



THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

COMMENCEMENT 2017

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A Centenary Celebration

Providence Places Commencement 2017 on 100th Anniversary of Fatima Apparition

When family, friends, and members of the Class of 2017 gathered for Thomas Aquinas College's 43rd Commencement exercises on May 13, they celebrated not only the accomplishments of the 91 graduates, but also an important anniversary in the life of the Church.

"Who can ignore the fact that your graduation occurs on the day that the whole Catholic world celebrates with joy the centenary of Our Lady of Fatima's visit to the children in that town?" asked the 2017 Commencement Speaker, Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV, Superior General of the Sisters of Life. Mother Agnes Mary applauded the seniors for choosing Our Lady of Fatima as their class patron. "Mary knows her children," she smiled. "And she knows you." (See page 3.)

Throughout the day, the miracles and legacy of Fatima served as a spiritual backdrop. That Our Lady chose to appear to three uneducated peasant children provided a constant, subtle reminder that the graduates, rather than taking pride in their academic achievements, must remain humble and docile to God's will. Likewise, the visionaries' role in bringing about the downfall of Communism served as a potent example of the great good that the faithful can achieve when they put their trust in Our Lord and are responsive to His mother's prompting.

"At Fatima Our Lady made clear that we, her disciples, have a decisive role to play in the outcomes of history," said Mother Agnes Mary. "Today Our Lady entrusts you, 2017 graduates of Thomas Aquinas College, with a task she repeat-



edly entrusts only to the humble and the bold — by the prayer and witness of your lives, be the heralds of an undreamed-of but longed-for reality to all who do not yet know Jesus Christ."

"Children of God"

The College's 43rd Commencement exercises began that morning at the Baccalaureate Mass, with Rev. Paul Scalia, Episcopal Vicar for Clergy in the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, serving as the principal celebrant and homilist. Vested in red for this Mass of the Holy Spirit, Fr. Scalia, too, spoke of Fatima. He observed in his homily that, just hours earlier, His Holiness Pope Francis had canonized two of the shepherd children to whom Our Lady appeared. "For those who seek wisdom, the Holy Father has put forward for veneration and imitation two completely obscure, illiterate, and unaccomplished

children," he said. "It was the *childlike* at Fatima who received true wisdom." (See page 10.)

Members of the Class of 2017, Fr. Scalia urged, must be "children of God who rejoice not in just the knowledge of the things of this world, but in the wisdom from above." Having spent four years "striving for wisdom and advancing in learning," he added, they were well suited for this endeavor. "You have been blessed to study at a school that understands this Christian paradox: that only the childlike attain true wisdom and learning. You have been blessed to study under the patronage of a saint whose intellect soared because he was first willing to humble himself."

"Dare to Dream"

Shortly after the Mass, the congregation reconvened on the academic quadrangle for the Commencement ceremony. For their Class Speaker, the seniors elected Joseph Rivera of Kendall Park, New Jersey. "We have become lovers of wisdom, and have spent a short time in intense study so that we might spend a lifetime in openness to the truth in all its manifestations," Mr. Rivera remarked. "We rejoice in what we have learned, not on our own account, but because God has used these four years of study to draw us closer to Himself." (See page 4.)

As part of the Commencement ceremony, the College honored Mother Agnes Mary for her faithful service to the Church, presenting her with the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion, the College's highest honor. (See story, below.) Mother then delivered her Commencement Address, telling the graduates that, having fulfilled "one of life's goals," they could now "dream of fulfilling God's plans and purposes" for their lives.

"Today Thomas Aquinas College presents you to us, and invites you to take your place among the educated citizenry of the Church, our nation, and the world," said Mother Agnes Mary. "With Our Lady of Fatima to assist you, dare to dream, dreams full of truth and beauty and goodness. For the world needs your dreams."

Commencement 2017

Video, audio, photo slideshows & more: thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2017

The Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion

College Awards Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV, its Highest Honor

"Our speaker today has devoted her life to the defense of these innocents — and to the care of their mothers," said President Michael F. McLean at Commencement 2017.

The innocents to whom Dr. McLean was referring were children in their mothers' wombs; their devoted defender, Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV, Superior General of the Sisters of Life. As part of the 2017 Commencement exercises, the College awarded its highest honor — the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion — to Mother Agnes Mary in recognition of her lifetime of fidelity, prayer, and promotion of a Culture of Life.

The Medallion, established by the College's Board of Governors in 1975, exists to recognize and honor those who have demonstrated, through their lives and work, an extraordinary dedication to God and His church. Past recipients include St. Teresa of Calcutta; Servant of God



Rev. John Hardon, S.J.; and the "founder and father" of Mother Agnes Mary's religious order, John Cardinal O'Connor, the late Archbishop of New York.

The Sisters of Life are both a contemplative and an active community, the primary work of which is prayer on behalf of vulnerable human life. Their apostolic works include a "Holy Respite," where pregnant guests may live in the spiritual environment of a religious house, and a "Visitation Mission," offering hope and providing practical resources to women for whom pregnancy creates a crisis. The

Sisters also host a variety of retreats to support young women and to invite those who have suffered from abortion back to the Lord's merciful love.

Mother Agnes Mary has been a member of the order since its inception in 1991, and she has served as its superior general since 1993. Previously she earned a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, after which she worked as a professor of psychology at Columbia University and the College of William and Mary. She also served as an academic and clinical psychologist, focusing on family intervention, mother-child relationships, and children with special needs. In addition to her work with the Sisters of Life, Mother Agnes Mary is the chairperson of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, a collaborative body committed to the "full flowering" of religious life in the United States in complete unity

with the Church and its teachings.

"Mother Agnes Mary has shown an exemplary loyalty and devotion to the Holy Father and the magisterium of the Church in her leadership as Superior General of the Sisters of Life and as chair of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious," said Chairman of the Board of Governors R. Scott Turicchi. "She has worked tirelessly to proclaim, support, and defend the teachings of the Church and to advance the mission of Christ on earth."

