



Parents' Association Newsletter

THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

Fall 2014

An Open Letter to Our Parents Saying Thanks for Your Tremendous Sacrifice

By April and Michael Shonnard ('16)

Dear Mom and Dad,

Back when we chose to attend Thomas Aquinas College, you not only encouraged us to seek a faithfully Catholic higher education, you also made a heroic decision that made this education possible for us. You took on the sacrifice of moving the family away from our home — and your medical practices — in Nevada, so you could live by us here in California. That way, we could stay close to our newly adopted siblings, who were then just 7 and 5 years old.

This generous decision allowed us to remain an active part of Samuel and Katharine's lives, helping them to maintain a close bond with their adopted family. It was also a gift to us, allowing us to continue experiencing the blessings of family life. We know you, too, have been blessed by being a part of the wider Thomas Aquinas College community, filled with supportive and faithful Catholic families.

Yet there is another way your generous decision has borne good fruit: it has helped us to experience profound spiritual and intellectual growth. As students at Thomas Aquinas College, we have had the opportunity to read and ponder the greatest works of the Western world. We have set out on the natural path to truth with Aristotle, learned to place our salvation in God's hands with St. Augustine, and begun the orderly study of the deposit of Faith with St. Thomas Aquinas. We have learned that the ultimate end of the intellectual life is the contemplation of God, Who is Truth.

The strong spiritual life of the College has aided us in our journeys toward God. We have had opportunities for daily Mass, confession, and adoration. We have seen numerous examples of God-fearing men and women in our peers and chaplains. The chaplains, in particular, have dedicated themselves to us students by praying for us and by offering spiritual direction.

The vibrant community life at the College — the result of

students' living, learning, praying, and recreating together daily — has helped us to form friendships that we believe will last a lifetime. We have been able to deepen these friendships by participating in various student-led activities and opportunities for community service. These friendships have helped us to live out Christ's command, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34).



Our time at the College has also prepared us for future careers and family life. We have been blessed to witness the goodness of marriage and parenting not only through your example, but also in the beautiful families within the TAC community. For me (April), this experience has helped me to see more fully Christ's deep love for man and, from this, to offer myself completely for the service of others, hopefully as a mother and an active member of society. For me (Michael), being grounded in the philosophical foundations that this education provides has fortified me in my plans to follow in your footsteps and study medicine.

Mom and Dad, you have sacrificed so that we could attend Thomas Aquinas College: You have endured the expense of moving our family to another state. You have undergone the trials of separation every time Dad must return to Nevada to work. You have even suffered criticism from family and friends for keeping the family together during our college years.

We know that this has been a huge sacrifice, but it is one that will bless us throughout our lives. For this we are truly grateful.

Love,
April and Michael

Focus on Medicine

Dear Fellow Parents,

When I travel the country and talk about Thomas Aquinas College, many are surprised to learn that medicine is the third most-popular career field among our graduates (after education and business). They assume that, at the College, “liberal arts” has the same meaning that it has at most modern colleges and universities — an undirected study in the humanities, usually with little or no math or science. They cannot imagine that our graduates have an aptitude for the “hard sciences” that modern medicine requires.

Of course, as you know, our students take four years of Natural Science and Mathematics, reading the works of history’s greatest mathematical and scientific minds, such as Euclid, Galileo, Newton, and Einstein. Through their studies of philosophy and theology, they also achieve a fuller understanding of man and his Creator. Moreover, they do so in a classroom setting that fosters critical thinking, active listening, and clear communication — skills that are essential in the practice of medicine. It only stands to reason, then, that many of our graduates, motivated by a Christian yearning to care for the sick, go on to become doctors, nurses, psychologists, and medical researchers.

This issue of the *Parents’ Association Newsletter* takes a closer look at the relationship between the College and the healthcare profession. We start with an open letter on the cover, in which April and Michael Shonnard (’16) thank their parents — both physicians — for the extraordinary sacrifice it took to bring these twins to the College. Then, inside, we look both at some recent on-campus events for premed students and at the long list of alumni who work in the medical profession. We also hear from Cara Buskmiller (’11), a recent graduate who is now in her fourth year of medical school. Finally, on the back cover is the amazing story of Dr. Kevin White and his wife, Valerie, whose experience as TAC parents helped bring them into the Catholic Church.

God is doing great work through the College and its alumni in the healthcare profession, healing the afflicted and bringing souls ever closer to Him. We thank Him for our alumni doctors and nurses, and ask that you pray for them and those they serve.



