. Nathaniel Roberts ('13)

For most new priests, the first week after ordination is one of much joy and celebration, with homecoming Masses and congratulatory parties. For Rev. Nathaniel Roberts ('13), the time was tinged with great sorrow.

Just days before his ordination, his grandmother passed away. And on the morning of his grandmother's funeral, his father suddenly died as well. Rather than getting to share this long sought-after moment with those he loved most, Fr. Roberts spent his first week as a priest offering their funeral Masses. Yet the tragedy was, for him, an important reminder of the need for surrender in his newly received vocation.

"Now, even in the most difficult of times," he says, "I know that this is what God wants me to do. This is where He has put me, and I will follow His lead."

Fr. Roberts was born and raised in Key West, Florida, where his mother's family has lived for seven generations. In high school, he took classes at the local community college and graduated with both a diploma and an associate's degree. His parents first heard about Thomas Aquinas College many years prior, when then-president Dr. Thomas E. Dillon appeared on EWTN's *Mother Angelica Live* program, and his elder brother, Merrill ('03), attended the College in 1999. Initially, Fr. Roberts planned to go to a local Florida university, but after attending the High School Summer Program in 2008, he set his sights on Thomas Aquinas College.

"Now, even in the most difficult of times, I know that this is what God wants me to do. This is where He has put me, and I will follow His lead."



While attending the College, Fr. Roberts gave some thought to the priesthood, but assumed he would ultimately graduate, get a job, and get married. "There were a few grace-filled moments while I was a student, where I thought, 'Maybe this is what God is calling me to,' where I would briefly recognize His call. But, for a long time, those thoughts fell by the wayside in favor of the plan I had for my life." After graduation, he started doing commercial construction in Washington, D.C., and saving



money to buy a house.

God, however, had other plans for Fr. Roberts. In 2017, he traveled to Kalamazoo, Michigan, for the ordination of Rev. Jeff Hanley ('13), a classmate who now serves as a canon lawyer and bishop's aide in the Diocese. There, Fr. Roberts met many of Fr. Hanley's priestly and seminarian friends. "I think every single one of them asked me if I had ever thought about seminary," he recalls. "They all saw that I was living my own life and not asking God where He wanted me to be. After that weekend, I realized that I needed to discern more seriously."

Following a year of discernment, Fr. Roberts entered Saint John Paul II Seminary in Washington, D.C. He spent six years studying theology and growing in spiritual formation. "Seminary really helped me to foster the ability to discern God's will in my life. Once I confirmed that He was calling me to the priesthood, seminary became more about how I could conform my life to Christ to become the best priest for myself and — more importantly — for those I minister to."

On June 15, 2024, His Eminence Wilton Cardinal Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, D.C., ordained Fr. Roberts. The new priest shared the day with 15 fellow ordinands as part of the largest ordination class for the Diocese in 64 years. "It was such a grace to be part of a group of so many other men who all realized that God was calling them to the priesthood at similar times and said yes to Him." This year, Fr. Roberts will complete his sacred theology license at The Catholic University of America while assisting at St. Peter's Church in Washington, D.C.

His first week as a priest, spent ministering to members of his own family who mourned the loss of their loved ones, has proved invaluable to the work that has followed. "I have been able to help my family through their grief," he says. "That has been one of the greatest graces of my priesthood so far." □

Rev. Moses Pavel (Luke '14) Blain, O.Praem.

When Rev. Moses Pavel (Luke '14) Blain, O.Praem., first came to Thomas Aquinas College, he was disengaged from his faith and disinclined to rekindle it. But his two older brothers, Blaise ('10) and Nate ('13), had come to the College before him and, after seeing how much they loved the academic program, he decided to attend as well.

"My prayer life truly began once I entered college," Fr. Moses says. As a student, he discovered a love for the Great Books and a life of study, as well as an uplifting community that helped set him on the right track. "The witness of my friends' lives of Christian charity and the contemplative nature of being a student at the College helped me to re-engage in the life of thought and prayer. I wanted to go deeper, to dedicate myself in a more committed way to that kind of life."

After he graduated in 2014, Luke worked for a year at an engineering firm, looking to earn a graduate degree in a STEM field. Yet he still felt called to commit himself to the contemplative life. "I found myself seeking a house of prayer," he says. He was most familiar with the Norbertine Order, thanks to the influence of Rev. Hildebrand Garceau, O.Praem. ('78), who was a chaplain during Luke's time at the College. He visited St. Michael's Abbey in Silverado, California, and knew God was calling him to enter.