Upon receiving the Medallion, Mother Agnes Mary thanked the College for the honor, which she called "a treasured affirmation" of her community's efforts. "I receive it on behalf of our sisters, of our coworkers and, most especially, on behalf of those women and men whom we have served through our mission," she said. "It is an affirmation of the Spirit's work within the lives of these people."

“To learn to Live and Think as Catholics”

Dr. McLean’s Remarks to the Class of 2017 at the President’s Dinner

Three recent books on similar themes are creating quite a stir these days: *Out of the Ashes*, by Providence College professor Anthony Esolen; *The Benedict Option*, by blogger Rod Dreher; and *Strangers in a Strange Land*, by Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput. All, in one way or another, take up the question of how to live out the Catholic faith in an increasingly alien and hostile culture.



I chose to read Archbishop Chaput’s book first for several reasons. First, I have met him, and he has visited the College, and I know him to be a deeply intelligent and faithful Catholic. Second, he is an archbishop in the Catholic Church and leads a major archdiocese in the United States. And third, the reviews that I have read of these three books suggested to me that the hope and courage which lie at the heart of Chaput’s analysis are close to what I myself believe are required of Catholics in today’s world and, more importantly, best reflect the institutional commitments and mission of Thomas Aquinas College.

So, as you prepare to leave this campus, which has been your home for four years, and as you prepare to engage the culture as mature and educated young Catholic adults, I want to share a few key ideas from *Strangers in a Strange Land* in the hope that you will find Archbishop Chaput’s thoughts encouraging and edifying, as indeed I have, and that you will find the time to take up his book yourselves to get a fuller sense of what he is proposing to all Catholics, but especially to you who are the future of the Church.

Offering an account of why he wrote the book, Archbishop Chaput cites as a watershed event the 2015 Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, in which the Court ruled that states must license “same-sex marriages” and recognize similar “marriages” when lawfully performed out of state. In this decision, Chaput says, “the Court [not only] struck down the nation’s traditional understanding of marriage ... but changed the meaning of family by wiping away the need for the natural relationships — husband and wife, mother and father — at the heart of these institutions.”

Penetrating more deeply into the contemporary situation, Chaput points to tendencies within democracy itself that lie at the root of the problem. He says, “to protect the sovereignty of individuals, democracy separates them from one another. And to achieve that, the state sooner or later seeks to break down any relationship or entity that stands in its way. That includes every kind of mediating institution, from fraternal organizations, to synagogues and churches, to the family itself. This is why Alexis de Tocqueville observed in *Democracy in America*

that ‘despotism, which is dangerous at all times, [is] particularly to be feared in democratic centuries.’”

Archbishop Chaput continues, “Tocqueville saw that the strength of American society, the force that kept the tyrannical logic of democracy in creative check, was the prevalence and intensity of religious belief. Religion is to democracy as a bridle to a horse. Religion moderates democracy because it appeals to an authority higher than democracy itself.”

Turning to the question of a Catholic response to the contemporary situation, Chaput speaks to all of us, and especially to you who will help chart the Church’s future course, when he says, “Christianity is worthless as a leaven in society unless people actually believe in Jesus Christ, follow the Gospel, love the Church, and act like real disciples.” Helping to bring this about is one way to describe the work of Thomas Aquinas College and to describe what you have been endeavoring to do in your years here.

In pointing the way for Catholics in our time — and in so doing distinguishing himself from Dreher’s *Benedict Option* — Archbishop Chaput cites, along with Tocqueville, two other great lights from our educational program: “We can’t simply withdraw from public affairs. Saint Benedict could retreat to the Italian countryside, but Augustine was a bishop intimately tied to his people and their society. For Augustine, the classic civic virtues named by Cicero — prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance — can be renewed and elevated, to the benefit of all citizens, by the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity.”

I am paraphrasing Chaput when I say, inspired by St. Augustine, that you need to approach 21st century America with a spirit not of anger, frustration, or despair, but with a spirit of *clear judgment* and *love*; a spirit of *gratitude*, thanking God for all the good in America, not just in the past, but today; a spirit of *patience*, recognizing that you are not going to win many of the culture-shaping struggles you will face — at least not in your own time, but only in God’s time; and a spirit of *prudence* and *practicality*, doing what can be done rather than anguishing over what cannot.

All of these should be animated by the gift of *hope*, which, in Archbishop Chaput’s words, “creates in us a desire for heaven and eternal life as our [true] happiness.” They should be animated as well by a robust reliance on *Divine Providence*, “the understanding that God has a plan for each of your lives and for the whole world, and that ... His plan is good.”

Archbishop Chaput continues: “Your calling as Christians is to make Christ known in the world. To hand on the hope that fills your hearts, and to work for God’s justice in our nation, honoring all that remains beautiful and good in it.”

Archbishop Chaput sums up his advice by referencing three of Jesus’ most memorable images: salt, light, and leaven. “Leaven mixes with flour and makes the dough rise. We sprinkle salt on our food and the meal tastes better. We turn on the lights so we can see. The yeast, salt, and light aren’t the focus of our attention. Rather, they impart their qualities to something else to make it better. And so it should be with the work of the Church — your work — in the world.” You must show forth your moral and intellectual virtue and your faith, your hope, and your charity whatever your circumstances may be, and in that way, as we pray daily at the College, “renew the face of the earth.”

As you live out your faith in the world, and as you bring your virtues and talents to bear on the problems we face, do not lose sight of what is most important: “What matters,” Archbishop Chaput adds, “aren’t projects, programs, studies, procedures, committees, structures, synods, or plans ... the only essential thing is to be a saint.”

Which brings Archbishop Chaput, and which brings me, to the place of Thomas Aquinas College in the Church and to the significance of the four years you have spent here studying, praying, cultivating friendships, and growing in virtue. To be the saints that the Church needs today it is essential that you have, in the Archbishop’s words, “learned to live and think as Catholics.” That is what we have tried to help you do, and the confidence I have in our educational program, in our faculty, in our staff, in our chaplains, in God’s providence and in His grace, and in you gives me all the assurance I need that we have been successful.

