

THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

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Peace & Perseverance in a Time of Pandemic

College Endures with Online Classes and Livestreamed Masses

“Lifelong friendships have been forged, theses have been written and defended, and the greatest books of our civilization have been pondered and discussed,” President Michael F. McLean told members of the Thomas Aquinas College Class of 2020, via video, on what was supposed to have been their graduation day. “And, to your credit, these things have been achieved under the kind of duress that none of our 45 other graduating classes has ever experienced.”

Thanks be to God, “achievement under duress” proved to be an apt description of life at Thomas Aquinas College — and, perhaps, throughout the world — during the spring of 2020. After local health directives compelled the closure of both campuses in mid-March, students, faculty, staff, governors, benefactors, and chaplains alike found themselves scrambling to preserve the intellectual, spiritual, and communal life of the College as much as possible.

Rather than let the academic year come to a premature end, the College conducted classes remotely for the first time in its nearly 50-year history. Tutors led Socratic discussions in video chats of 17 or 18 participants, rather than around the customary oak tables. For mathematical demonstrations, students made use of the Zoom electronic whiteboard, explain-



ing Euclidean propositions and other proofs for classmates thousands of miles away.

“When we first began online learning, there was great enthusiasm, with everyone eager to do whatever they could to save the academic year,” says Dean John J. Goyette. “Over the many weeks that followed, spotty Internet connections, tired eyes, and audio cacophony began to take their toll. I pray that we never have to go the online route again. But we all stayed healthy, and it got us through the semester. For that we are profoundly grateful.”

When it came time for the seniors to defend the capstone of their four years’ work — the Senior Thesis — the College turned again to video conferencing. The structure of the defense sessions was

largely unchanged: Each senior presented an oral defense of his or her work before a faculty panel, after which tutors asked pointed questions. Students had to make do, however, without the beloved custom of being cheered by friends and classmates as they exited their defense sessions — even if families did their best to offer worthy celebrations back at home.

To aid the prayers of the faithful during the COVID-19 pandemic, the College began livestreaming Masses on Holy Thursday and, for the last two Fridays of Lent, offered “drive-through” devotions at the outdoor Stations of the Cross on the California campus. The daily livestreamed Masses, which on Sundays included the sacred music of a smaller (and socially distanced) Thomas Aquinas

College Choir, continued while Archdiocesan restrictions against public Masses remained in effect.

Meanwhile, many other aspects of the College made the transition to online platforms this spring:

To keep in touch between classes, students and faculty connected via the Slack project-management app. To endure the loneliness of the Great Quarantine, students used Zoom to host virtual parties, game nights, study sessions, and even lunches. The seniors made an uproarious video version of their annual “boast” to the underclassmen, and tutors toasted them farewell by way of YouTube. The Admissions Office even reached out to prospective students and their families through virtual tours of the California and New England campuses, accompanied by live Q&A sessions with its counselors.

Yet for all the online classes and livestreamed Masses, no attempt was made to create a virtual Commencement ceremony. “When we spoke to the seniors, they were unanimous in their desire to celebrate their graduation in person. They all wanted to reunite on their campus one more time,” says Dr. McLean. “If there is one enduring lesson of this last semester, it’s that, sometimes, there’s just no substitute for being together.”

Faith Streaming Understanding

How a Classical College Made the Quick Leap to Online Learning

Thomas Aquinas is a famously low-tech college, where students read printed copies of centuries-old books and residence halls lack WiFi. Yet in just one week after sending students home in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the College successfully made the jump to online learning. How it accomplished this feat is a testament to God’s grace, made manifest in the diligence of the College’s students, the resourcefulness of its faculty, and the generosity of one of its parents.

When concerns over the spread of the novel coronavirus began to threaten the prospects of completing the academic year, Admissions Director Jon Daly received a call from John Birch (’92), an alumnus and the father of two students on the California campus. The co-founder and COO at Virtual Service Operations (VSO) in Nokesville, Virginia, Mr. Birch is in the business of providing cloud-based technological assistance to institutions of all sizes. His partner and co-founder, Stephen O’Keefe, is chairman of Christendom College’s Board of Directors. Mindful that small colleges could be overwhelmed by the enormity of the task suddenly at hand, the two offered VSO’s assistance, pro-bono, to several faithfully Catholic schools.

“We knew bringing some 450 people onto an online platform at once could be overwhelming,” says Mr. Daly. “So we were relieved and deeply grateful for VSO’s assistance. Without it, making this transition in that time, and so well, would probably have been impossible.”

Mr. Birch and VSO employees worked with the Col-

lege to identify Zoom video conferencing and Slack project management as the appropriate tools. “TAC is, oddly enough, better prepared to make this transition than most ‘modern’ colleges because of its classroom method,” says Mr. Birch. “The classroom conversations lend themselves well to video conferencing, and the reading assignments and papers are much easier to manage than the various kinds of homework that are often assigned at other schools.”

Meanwhile the College’s IT director, Patrick Nichols, rushed to secure webcams for all of the teaching faculty — a tall order, given that they had quickly become a precious commodity second only to bathroom tissue. From there, VSO worked closely with Dean John Goyette and three members of the faculty — Mr. Daly and tutors Brian Dragoo and Andrew Seeley — to bring the community up to speed. VSO’s tech-support crew was on call, but found surprisingly little need for its assistance.

“The techs at VSO report that we did very well relative to other schools that were trying to move their classes online,” says Dr. Seeley. “One told me, ‘All your students are either techies or really smart.’” A big difference, Dr. Seeley believes, is that members of the faculty were deeply involved in the online rollout. “We knew, as an outsider never could, what our classes needed in order



Tutor Brian Dragoo leads a class from the St. Thomas Hall conference room on the California campus.

to be successful,” he reflects. “That allowed us to streamline the entire process.”

While not a replacement for a traditional classroom, the online learning was sufficient to get the College through the semester. “We are grateful to God for making it possible, through the help of so many, for us to finish the academic year,” says President Michael F. McLean. “In particular, we are grateful to John Birch and his colleagues at VSO, as well as to the members of our faculty and staff who facilitated our transition to online learning, and to our students and parents for responding so well to these extraordinary measures.”

From the Desk of the President

“Let Us Return”

*You will not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.*
— Psalm 91:5-6

By God’s grace, we have completed our 49th academic year, albeit under far from ideal circumstances. With heavy hearts, we bade our students an early farewell, we postponed Commencement for our graduating seniors, and we made do with a stopgap online-learning platform which, while adequate, fell far short of the rich, in-person conversations that define our program of Catholic liberal education.

Still, it has been a time of great blessing. We are thankful to God, to so many benefactors, to our tutors, and to our students and their parents for making it possible for us to complete the academic year. We are relieved that the ravages of COVID-19 have not been as widespread as we had reason to fear, and that our community has remained safe. We are grateful for our leaders, both ecclesiastic and civil, who have had to make difficult decisions — often without recourse to conclusive data or guiding precedent — for the common good.

Naturally, our thoughts now turn to the next academic year, which is set to begin at the end of August. Every day I hear from our students, who cannot contain their eagerness to return to our campuses. They long to resume their study of the Great Books through vigorous conversations, surrounded by their friends and fellow scholars. Our faculty members, too, are likewise unanimous in their desire to get back to the classroom. This is the work of Thomas Aquinas College, the work to which our students have dedicated these four years; and our tutors, their lives.

I am pleased to report that, God willing, our students and faculty will return to their classrooms in August. Indeed, our entire faculty and staff are working tirelessly toward this end.

The safety of our students, our families, and our surrounding communities is, of course, paramount. As Catholics, our yearning to resume our former lives cannot come at the expense of the vulnerable among us, to whom we owe our special protection.

Providence, however, has blessed Thomas Aquinas College with two beautiful campuses which are rural, remote, and largely self-contained. With diligent adherence to all applicable health and safety guidelines, I am

confident that we can operate in a manner that poses minimal risk to our students, our employees, and our neighbors. That may require us to make significant changes to the way we are used to living on campus, but based on my many conversations with students and tutors, I am confident that all would gladly make any such necessary sacrifices.

As we plan for the upcoming academic year, let us recall that God instructs us to fear not “the pestilence that stalks in darkness,” as long as we have faith in Him. “Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your habitation, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent” (Ps. 91:6, 9-10). In faith, let us then return to the work to which we have been called, under the protection of Christ, our refuge and fortress in Whom we trust.

I look forward to seeing all of our incoming and returning students, and as many families as possible, in August.



Celebrating 50 Years

College Salutes Richard Grant’s Faithful Leadership and Support

At a special Mass and celebratory dinner in downtown Los Angeles on February 8, members of the Thomas Aquinas College community gave thanks for and to a stalwart champion of the Catholic Church and her works, Richard A. Grant.

Over the last half century Mr. Grant has served as secretary-treasurer, then executive director, and finally president of the Dan Murphy Foundation, which promotes numerous Catholic initiatives, especially those pertaining to education and religious life. In honor of his retirement, friends of Mr. Grant from around the world came together to express their gratitude for his career of service. Among those were Thomas Aquinas College President Michael F. McLean and his wife, Lynda; Chairman of the Board of Governors R. Scott Turicchi and his wife, Lannette; one of the College’s founders and former presidents, Peter L. DeLuca, and his wife, Kay; longtime chaplain Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J.; Director of Special Projects Anne S. Forsyth (’81); and Choir Director Dan Grimm and his wife, Rose (both ’76).

“Richard Grant began his tenure at the Dan Murphy Foundation just a year before Thomas Aquinas College opened its doors, and he and his wife, Maria, have played major roles since then in the development of our California campus and the planning for our second campus in New England,” said Dr. McLean. “Through Richard’s good offices, the College has been the recipient of many generous gifts from the Dan Murphy Foundation for both capital projects and student financial aid, making it possible for many of our young people to receive the benefit of a genuinely Catholic liberal education that would not otherwise have been available to them.”

Under Mr. Grant’s leadership, the



Richard and Maria Grant with Ann and Joe Sanders, chairman of the Dan Murphy Foundation’s Board of Trustees, at Mr. Grant’s retirement dinner in February

Foundation has contributed to the construction of many buildings on the California campus, making lead gifts for St. Bernardine of Siena Library and Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. In 1993 the College inducted the Dan Murphy Foundation into the Order of St. Albert the Great, in honor of its tremendous generosity. “Richard and Maria have also been personally most generous to the College over many years with their time, talent, and treasure,” added Dr. McLean, noting that the Grants are longstanding members of the President’s Council and Legacy Society, and that Mrs. Grant served for 22 years on the College’s Board of Governors, including 6 as chairman.