Taking the religious name Frater Moses, he spent the next seven years in formation with the Norbertines, learning how to live the monastic life, teaching high school students, and study-

"The witness of my friends' lives of Christian charity and the contemplative nature of being a student at the College helped me to re-engage in the life of thought and prayer. I wanted to go deeper, to dedicate myself in a more committed way to that kind of life."

ing theology and philosophy. Last year, he made his solemn profession, taking the final vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty. "It was one of the greatest, most beautiful moments of my life," he says.

On June 29, 2024, the Most Rev. Kevin Vann, Bishop of Orange, California, laid his hands on Frater Moses, ordaining him a priest. "To whoever I send you, you shall go, whoever I command you, you shall speak. "'You will have no fear before them, because I am here to deliver you,' says the Lord," remarked His Excellency, reminding the ordinands of the words of the Litany



"As a priest, it's a kind of profound and overwhelming gift that I can participate in the mediation of hope and grace to the faithful Christian."

of Sts. Peter and Paul: "In your lives and ministries as you go forth from here, have no fear and know that to whoever you are sent to, you will go, and to always be courageous."

By God's grace, Frater Moses is now Father Moses, a humble minister of God's sacraments. While his ordination has left an indelible mark on his soul, "My identity, my person, my humanity, will not be transformed," he reflects in an essay on the Norbertines' website. "I will still be a weak man tempted to sin, frequent to fall, ready with many unchristian words and deeds, trapped in the world of my own egotism. ... The Christians who daily struggle and reach out to their Savior, God's beloved children who seek Him in the sacraments, these are the ones who gain by the ordination of a new priest."

Nonetheless, Fr. Moses is awed by his duties as an *alter Christus*. "As a priest, it's a kind of profound and overwhelming gift that I can participate in the mediation of hope and grace to the faithful Christian," he writes. "That really is the kind of gift that Christ has given to the Church in the priesthood, to strengthen us in the battle that we all fight daily."

Since his ordination, "I have come to love the priesthood," he says. "For me, my vocation was more about entering the religious life and consecrating myself to prayer. But I have had a gradual sense of awareness of the beauty of the priesthood and what it means to act as Christ in a sacramental order."

For the next year, Fr. Moses will teach Greek and fundamental theology to seminarians and philosophy to high school juniors. He will also perform administrative work at the Abbey and offer Mass at nearby schools. "I will be very busy this year," he laughs, "but I am looking forward to it!" □

“It’s Time to Stand Up and Be Counted”

An Interview with the Most Rev. Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.

Archbishop for the Military Services, U.S.A.

President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Thank you for presiding over the California Convocation in August, which marked your first visit to Thomas Aquinas College. What were your impressions of the College and its students?

I was very impressed by the beauty of the campus, the splendor of the liturgy, and the interaction between the tutors and students. Their commitment to Catholic liberal education, and their commitment to Catholic values, was outstanding. It is very encouraging for the future of the Church in the United States.



In your homily, you encouraged students to “invite others into our experience of the Lord.” Can you please speak more about the role of young people, and TAC students and alumni in particular, to evangelize the world today?

All studies indicate that young people are best evangelized by their peers. They need to be invited, and the best people to invite them are their peers. So, I think it’s important that, as students go out from a place like Thomas Aquinas College, not only that they are convinced in their faith, but also that they are willing to share their faith by the witness of their lives. That’s always been the most effective way to bring the Gospel to others — to live it out, day in and day out — which becomes extraordinary by the grace of Almighty God.

It’s also important to invite people to come and meet Jesus Christ and to come experience His love inside the Church. Graduates surely leave this college well-prepared, so I think that,

for them, using their gifts and talents professionally in the secular world is an opportunity to invite others to meet Jesus Christ. That has always been the most effective way to teach the Gospel: to live it.

That calls to mind Team Saint Paul, a mission dedicated to engaging young adult members of the U.S. Armed Forces, which you created in 2021. One of the Team’s newest members is one of the College’s newest graduates, Peter Bockrath ('24). Can you talk

about Peter and the work that he and his fellow missionaries will do?

Team Saint Paul is an initiative by the Archdiocese for Military Services that allows people who are about the same age as our men and women in uniform to talk to them, to interact with them about the Faith in a very tranquil and non-pressurized way, and to make the Gospel come alive for them. I am pleased that we now have five missionaries, and among those five are the first two men, including Peter.

I am very excited about this initiative because it’s something that’s desperately needed, and it’s important because you often don’t see young people in our chapel communities. So, this is an attempt to invite them into the practice of the Faith, and, of course, that’s consistent with the mandate Jesus Christ gave us, which is to go out and preach the Gospel and baptize all nations. This is, for me, a very concrete way of doing that.