Helping the young to “learn to live and think as Catholics” is the work of Thomas Aquinas College. We were given a tremendous opportunity to do that work here in Santa Paula, and we have now been presented with an opportunity to do that work in New England, work which we will do if we receive the approval of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. God seems to have opened a door there which He is encouraging us to walk through, for, we believe, as Archbishop Chaput wrote, “that [today] we need to create places where Catholic culture can flourish and be handed down to the next generation.”

We trust that there are many more out there who have not had the opportunity to come to Thomas Aquinas College — but who, like you, have the ability and willingness to succeed in our program and to receive the Catholic intellectual, moral, and spiritual formation we are trying to provide. Following Archbishop Chaput’s suggestion, one of the tasks of Thomas Aquinas College in today’s Church is to find those young people and, if it be God’s will, to have the privilege of doing together with them what we have had the privilege of doing together with you. Thank you.

Commencement Festivities

1. Michael Mulvanny tosses his text onto the fire at the thesis draft-burning party. 2. Suzanne Urbancic ('18), Kateri Brown ('17), Mary Bridget O'Hara ('17), and Thomas O'Hara ('18) examine a class yearbook that the juniors presented to the seniors at the Junior-Senior Dinner. 3. Members of the Class of 2017 meet up after completing their last exam ... 4. ... then take a celebratory swim in one of the College's ponds. 5. Alexander Sebastian proudly announces the Class of 2017's accomplishments to the underclassmen during lunch in St. Joseph Commons. 6. Students perform at the Parents' and Alumni Associations' Taco Dinner.



“Dream of Living the High Calling for which You were Created”

Excerpts from the Commencement Address of Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV

Dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima

With this ceremony, dear graduates, with the grace of God, you fulfill one of childhood’s dreams: graduation from college.

These years at Thomas Aquinas College, I trust, have been something of a “cenacle” experience. You are blessed to be among those who have found the “pearl of great price” and to inherit the intellectual and the sacred tradition of the Catholic Church.

During these four years you have, no doubt, with your classmates worshipped the living God; forged friendships, which, God willing, will last a lifetime; studied and discussed the works of the world’s greatest thinkers, the natural sciences, and the arts; created and played together; discovered, learned, and competed together and against one another — and in all of this you have honed skills which will serve you well as you begin the great undertaking of adult life.

Our Lady of Fatima

But who can ignore the fact that your graduation occurs on the day the whole Catholic world celebrates with joy the centenary of Our Lady of Fatima’s visit to the children in that town? You rightly choose her as your patron.

Mary knows her children, and she knows you.

Notice how Mary speaks when she speaks with such great tenderness to the Mexican people in Guadalupe, who did not yet know her son, saying: *Am I not here, who am your Mother? Are you not ... under my protection? ... Are you not in the folds of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need?*

But in Fatima (before given the title Star of the New Evangelization), Mary exhorted believers in her son, Jesus Christ, to a greater spiritual fervor in response to the grave perils which confronted a world at war. Our Lady wanted to make clear to her son’s disciples that they had a decisive role to play in history. Her call is timeless.

There is no immutable destiny, either for individuals, nations, or cultures. Mary exhorts us to call upon her to assist us in realizing God’s dreams for our lives and for the world. God gave the people of Portugal the miracle of the sun to underscore the validity of His mother’s message. And it was the response to her message of faithful prayer for the “conversion of Russia” — sustained through decades — that changed the course of the last century’s history.

To see vividly the power of faith and prayer, let us look at two moments in the life of Pope John Paul II, a son with total devotion to Our Lady.

The first moment, your parents and grandparents will remember, occurred on this day — May 13 — in 1981, in an attempted assassination of Our Holy Father, in broad daylight, in St. Peter’s Square. He was brought to the threshold of death by gunshot wounds. But recovering later, he requested the text of the “secret” of Fatima, and he would then explain his survival saying: “One hand fired the shot. Another (the hand of the Virgin Mary) guided it.” It was “a mother’s hand” that deflected the fateful bullet. And Pope John Paul II later visited Fatima and presented the bullet, which was intended to silence and to kill him, to Mary. The weapon she made powerless



is now a jewel in her crown, a sign of her victory.

The second moment would occur 10 years later. Desiring to fulfill Our Lady of Fatima’s request, our Holy Father made a formal Act of Consecration of the world (and of Russia) to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1984. Our Lady had promised that prayer and the consecration of Russia would stop the spread of Communism. Just five years later, the icon of the division between Western democracy and Communism, the Berlin Wall, fell. And it would be only two years later that the Communist regime of Soviet Russia — one of the world’s two great superpowers — collapsed. History has no immutable destiny. Faith and prayer are forces which influence history, and in the end, prayer is more powerful than bullets — whether emotional or real — and faith, more powerful than armies.

Dare to Dream

Young graduates, with Our Lady of Fatima to assist you, dare to dream, dreams full of truth and beauty and goodness. For the world needs your dreams.

Today’s ceremony is one of the rituals of young adult life which signifies that the stewardship of the awesome gift of your life is being passed into your hands. Receive the gift with a full measure of gratitude to your parents for the gift of life; with gratitude to those who, by their lives, their love, and their witness have led you to encounter the living God and to a vision of the Mystical Body of Christ, His church; and with gratitude to those who have shared with you the great adventure and dignity that is to be found in human life. The ways in which you steward the gift of your life are the most fundamental contribution you can make to the building of a Culture of Life and a civilization of love.

Graduates, dare to dream of living the high calling for which you were created as the central focus of your life. Every human life, as you know, is a question — as our Holy Father Pope John Paul II would put it — to which the assent and the gift of one’s love, given and received, totally and unreservedly, is the answer. Love is, therefore, the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.

To live vocationally requires a commitment to a life of continual conversion in the Lord. Then, whatever vocation you are blessed to receive — to family life and marriage, to a participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, to consecration to the Lord as a religious, or in the lay state — may you live your vocation with such vision that your life contributes to the building of the earthly city, to human culture, in ways befitting the human person.