Mr. Grant’s retirement festivities began with a Vigil Mass in the Sunset Room of the California Club, with the Most Rev. José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, serving as the principal celebrant. Joining His Excellency at the altar were some two dozen concelebrants, including fellow L.A. prelates Cardinal Roger Mahony, the Most Rev. Marc Vincent Trudeau, and the Most Rev. David G. O’Connell; and visiting prelates Cardinal Justin Rigali and the Most Rev. Nicolas Djomo Lola, Bishop of Tshumbe in the Democratic Republic of the

Congo. The Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles chanted the responses and sang several hymns, and the former superintendent of high schools for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Msgr. Sal Pilato, gave the homily.

Cocktails and dinner followed, with tributes from Jon Rewinski, a former member of the Dan Murphy Foundation’s Board of Trustees and a lifelong friend; Bishops Trudeau and Djomo; Joe Sanders, chairman of the Foundation’s Board of Trustees; and Sr. Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D., vicar general of the Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles. Then Mr. Grant spoke of his last 50 years’ work, which, he said, “has been a learning experience in how a philanthropic foundation can, with consistent effort over time, make a real difference in promoting the good, the true Good.”

He was especially gracious in his comments about Thomas Aquinas College. “Fifty years ago the Dan Murphy Foundation made its first grant to Thomas Aquinas College for \$25,000, and in the ensuing years it contributed many times that amount towards the completion of the beautiful Thomas Aquinas College campus in Santa Paula,” said Mr. Grant. “The College is now an internationally recognized institution whose graduates are playing an increasingly prominent role in the realms of church and state

in this country and abroad.” He also noted that his “first real introduction to the College occurred in the early 1990s when I attended a Great Books Summer Seminar,” and he was “taken with the experience.”

To conclude the evening, one of the College’s student choirs, Chrysostomos, performed three songs that Mr. Grant had personally requested: Lauridsen’s “O Magnum Mysterium,” “Shenandoah,” and “May God Bless You and Keep You” — plus an encore, the Ave Maria.

Although Mr. Grant’s time at the Dan Murphy Foundation has come to an end, his good work on behalf of the Church continues. In upcoming years, in addition to updating a family narrative his grandfather wrote in 1951, he plans to work as a Knight of the Order of Malta on the Caring for the Whole Person initiative in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, a ministry of presence and accompaniment for persons who are seriously ill. He will also participate in a significant archival project at the Huntington Library.

“For all of the good the Grants have done, and for many years of warm friendship,” said Dr. McLean, “on behalf of the entire community of Thomas Aquinas College, I wish them God’s richest blessings as they embark on this new phase of life.”



Compassion in Times of Crisis

Three Alumnae Begin Nursing Careers Battling COVID-19

“I got hired onto a medical floor where normally we see a wide variety of patients,” reflects Katie Ellefson, RN, BSN (’16), who in February began her first nursing job at the Inova Health System’s medical campus in Fairfax, Virginia. “Three weeks after I started, our entire floor was turned into a COVID unit.”

This wasn’t how Miss Ellefson or her two fellow Thomas Aquinas College alumnae — Joanna Kaiser, RN, BSN (’15), and Annamaria Masteller, RN, BSN (’16) — envisioned their medical careers would begin. The three friends, all recent nursing-school graduates, accepted positions at the same hospital only weeks before the outbreak of the novel coronavirus upended American medicine — and then consumed their days.

The timing, they say, is providential. “You know you have a great job when you arrive at the hospital for a 13-hour night shift, groggy and a touch cranky, and you leave the next morning peaceful and happy,” says Miss Ellefson. “I’m very grateful that I became a nurse in time to be able to help out in whatever ways I can in this crazy time.”

Bonds of Friendship

When they graduated from Thomas Aquinas College a few years ago, none of these new nurses had immediate plans to pursue medical careers. While Miss Kaiser considered entering religious life, all three traveled and worked various jobs near the California campus until — inspired, in part, by each other — they began to take prerequisite classes and apply to various nursing programs. “It was so wonderful to have these girls with me along for the whole journey,” says Miss Kaiser. “We worked together, took classes together, and supported each other throughout the application process.”

Eventually Miss Masteller and Miss Kaiser enrolled in an accelerated pro-



gram at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where, Miss Kaiser notes, they “enjoyed the community life at TAC, New England, while we studied.” Miss Ellefson, meanwhile, enrolled in a similar program in Cleveland, Ohio, and the three met up again in Virginia after completing their licensing examinations earlier this year.

For these friends, working together during this time of isolation is a great comfort. “One thing that has really been affected with this virus is our ability to mingle with other new nurses in the hospital,” says Miss Masteller. “There are usually classes and meetings every other week for the new nurses to gather and share the various experiences that come along with being new to the unit. I am so lucky, however, to have two very close friends who are starting at the same time.”

Practicing in Times of Pandemic

Although the pandemic has not much changed the essential duties of nursing, the nurses report, rampant fear and uncertainty have radically altered the environment in which medicine is practiced.

“In order to limit our contact with patients, we try our best to cluster care, spending only 20 minutes at a time in each room,” says Miss Masteller. “And, of course, we are fully gowned and gloved, with masks and face shields. We also are doing more frequent checks of

their respiratory status.” As researchers learn more about the nature of the virus, healthcare workers must modify their practices accordingly. “Policies at the hospital are changing almost every day,” says Miss Kaiser, “as we attempt to adapt and respond to the needs of the community and the needs of the staff.”

The crisis, however, is most distressing for the nurses’ patients, who must battle a mysterious, possibly deadly illness without the consolation of visits from friends and family. “Most of the time we are the only people who are physically coming into the room to check on these patients,” says Miss Ellefson. “They are generally more lonely, scared, and anxious than our typical patients. Being able to be the person who can go in there and cheer them up and make their stay even just a little better has honestly been such a gift.”

This is, after all, what drew these young women into medicine in the first place: the opportunity to comfort the afflicted in their time of need. It makes even the newly heightened dangers of the medical profession worthwhile. “Being infected with some illness at the hospital has always been a risk for healthcare workers, and it was a risk I chose to take when I chose this profession,” says Miss Kaiser. “I am confident that God has me where He wants me, and I am focusing on learning as much as I can during my orientation, so that I can provide the best care I am able.”

Formed and Fortified

It is their faith, the nurses say, that gives them the strength to withstand their arduous entry into the nursing profession — a faith nurtured and deepened during their time at Thomas Aquinas College. “The education and community life at TAC provided me with a solid foundation in the Faith and a love of truth that has been a rock to stand on in uncertain times and a shield from the anxiety of the

“I am confident that God has me where He wants me, and I am focusing on learning as much as I can during my orientation, so that I can provide the best care I am able.”

world,” says Miss Kaiser. “At the College I learned that ultimately everything is in God’s hands,” says Miss Ellefson. “We have to trust Him entirely and not give in to the panic, anxiety, and stress that the world is constantly pushing on us.”

Although she has known that she wanted to be a nurse since she was eight years old, Miss Ellefson says she has no regrets about earning a bachelor of liberal arts degree at the College before going to nursing school. “My years at TAC prepared me for nursing in ways I never planned or foresaw,” she explains. “I left with a clearer, more analytical mind; I am able to reason better and, above all, empathize better.” As Miss Masteller puts it, “Having already been to college, and especially to a college like TAC, I was able to take my nursing studies very seriously and enter the field with a very holistic approach, seeking to understand the full picture of each body system, disease, or medication, and not just memorize what was placed in front of me.”

Their Catholic liberal education has prepared them to enter their new profession with a peaceful and confident longing to serve, even amidst much turmoil and anxiety. “Being a nurse is challenging in many ways, and nobody would ever say that it’s glamorous,” says Miss Ellefson. “But we are offered concrete opportunities every moment of every shift to ease the suffering of our patients and make their nights a little better in very simple ways — and that can be very rewarding.”

Graduates Put Faith in Action

Rev. Mr. Ryan Truss (’16)

The Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis was largely empty of worshipers on Saturday, May 2 — but it was overflowing with grace. That morning, the Most Rev. Robert J. Carlson, Archbishop of St. Louis, ordained Rev. Mr. Ryan Truss (’16) and five other young men to the transitional diaconate. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the *ordinandi* were allowed to bring no guests but their parents and had to wear masks throughout much of the ceremony. “My ordination day was very blessed indeed,” writes Deacon Truss (’16). “To receive ordination at a time like this convinces me that God is never outdone in generosity, even in times of pandemic.”



The Most Rev. Robert J. Carlson, Archbishop of St. Louis, and Rev. Mr. Ryan Truss (’16) / St. Louis Review

Grace Kelly (’12)

“Good teachers prove daily that they would give their lives for their students,” observes Grace Kelly (’12). “This time of pandemic has made this principle that much clearer.” As principal of St. Sebastian School in Santa Paula, California, Miss Kelly was charged, in the face of COVID-19, with swiftly transitioning some 150 students and nine teachers to distance learning. “As soon as word of our imminent closure came out, we hit the ground running,” she writes for the Catholic Education Foundation of Los Angeles. “This path has not been easy ... but we are excited for the nuggets of gold we are uncovering, which will enhance our learning goals when we are blessed enough to be able to go back to our campus.”



Dr. Samuel Caughron (’96)

“A small biotech company, based in Kansas City, is making a major contribution to local hospitals and healthcare workers during the coronavirus pandemic,”

began a recent Fox 4 news report. “MAWD Pathology Group is redirecting its resources to ramp up the production of testing kits for COVID-19.” The physician and executive responsible for this act of public service is Dr. Samuel Caughron (’96), MAWD’s president and CEO. “What we saw is, in our hospitals, these patients who were being admitted, who were coming in for care, as well as the healthcare workers in the hospitals, needed a quicker turnaround time,” Dr. Caughron told reporters at KCTV News 5. So he and his team began offering expedited testing for those who are ill, greatly reducing the strain on local hospitals.



Dr. Samuel Caughron (’96) speaks to students in 2019.

Senior Reflections

Giving up a Full Scholarship to Attend TAC was Worth It

By Michael Murphy ('20)

Note: The following essay is adapted from remarks made to the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its meeting on November 16, 2019.

Thank you very much for having me here today to say a few words. First and foremost, I would like to thank you all for what you have done for me and my class. We are all well aware that we live in one of the most beautiful places on earth and study some of the greatest minds to ever live, not through any merit of our own but only because of the generosity of people such as yourself. For that we will be forever grateful.