“Their commitment to Catholic liberal education, and their commitment to Catholic values, was outstanding.”

You were installed as the Archbishop for the Military Services, U.S.A., on the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul. Do you have a special devotion to him? Is that part of the reason behind the name, “Team Saint Paul”?

I have a special devotion, first of all, because that’s my middle name and, secondly, I have always been attracted to this great evangelizer. In college, I read all his letters in Greek, and that only increased my devotion and admiration for him and his ability to travel all over the known world at a time when travel was not particularly easy or feasible. He did all of this to bring the Gospel to many communities, making him one of the first evangelizers, opening the message of Christianity to the Gentiles. I was happy I was able to choose the Conversion of St. Paul for the date of my installation; the timing worked out well. And if there is a figure who represents evangelization *par excellence*, it is Paul of Tarsus. So, choosing his name for Team Saint Paul was natural.

Speaking of “Pauls,” another TAC alumnus who works with you is Paul Collins (’14). By God’s grace, Paul will be ordained to the priesthood next year for both the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the Archdiocese for the Military Services. What has your experience with him been like, and how do you think the College helped prepare him for his vocation?

I got to know Paul before I knew he studied at Thomas Aquinas College, but I think that, certainly, the groundwork that was laid with the education he received there made his transition to seminary life much easier. TAC prepares its students well to study philosophy at the seminary level. There’s a real depth to Paul. I am excited that he is going to be ordained and, after a few years, come into the Navy to serve as a chaplain. We certainly need his ministry.

What is your advice for servicemen and women when military policies regarding matters such as homosexuality, marriage, transgenderism, and vaccines — to name just a few — are in tension with Catholic teaching?

Well, one principle, of course, is that no one can force you to violate your conscience. When push comes to shove, the military respects that, but people can be put into morally fraught situations. Suppose you are a commander, and someone comes to you at an installation in a state where abortion is very difficult to obtain. You would be the one required to permit this person the necessary liberty to go and obtain an abortion out of state, or even to fund the transportation. Obviously a Catholic can’t do this. My advice to commanders is always just to push such questions to the next level,

let someone else make that decision, but that’s not always possible. Thankfully, we haven’t had any case of someone being court-martialed or something like that, but sometimes people have to choose between their career and their moral compass.

Such controversies often stretch into civilian life as well, and you must deal with them often in your role as president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In the past, you spoke out against the HHS Contraceptive Mandate and, more recently, the EEOC’s attempt to compel employers to accommodate abortion. What is your advice to civilians trying to live as Catholics and function in the face of such mandates?

I would always encourage Catholics to take the moral high ground and to resist as much as possible these governmental encroachments on religious liberty. If you noticed, there is a tendency to reduce religious liberty to only freedom of worship. Well, that’s not what’s in the Constitution! The First Amendment speaks very clearly about the free exercise of religion. That means much more than going to church on Sunday, or Saturday, or Friday, or whatever day is holy for your religion. It is the ability to embrace a lifestyle and a series of beliefs, and for Catholics, these are contained in the person of Jesus Christ.

It’s time to stand up and be counted. I applaud the College for its opposition to the HHS Mandate, and I know that it’s never easy. The pressure is very great, and I can imagine the pressure in a place like California would be even greater than in other parts of the country.

As we survey the current global situation, there are two places where our country’s servicemen and women could find themselves called in the near future. What is your perspective on the situations in Ukraine and Israel?



With regard to Ukraine, the whole political situation in that part of the world is really at a sword’s point, and I think that the United States has a tremendous responsibility to ensure the freedom of the Ukrainians and their neighbors, because who knows when this kind of

aggression will stop? Unfortunately, anything beyond Ukraine would directly involve the United States, because we have a fair number of troops in Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania, and they would suddenly be on the front lines if Ukraine were to fall. So that is a very grave concern.

As for Israel and the Middle East, we have a tremendous presence in the Gulf at all times, and now it's been increased, and the news is ever darker from that whole front. I fear the possibility of an escalation of the conflict that could draw us into a world war. It's very important that we try and, if we can, broker peace. Both situations demand much prayer.

“There’s no question he was on that battlefield because he felt it was where Jesus Christ wanted him to be.”

During a visit to Ukraine last year, you remarked that “When I became the Archbishop for Military Services in 2008, I realized that my mission was to serve the men and women affected by war.” In what ways do you minister directly to the men and women of our Armed Forces?