Graduates, dare to dream of living always within the bonds of communion founded within the Eucharistic Lord. As you depart this hallowed place, you will engage a wider, more difficult, world; yet at the same time a world replete with potential and possibilities. Therefore, to steady your life’s course, seek the bonds of community with other believers who will champion your aspirations, call you to accountability, strengthen your Christian resolve to walk humbly with God amid a polyphony of discordant voices, and challenge you to open your hearts to the gift of God’s grace and light, which is given equally in days of delight and difficulty.

I pray your life will be a compelling sign of contradiction. Find friends and points of cooperation among

those who do not share our beliefs, and those who oppose your good purpose. Remember the words of St. Augustine from the *City of God*, “Let this city bear in mind, that among ... our most declared enemies there are now some, unknown to themselves, who are destined to become our friends.”

Graduates, dare to dream of being truly free men and women. The freedom you seek is, most profoundly, that freedom given us by God, that we may choose to love and follow the way of transformation in Jesus Christ. We grow in this precious freedom by loving others, in the words of Mother Teresa, “until it hurts.” As we love we grow in our capacity for love.

“These years at Thomas Aquinas College, I trust, have been something of a ‘cenacle’ experience. You are blessed to be among those who have found the ‘pearl of great price’ and to inherit the intellectual and the sacred tradition of the Catholic Church.”

Seize Freedom

As we all know too very well, in our attempts at loving, sometimes we fail. There are times when we have made mistakes, and there are times when others have hurt us. No matter where you have been, or whatever darkness you may yet pass through, nothing can keep you from the freedom that is already yours. Everything — even and especially the most difficult and painful aspects of our lives — can be given to Our Lady to become signs of her victory, jewels in her crown.

So today let us join with Christians throughout the world in this Easter season who celebrate our final and definitive liberation — the freedom of the sons and daughters of God! The Church’s celebrations are founded on the reality that, as prophesized by Isaiah, we have been ransomed by a savior, Jesus Christ, Who came to “set the captives free.”

We rejoice in the freedom won for us by so great and loving a God. Seize that freedom! Promise yourself that, throughout your life, you will avail yourself of the sacrament which frees one from the bondage of sinfulness. Secure that freedom! As you leave here today, promise yourself that throughout your life you will receive from the treasury of grace at Holy Mass, in times of personal prayer, and in the praise and adoration of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Be witnesses to the greatest freedom of all — women and men, fully alive, capable of reflecting the glory of God.

Today Thomas Aquinas College presents you to us, and invites you to take your place among the educated citizenry of the Church, our nation, and the world; and we are blessed to receive you. The fulfillment today of one of life’s goals gives way to larger, and greater, dreams: dream of fulfilling God’s plans and purposes for your life.

At Fatima Our Lady made clear that we, her disciples, have a decisive role to play in the outcomes of history. Today Our Lady entrusts you, 2017 graduates of Thomas Aquinas College, with a task she repeatedly entrusts only to the humble and the bold — by the prayer and witness of your lives, be the heralds of an undreamed-of but longed-for reality to all who do not yet know Jesus Christ — and asks that you heed her call to the benefit of millions of souls and the glory of God.

Remember, you are never alone. You have a mother in Mary who has chosen you, who delights in you. She loves you. She knows you. Go forward, knowing that she awaits your requests.

May God bless you.

Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV, is the Superior General of the Sisters of Life. For the full text and audio of her address, see thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2017.



Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV, presents a diploma to Karl Ames ('17).

“We Have Become Lovers of Wisdom”

Excerpts from the 2017 Senior Address

by Joseph Rivera ('17)

*“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.”
“This is the day that the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein.”*

How fitting it is that Commencement falls within Eastertide, when we have the greatest cause to rejoice. We rejoice in the Resurrection of Our Lord, and soon, on Pentecost, we will rejoice in the descent of the Comforter among us.

Today, however, we celebrate a smaller triumph. We graduates have spent the last four years in intense study of the best things, striving — sometimes more, sometimes less — to know and love God better in our vocation as students.

Now that we have reached the end, it may seem curious that we rejoice, as we must soon leave our dear friends and teachers and scatter among different places across the country and perhaps throughout the world. Most of us will be leaving aside the studies of the free man for the reality of hard work in a world that is not only deaf to the truth, but often opposed to it. Under these circumstances sorrow might seem more appropriate than jubilation.

Yet we rejoice today, not principally in the community and studies that we must now leave, but in a change that has been wrought in our souls. It is easy to forget, when in the midst of all the labors of study, that a marvelous work is being done within us. Every mathematical proposition, every seminar reading, every class discussion has been ordered toward making a change of inestimable value.

But what is this change? I would like to say that we have become wise, for wisdom is the last end of all the studies here, but I know that, at least on my part, that is not the case. I doubt that any of my classmates would lay claim to the name of wise, either, nor even those who have taught us for the past four years. Indeed, as Socrates says in the *Phaedrus* about the educated man who pursues the truth diligently, “to call him wise, seems to me too much, and proper only for a god.” But as he adds, “to call him a lover of wisdom — a philosopher — or something similar would fit him better and be more seemly.”

If we have not become wise, perhaps we have become lovers of wisdom, and that is no small thing. Though, what does it mean to be a lover of wisdom? I think that Plato can teach us much about this. In his allegory of the cave, he compares education to prisoners being set free from chains, so that they may turn from looking at mere images of objects to the things in themselves.

“Every mathematical proposition, every seminar reading, every class discussion has been ordered toward making a change of inestimable value.”

The prisoners must move from the things they can see, to those things that are invisible to them in their captive condition. Indeed, when they first come out of the cave, they cannot bear the light on account of the weakness of their eyes. Likewise, a lover of wisdom must turn from what is apparent to those things that are most real. At first this is difficult, for we are accustomed to thinking only of sensible things, and because in our sin and weakness we have become “vain in our thoughts” and our “foolish heart has been darkened.” But with persistent and open inquiry, Plato shows us, we can free our minds from slavery to the senses and see the realities that underlie the visible world.