God bless you and your children,

Robert Bagdazian
Father of Daniel (’13) and Gabriel (’14)
Coordinator, Thomas Aquinas College Parents’ Association

E-Mail Resources for TAC Parents!

- Get “Letter Home,” the Parents’ Association Electronic Newsletter
- Join the TAC Parents’ Discussion Group

To sign up, just send an e-mail to rbagdazian@thomasaquinas.edu.

Would You Like to be a Career Contact for TAC Students?

Please fill out our simple survey:
thomasaquinas.edu/parent-career-survey

amazon.com

Support the College while you shop online!

thomasaquinas.edu/amazon

Education for the Whole Person

College Hosts Panels for Students Interested in Medical Careers

As part of its ongoing program of exposing students to the myriad ways that they can put their liberal education to use in the marketplace, the Office of Career Advisement hosts career panels and talks throughout the year. This fall it held two such gatherings for students who are interested in becoming medical professionals. One was organized for the benefit of the College's would-be physicians, and the other to discuss career opportunities in the nursing profession.

The Catholic Physician

Leading the November 2 event for premed students was a husband-and-wife team of Catholic physicians, Drs. Mary J. Kotob and Barton Billeci, parents of Laura Billeci ('09). Joining them was Dr. Nicole Shirilla, a recent medical school graduate now in her residency. The three physicians spoke about how the College's graduates can earn their prerequisites for medical school, how to choose the right sort of medical practice, and how Catholic doctors can overcome the ethical challenges they are likely to face.

As a gynecologist and gynecological surgeon who refuses to perform abortions or prescribe contraceptives, Dr. Kotob knows these challenges all too well. Nonetheless, she encouraged students to be unafraid about practicing medicine. "We essentially lost two generations of doctors because no faithful Catholics would go into the ob-gyn field," she lamented. Yet



the College's students, she continued, because of their liberal education, are better prepared than most to understand medicine's moral dimension.

"The fact that you are here, getting a strong formation, which you can then take into your career, is awesome," she said. "If you love what you do, study hard, and pray and keep God in the center, you will be fabulous in medicine."

Dr. Shirilla likewise observed that medicine is "a field where people of strong faith are needed." Admitting that the culture of medical schools can at times be hostile toward faithful Catholics, she encouraged students to be mindful of the bigger picture. "Outside of the medical community, there is a whole society of people who are praying for and really wanting

principled, faithful physicians to help take care of them and their children."

A primary-care physician, Dr. Billeci noted that the College's students are well suited for the practice of medicine. "My advice is that, once your medical school prerequisites are met, you will be more than qualified," he said. "The vocation of medicine is best served with a comprehensive understanding of the human person, encompassing both the physical and spiritual aspects of health. In over 30 years of medical practice, I have found that the finest, most compassionate, and most thoughtful physicians have had some prior education or experience in the liberal arts."

Careers in Nursing

On October 10, Charlene Niemi, RN, MSN — the College's nurse and a member of the nursing faculty at California State University, Channel Islands — spoke to a roomful of students eager for her expertise and counsel. Nurse Niemi discussed the various nursing programs that are available to college graduates, as well as the best way for Thomas Aquinas College students to discuss their liberal arts degrees when applying for such programs.



"When I went to nursing school, I had to take some philosophy and religion classes, and I kept thinking, 'Why do I have to keep taking these kind of classes when all I want to do is be a nurse?' I thought that these subjects had nothing to do with nursing," Nurse Niemi said. "How wrong could I have been? I am dealing with people's spiritual beliefs, their struggles, their pain, their emotional pain. By having become more broad in my scope of knowledge, I am now better able to help other people. You already have that broad scope of knowledge just by going here."

Stressing the need for well-educated, compassionate nurses, Nurse Niemi strongly encouraged interested students to enter the profession. "When TAC students become registered nurses, you bring such a gift, just by the nature of how you think and discuss," she said. "The ability to discuss amongst each other enables you to articulate in difficult situations, such as when you have family members who really don't understand what is going on. To be able to pass that knowledge on to someone, so that they can understand and articulate it well, that is a great benefit of this education."

Alumni Medical Professionals

A Commitment to Catholic Healthcare

According to a recent survey, healthcare is the third most popular career field for Thomas Aquinas College alumni, after only education and business. Below is a partial listing of graduates who are currently working in medicine. These professionals are a testament to the value of a liberal education in the medical sciences, and most are glad to share their wisdom with interested TAC students.