I spend a good bit of my year making pastoral visits to military installations, spending time with our men and women in uniform, with their families, and with patients at VA hospitals. I also administer a fair number of confirmations and other sacraments. Of course, there’s also the responsibility to give clear guidance as the first teacher of the Archdiocese, and that’s important. *Lumen gentium*, one of the principal documents of the Second Vatican Council, says that the diocesan bishop is the Vicar of Christ for his people. That’s a very heady role, and it’s one that I think we have to take very seriously.

One of our country’s best known and most celebrated military chaplains was Servant of God Vincent Capodanno, who was killed in Vietnam in 1967 while administering medical and spiritual attention to two U.S. Marines. Two years ago, consultants to the Vatican body tasked with considering his beatification urged the suspension of Fr. Capodanno’s cause. You have been a strong champion of that cause — what is its status now?

We obtained permission to respond to those objections, and that response is at the dicastery as I speak. We had three lay historians do additional research and respond to the four objections, and I think they did a very good job of presenting the reality of Fr. Capodanno’s life. It’s now up to a new commission of theologians who examine their objections as well as our response. We hope they recommend continuing the process, so it can go to the bishops and cardinals of the dicastery for their vote.

Fr. Capodanno gave his life to minister to his Marines. There’s no question he was on that battlefield because he felt it was where Jesus Christ wanted him to be; he was spending himself to ensure that these men would not die without the sacraments and without his prayerful encouragement. Many of the witnesses who attest to his life are not Catholic, but they were deeply impressed by this young father who gave his all for his Marines, as well as his dedication to duty and to preaching the Gospel.

Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would care to add?

I would like to thank the founders and those who continue the good work at Thomas Aquinas College for the educational experience that they offer. I was very impressed by my time on campus, and I hope that many people take advantage of what’s offered there. □



The Businessman

Retired Since 2021, Co-Founder
Peter DeLuca Has Found a New Way
to Further the Mission of TAC

Peter DeLuca was just 28 years old when, at the request of the College's founding president, Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, he left a promising job with the Intercollegiate Studies Institute and became Thomas Aquinas College's first employee in 1969, two years before its opening. It was a leap of faith.

"My wife and I had two small children at the time," he explains, and the College — which then had no campus, no accreditation, no students, and no funding — did not offer much promise for financial stability, let alone career advancement. "But the main thing was, we believed in the mission and the leaders, and we needed to do it."

And the College needed him. Mr. DeLuca's fellow founders were brilliant, idealistic, and accomplished educators with a deep love for the Catholic intellectual tradition and a burning zeal to preserve it. They had a clear vision for the academic program and

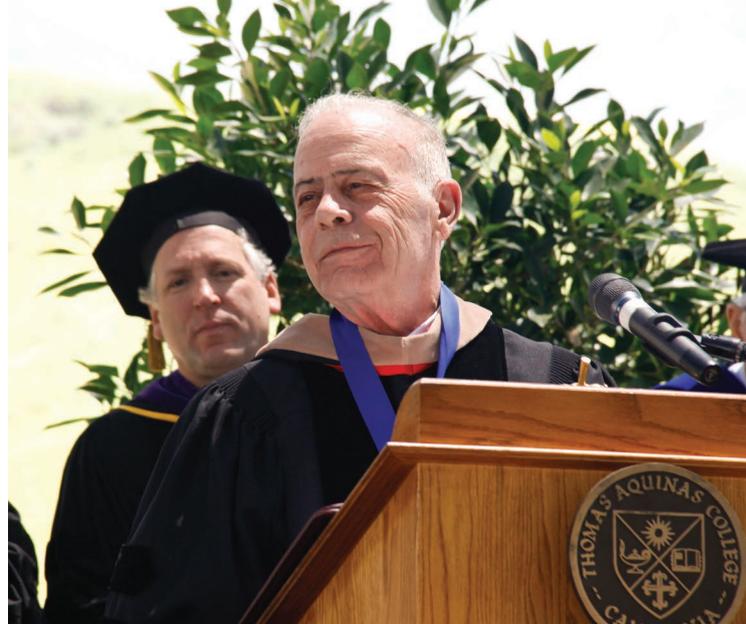
"We are essentially duplicating the existing college so that we can double the number of students who are educated in our program. ... We must depend, as always, on God's providence, and people who believe in the College's mission will need to step up."

pedagogy that would, in time, make Thomas Aquinas College the national model for Catholic higher education. None, however, had the experience needed to manage the day-to-day operations of a functioning business.