But there is a truth here that Plato perhaps missed, namely that in order to see invisible things, we do not need to turn away from the visible, but rather to see the visible rightly. “The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands.”



The Class of 2017 elected Joseph Rivera as its Class Speaker ...

Everything that we see around us on this fine spring morning is an expression of the Wisdom which wrought it all. It is from seeing things as they really are, with attention to their beauty and order, that we are led to knowledge of God, Who is the most real of all realities: “For by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby.”

The philosopher, then, is one who listens to nature. And what have we done over these past four years, if not that? We have marveled with Fabre at the workings of instinct; plotted the course of the stars with Ptolemy and Kepler; constructed the five perfect solids with Euclid; pondered the imponderables with Maxwell and Einstein; and with Aristotle and St. Thomas reasoned, from these changing and changeable things, to the first unmoved mover Who made them all. The principal thing that we take away from this education is not any one of these things — though all of these are wonderful — but an openness to all that Creation has to tell us about God, and a delight in thinking upon His works.

In short, we have become lovers of wisdom, and have spent a short time in intense study so that we might spend a lifetime in openness to the truth in all its manifestations. We have been given the habits of soul requisite to live the fullest kind of life. As Hamlet said,

*Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused.*

To live the most human life, and indeed the most divine life, we must live according to what is best within us. “For even if it be small in bulk, much more in power and worth does it surpass everything.”

But we have not accomplished this alone, and are deeply indebted to our parents, for sending us here, and to our tutors, who by word and example have cultivated this love within us, and to each other. Each of us has added something to the discussion that no one else could. As Aristotle says, “every-one says something true about the nature of things, and while individually we contribute little or nothing to the truth, by the union of all a considerable amount is amassed.”



... and Giorgio Navarini to sing the National Anthem.

Together, sometimes through cooperation, and sometimes through disagreement, we have offered those parts of the truth that are ours and have mutually enriched each other's understanding. I hope that we will always remember with fondness that common endeavor.

I have spoken thus far about the change we have undergone in regards to our education, and rightly so, for we rejoice today in the accomplishment of that work. But our joy is not complete unless we are lovers of the Divine Wisdom, made incarnate in the person of Our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. “If I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and have all faith so that I could move mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” We rejoice in what we have learned, not on our own account, but because God has used these four years of study to draw us closer to Himself. As we will sing at the end of this ceremony, “Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name give the glory.”

Moreover, with our education comes a responsibility. As in Plato's allegory, we must re-enter the cave, and help those who still sit in darkness, help them to come to clearer vision of the truth. This responsibility assumes a greater significance in light of our Christian obligation to preach the Gospel in and out of season. As Our Lord says, “The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.” We are to be leavened to the world and to bear witness to the truth.

But again, this work is impossible without charity, and that great fruit of charity, humility. St. Teresa of Calcutta expresses this with beautiful simplicity in our class quote: “Go out into the world today and love the people you meet.” If we wish to be leavened, we must not only hold firm to the truth, but make it attractive to others with kindness and simplicity of life.

In doing so we are only completing the picture. For just as God may be known in all Creation, so can He be loved in all Creation. This is what Fr. Zosima encourages in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: “Love man in his sin, for this likeness of God's love is the height of love on earth. Love all of God's creation, both the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love animals, love plants, love each thing. If you love each thing, you will perceive the mystery of God in things.”

“The principal thing that we take away from this education is ... an openness to all that Creation has to tell us about God, and a delight in thinking upon His works.”

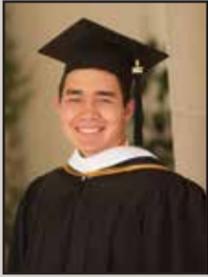
All of Creation participates in this love; all of Creation strives toward its maker with a wild and ancient joy: “And the stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced: They were called, and they said: Here we are: and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them.” We take our proper place in the whole of Creation when we seek to know and love God in sincerity of heart and with all of the sons of God cry out with gladness to the Lord, our maker.

Let us then rejoice in the opening of our minds and hearts to God, and pray that every day we may give Him glory in our words and actions. “For He hath given us understanding that we may know the true God, and may be in His true son. This is the true God and life eternal.”

Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us. May God bless you all.

Elected by his classmates to present this year's Senior Address, Mr. Rivera is from Kendall Park, New Jersey. For the full text and audio of his address, see thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2017.

The Class of 2017 and Senior Thesis Titles



Thesis of Finite Length Must be Bound on Each Side: An Argument for Actual Infinities

KARL PATRICK AMES
San Diego, California



The Polity: The Best Practical Regime

KATHERINE JANGMI AMES
Vista, California



That Charity Is a Creature

JOHN PETER HALLGRIMUR ANDERSON
Tracy, California

The Fruit of Forbidden Love: The Detrimental Effects of Forbidden Love in a Society

GABRIELLE VICTORIA ARANAS
Sacramento, California



An Argument from the Natural Law Against Euthanasia

CRISTINA MARIE BATT
New London, New Hampshire



On the Integrity of Knowing: Reuniting Sense and Intellect

MARGARET ODESSA BECHER
Santa Paula, California



"This Is My Body Which Is Given for You": How the Eucharist Unites Us to Christ

RACHEL MARIE BECK
Flagstaff, Arizona



Love as Shared Guilt: The Key to *The Brothers Karamazov*

KATERI MARIE BROWN
Churchton, Maryland



Act According to Nature: A Consideration of Man's Nature and His End

BERNADETTE CLARE BUCHES
Lakewood, Colorado

The Truth Shall Set You Free: An Illumination of Human Freedom in the Light of Truth

GRACE MARY BUECHE
Shelby Township, Michigan



The Cosmological Straw Man: Kant's Failure to Refute Aquinas' Five Ways

NICHOLAS ANTHONY CAMMAROTA
Fair Oaks, California



"I Don't Care Shucks for the Morality of It, Nohow": The Unconventional Virtue of Huckleberry Finn