I have known about Thomas Aquinas College all my life, as my parents both attended the College, and three of my four older siblings have now graduated from here. For this reason, the stubborn Irishman in me immediately rejected the idea of coming here. I wanted to do something “cool” and “fun” with my college experience, as I thought throughout high school.

Growing up, I always wanted to join the military, and my top choice among the schools I was accepted to during my senior year in high school was the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). I was also accepted to TAC, but I did not imagine



I would ever end up here. I had applied mostly out of love and respect for my mother.

My desire to attend VMI grew even more when I received an academic scholarship for full tuition. To obtain this scholarship I had to travel to the VMI campus and be interviewed by a panel of nine officers who were in charge of admissions. The interview lasted about 45 minutes, and we discussed a wide variety of topics. There was one question an officer asked me, however, which left a lasting impression. He asked why I was interested in both TAC and VMI, which were both extremely prestigious schools in their own respective fields of study.

I did not have a good answer at the time, but I remember being shocked that a successful military officer would call Thomas Aquinas College a prestigious school. His question marked the first moment that I began to seriously consider

attending Thomas Aquinas College.

I visited the College a couple of weeks after that interview. Although I was somewhat considering coming here, I viewed my trip much more as a five-day vacation to Southern California to see my brother than as an official college visit. But while I was on campus I sat in on some classes, and one particularly captivated me.

It was a class led by Dr. Michael Augros, in which the students discussed the chapter of the *De Anima* in which Aristotle considers the faculty of sight and the medium by which we see. Although I didn't know the answer to any of the questions, I wanted to talk many times, and I wanted to know the answers to these questions which I had never thought about before. This desire to know, coupled with being on campus and getting to know members of the student body, made it clear to me that I should attend TAC for my college education.

When I first arrived as a freshman, I was excited to be here and to meet my classmates, but after about a month of studies, I found myself extremely frustrated for two reasons. The first was that, in many of our classes, we would raise all kinds of interesting questions, but we would not always come to a concrete conclusion by the end of class. The second was that I did not realize how many times

I could be wrong in front of my section — in just an hour-and-a-half class.

Looking back, I now see that the majority of freshman year is spent wondering at questions and gaining the tools necessary to answer them in the later years. I also had the pleasure of meeting a wonderful and amazing woman, Kayla, during my freshman year. We quickly became good friends and started dating during the second semester. After three years of dating, we recently got engaged and will be getting married this summer.

I am very grateful to Thomas Aquinas College not only for giving me a well-rounded liberal education, but also for preparing me for the professional world. In all the internships and jobs I have applied for in the last year, employers' three desired qualities were always critical thinking, strong communication, and problem solving. At TAC we read original texts and think critically about them, communicate our thoughts to our fellow students in class, and solve problems we might have in understanding the various texts. We practice these three skills every day in class, and I am very excited to take them out into the professional world.

I know that all of this is a gift from God, made possible by your generosity. Thank you very much.

Mr. Murphy is from Cheshire, Connecticut.

St. Vincent de Paul Lecture and Concert Series*

Endowed by Barbara and Paul Henkels
Highlights from the Last Quarter



California

- **November Lecture:** Dr. Michael Mack
Department of English, The Catholic University of America
“Shakespeare’s Christian Ethics”
- **Thanksgiving Concert:** The Thomas Aquinas College Choir
Bach’s Magnificat
- **January Lecture:** Dr. Timothy B. Noone
Professor of Philosophy, The Catholic University of America
“Augustine on Words, Signs, Thought, and Things in *De Magistro*: One of Many Ways to the Same Truth”
- **St. Thomas Day Lecture:** Rev. Dominic Legge, O.P.
Assistant Professor, Systematic Theology, Dominican House of Studies
“Does the Father Want the Son to Die? Aquinas on Christ’s Passion and the Trinity”



New England

- **November Lecture:** Rev. Sebastian Walshe, O.Praem. ('94)
Professor of Philosophy, St. Michael’s Abbey
“Per Se Statements: Getting a Handle on Truth”
- **January Lecture:** Dr. Robert Augros
Professor of Philosophy, Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts
“A Response to the Scandal of Disagreement”
- **St. Thomas Day Lecture:** Rev. Joseph Koterski, S.J.
Associate Professor of Philosophy, Fordham University
“The Love of Learning and Desire for God”

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

President’s Day Lecture (both campuses)

Hon. J. Leon Holmes
United States District Judge (Ret.), Eastern District of Arkansas
“From Valley Forge to Appomattox: George Washington and the Formation of the American Nation”



All-College Seminar

One Friday night each semester, students and members of the teaching faculty on both campuses gather for the All-College Seminar — simultaneous meetings of small groups (about 20 students, drawn from all classes, and two tutors) to discuss the same reading. The text for this spring’s seminar, held on February 7, was *On Loving God*, by St. Bernard of Clairvaux.



What Makes Humans Valuable?

Actual Knowledge and Artificial Intelligence

By Jane Neumayr Nemcova ('98)

Note: Jane Neumayr Nemcova ('98) served as Managing Director of AI at Lionbridge until May 2020. She recently finalized a course at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in cryptocurrency and blockchain, and is planning to work on new projects in the area of natural language processing. The following article is adapted from remarks she made to the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its meeting on November 16, 2019.



Back when I was in high school, when people would ask me about my college plans, they would say things like, “Do you want to go play basketball or tennis?” Or, “Do you want to study law?” And I would say, “No, I think I probably want to study philosophy.” And they would respond, “Why would you ever do that? That’s, well, kind of silly and impractical, isn’t it? What are you going to do with *that*?”

And so I thought, “Well, OK, maybe it is silly,” but somehow I knew that I needed to learn, and deep down I knew that, while maybe everyone wants to learn in some sense, I kind of wanted it more. I knew that I needed to learn *how* to learn, and that, if I did that, then I could pursue any profession that I wanted. If I decided to go into law later, that would be great, and if I decided to go into some other area, that would be fine. I would have the necessary foundation.

“What Thomas Aquinas College is doing in the lives of its students is not only invaluable in terms of the good it’s achieving for American higher education, it’s vital for preparing the next generation to navigate the AI world.”

From TAC to AI

I was always interested in language, but when I graduated from Thomas Aquinas College and I started thinking about what I wanted to do next, there weren’t many options in that field. I had studied French extensively and I had even lived in France for a while, so I thought maybe I would go back to France, continue with French, and see what I could do with that.

As I went to graduate school and then later into the business workforce, language was my focus. Back then it was really about translation, using translation services to take the products or software technologies that companies build in English, translate them into other languages, and then deploy them in other countries.

But as I was working I realized that technology was changing rapidly, and about seven or eight years ago, just as Artificial Intelligence (AI) was beginning to catch on, I started thinking about the role that language played in the development of technology. I saw an opportunity, and so I started an AI division within the language company where I was working.

What my team did, and what I have done, is structure an organization around supporting AI companies with data services. We developed the human side of the human-data input for AI. In language and speech, which are the most difficult parts of the process, we provided data services for developing language models, natural language processing, computational linguistics — all aspects of speech development for products — among others. We covered more locales than any other company. We specialized in finding people, even working in languages you’ve never heard of, and developing language technology across the world.

What’s funny, given the opposition I ran into in high school when I told people I wanted to study philosophy, is how philosophy proved to be the avenue that brought me to AI. And these days, many of my colleagues in the AI industry — very accomplished individuals who are creating the products and technologies that we all use day in and day out — often remark about my college education. They say, “It’s really the most interesting thing about you, that you studied Descartes, or Aristotle, or Kant.”

AI and Liberal Education

What’s more, they are beginning to see that the sort of education that I had is something like what they want for their own children. I have been involved in countless conferences and summits with different folks in the AI community over the years, and I have often heard industry leaders asked the question, “What should my child study in school to survive in this AI world?” What I find pleasing, but also ironic, is that these professionals who have spent so much of their lives — 20 or even 30 years — working on different areas of AI often see the perils of over-exposing children to technology.

One of the people I respect the most in AI is Andrew Ng, who was one of the founders of Google Brain; later he was a key person at Baidu, and he started Coursera, which is one of the most successful online education companies. He said at an EmTech conference, in answer to a question along those lines, “You know: for my children, if I could pick what I wanted, I would want them to learn how to learn.”

What pleased me, of course, was that I had essentially made that choice as a teenager — and now Andrew Ng was validating it.

Steve Jobs famously prohibited his children from using an iPad, and one of the reasons he did so is because these devices can be a huge distraction from focusing on the right things. Technology, in and of itself, might not be a problem; it helps in many practical aspects of life. But, as far as education is concerned, distractions from the focus on actual knowledge and learning can be a very big problem.

The emergence of AI is pushing everyone into understanding what education ultimately means, what learning is, and what knowledge is. And I do see, in the Silicon Valley in particular, that more people are trying to teach their kids languages; they are trying to get their children to read more, to decode what knowledge is. The people I have often encountered at big tech companies see that learning *how* to learn is really the most important part of education. The ability to think is essential to the smooth operation of business, and that becomes ever more apparent the more technical an area becomes. We are in a technology revolution of sorts right now, and we don’t have a choice about that. It is happening, and how we navigate and educate ourselves in and around that is absolutely crucial.

One of the ways in which I think this trend will evolve is that AI is going to force more *true* learning. It is going to heighten the value that society places on creativity, broad thinking, and the liberal arts. People with a liberal arts background typically end up being very good in a business environment because they are used to thinking about things from different angles, in different frameworks, and figuring out how to discuss complex topics. In business and technology, a liberal arts background is a kind of natural advantage. That will be even more true in an increasingly AI-driven economy. It will push people to figure out what makes humans different from machines — what ultimately makes humans valuable — and, as a result, knowledge itself is going to become a commodity worth purchasing.

Premium on Philosophy

A couple years ago I spoke to students at the College and shared with them a story about a friend of mine who developed “Magic: The Gathering,” which is a famous

“The folks in AI are looking for candidates exactly like those coming from Thomas Aquinas College to help them, not only in developing their products, but in figuring out how those products should function and how they should be applied.”

game that was later bought by Hasbro some years ago. The story has to do with a discussion we had about the hiring practices at his company, which was worth something like \$300 million at the time. “What are you looking for in students coming out of college?” I asked him. “Are you looking only for candidates with degrees in gaming?” And he said, “Well, we’ve got PhDs and master’s students from gaming programs, but they have not been our best hires. What we have come to figure out is that we really need to hire philosophy majors. Those are the guys and gals who are creating next-level games and characters and storylines — all the exciting, interesting things that lead to success in this industry.”

That story is, I think, representative of what is happening in the marketplace right now. Philosophy is no longer an impractical piece of your education; it actually may be the most important piece.