Richard W. Cross, Ph.D. ('75)

Psychologist

Worcester, Massachusetts

Douglas T. Gillis, D.P.M. ('75)

Podiatrist

Arroyo Foot and Ankle Clinic, P.C.

Las Cruces, New Mexico

David E. Bomar, D.D.S. ('76)

Dentist

Chatsworth, California

Maureen Gahan ('76)

Milestones Director

Stone Belt Arc

Bloomington, Indiana

Daniel J. Grimm, M.A. ('76)

Counselor

Stillpoint Family Resources

Ojai, California

Jonathan D. Teichert, M.D. ('76)

Family Practitioner

Oak View, California

Gregory A. Pesely, M.A. ('77)

Mission & Ethics Manager

Order of St. Francis Healthcare System

Washington, Illinois

Nadine St. Arnault, M.D. ('78)

Anesthesiologist

Colorado Anesthesia Consultants

Denver, Colorado

Thomas J. Walsh, M.D. ('78)

Family Medical Physician

Indian Health Service

Yerington, Nevada

Sara A. Most, B.S.N. ('79)

Nurse

Washington Hospital Center

Springfield, Virginia

Michael W. Detar, M.D. ('80)

Pathologist

Incyte Diagnostics

Spokane Valley, Washington

John Arnerich, R.N. ('82)

Registered Nurse

UCLA Health System

Los Angeles, California

Dr. John L. Damiani, O.D. ('84)

Urologic Surgeon

Michigan Institute of Urology

Dearborn, Michigan

John A. Loesch, D.D.S. ('85)

Dentist

Flagstaff, Arizona

Diane M. Oehl, R.N. ('85)

Nurse

Winthrop University Hospital

Lafayette, Louisiana

Anthony R. Pivarunas, D.O. ('85)

*Chairman of Department of Obstetrics
and Gynecology*

Sisters of Charity Hospital

Buffalo, New York

Jennifer A. Tenney, M.D. ('85)

Pediatrician

Oakland Medical Center

Oakland, California

Francis J. Milligan III, M.D. ('85)

Family Practitioner

Recipient, St. Martin de Porres Award
for Outstanding Medical Treatment

Bow, New Hampshire

Thomas H. Zepeda, M.D. ('85)

Emergency Room Director

St. Luke's Jerome Medical Center

Jerome, Idaho



Karen Kelly, M.S. ('88)

Family Therapist

Interface Children and Family Services

Santa Paula, California

John F. Gisla Jr., M.D. ('90)

Physician, Department Chair, Medical

Director

Mercy Medical Group

Sacramento, California

Thomas G. Hart, D.D.S. ('91)

Owner

Wahoo Family Dentistry

Wahoo, Nebraska

Erika J. Gray, M.A. ('92)

Supervisor, Rehab Services

William Beaumont Hospital

Royal Oak, Michigan

Allen Nadej ('93)

Nursing Assistant

Northwestern Memorial Hospital

Chicago, Illinois

Michael Horton, R.N. ('94)

Registered Nurse

Critical Staffing Services

La Mesa, California

Lauren Jude, R.N. ('92)

Senior Clinical Account Manager

Vocera Communications

San Jose, California

Jennifer L. Mak, F.C.P. ('93)

Practitioner Coordinator

Twin Cities FertilityCare Center

West St. Paul, Minnesota

Bernard T. Pegis, M.D. ('94)

Family Practitioner
Front Royal, Virginia

Lawrence Cecchi, M.D. ('95)

Ophthalmologist
Syracuse, New York

Major Paul W. White, M.D. ('95)

*Program Director, Vascular Surgery
Fellowship*
Walter Reed National Military
Medical Center
United States Army
Bethesda, Maryland

Zyginas Binkis, D.D.S. ('96)

Managing Doctor
Stone Creek Family Dental
Cincinnati, Ohio

Samuel K. Caughron, M.D. ('96)

President & Managing Partner
MAWD Pathology Group, PA
Kansas City, Missouri

Shannon Martin ('96)

Registered Nurse
John C. Lincoln Deer Valley
Hospital
Phoenix, Arizona

Mary Jane Gingras ('97)

Dental Hygienist
Alexandria, Virginia

Caroline Johnson, M.D. ('97)

Internist
Rural Physicians Group
Phoenix, Arizona

Neill Mollard, M.D. ('97)