ANNA ROSE CARLMAN
Ventura, California



"Nevertheless I Tell You the Truth; It is To Your Advantage That I Go Away": An Exposition of the Greater Benefits Which the Holy Spirit Provides

MARGARET ANNE MERCY CONKLIN
Mount Angel, Oregon



The Battle Cry of Freedom: The Declaration of Independence and Secession

GERARD JOHN-CHARLES COUGHLIN
Santa Paula, California



"Beauty Through My Senses Stole, I Yielded Myself to the Perfect Whole": An Account of How the Encounter with the Beautiful Shows Man the Necessity for God

PETER CAMPION COVINGTON
Pendleton, South Carolina

Symbolic Realism in the Liturgy: A Philosophy of Worship

JONATHAN MICHAEL CULBREATH
Chico, California



The Legacy of Don Quixote

BRENDAN TIMOTHY DAVIDSON
Lake Ariel, Pennsylvania



Spiritual Childhood: The Little Way of Humility and Confidence

BRIDGETTE MARIE DEBATES
Chandler, Arizona



The Role of Self in Selflessness: How Man's Desire for Happiness Illumines the True Nature of Selfless Love

CLARA FRANCESCA DIODATI
Ave Maria, Florida



Justice Before Mercy

LAWRENCE LEO DONNELLY
White Rock, British Columbia, Canada



"Music Uncovers the Buried Way to the Heart": An Account of Music's Purpose in the Christian Life

THERESA CORINNE DONNELLY
White Rock, British Columbia, Canada

Eminently Knowable: An Argument for the Scientific Nature of Calculus

MICHAEL JOSEPH DOUGLASS
Stillwater, Minnesota



The Differences Between Men and Women: Why Distinct Natural Roles Are Necessary for Good Marriages, Families, and Societies

THOMAS AQUINAS FORD
Orange County, California



On the Necessity of the Four Causes as Principles of Substance

JOSEF MICHAEL FROULA
Waterbury, Connecticut





In Him We Live and Move and Have Our Being: An Argument for the Existence of God as the Substantial Good

JOHN PAUL FUNES
Fairview, Texas



What I Mean, That I Do Not Say; or, On the Inconstancy of Words

PETER JOSEPH GARDNER
Brookfield, Wisconsin



Reconciling the Curved and the Straight: A Defense of the Limit

CECILIA MARIE GOYETTE
Santa Paula, California

The *Odyssey* as Tragedy
TIMOTHY JOSEPH HARTZELL
Fairfax, Virginia



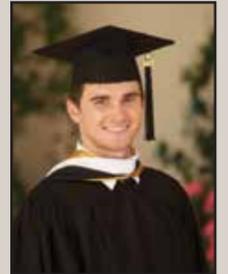
“All Things”: Why the Proper Object of the Intellect Proves the Immateriality of the Human Soul

JOHN FRANCIS JOST
Algonquin, Illinois



The Natural Path to Virtuous Friendship

JAMES PATRICK KNUFFKE
Fresno, California



“Thy Will be Done”: How Suffering Unites Man’s Soul to God’s Will Resulting in a Greater Love for God

VERONICA ROSE KUENSTLE
Tehachapi, California



Does Evil Trump Good? That the Principle of Double Effect is Applicable to the Act of Voting in the Modern Republic

PAUL THOMAS KULDA
Bluffdale, Utah



“When I Use a Word [...] It Means Just What I Choose It to Mean”: On the Natural Convention of Language

AARON GABRIEL LANGLEY
Camarillo, California

Why Our First Concept Is Being
ANNA LOUISA LANGLEY
Cleveland Heights, Ohio



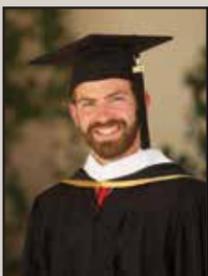
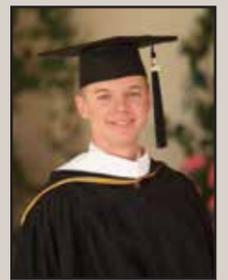
“Change in All Things Is Sweet”: The Necessity of a Spirit of Adventure for Life

THOMAS BONAVENTURE MARIE LANGLEY
Savannah, Georgia



The Unmoved Mover and Free Will: Solving the Seeming Irreconcilability of Two Philosophical Truths

CHARLES ANTHONY LAUBACHER
Tracy, California



Philosophy and Chemistry Meet: Whether the Elements Are Essentially Different

KELLAN JOSEPH LOEW
Saint Marys, Kansas



The Role of Unity in Marriage

LUCY MARIE LYONS
Ventura, California



On the Compatibility of Humility and Political Leadership

MARK BENEDICT MACIK
Brecksville, Ohio

Speak Through Me: On the Edifying Character of Poetic Performance

SEAN MICHAEL WILLIAM MALLOY
Irving, Texas



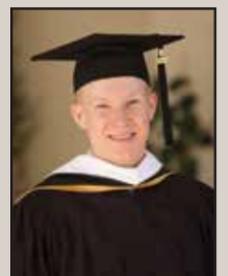
What Is Love: Concerning the Call to Love in the First Epistle of John

HANNAH GRACE MARTIN
El Dorado, Kansas



“*Omnia in Mensura, et Numero, et Pondere Disposuisti*”: On the Use of Quantity in the Study of Nature

THOMAS EDWARD MATTHEWS
Joseph, Oregon



“Then from My Flesh I Shall See God”: Why Platonic Reincarnation Is Impossible

ROGER ARTHUR MCCAFFREY, JR.
Ridgefield, Connecticut



Total Corruption: An Explanation of Dante’s View of Fraud

PATRICK JOSEPH MCCANN
Chesterfield, Missouri



The Place of Newton’s *Principia* in the Scheme of the Speculative Sciences

HELEN ANN MCDONOUGH
Roswell, Georgia

The Necessity of Metaphor in Thomistic Theology

ALEXANDER GREGORY MELLEIN
Ventura, California



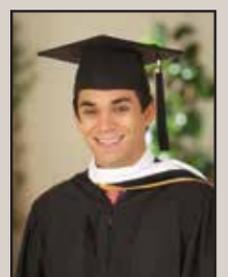
“Fruit of the Earth and Work of Human Hands, It Will Become for Us the Bread of Life”