An enormous amount of human data is required to make AI and related technologies work, and an obstacle to using that data properly can be labeling and categorizing. Now, TAC students know well that Aristotle spent a lot of time going through all kinds of data empirically, labeling and categorizing the natural world around us. In a sense he is the number-one thinker in AI, and many of the great AI thinkers reference him and talk about him as an important part of building any kind of machine-learning model. He is also one of the initial data collectors. So he went about observing nature and observing everything about the world that he could in order to use empirical means as a form of validation.

What I tried to communicate to the College’s students was their value as philosophy students, which is now recognized as an important criterion by people looking for the next generation of professionals — especially in areas such as management and marketing, and particularly in AI. Thomas Aquinas College graduates are well positioned for these sorts of positions and can interview very effectively. The ability to discern and navigate complex matters is the most crucial trait that our economy needs right now — in other words, critical thinking.

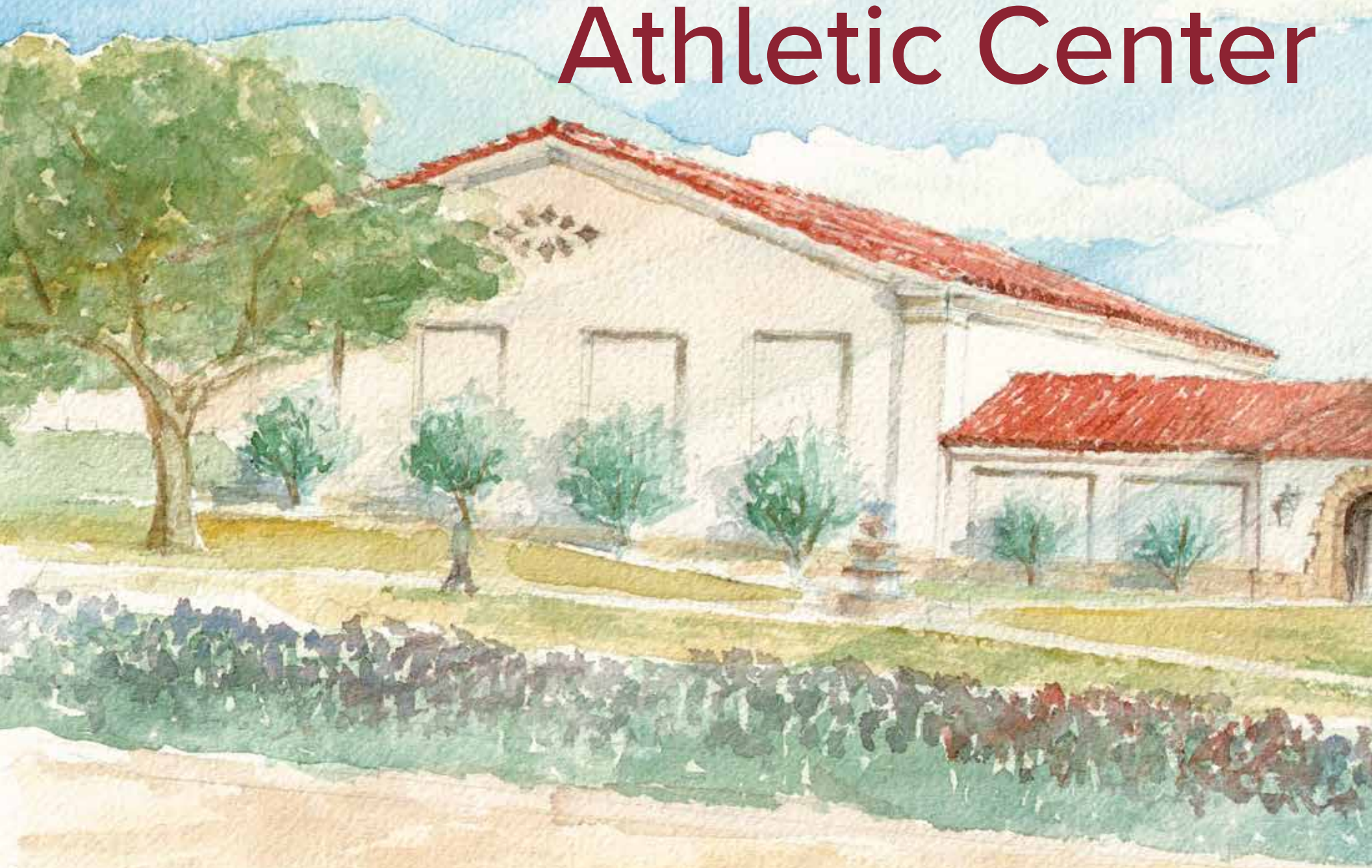
What Thomas Aquinas College is doing in the lives of its students is invaluable not only in terms of the good it’s achieving for American higher education, it’s vital for preparing the next generation to navigate the AI world. And the folks in AI are looking for candidates exactly like those coming from Thomas Aquinas College to help them, not only in developing their products, but in figuring out how those products should function and how they should be applied.

As I have spent much time in AI with accomplished engineers, I have come to realize how precious my own education in philosophy is — and that has been recognized by the folks I work with in Big Tech everywhere. They have all noted that. So thank you for your support of Thomas Aquinas College. It’s been amazing.



Jane Neumayr Nemcova ('98), center, speaks to students in 2018.

The Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center



Fritz B. Burns Foundation Awards College \$15 Million Grant for California Athletic Center

The rumbles of heavy machinery can now be heard on the College's California campus, where construction has begun on a new athletic center, made possible by a \$15 million grant from the Fritz B. Burns Foundation of Los Angeles. The facility, which will likely be completed before the start of the 2021–22 academic year, will bear the name of a saint of recent times who was both a friend of the young and a champion of physical fitness: Pope St. John Paul II.

"We are deeply grateful to the Fritz B. Burns Foundation, which has supported the construction of several buildings at the College and now surpasses its past generosity with its largest grant to date," says President Michael F. McLean. "For generations to come, the stu-

dents of Thomas Aquinas College, California, will exercise their bodies in the Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center, as they train their minds in our classrooms and nurture their souls in the Chapel."

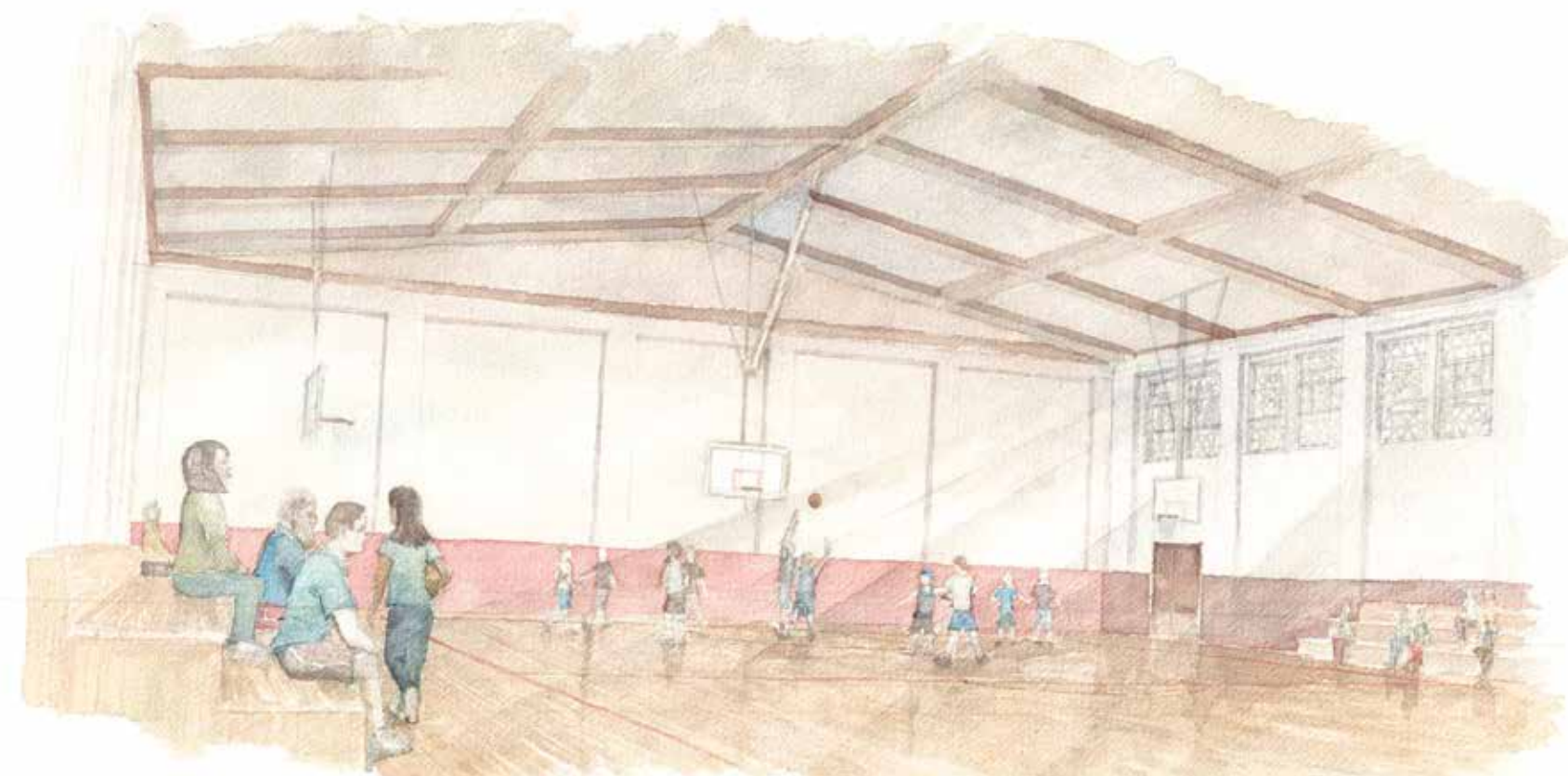
Located on the previous site of the campus' outdoor basketball and tennis courts, just behind St. Junipero Serra Hall, the 17,000-square-foot Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center is designed to visually connect the upper and lower parts of the campus.