Many of the administrative tasks, from setting up an office, to negotiating leases, to aiding Dr. McArthur in assembling a capa-



Kay and Peter DeLuca at the College's 50th Anniversary Gala in 2021



Peter DeLuca receives the College's highest honor, the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion, in 2012.

ble staff and incorporating this educational start-up as a nonprofit corporation, fell largely to the young Mr. DeLuca. He did much to help guide the College through its turbulent, early days, when just meeting payroll was a daunting challenge. With the assistance of early trustee Francis J. Montgomery, he found the site of the College's initial campus in Malibu Canyon, and he worked with the faculty to facilitate the College's relocation to Santa Paula in 1978.

In the ensuing four decades, he would hold titles as disparate as tutor, director of development, vice president for finance and operations, treasurer, and president. He would also oversee the construction of many of the new buildings on the California campus, from St. Joseph Commons in 1979 to the St. Cecilia Lecture and Concert Hall in 2018, and he contributed to the acquisition of the New England campus, which opened its doors in 2019.

As Dr. McArthur put it, "This college simply wouldn't exist if it weren't for Peter DeLuca."

After a half-century of service to Thomas Aquinas College, doubtlessly forfeiting more lucrative opportunities along the way, Mr. DeLuca stepped down from his administrative responsibilities in 2021 and from teaching the following year. Yet even now, in his retirement, he remains as committed as ever to the audacious project he helped to launch more than 50 years ago — and he is as savvy as ever in how he supports it.

A Better Way to Give

"I'm not sure when we made our first donation," Mr. DeLuca laughs. "In those first few years, I was not in a position to make a lot of financial donations, especially since the College was shaky enough that I had to realize that I might have to support my family in some other way for a while." Within the next decade, though, he and his wife, Kay, would become regular benefactors and, sometime in the 1980s, began giving at the President's Council level.

Having surpassed the age of 73 — a number that turns out to be rather significant, as far as the federal government is concerned — Mr. DeLuca has recently adopted a method of giving that has



Mr. DeLuca with the College's founding president, Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, at the 2009 Dedication of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel

proven far superior, both in terms of his personal tax situation and his estate planning. “When you’re retired, if you have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), you can make a gift in a way that’s unusually tax advantaged.”

The technical term, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), describes the simple process of making a gift to a charitable organization, such as Thomas Aquinas College, directly from one’s IRA. Starting at the age of 70½, retirees can use QCDs to support their preferred charities while avoiding the tax that otherwise accompanies an account withdrawal, or distribution. The government mandates annual distributions starting at the age of 73, regardless of whether the retiree needs the funds, making the tax relief of a QCD all the more desirable.

“If we simply took the mandatory distribution, then sent a check to the College, we would have to include the distribution in our income, and then itemize to receive any deduction,” says Mr. DeLuca. “Instead, by using a QCD, the distribution is not included in our taxable in-

“When you’re retired, if you have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), you can make a gift in a way that’s unusually tax advantaged.”

come and goes directly to the College. In effect, it’s like a 100 percent charitable tax deduction without the need to itemize.”

Moreover, because a QCD does not qualify as personal income, it will not bump the donor into a higher tax bracket. “You can contribute as much as \$105,000 in a single year and still be eligible to use the standard tax deduction,” says Mr. DeLuca. “That greatly simplifies tax preparation and saves money, too.”

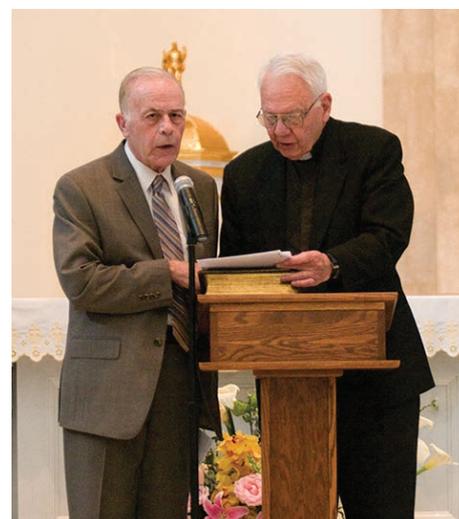
It’s also advantageous for the DeLucas’ heirs, including their six children. “If we leave any money in our IRA after we die, our heirs

will have to withdraw all the funds — and pay income taxes on them — within 10 years. That would likely force them into a higher tax bracket,” Mr. DeLuca explains. “So, it makes sense for us to spend down our IRA now through QCDs, and leave our other assets to our family, since those will pass untaxed. By the same token, we could donate what remains of our IRA to the College as an estate gift. That way nobody would have to pay the tax, and we could leave the savings to our heirs.”