GRACE CATHERINE GENEROUX METILLY
Paxton, Massachusetts



The Divine Artist

AIDAN ISAAC MILTON
Hillsboro, Oregon



Senior Thesis Titles



Whether There Is an Angelic Governance of the Physical World
SONJA CATHERINE MISKO
Blairstown, New Jersey



To What Extent Is Man's Nature Corrupted By Original Sin? An Enquiry into the Nature of Original Sin and Its Effects on Man
STEFAN JOHN MISKO
Blairstown, New Jersey



Maintaining Moral Integrity in the Face of Suffering in Light of *Jane Eyre*
MONICA MARY MOREL
Stewartstown, Pennsylvania

It Is Not Good for Man to Be Alone: A Refutation of the Social Contract Theory
GENEVIEVE FRANCES MORLINO
Danbury, Connecticut



What Is a Computer?
MICHAEL PATRICK MULVANNY
Pacifica, California



"Logical Validity Is Not a Guarantee of Truth": An Explication of Kant's and Aristotle's Understandings of Time in Relation to their Methods
THOMAS DILLON MURRAY
Hillsdale, Michigan



On the Nature of a Melody and Its Musical Preeminence
GIORGIO PIO NAVARINI
Pleasanton, California



"He Does Not Bear the Sword in Vain": A Defense of Capital Punishment in Light of the Teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas
MARY BRIDGET HELEN O'HARA
Sacramento, California



We Say That the Word Is the Way, Truth, and Life of the City: A Catholic Consideration of Language and the Political Community
NNADOZIE DUKE ONYEKURU
Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

Dear Screwtape, Can the Fallen Angels Still Teach Men?
BRIDGET KATHLEEN PAPE
Boise, Idaho



Viator Simul et Comprehensor: A Defense of St. Thomas Aquinas' Teaching on Christ's Possession of the Beatific Vision
GUILLERMO RAMON PEREZ WARNISHER
Valencia, Spain



The Body As Necessary for Earthly Happiness
REBECCA MAE PETERSON
Linden, Virginia



Bikinis vs. Burkas: Finding the Mean of Modesty
MAUREEN GRACE PFEIFFER
Waterford, Wisconsin



"I Shew unto You Yet a More Excellent Way": A Defense of the Superiority of the State of Celibacy over That of Marriage
MICHAEL FRANCIS PATRICK PFEIFFER
Waterford, Wisconsin



"Be You Therefore Perfect, As Also Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect": An Account of the Virtues Necessary for the Perfection of a Man
SEAN SÒN NHỦ PHAN
San Diego, California

"He Must Not Be Above Her": An Exposition of Equality in Marriage According to Chaucer
TERESA MARY ROSE RICCIO
Cobourg, Ontario, Canada



"Enlightened Statesmen Will Not Always Be at the Helm": The Importance of Separation of Powers for Good Government
JEANNETTE MARIE RICHARD
San Jose, California



Economics and the Ethical Sciences: A Critique of Adam Smith's Speculative Science of Economics
BRANDON CHRISTOPHER RISTOFF
Laguna Niguel, California



Qui Non Diligit, Non Novit Deum: On the Necessity of the Love of God for Theology
JOSEPH ROBERT RIVERA
Kendall Park, New Jersey



The Fine Arts: A Glimpse into the Divine
OLIVIA ISABEL RIVERA-FLYNN
Santa Paula, California



"Who Is She That Comes Forth Like the Dawn, Fair as the Moon, Bright as the Sun, Terrible as an Army with Banners?": Mary's Participation in God's Act of Salvation
CAROLINE MARIE RUEDIG
Libertyville, Illinois

"God Chose the Simple to Confound the Wise": On the Dignity of Those with Intellectual Disabilities
EMILY RUTH THÉRÈSE SANCHEZ
La Mesa, California



"And the Word Was God": How the Name "Word" Manifests the Equality Between the Father and the Son
MARIA ROSE SANTINE
Macomb, Michigan



An Investigation into the Human Person As Ordered Toward Other
SCOTT SCHARDT
Trabuco Canyon, California



The Class of 2017 and Senior Thesis Titles



The Rationality of Feeling:
An Argument for Intuition
SUSAN MARIE SCHEESE
Vancouver, Washington



“I Die the King’s Good Servant
but God’s First”: Is the Good Man
Always a Good Citizen?
**CHRISTOPHER ANTHONY
SCHMIDGALL**
Portland, Oregon



Joseph’s Role in the Holy Family
**BENEDICT HOWARD
SCHMITT**
Leominster, Massachusetts

The Sky’s Not the Limit:
Theological/Philosophical
Justification of Space Exploration
SEBASTIAN ALOYSIUS SCHMITZ
Las Cruces, New Mexico



“Give to Caesar What Belongs to
Caesar, and to God What Belongs
to God”: An Inquiry into the
Obligation of the Citizen
**ALEXANDER THADEUS
SEBASTIAN**
Livonia, Michigan



On the Dignity of the Human
Body, Manifested Through
Human Communion
ROSALIE SIMONEAU
Mesa, Arizona



The Crown of Thorns: Reconciling
Humility and Magnanimity
ROSE MARIE SIMONSE
Wayzata, Minnesota



What Are You Laughing At?
A Philosophical Definition of
Humor and Its Relation to the
Human Intellect
AARON JOSEPH SMITH
El Paso, Texas



*Quid Animo Satis?: Love and
Forgiveness in Sigrid Undset’s*
Kristin Lavransdatter
HOLLY VICTORIA SMITH
Deerwood, Minnesota