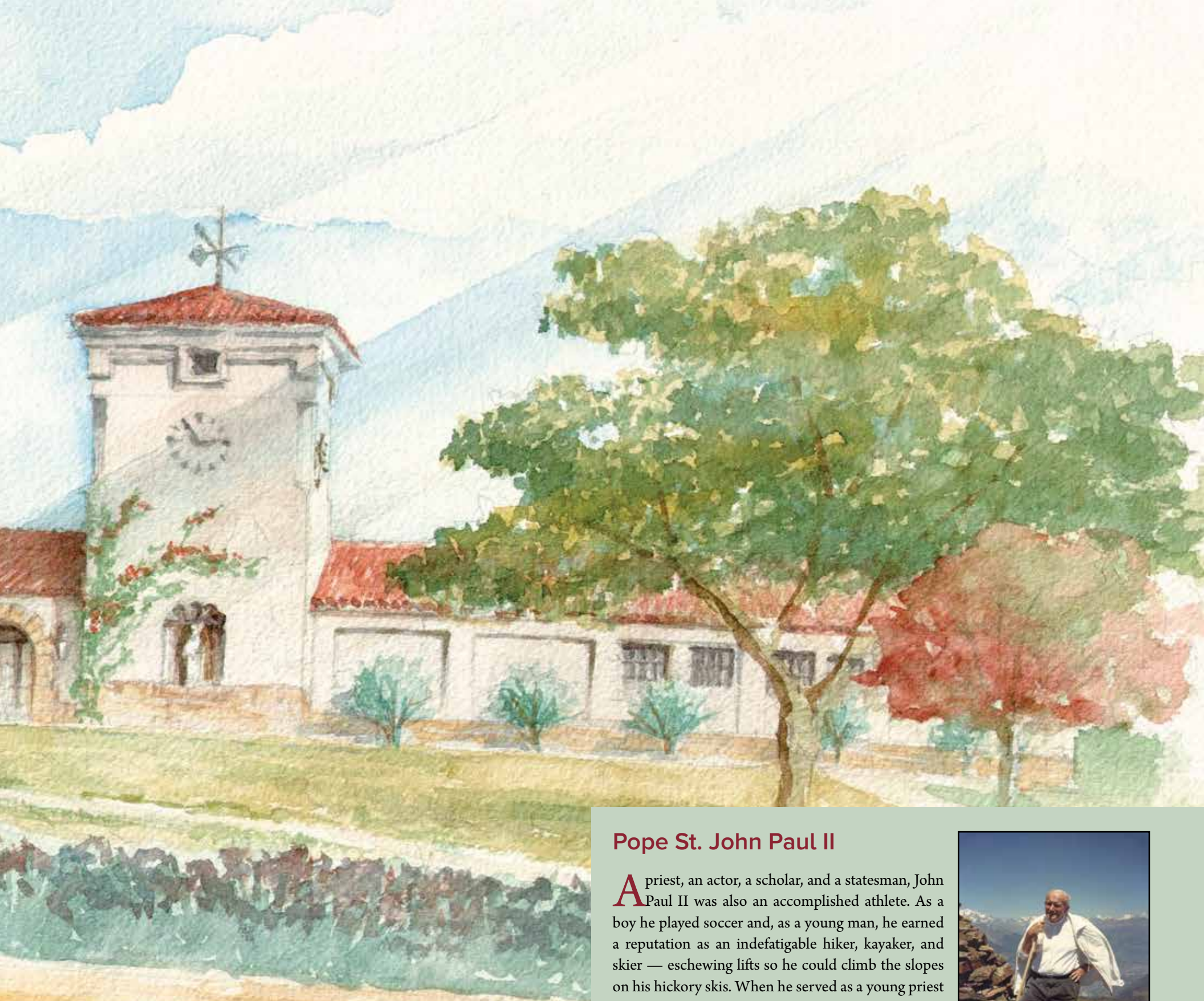
From the exterior, its most distinctive feature will be a four-story clock tower, loosely modeled after the one in Santa Barbara's historic City Hall. To the rear, or south, of the building will be the athletic center's six-lane, 25-yard waveless lap pool, as well as lighted outdoor tennis and

basketball courts. New soccer and baseball fields, complete with bleacher seating, will be visible just to the building's west. And, to the front, the arched vestibule will look onto a campus picnic area that will host All-College Barbeques and other events.

On the inside, the Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center will feature a gymnasium equipped with beautiful hardwood floors — configured for basketball and volleyball — spectator seating, and an electronic scoreboard. The College's men and women will enjoy separate weight and workout rooms, which will connect to locker rooms and the swimming pool. Housed within the bell tower will be a feature that promises to be a favorite among students: a climbing room that boasts two 32-foot-high scaling walls and a 12-foot-high bouldering wall.

When it came time to choose a name for the athletic center, officials from the College and the Fritz B. Burns Foundation were unanimous that Pope St. John Paul II — a lifelong athlete who wrote eloquently about what the human body can teach us about its Creator — would be the ideal patron. "In our consultations with the Foundation's directors," says Dr. McLean, "we came to see that John Paul II could serve as an especially meaningful model for our students in his athleticism, his scholarship, and his holiness."





enter, to Open in 2021

The architect for the Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center is Anthony Grumbine ('00), principal at the Santa Barbara office of Harrison Design, an alumnus of the College, and the father of two current students. Mr. Grumbine, together with his business partner, Nic Charbonneau, designed the renovation plans for Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel on the New England campus. Mr. Grumbine is a graduate of the master's program at the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture, where he studied under Duncan Stroik, the design architect for Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel.

"As an architect whose mentor designed the California Chapel — arguably one of the most beautiful and successful sacred buildings built since World War II — it is an incredible honor to be a part of the College's continued legacy of beauty, truth, and goodness in built form," says Mr. Grumbine. "I think back almost 25 years ago to my days at TAC and remember playing basketball with then-president Thomas Dillon, who used to tell us that 'one day there will be a great gym here at TAC, with gorgeous wood floors.' What a privilege it is to be part of making that dream a reality!"

Serving as contractor for the athletic center is RCI Builders of Thousand Oaks, California, whose previous work includes several athletic facilities in the region, among them the Westlake Village YMCA and the new headquarters for the Los Angeles Rams. "We began this project almost two years ago by surveying members of the community as to which features they would value most for our athletic facilities," says Mark Kretschmer, the College's director of operations. "We then began the lengthy process of designing the new facilities and getting the permits to build them. So it's exciting to have at last reached the construction phase."

Work on the Pope St. John Paul II Athletic Center is expected to be completed sometime next summer. "Our students have long waited to have an athletic center on this campus," says Dr. McLean. "By God's grace and thanks to the Fritz B. Burns Foundation's wonderful generosity, their patience will soon be rewarded with an excellent facility worthy of its patron's name."

Pope St. John Paul II, pray for us!

Grill designed for the Athletic Center's windows, bearing the coat of arms of Pope St. John Paul II

Pope St. John Paul II

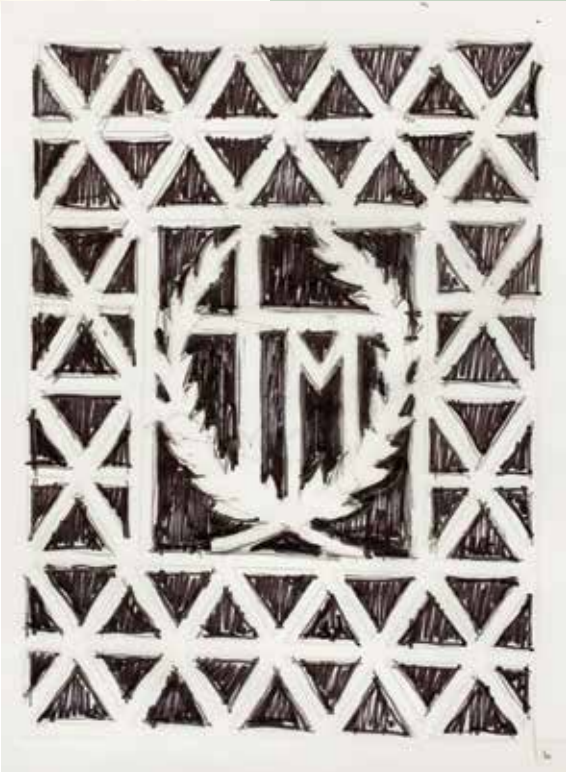
A priest, an actor, a scholar, and a statesman, John Paul II was also an accomplished athlete. As a boy he played soccer and, as a young man, he earned a reputation as an indefatigable hiker, kayaker, and skier — eschewing lifts so he could climb the slopes on his hickory skis. When he served as a young priest in Communist-ruled Poland, he often took students from Lublin University on hiking and camping trips that served as covert retreats, discussing passages from C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* while kayaking, and offering Mass on an overturned canoe.

As the Archbishop of Krakow, Cardinal Wojtyla — nicknamed the "Daredevil of the Tatras" — took an annual two-week trip to Poland's largest ski resort. ("It's unbecoming for a cardinal to ski badly," he explained.) As Holy Father he was famous for jogging in the Vatican gardens and making surreptitious trips to nearby ski slopes whenever he could get away. When cardinals questioned the expense of installing a swimming pool at Castel Gandolfo, the papal summer residence, he quipped that it was "cheaper than another conclave."

"The Church cannot but encourage everything that serves in harmoniously developing the human body," he told Italian athletes in 1981. "It is rightly considered the masterpiece of the whole of creation, not only because of its proportion, strength, and beauty, but also and especially because God has made it His dwelling place and the instrument of an immortal soul, breathing into it that 'breath of life' by which man is made in His image and likeness."

In the early 1990s, the effects of Parkinson's disease, two attempted assassinations, and a series of surgeries began to take a heavy toll on the Holy Father's physical health, yet he still maintained a rigorous schedule. When aides urged him to slow down, he reportedly replied, "*Si crollo, crollo*" ("If I collapse, I collapse"). Continuing with his public ministry while making no effort to conceal his infirmities, he offered the world an example of prayerful perseverance in the midst of great suffering.

Students at Thomas Aquinas College read John Paul's *Veritatis Splendor* ("The Splendor of the Truth") during their Senior Seminar. While lifting weights, mounting the climbing walls, or swimming laps in the athletic center named in his honor, they will have a fitting opportunity to contemplate one of that encyclical's many insights into the corporeal dimension of human morality: "Body and soul are inseparable: in the person, in the willing agent, and in the deliberate act," wrote Pope St. John Paul II. "They stand or fall together."



Forty-One Years in Two Acts

College Bids Farewell and Thank You to Tom Susanka

After 41 years of faithful service, Thomas J. Susanka — erstwhile director of admissions and, later, gift planning — retired from the faculty of Thomas Aquinas College at the end of the 2019-20 academic year.