For Mr. DeLuca, taking advantage of the tax savings afforded by QCDs is in keeping with what he has done throughout his entire adult life: putting the gifts that God has given him, in the best way possible, toward “preserving the intellectual life that has sustained Western civilization since the time of the Greeks, all the way up until the Middle Ages, with St. Thomas and Aristotle.”

He sees Thomas Aquinas College’s current situation, establishing a second campus on the East Coast, as analogous to the early years, when he and his fellow founders were just getting the College off the ground. “We are essentially duplicating the existing college so that we can double the number of students who are educated in our program,” he says. “Anyone who’s familiar with the quality of people who are coming out of the College every year can see the benefit to both the Church and the country of having that. But it is a highly expensive undertaking that will strain our resources. We must depend, as always, on God’s providence, and people who believe in the College’s mission will need to step up” — just as the DeLucas have stepped up for more than 50 years.

“We are so appreciative of the DeLucas, who, through their use of QCDs, are making truly meaningful gifts to the College and showing us all the way, yet again,” says Paul Blewett, the College’s director of gift planning. “Everyone’s tax situation varies, and those interested in using QCDs to support the College should check first with their financial adviser and IRA



Head Chaplain Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley administers the presidential Oath of Office to Mr. DeLuca in 2009.

custodian. But for many of us, QCDs are an ideal way to support Thomas Aquinas College. And who knows more about supporting the College than Peter DeLuca?” □

For more information about QCDs or supporting Thomas Aquinas College through your estate planning, please contact Mr. Paul Blewett, director of gift planning, at 805-421-5924 or pblewett@thomasaquinas.edu.

Esther Pickard Wachtell

1934 – 2024

A member of the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors, as well as a neighbor, friend, and generous benefactor, Esther Pickard Wachtell passed away on Saturday, June 1, having received the last rites and surrounded by her beloved family.

Born on June 30, 1934, in New York to Rhoda and Victor Pickard, Mrs. Wachtell graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Connecticut College and earned a master's degree from Cornell University. There, she met the love of her life, Tom Wachtell, on a blind date. Because she thought he would not do so himself, she took the initiative and asked him out for their second date. Eventually the couple married and, in 1963, moved to Los Angeles to create their personal "Shangri-LA" — filled with family, friends, and a long line of German shepherds.

Mrs. Wachtell had a lifelong love of the arts and the community. From her earliest days, she began to channel this love into public service and philanthropy.

The founder and retired president of The Wachtell Group, a fundraising company that specializes in large-scale philanthropic efforts, she previously served as president of the Music Center of Los Angeles and led the development campaign for the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles — raising \$1 billion, the largest amount ever raised for a children's hospital in the United States. A 25-year resident of Ojai, California, she also raised funds to rebuild the city's famed amphitheater, the Libbey Bowl, as well as to restore the Museum of Ventura County.

"She was a reliable and invaluable presence at our Board meetings, where she always provided sharp insights, strong opinions, and unfailing charity to those around her."

As neighbors of the California campus, Mr. and Mrs. Wachtell were longtime admirers of Thomas Aquinas College and began supporting it financially in 2005 as members of the President's Council. She joined the Board of Governors in 2014, where she shared her tremendous experience in fundraising as a member of the Development Committee.

Yet the College's Board was only one of many to which Mrs. Wachtell lent her expertise. She additionally served on the boards of the Cal State Channel Islands Foundation, the Museum of Ventura County, the Ojai Music Festival, Ojai Community Bank, USC Center for Philanthropy and Public Policy, Children's Hospital



Los Angeles, and the Music Center. Among other notable accomplishments, she was a commissioner for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

"She was tireless, and her willingness to serve knew no bounds," observes Thomas Aquinas College President Paul J. O'Reilly. "She was a reliable and invaluable presence at our Board meetings, where she always provided sharp insights, strong opinions, and unfailing charity to those around her."

In her published obituary, her family noted that, "beyond her professional accomplishments, Esther was known for the warmth, generosity, and the personal connections she forged with so many friends and colleagues. She was a mentor to many, always willing to share her knowledge and support for the next generation of leaders." She was also a tennis player, a swimmer, and an avid traveler, for whom "there was no trip without a reading list, no destination without a museum, and no corner of the world where she could not find art and beauty."

Above all, Mrs. Wachtell was driven by her Catholic faith and great love for her family, especially Mr. Wachtell, who, after 65 years of marriage, predeceased her in 2021, and their 3 children, 12 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren, one of whom was born just five days after her death.