Cardiovascular Anesthesiologist
Associated Anesthesiologists, P.C.
Lincoln, Nebraska

Beau R. Braden, D.O. ('00)

Managing Partner
Braden Clinic
Ave Maria, Florida

Michael Ferri, M.D. ('00)

Psychiatrist
Franklin, Tennessee

Paul Pedry, CNA ('00)

Poplar Living Center
Casper, Wyoming

Tamara Twaddle, R.N. ('00)

Registered Nurse
Fredericksburg, Virginia

Brooke Collins, R.N. ('01)

*Registered Nurse, Oncology/Medical
Unit*
Community Memorial Hospital
Ventura, California

Hemma Clark, R.N. ('02)

Registered Nurse
Via Christi Hospital
Wichita, Kansas

Camille M. Jansen ('02)

Anesthetist
Washington Hospital Center
Falls Church, Virginia

Adrienne Rivera, M.D. ('02)

Pathology Resident
Rutgers New Jersey Medical School
Newark, New Jersey

Katherine Vincent, R.N. ('02)

Registered Nurse
Inova Health System
Boise, Idaho

Katherine Branch, R.N. ('03)

Registered Nurse
Mercy General Hospital
Sacramento, California

Kenneth J. Lashutka, N.M.D. ('03)

Physician
Peregrine Natural Medicine
Phoenix, Arizona

Molly C. O'Brien, B.S.N. ('03)

Registered Nurse
The Children's Hospital
Denver, Colorado

Teresa L. Gisla, R.N. ('04)

Registered Nurse
UCSD Medical Center
San Diego, California

John Almeida, D.O. ('05)

Resident Physician in Emergency
Ohio Valley Medical Center
Wheeling, West Virginia

Jaclyn Hagon, M.S.N. ('06)

Clinical Nurse Specialist
Santa Barbara, California

Karolyn Hershberger, R.N. ('06)

Registered Nurse
Mercy Hospital Systems
Springfield, Missouri

Johanna Rudolph, Ph.D. ('06)

Research Scientist
University of Texas at Dallas
Dallas, Texas

ILT David Gisla ('07)

Registered Nurse
U.S. Army Nurse Corps
Mannheim Area, Germany

Christina J. Holcomb, B.S.N. ('07)

Training Specialist
WellPoint, Inc.
Denver, Colorado

Laura Laubacher, R.N. ('07)

Registered Nurse
Arlington, Virginia

Katherine Marshalian, R.N. ('07)

Registered Nurse
Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
Los Angeles, California

Thomas Duffy, D.D.S. ('08)

Dentist
Dr. Steven Bowers, Bowers Dental
Group
Kirkland, Washington

Elizabeth Oven ('08), D.O.

Physician
Northwest Physician Associates
Meadville, Pennsylvania

Nathan Reyes ('08)

Dialysis Technician
Satellite Health Care
Santa Rosa, California



From TAC to MD

An Interview with Cara Buskmiller ('11)

From a young age, Cara Buskmiller ('11) knew that she wanted to become a doctor. So when it came time to apply to college, she thought about attending a large university with a strong premed program “that would make it very easy to slide right into medical school.” Upon consideration, however, she decided to attend Thomas Aquinas College in order to receive a truly liberal education. Yet she still kept her dream of becoming a physician, and she spent her summers taking prerequisite classes and gaining the necessary experience to apply to medical school. During her senior year at the College, she was admitted to her first choice, the Texas A&M College of Medicine, where she is currently in her fourth year of studies. She now describes her time at the College “the most important part of my premedical preparation.”

In the interview below, Miss Buskmiller discusses her life as a TAC alumna in medical school.



What is your MD program like, and what are you learning?

My medical school is a traditional MD program with two years of mainly classroom work followed by two years of mainly clinical work. Throughout, we prepare for three parts of our four-part licensing exam.

Medical curricula vary, but this is a basic outline for a traditional program.

How has your TAC background helped you in your classes?

It helped a lot during my first and second year, because I acquired a strong work ethic at TAC, as well as time-management skills. It has also been very helpful my third and fourth year because every day I need to talk with patients, listen attentively, admit that I don't know things, and admit that I don't understand. Those are all things I did daily at TAC! Finally, TAC is conducive to

“Remember, your son or daughter is called to be a saint. God is capable of achieving this goal, so expect that He'll make good on His promise.”

Q & A for Pre-Med Students

By Cara Buskmiller ('11)

If I go to the College, what extra classes will I need to take?