“I have the gift of being in the right place at the right time,” he says, with characteristic humility and candor, of the fortuitous circumstances that brought him to the College nearly five decades ago. As a sophomore at Portland State University, he “blundered,” as he puts it, into a music class led by Dr. Molly Gustin, who captured his imagination with her love of philosophy and yearning for truth. When Dr. Gustin departed the next year to join the teaching faculty of Thomas Aquinas College, Mr. Susanka followed, enrolling as a freshman in the Class of 1976.

After two years, and then in his mid-20s, Mr. Susanka found that, as a result of his affection for classmate Therese (Rioux), he was looking to quickly settle down. So he wed his sweetheart, returned to Portland State, and completed his bachelor’s degree. Not long thereafter, however, he would come back to the College — not as a student, but as a member of the administrative faculty.

“As director of admissions, he was the perfect man for the difficult job of persuading excellent young men and women to attend what was then a relatively obscure little college,” says Paul Blewett (’85), who is succeeding Mr. Susanka as director of gift planning. “In those early years in Santa Paula, the campus had yet to be landscaped, classrooms and dorms consisted of temporary buildings on wheels, and the College continually hovered on the brink of insolvency. You can imagine just how difficult it would be to

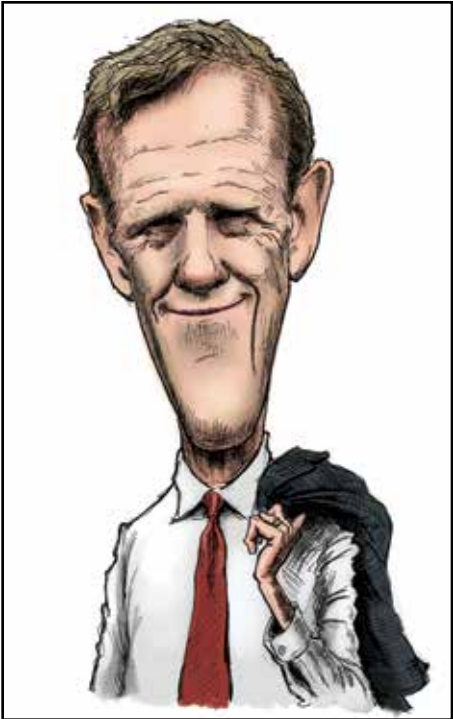


Illustration by Pat Cross (’14)

represent the College to aspiring students and their parents. Yet that’s just what Tom did, and he did it in the only way it could be done — with a thorough commitment to and love of the mission of TAC, and a love and commitment to those whom he recruited.”

Twenty-five years later, Mr. Susanka found his successor as director of admissions, Jon Daly (’99). “Tom is humorous, he is direct, and he is at the same time the most genuine and truly humble man I have known,” says Mr. Daly, who worked in the Admissions Office for four years before taking the helm. “I am blessed to have been among those who knew him and worked with him for so long, and I owe him a deep debt of gratitude for that.”

Populating the College’s student ranks over the course of a quarter-century, however, was only the first act of Mr. Susan-

ka’s extraordinary career. The second act proved no less impressive.

“In 2004 President Tom Dillon offered me new work,” he says. “I would, Tom promised, make many friends and would enjoy conversations with adults. Charming and illuminating as conversation with adolescents and teenagers can be, the prospect of speaking with middle-agers and oldsters was truly an appealing novelty.” Thus he became director of gift planning.

If the greatest challenge facing the College in its earliest days was attracting qualified students, by the early 2000s — when a firmly established reputation began to yield ever more prospects — that challenge shifted to fundraising. “As the College has expanded and, with it, our need for financial aid, planned giving has played an ever more important role in our development efforts,” says Vice President for Advancement Paul J. O’Reilly. “For the last 16 years, Tom has done a marvelous job of helping us both to meet our annual needs and to grow our endowment. He has been so successful because he genuinely cares for our benefactors and has formed abiding friendships with them.”

In both his admissions and development positions, Mr. Susanka’s faith, kindness, and good humor served him well. “As I reflect on our time together, what I find most remarkable is that the Tom Susanka I worked with these past few months is no different than the Tom Susanka I knew and loved as a student,” says Mr. Blewett. “He is a truly good man, whose love and commitment to the College and, more importantly, to God and neighbor, have left an indelible imprint on all those around him.”

Consistent among all the accolades that Mr. Susanka’s colleagues and friends have to offer are these sorts of observations about his character: his virtue, his prayerfulness, his calm strength. When the College produced a promotional video some 15 years ago, Mr. Susanka was chosen as the narrator, not merely because of his clear cadence, but because his voice carries the same warmth that is ever present in his words.

“I have known Tom since he first came to Thomas Aquinas College as a student almost 50 years ago. I have labored with him in that same province of the Lord’s vineyard for almost 40 of those years,” says Peter L. DeLuca, one of the College’s founders and a former president. “He has been a major part of its success and has affected all our lives for the better.”

Adds President Michael F. McLean, “I, along with countless others, have been inspired by Tom’s holiness, joyfulness, and humility. His sense of humor is unfailing and always uplifting. He, his wife, Therese, and their seven children — including six alumni — have been tremendous blessings to the College.”

“The Tom Susanka I worked with these past few months is no different than the Tom Susanka I knew and loved as a student. He is a truly good man, whose love and commitment to the College and, more importantly, to God and neighbor, have left an indelible imprint on all those around him.”

Board of Governors

College Welcomes Newest Governor, John J. Guinee

Based on the witness of several TAC graduates and a strong belief in the vision of the College’s founders, we sent our oldest son, John (’18), to Thomas Aquinas College, sight unseen,” says John J. Guinee, the newest member of the College’s Board of Governors. “Soon, three more of our 10 children — Caroline (’20), Joseph (’21), and Michael (’23) — followed. The results have been nothing short of transformational for both them and our family.”



A managing partner and founder of Constitution Capital Partners, a full-service alternative asset manager focusing on the North American middle-market sector, Mr. Guinee has nearly three decades of experience in finance. He holds a Bachelor’s of Science from Babson College and an MBA from UCLA’s Anderson School of Management, and he serves on boards of directors for eight companies comprising more than \$2 billion in revenue and more than 3,500 employees.

“When I tell the people in my industry that, rather

than going to conventional colleges or business schools, my four oldest children have chosen to study the liberal arts, they are shocked,” he says. “But when I tell them about TAC and its curriculum, they say, ‘Wow, I would love to go to a school like that.’ They can see the value of this program.”

Why? “My professional field is all about assessing risk, making decisions, and convincing people of your decision,” Mr. Guinee explains. “The employees that we all want to hire — the best investment banks, the consulting firms, the top corporations — are the intellectual athletes, those who are versatile enough to quickly adapt to changing circumstances and learn new skills. In a volatile world where information is coming ever faster, if your training is too specialized, or your learning is too rote, you’re going to be easily replaced.”

Mr. Guinee and his wife, Kara, first learned about Thomas Aquinas College when their children began attending Trivium, a classical high school near their home in North Andover, Massachusetts, whose founding headmaster was once a tutor at the College. “We met some other parents who were TAC graduates, and we immediately saw that there was something different about them,” he says. “They talked differently, joked differently; they were thoughtful, intellectually curious, deeply faithful. As we learned more about the College, we saw that it would be the best place to prepare our children not only for adulthood in this world, but for eternity in the world

to come. They would be prepared for whatever life could throw at them.”

Their only regret about sending their children to the College was that its California campus was 3,000 miles away. So the Guinees were naturally delighted when the College acquired its New England campus in 2017.

“When we learned of the potential of TAC gaining an East Coast campus, we committed ourselves to helping in any way possible to make it a reality,” says Mr. Guinee. “We recognized that there are many other families unable or unwilling, for many valid reasons, to send their children 3,000 miles west for college, yet still desperate for them to have the benefit of a TAC education.”

Thanks in no small part to the prayers and support of the Guinees and many others, Thomas Aquinas College, New England, opened its doors in the fall of 2019. “The inaugural New England convocation was an inspirational day,” Mr. Guinee recalls. “It reminded Kara and me of the debt of gratitude we owe the original founders of the College.”

As a member of the Board of Governors, Mr. Guinee hopes to aid the College in its work of preparing students to thrive and witness to the Faith in an increasingly secular world. “These are very trying times for the Church and society, and while it is easy to despair, God has called us to be faithful,” he says. “I believe that the mission of TAC, of educating faithful Catholics, is more vital now than ever before.”

A Soldier's Priest

Alumni Update: Rev. Andrew De Silva ('03)

“I have always been drawn to the Armed Forces,” says Rev. Andrew De Silva ('03). “And one reason I was drawn to my ministry to American soldiers is the great need for good Catholic chaplains among our men and women in uniform.”

The College's 73rd and most recently ordained alumnus priest, Fr. De Silva serves in the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, as well as in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps. He is the parochial vicar at St. Agnes Parish in Clark and a chaplain to the Army's 8th Medical Brigade in Staten Island, New York. It was his lifelong admiration of the military that helped lead him to the Army chaplaincy — and almost kept him from attending Thomas Aquinas College.

For as long as he can recall, the College has been a part of Fr. De Silva's life. His father, Dr. Norman De Silva ('75), was a member of the first graduating class and an early member of the teaching faculty. His mother, Maureen (Barlow '76), was a fellow graduate, and after Dr. De Silva died of cancer in 1985, she married a classmate, James Finley ('76).

Yet, despite these ties to the College, when he graduated high school, his affinity for the Armed Forces brought him instead to the Virginia Military Institute. He had heard that the first year at VMI was “one of the toughest military experiences you could have” — a challenge too appealing to let pass.

Triumphing over this obstacle, however, proved to be a fleeting satisfaction. “I found myself seeking some-

thing more intellectually or philosophically challenging,” Fr. De Silva says. “I decided I would rather search for the truth at Thomas Aquinas.” Thus he transferred to the College as a freshman, where he developed “the ability to think about something and articulate my thoughts on whatever it was that I was studying” — talents, he says, that would serve him well in the years ahead.

After graduating in 2003, Fr. De Silva spent the next three years as a manager for a large-scale wine retailer in Virginia. He had become lackadaisical in his practice of his faith, he admits, until two friends from the College independently surprised him with the same question: “Have you ever considered becoming a priest?”

“For the first time, I actually asked myself that question: ‘Is God calling me?’” Fr. De Silva muses. “The answer came back very clear: ‘Yes.’” With the help of a friendly deacon, he began a 30-day Lenten Ignatian retreat that included three hours of prayer squeezed between shifts in his fulltime work schedule. “At the end of those 30 days of listening to God, I was ready to say back, ‘Yes, I’m going to give my life to You.’”