For all these blessings, she had an abiding sense of gratitude, which she expressed each fall when as many as 80 guests — relatives, friends, and others — would gather at her home for her famous Thanksgiving celebrations. The feasts always began with prayer and never ended without the singing of patriotic songs.

Many of Mrs. Wachtell's many loved ones gathered once more on the College's California campus on June 29 for a requiem Mass in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Alumnus priest Rev. John Paul Erickson ('02) offered the Mass, while Dan Grimm ('76) directed the College Choir.

"It was a beautiful day and a fitting way to pray for and remember one who loved and was loved by so many," says Dr. O'Reilly. "All of us who knew Esther are grateful to have been part of her beautiful life. We miss her already. Please join us in praying for her, Tom, and all those who mourn them." □

IN MEMORIAM

Michael Elwood Sorrell

February 7, 2023
St. Thérèse of Lisieux
Legacy Society member

Eugene Horan

June 6, 2024
President's Council and
Legacy Society member

Alan Emil Roberts

June 21, 2024
Father of Merrill ('03) and
Rev. Nathaniel ('13)

Paul Michael Massell

July 15, 2024
Father of Mary (Farrington '15)
and Sarah ('16)

John William Kozak

August 24, 2024
Incoming freshman

Nettie Washington

September 2, 2024
Mother of Lannette and mother-in-law
of Chairman of the Board of Governors
Scott Turicchi, members of the Order of St.
Albert; grandmother of Kristina ('23)



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

Elizabeth "Betty" Zepeda

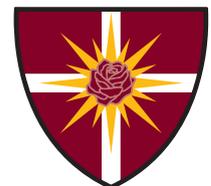
September 5, 2024

Mother of College Governor Andrew ('79), Peggy (Caldwell '80), Aggie (Laubacher '82),
Luke ('84), Tom ('85), Matt ('85), Mark ('86), Mary Kate ('89), Nick ('90);
grandmother of Lucy (Chirdon '03), Joe ('04), Henry ('06), Eddie ('08), Steve ('09),
Ramona (Cross '11), Michael ('11), Martin ('13), Leon ('14), Charlie Laubacher ('17),
Elena (Schmitt '18), Sylvia (Sanchez '20), Renata (DeBates '21), Joe Caldwell ('22),
Luke ('25), and Nicholas ('28); great-grandmother of David Zepeda ('28)

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



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



**The St. Thérèse of Lisieux
Legacy Society**

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

More events: thomasaquinas.edu/events

 Advent Lessons and Carols.....December 6

 Advent Lessons and Carols.....December 8

 Lecture: Stephen ShivoneJanuary 17
Assistant Dean, TAC, New England

 Concert: Peter BlanchetteJanuary 17
Classical Guitarist

 St. Thomas Day Lecture: Rev. Sebastian
Walshe, O.Praem. ('84)January 28
Professor of Philosophy, St. Michael's Abbey

 St. Thomas Day Lecture:
Rev. Romanus Cessario, O.P.....January 28
Adam Cardinal Maida Professor of Theology,
Ave Maria University