Medical school, veterinary school, and nursing school require classes that are not part of the College's curriculum. Typically, these schools require:

- two semesters of college physics with lab
- two semesters of organic chemistry with lab
- two semesters of inorganic (general) chemistry with lab
- two to four semesters of biology with lab
- one semester of calculus or statistics
- two semesters of English with composition
- biochemistry with lab (sometimes)

Most of my experience is with medical schools, so instead of all the possibilities listed above, I'll just say “medical schools.” The prerequisites may differ slightly for other careers.

How can I get these credits?

1. Thomas Aquinas College classes/thesis: A Thomas Aquinas education supplies enough hours in physics and

calculus to numerically satisfy a medical school application. However, the physics and calculus students take at the College are not the problem-set-driven classes that the medical schools usually have in mind. Some supplement should be made to the College's classes, such as self-study with an old textbook (available from the College library) or with online worksheets.

2. AP credit: Most medical schools take IB and AP credit if it is recognized by a college or university — that is, your AP credit must be translated by a college or university into course numbers and credit hours on an official transcript. The College cannot do this, but another college or university can (if you have attended another college in the past, or if you are attending somewhere for summer school).

3. College Level Examination Program credit: CLEP tests are like APs for students out of high school. They are tests in specific subjects that most colleges and universities will translate into credit hours. Again, the College cannot do this, and medical schools are only interested if another college recognizes these credits on an official transcript.

4. Summer school: Find a college or university near home and enroll for the summer or take online classes if you find a

becoming a balanced person, especially with regards to socializing, recreating, and spiritual enrichment. This was also key, as I often work long hours (12 or 14-hour days).

How has your education prepared you compared to your peers from more standard undergraduate/premed programs?

I am in the upper quartile of my class, and my grades made me eligible for Alpha Omega Alpha, a medical honor society for the upper decile of medical students. I was inducted into the Gold Humanism Honor Society (30 out of 200 students). So I was well prepared by TAC and by the prerequisite courses I took at a traditional undergraduate institution.

How do the professors rate your TAC education and your faith background?

One attending physician (a.k.a. professor), on learning that I studied Latin to read St. Thomas’s original texts, remarked, “You seem really self-actualized.” Others have commented on my politeness with patients, which is the habit (still unbroken) of calling people “Miss So-and-So” or “Mr. So-and-So” from class at TAC. Being Catholic presents challenges, especially considering that I want to become an ob-gyn, but I have had professors and fellow students say, “You have to do what you think is right.”

reputable program. Medical schools don’t mind an additional college or university; they may ask about a community college in your interviews, especially if your Thomas Aquinas College GPA is below average; online classes might only meet with approval if you have a good MCAT. I cannot recommend taking classes during the fall or spring semesters; the liberal education deserves the student’s full attention.

5. Post-baccalaureate programs: These are one- to three-year sets of courses that offer medical school prerequisites to college graduates who have not completed them.

If I go to Thomas Aquinas College, will I become a competitive applicant?

The College’s premedical students are largely responsible for finding their own advisors (parents, friends, Internet communities, books), although some resources have been pooled for them. If you go to the College with a health career in mind, you must be determined enough to find opportunities, network, and overcome obstacles without a premedical advisor on campus.

That being said, alumni who have gone into healthcare agree with me that the College teaches its students to make decisions and distinctions, which is invaluable in our work. I saw in my medical school interviews that a Thomas Aquinas

What do you expect to do professionally?

I am becoming an ob-gyn and plan to find a residency that will respect my desires not to prescribe contraceptives, not to perform abortions, and not to do unnecessary primary sterilizations. That’s a tall order! But I trust God will help me find the right place. After residency I plan to complete a fellowship in naprotechnology, the medical application of fertility awareness. I will then be able to provide a full range of surgical and medical therapy for infertility, endometriosis, PCOS, and other common disorders — all in accord with the dignity of the human person and the sacredness of marriage.

What would you tell parents who wonder if the TAC education is not practical enough for their son or daughter who wants to pursue a career in medicine?

A liberal arts major, when combined with a competitive MCAT and the necessary prerequisites, is an advantage in a medical school application, because it shows that an applicant is well-rounded. The prerequisites that are not included in the College’s curriculum can be picked up in many other ways. (See Q&A, below). Remember, your son or daughter is called to be a saint. God is capable of achieving this goal, so expect that He’ll make good on His promise.