He left the wine business and became a brother with the Community of St. John in Princeville, Illinois. The community sent him, first, to study theology in France, and then to serve as a campus minister at Seton Hall University, where he earned a master's degree in pastoral ministry and biblical studies. He was also commissioned, while still a brother, as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve Chaplain Corps — and began to discern a vocation to



Rev. Andrew De Silva ('03) offers Palm Sunday Mass for soldiers at the Army Reserve Center in Staten Island, New York.

the diocesan priesthood. In 2016 he became a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Newark.

On Saturday, May 25, 2019, His Eminence Joseph W. Cardinal Tobin, C.Ss.R., conferred Holy Orders upon Fr. De Silva at Newark's Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart. In his first assignments, he is the parochial vicar at St. Agnes while also working with those at the Army Reserve Center on Staten Island. “I’ve dealt with soldiers who are addicted, or soldiers who are suicidal,” Fr. De Silva reflects. “Soldiers struggle on different levels, and I pray that my presence among them will bear good fruit.”

President's Council Profile

Nurse Nancy: From Qui Nhon to Northfield

“It's miraculous,” says Dr. Nancy Faller of the journey that brought her from an evacuation hospital in Vietnam to the fullness of the Catholic faith and then — 25 years later — to Thomas Aquinas College.

“Nurse Nancy,” as she is known, is a beloved presence on the New England campus, where she tends to students' medical needs. She is also a member of the President's Council, the faithful society of friends, each giving at least \$1,000 a year, who provide the backbone of support to the College's Annual Fund. Yet she would likely be neither the campus nurse nor a College benefactor — nor even a practicing Catholic — were it not for a providential encounter with a blinded American soldier in Qui Nhon in 1970.

The story begins several years earlier, when Dr. Faller, one of eight children in a Catholic family from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, applied for an Army nursing scholarship, never imagining that, by the time she graduated from St. Joseph's College in 1968, the U.S. would be embroiled in a rapidly escalating war in Vietnam. Eighteen months after her graduation, she was the night supervisor in the Army's 67th Evacuation Hospital, located at the end of a runway on the edge of the South China Sea.

Among the many wounded soldiers Dr. Faller treated were a few whose names she would never forget. One was Sgt. David Rioux ('75), a native of Maine serving in the 101st Airborne Division who was blinded and critically injured by a mortar rigged to a tripwire. “He was there a long time, so everybody remembered him,” says Dr. Faller. “I even know what bed he was in; he was in the fourth bed from the end on the right-hand side.”

Within a year of returning stateside, Sgt. Rioux enrolled as a member of the inaugural class at Thomas Aquinas College. “There was an organization, Recording for the Blind, which would put books on reel-to-reel tapes,” he recalls. “Once I had the recordings I needed for the curriculum, the rest was memory.” After graduating in 1975, he went on to earn both master's and doctoral degrees in philosophy at the Université Laval in Quebec.

Dr. Faller, meanwhile, became an accomplished nurse and published expert in WOC (Wound, Ostomy,



and Continence) Nursing, eventually earning a master's degree from Russell Sage College and a doctorate in nursing from the University of Massachusetts. Yet her faith had waned. “When I went to nursing conferences all over the world — Africa, Australia, Europe, Asia, South America — I never went to Mass on Sunday,” she admits. “I lived a fairly dissolute life. Anything you can do wrong in the Ten Commandments, I'd been there, done that.”

Then providence intervened. In 1995, while working with another visually impaired veteran from New England, Dr. Faller decided, “totally out of the blue,” to inquire about the blinded Maine native she remembered from 25 years earlier in Qui Nhon. “I wrote David's name down on a piece of paper, and I said, ‘Ask the people at the VA blind program whether they know him.’”

Within months, Doctors Faller and Rioux were pen pals. “He would send me letters that were typed on his computer using the Flipper screen-reader,” she reminisces, “and I would send him audiotaped letters.” Their missives covered a wide range of topics, including faith. During one exchange, Dr. Rioux remarked that “Catholicism is the flower of Christianity” — a passing comment with eternal consequences.

“In that one instant,” Dr. Faller observes, “I knew what the Catholic Church is, what it teaches; everything is true. I went to Confession, and started going to Mass

every day after that. My whole life changed.” Says Dr. Rioux, modestly, “Sometimes, the Holy Spirit uses the things we say to make things happen.”

In the years to follow, Dr. Faller took up residence in Turners Falls, Massachusetts, and, in no small part because of Dr. Rioux, became an admirer and benefactor of Thomas Aquinas College. In 2007, when a prep school tried to sell its campus in nearby Northfield (price: \$60 million), she and some friends began praying the Rosary for the property to somehow come into the College's possession.

Ten years later, those prayers were answered when, through the largesse of the National Christian Foundation, the campus became the home of Thomas Aquinas College, New England. Dr. Faller began attending daily Mass in Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel, after which, one Saturday last summer, Associate Dean Tom Kaiser approached her in his golf cart.

“You're a nurse!” he exclaimed. “Do you want a job?” Dr. Faller was delighted: “You're asking me if I want to work here? Of course, I would love to!” Without a second thought, she set up an infirmary in Gould Hall.

“Let's face it, she's massively overqualified to be a campus nurse, but that doesn't matter,” says Dr. Rioux. “Her enthusiasm and love for the College are unlimited. It combines two things that she loves: the life of the mind and the life of the Faith. It's the perfect place for her to be, and she can contribute a great deal.”

In addition to lending her professional expertise, Nurse Nancy contributes as a member of the President's Council, having gifted the College with the non-taxable assets of an IRA account this spring. “Working at the school, I wanted to do something for the Chapel,” she says, noting that her gift has been dedicated to that purpose. “I can't think of any place I'd rather work or support.”

And what better way, in 2020, to commemorate two meaningful anniversaries? It has been 25 years since Doctors Faller and Rioux reacquainted — and 50 since their lives crossed paths at that evacuation hospital in Vietnam.

In Memoriam

Frances O'Connor Hardart, 1931–2020

Frances O'Connor Hardart, a longtime member of the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors, died on February 19.

“Frannie Hardart served on our board for 14 years,” says President Michael F. McLean. “She loved the College’s educational program as well as its commitment to the Catholic faith, and she believed that our graduates offered great hope for the future of the Church and the country. She remained a close friend of the College and a generous benefactor even after her retirement.”

A native of Waterford, New York, Mrs. Hardart served as a member of the Board of Directors of her family’s business, Mohawk Fine Papers, Inc. She held a bachelor’s degree from Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart and studied art history at the University Firenze, Italy. In 1961 she married Dr. Frank Hardart, Jr., a distinguished obstetrician at St. Vincent’s Hospital and Medical Center in Manhattan. The couple was blessed with six children: Frank III, George, Richard, Marie Therese (Tracie), Christopher, and Michael, as well as 12 grandchildren.

In 1979 both Dr. and Mrs. Hardart were invited to become members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. In 1986, Mrs. Hardart became a Dame in the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta (Order of Malta), American Association U.S.A., later serving on its Board of Councilors and holding the position of Hospitaller. She held numerous positions for the Order over the years and participated in many pilgrimages to Lourdes.

Dr. Hardart retired from practice in 1990, the same year that he was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease), and passed away in 2000. It was during this trying time that the couple met Dr. Thomas E. Dillon, then-president of Thomas Aquinas College, and began enjoying many wonderful visits with him, his wife, Terri, and other members of the College community. Mrs. Hardart had long been thinking about adopting a faithfully Catholic institution and becoming one of its “spiritual alumni.” Learning about the College and visiting with its enthusiastic president convinced her that she had found the right place.

When the Hardarts were asked to help in the construction of St. Thérèse of Lisieux Residence Hall, it was as if they were receiving a special affirmation of their conviction: Their only daughter was named for the “Little Flower,” whom they considered, with prayerful respect, a lifelong friend of the family. The Hardarts responded to the request with a generous gift for the building project.

Not long after her husband’s death, Mrs. Hardart was offered and accepted an invitation to become a member of the College’s Board of Governors. She faithfully served in that capacity until her retirement in 2014, at which point the Board granted her emerita status in honor of her many years of exemplary work.

“Frannie’s faith, hope, and charity were an inspiration to me and to all who knew her,” says Dr. McLean. “I will miss her zeal for Christ and her advice and counsel very much.”



In Memoriam

Barbara Marie Friedrich — May 13, 2019
President’s Council member

Ronald D. Heveran — July 4, 2019
Benefactor

Patricia Kessler ('87) — November 1, 2019
Alumna

Winifred Catherine Buckley
December 6, 2019
*Benefactor, sister-in-law of Chaplain
Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J.*

Peter Bachmann — December 15, 2019
Father of Rev. Mark Bachmann, O.S.B. ('82)

Robert Richard — January 22, 2020
*Grandfather of John ('13), Robert ('13),
Carmel ('15), Demi ('15), Jeannette ('17),
Elizabeth ('18), Robert ('20), Bernadette ('22),
Thomas ('22), and Domenic ('22)*

Mary Lynn Toland
January 29, 2020
*Grandmother of Sarah (Susanka '97), Rebekah
(Andrews '01), and Stephen Sims ('10)*

Stephen Atchley — February 16, 2020
*Husband of Patrice (Ford '81); father of Liam ('14),
Clare ('12), Angelique (Cotugno '14), Juliet ('18),
and Dominique ('22)*

Frances O'Connor Hardart
February 19, 2020
Emerita member of the Board of Governors

Ken J. Kaiser ('78) — March 28, 2020
*Husband of Patti (Grimm '79); brother of Associate
Dean Thomas Kaiser ('75), Kathy (Eubanks '77),
and David ('79); father of Will ('03) and John ('07)*

James Aloysius Sladky, M.D.
March 31, 2020
*Father of Joseph ('89) and Donna (Khattar '91),
grandfather of Christopher Khattar ('18)
and Teresa ('20)*

Phillip A. Wodzinski — May 16, 2020
Father of Tutor Dr. Phillip D. Wodzinski

Edna Rye — May 17, 2020
*Mother of Jacob Coke, dining services manager on the
California campus*

TAC.Estate

College Offers Free & Simple Online Will-Writing Tool

“I don’t intend any dark humor,” says Paul Blewett ('85), Thomas Aquinas College’s newly appointed director of gift planning. “But if you’ve got a few minutes to spare — and with all this ‘sheltering in place’ going on, most of us do — this is the perfect time to write your will.”