 President's Day Lecture:
Paul ClementFebruary 21
43rd U.S. Solicitor General

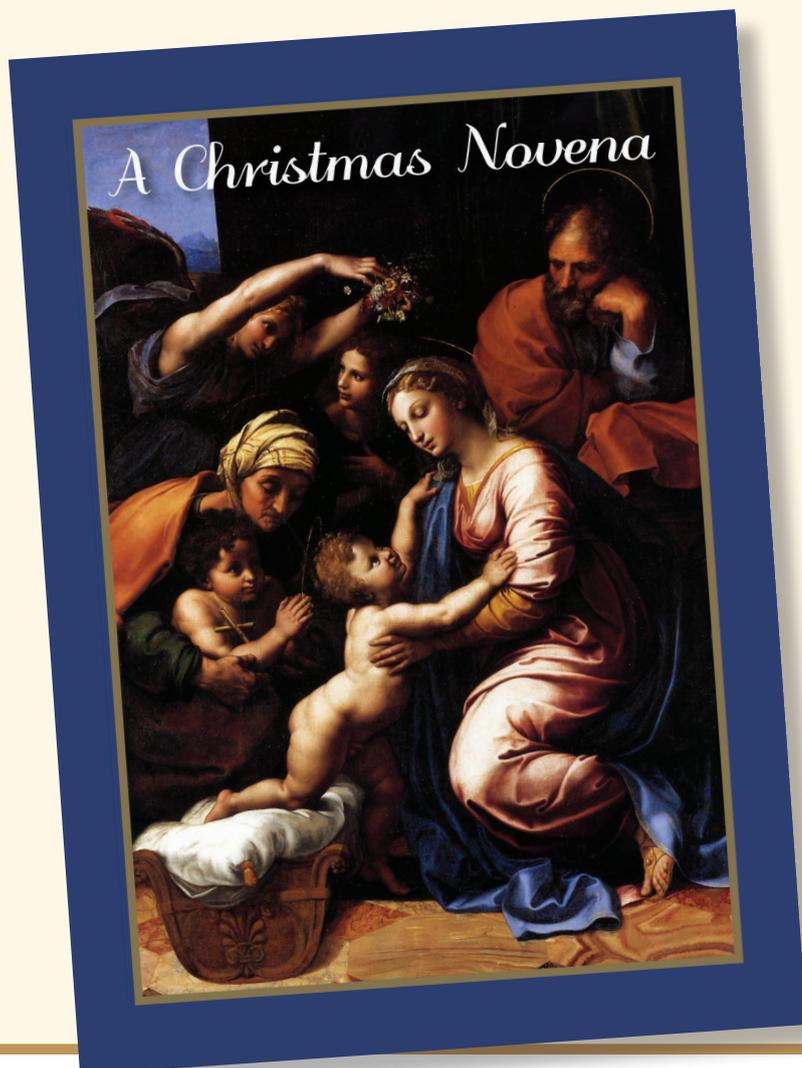
 President's Day Lecture:
Dr. Daniel MahoneyFebruary 21
Professor of Political Science, Assumption University

 Spring Open House Weekend for High School
Juniors and Seniors February 27

 Lecture: Dr. Zena Hitz..... March 14
Tutor, St. John's College, Annapolis

 Lecture: Dr. Stephen BarrMarch 28
Professor Emeritus, University of Delaware

Campus Mass schedules: thomasaquinas.edu/masstimes



The Perfect Gift ... A CHRISTMAS NOVENA OF MASSES

Beginning on December 16, the chaplains of Thomas Aquinas College will offer a novena of Masses in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Each person enrolled in the Novena will receive a beautiful, personalized card from the College.

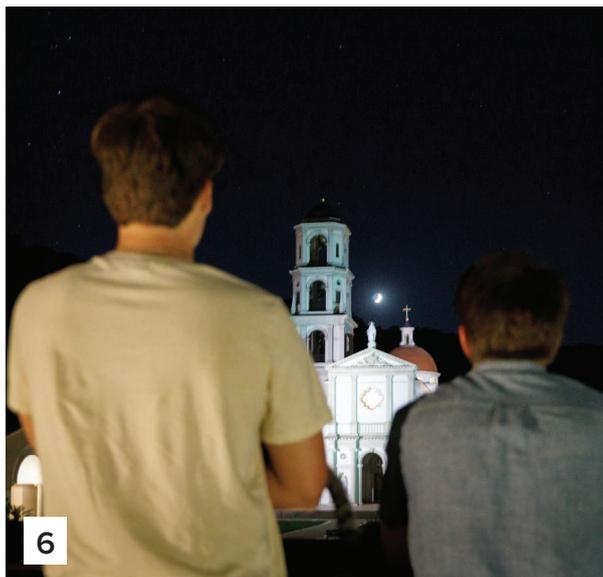
(Cost: \$5 per card, includes shipping and handling. All names must be received by December 15.)

thomasaquinas.edu/novena

STUDENT LIFE



1. Freshmen make new friends during Orientation. **2.** Dancers grab partners for a line dance during the “Welcome to America”-themed Junior-Freshman Dance. **3.** Students race down the giant slip-and-slide ... **4.** ... then go to the ponds to wash off the mud from their class tug-of-war battle ... **5.** ... and enjoy each other’s company at the All-College Barbeque. **6.** Sophomores observe the moon rising over Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. **7.** A group of students, accompanied by Chaplain Rev. John Mary Chung, experience a taste of Korean culture at the annual LA Korean Festival.





1. An all-out mud fight follows the annual class tug-of-war. **2.** Seniors welcome the freshmen with an outdoor luau, complete with tropical leis and flowers. **3.** Sophomores study the movements of the night sky for their Star Project. **4.** Prefects welcome the incoming freshmen with ice-cream sundaes. **5.** Freshmen prepare to brave the Connecticut River during the Junior-Freshman River day. **6.** Students show off matching outfits before the All-College Seminar. **7.** Freshmen mingle amid hay bales and live ducks at the sophomores' County Fair dance.





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