College education is very attractive to medical schools since it creates well-rounded, thoughtful students, develops character, and gives its graduates perspective and enthusiasm for the truth.

I graduated from the College and went to medical school after four years; I don’t have a shred of regret about what I did. The College offers a true liberal education. Among all Catholic colleges in this country, it is a unique servant of Christ. What a grace, to have graduated from this place!



Where do I go for resources?

The single best pre-health site I have ever come across is the Student Doctor Network (studentdoctor.net). This site was my premed advisor. (This, and Jesus.) It has forums for allopathic and osteopathic medicine, dentistry, optometry, pharmacy, physical therapy, podiatry, psychology, veterinary, audiology, occupational therapy, medical business, military medicine, master’s in public health degrees, and medical researchers.

Parents' Corner

How Thomas Aquinas College Helped Bring Our Family into the Church

By Valerie and Kevin White, M.D.

When our oldest son, Khyber, first enrolled as a student at Thomas Aquinas College, we expected that he would get an excellent education, and we have not been disappointed. What we did not expect, though, was that he — and our entire family — would go on to enter the Catholic Church. As Khyber approaches his graduation this spring, we look back at these past four years as a time of incredible transformation.

We first learned of the College years ago, when tutors would bring their children to see Kevin, a pediatrician in Ventura. Kevin got to talking with them about the College's academic program, and everything he learned led us to believe it would be a great fit for Khyber.

Khyber is not what you would call a "textbook kid." On his 18th birthday he asked for the Rosetta Stone series on Turkish, and proceeded to teach himself the language. Watching YouTube videos, he also taught himself to play the bağlama, a Turkish-style guitar. He loves to read, he loves history, and he's a hands-on learner.

For Khyber, it would have been unfulfilling to attend classes in some large auditorium, listen to a professor deliver a lecture, and then leave. We could see right away that the College, with its great books curriculum and classroom discussions, was the perfect school for him, and after visiting the beautiful campus, he agreed.

At the time, it didn't trouble us that Thomas Aquinas College was a Catholic school. As converts to Christianity — we both became believers as young adults — we were just happy that he was going to a college in a strong Christian environment. Besides, we were confident in our Presbyterian faith. We went to church on Sundays, participated in Bible studies, and practiced daily devotions. We could not imagine that the Catholic faith had anything more to offer.

Through Khyber, we began to see things differently. Over the course of his freshman year, he developed a deep knowledge about the Church, the Scriptures, and the first fathers of the Church, such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas. We could see that the education he was receiving was really forming



Khyber White ('15) and his parents, Valerie and Kevin, attend their first Mass as Catholics on March 23, 2014, in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel.

and shaping his view of what it means to live your faith. We were starting to wonder if there was something more to Catholicism that we had been missing.

As a sophomore, Khyber developed a strong ability to articulate what he was learning and thinking. This was a blessing for us, because we had become increasingly unsure about elements of Protestant doctrine as well as the direction that our own church was taking. Often Kevin would ask him theological questions, which Khyber could usually answer, and if he could not, he knew just whom to ask — usually one of the chaplains, or a tutor or classmate.

By junior year, Khyber had begun meeting regularly with Fr. Buckley for instruction in the Faith, and Kevin was joining him for Sunday Mass at the College. At the same time Valerie began reading every book she could find about Catholicism. As a couple, we came to see how rich the Church was with tools to help you live the Faith — the Rosary, the Liturgy of the Hours, daily Mass and, of course, the Eucharist!

Soon we were all attending Mass together, and last spring the three of us — Kevin, Valerie, and Khyber — formally came into the Church. We received our first Holy Communion from Fr. Buckley in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, with David and Jennaya Arias, a tutor and his wife, serving as our sponsors. Our two teenage daughters are now preparing for Confirmation this spring, and our second son, a student at Northern Arizona University, has entered the RCIA program at the local Newman Center, along with his girlfriend.

It has been quite a journey, and we are profoundly grateful for the role Thomas Aquinas College has played in it.

Meanwhile, Khyber continues his own journey. He will graduate from the College this spring, and his eyes are set on the Foreign Service. He hopes to enter the Peace Corps, then study political science, before pursuing a career as a diplomat. He has matured greatly these last four years. It is a joy to watch him talk about the Faith with his sisters, or even just encourage them if they are having a bad day. He has truly developed into a very caring, godly, thoughtful young man.

As parents, what more can you ask for?