Well before COVID-19 ground most business and social interaction throughout the world to a halt, the College was planning to offer an excellent estate-planning tool — free of charge — to friends and benefactors. “When everything shut down, we thought about putting those plans on hold,” says Mr. Blewett. “But then we thought, why *not* now? This is a chance to help people deal quickly with one of life’s less celebrated obligations — and at a convenient moment.”

It can, of course, also be a way to support Thomas Aquinas College, but not necessarily.

“Our estate-planning tool, available online at TAC.estate, offers an opportunity to consider charitable bequests as part of your legacy plan,” adds Mr. Blewett. “If you choose to consider a gift to Thomas Aquinas College in your will, we would be honored to be a part of your legacy. But regardless of your decision, the tool is completely free and available with no expectations or strings attached.”

In his experience, Mr. Blewett finds, too many people postpone making their wills, or never write them at all, because they fear that the process will be laborious, drawn-out, and expensive. “But the only way to make sure that, after you die, the fruits of your labor will be put to use in a manner you approve of, consistent with your values, is to write a will,” he says. “That’s why we are putting this service out there, so that our friends see that they *can* plan for their own legacy, rather than leaving it to the government to make these decisions for them.”

The College’s simple estate planning service requires no visits to a lawyer’s office or even a significant investment of time. “For most people who don’t need more complex estate planning, the online form takes about 20 minutes to complete,” says Mr. Blewett, a licensed attorney and a graduate of the University of Notre Dame Law School. “And the wills produced through this service comply with probate laws in every state.”

The modest effort required to complete the form is well worth it. “Everyone needs a will, a legal document for deciding what legacy we would like to leave at the end of life,” says Mr. Blewett. “It’s an important way to take care of our loved ones. With a will to guide them, they can know and follow our wishes and suffer no unnecessary stress or sorrow.”

To get started on this guided, step-by-step process, simply direct your web browser to TAC.estate. The service is available, for free, to all friends of Thomas Aquinas College.



Paul Blewett ('85), director of gift planning

“If you choose to consider a gift to Thomas Aquinas College in your will, we would be honored to be a part of your legacy. But regardless of your decision, the tool is completely free and available with no expectations or strings attached.”

Foundations of Freedom

Why We Read *The Federalist*

By Dr. John J. Goyette

The following remarks are adapted from Dean John J. Goyette's report to the Board of Governors at its November 16, 2019, meeting. They are part of an ongoing series of talks about why the College includes certain texts in its curriculum. To read the rest of the series, see thomasaquinas.edu/whywestudy.

It is to some degree obvious why we read *The Federalist*, since it is among the key texts of the American founding. But I would like to provide some more concrete reasons for its inclusion in our curriculum by sketching a few of the key themes. Before I do that, it is probably good to set out a few historical facts.

The Federalist was originally published as a series of newspaper articles whose aim was to convince the states to ratify the newly drafted federal constitution. They were composed by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, appearing in print under the pseudonym "Publius," a name drawn from Publius Valerius, the ancient Roman who helped to establish the Roman Republic. I'm going to focus on Hamilton and Madison since the bulk of *The Federalist* was written by them — Jay became seriously ill after composing Federalist #5.

Alexander Hamilton

Let me begin with Alexander Hamilton. A few biographical notes: Hamilton was one of the founders, a protégé of George Washington. As the first secretary of the Treasury, he was responsible for establishing a national bank. Hamilton was killed in a duel with Aaron Burr, who was the vice president at the time.

In Federalist #1, Hamilton sets the tone for the series by calling attention to the unique opportunity of the founders to establish a new government by reflection and choice, in contrast to most existing governments, which were founded by force.

"Hamilton sets the tone for the series by calling attention to the unique opportunity of the founders to establish a new government by reflection and choice, in contrast to most existing governments, which were founded by force."

Perhaps the most prominent idea that Hamilton promotes is that of a strong executive as provided by the U.S. Constitution. In Federalist #70 he reminds his readers of the problems with a weak executive: "A feeble Executive implies a feeble execution of the government. A feeble execution is but another phrase for a bad execution; and a government ill executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, a bad government."

Federalist #70 is also famous for defending the separation of powers articulated in the U.S. Constitution. By "separation of powers" I do not only mean a system of checks and balances — one branch of government functioning as a check against the other. Hamilton also insists that the powers separately entrusted to each branch are

suitably assigned and delineated in the U.S. Constitution. In Federalist #70, for example, he argues that it is fitting that the executive branch be placed in the hands of a single individual because of the energy required for executive work, whereas the legis-



lative branch ought to have many members, since that makes it more apt to "deliberation and wisdom," and better able to secure the privileges and interests of the people.

Another key theme in the articles by Hamilton is the principle of judicial review, which specifies the most important role of the judicial branch. He argues in Federalist #78 that the judiciary is responsible for reviewing laws and statutes to ensure that they are consistent with the Constitution. Hamilton argues that to presume that the legislature is the sole judge of the constitutionality of its own actions is to give it an authority that is unchecked. He argues that it is the judicial branch that protects the will of the people as expressed in the Constitution. The principle of judicial review was affirmed by the Supreme Court, and articulated in particular by Justice John Marshall, in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), arguably the single most important decision in American constitutional law.

James Madison

More than any other founder, with the remotely possible exception of Gouverneur Morris, James Madison is responsible for the particular form of government set out by the founders. Recognizing the failings of the Articles of Confederation after the Revolutionary War, he was the principal organizer of the Constitutional Convention and the principal author of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. For this reason he is sometimes called the "Father of the Constitution."

Along with Thomas Jefferson, Madison was a strong advocate for individual liberties, especially freedom of religion. He served as secretary of state under Thomas Jefferson, during which time he oversaw the Louisiana Purchase, and he later succeeded Jefferson as the fourth president of the United States.

Madison, like Hamilton, contends that the American founding could not achieve long-term success unless the Constitution were regarded as the "fundamental law." In Federalist #49 Madison argues for the need to cultivate a reverence for the Constitution and to make amendments infrequent and difficult to enact. Here we see an important difference between Madison and Jefferson. Whereas Jefferson described the Constitution as a "living document" which must keep up with the progress of the human mind, Madison was much less sanguine about the wisdom of frequent change. In this respect, Madison was much more prudent and sober-minded than Jefferson, who is famous for saying that "the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants" — which he described as "its natural manure."

Federalist #10 is probably the most famous, and perhaps the weightiest, of the articles of *The Federalist*. It contains a lengthy discussion of how to address the problem of faction. By faction is meant any group of citizens, whether a minority or a majority, united by some common interest or passion that moves them in a direction contrary to the rights of other citizens or the interests of the whole community. The rich and the poor are perhaps the most obvious examples of political faction.

Previous statesmen and political philosophers sought to reduce or eliminate the causes of faction. For example, they proposed ways in which law and public policy could

maximize the size of the middle class and minimize the number of those who are extremely rich or extremely poor, so as to reduce competing class interests. They also sought to produce a uniformity of habits and opinions by some form of common education so that common interests would prevail over private interests.

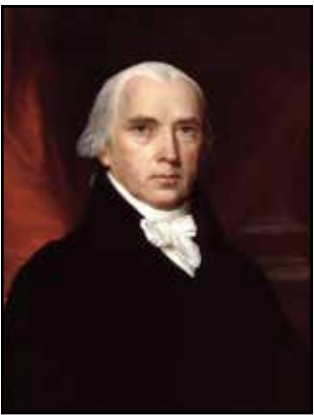
Madison rejects this line of thought. He argues that any attempt to reduce the causes of faction would either eliminate human freedom (in which case the remedy would be worse than the disease), or would be foolish and impractical. This is because — as Madison puts it — the seeds of faction are sowed into the very nature of man; they arise from "[t]he diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate." Since Madison regards the protection of these diverse faculties or abilities as "the first object of government," any attempt to make human beings equal by force or artifice, or to radically curtail the property rights that follow from differing abilities, would necessarily eliminate human freedom. Moreover, since unequal faculties of acquiring property necessarily produce "different interests and parties," attempting to overcome the causes of faction by common education is bound to fail because faction is rooted in natural inequality.

According to Madison, the only remaining alternative is to control the effects of faction. The solution to the problem of faction is contained in the very form of government that is proposed by the U.S. Constitution, that is, a democratic republic. Here we must distinguish between a pure democracy — a society consisting of a small number of citizens who meet in person to deliberate and administer the government — and a republic or representative democracy — a political society where the people are sovereign, but government is administered by a small number of elected officials.

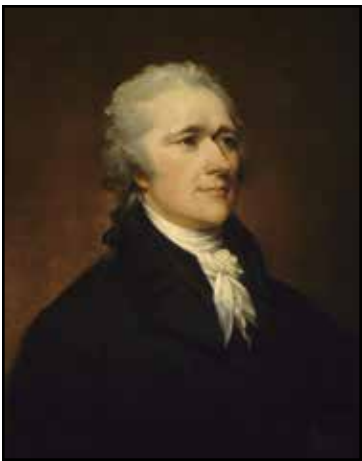
Madison sees two distinct advantages of a democratic republic. First, by placing the powers of government in the hands of a few elected officials, the odds are greater that those who rule will have a great wisdom to discern the true interests of the people and a love of justice that will make them less likely to be swayed by partial or temporary interests. In short, the interests and opinions of the people will be refined and enlarged by passing them through the medium of elected representatives. Second, a representative democracy can include a greater number of citizens and be spread over a much larger territory, which, according to Madison, is the principal advantage of republican government. The greater the sphere, the greater the number of parties and interests, which will make it less probable that any one party or interest will dominate.

In other words, the solution to the problem of faction is to multiply the number of factions! By increasing the number of factions, you can decrease the probability that any one faction will prevail over the interests of the others. While Madison recognizes that no form of government can prevent an unjust majority from overthrowing the rights and interests of the minority, he argues that republican government, and more particularly an extended republic, is the form of government that best safeguards liberty against the tyranny of the majority.

Thus we can see that, even though the articles of *The Federalist* were written in response to a particular historical moment, they address perennial themes about the nature of government, of man, of freedom and equality. These themes underlie almost every political debate, irrespective of time or place, and understanding them is essential for any American and all true lovers of liberty.



James Madison



Alexander Hamilton

Student Life



1. In January, students from the New England campus made their first-ever trip to the March for Life in Washington, D.C. ... 2. ... while students in California made their annual pilgrimage to the Walk for Life West Coast in San Francisco. 3. Musicians perform for their friends in St. Cecilia Hall at the Spring Schubertiade. 4. The first-ever Spring Open-Mic night ... 5. ... and Mardi Gras dance in New England. 6. Before the coronavirus forced students to go home early, members of the College community held a Rosary procession to pray for health and safety.

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



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



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