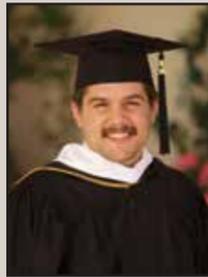
“Midway upon the Journey of Our
Life I Found That I Was in a Dusky
Wood for the Right Path, Whence
I Had Strayed, Was Lost”: Horror as
Man’s Path to Salvation through
His Wretchedness
**KATHERINE ROSE NICHOLAS
SOCKEY**
Venus, Pennsylvania



I Do Not See the Wounds As Thomas
Did, but I Confess That You Are My
God: On the Motives of Credibility
for the Christian Religion
JOSEPH MICHAEL STACK
Anaheim, California



The Study of the Incomplete: How
Newton’s *Principia* Expands Our
Knowledge of Elementary Bodies
**PHILIP CHRISTOPHER
STEIGERWALD**
Elm Grove, Wisconsin



The Just Man Justices: How Man
Can Merit Heaven
ELIZABETH ANNE THOMPSON
Amherst, New Hampshire



“For Your Own Good, I think It Well
You Follow Me and I Will Be Your
Guide”: An Examination of the Roles
of Virgil and Beatrice as Guides
Through the *Divine Comedy*
**NICHOLAS CAMPION
VAN HECKE**
Santa Paula, California



The Ladder of Charity:
How the Beatitudes Lead Us
to the Beatific Vision
JULIA ANASTASIA WALL
Granada Hills, California

Why Is Faith a Good for Man?
An Examination Regarding the Way
in Which Faith Helps Us to Be Wise
CECILIA MARIE WASHBURN
Woodbury, Minnesota



Abstract Ideas: A Defense of
St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle’s
Account of Universals Against
That of the Empiricists
PETER DAMIAN WATERBURY
Plymouth, New Hampshire



“Behold, I send an Angel Before
You, to Guard You on the Way, and
to Bring You to the Place Which
I Have Prepared”: A Correlation
Between the Archangels and the
Theological Virtues
**ELIZABETH MARIE ANGELA
YANOSCHIK**
Ada, Michigan



In Light of Past Inquiry:
Concerning the Dependence
of Modern Light Theory Upon
Aristotle’s Definition of Light
MICHAEL ROBERT ZEPP
Appleton, Wisconsin

Patron of the Class of 2017 Our Lady of Fatima

Class Quotation

“Go out into the world today and love the people you meet.”

– St. Teresa of Calcutta

Senior Reflection

“We Must Take Truth to the World”

Note: The following essay is adapted from comments made before the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its May 12, 2017, meeting.

By Emily Sanchez ('17)



I fell in love with Thomas Aquinas College in the fall of 2011. I grew up with many friends who are children of alumni, and I heard about TAC as “a small Catholic school where they read books.”

I thought, “I live in a small Catholic homeschooling community where we read books. I want something more when I go to college!” But my friends brought me to Alumni Day during my junior year of high school, and I loved the campus, the Chapel, the community.

As part of Alumni Day, we participated in a youth seminar in which we discussed a short story. I remember thinking, “I could go to a school where my classes are *all* like this?” I was sold. I went home that night and told my mother, “TAC was made for me!” She said, “Why don’t you say you were made for TAC? That sounds more humble.” But I knew God wanted me to come here.

Little did I know how hard I would find those classes to be. From Freshman Philosophy to Sophomore Science, Junior Math to Senior Seminar, I was challenged by the College’s intensely rigorous curriculum. They don’t spoon-feed us answers here, and that’s good! We have to wrestle with questions in order to rest in the truth.

And the truth really is the end for which we strive. I have a sister who is a novice in a Carmelite cloistered convent in Lincoln, Nebraska, and she spends her days praying. She wrote to me, and she said, “Emily, you spend

your days praying, too, because prayer is lifting up the mind and heart to God. Through your classes and studies, you’re constantly lifting your mind up to the Truth, and the Truth is God.”

I have definitely grown in my faith through the classes I have taken here at the College, and I have also grown in my faith through the Chapel. Living 45 seconds away from Our Lord is one of the greatest blessings of my life. Daily I have had the opportunity to kneel before Him and say, “Lord, let me do Thy will.”

My friendship with God is reflected in my friendships with others in the community. In Junior Philosophy we studied the *Ethics*, and we learned about friendships of virtue, which occur when two people are living lives of virtue and genuinely desire the good of the other person. Seeing how many friendships of virtue I have here is a testament to the community.

“Through your classes and studies, you’re constantly lifting your mind up to the Truth, and the Truth is God.”

One of the ways I have been blessed to be part of the community is through my Service Scholarship jobs. During Freshman and Sophomore Year I worked in the kitchen, which was fun and social. Then, Junior Year I was asked to work in Admissions as the office’s visitor coordinator. This was awesome because daily I had the opportunity to fall in love with the College over and over again as I led tours and explained why we do what we do, how we do it, how it is unique, and why it is successful. Then, this past year I was asked to be a prefect, which was a challenge, but I enjoyed serving the College in this leadership position.

Thanks to the College I have had two opportunities to join the larger Catholic world this last year. Last summer I went to a conference called the GIVEN Forum that was put on by the Catholic Major Superiors of Women Religious. Then, over Christmas break — thanks to the generosity of Governor Steve Walsh — I and six other TAC students went to SEEK, a Catholic youth conference. It was wonderful to see so many other Catholic students striving for the truth, and to see how blessed we are by our deep intellectual formation here.

It is so important for us to take what we learn here and bring it to the world. With the state of our society and our low, low standard of morality, it would be hard to know how to have hope for the world and what we can do to make a difference. We asked this question in our second-to-last seminar last week, and our answer was this: We have to have hope, because the intellect always desires the good, and when presented with the truth, the intellect will strive for it.

So we must take truth to the world, but we have to do it with love. For it is only through love that people will listen. This will be my aim next year at Catholic Answers in San Diego, where I will work as the executive assistant to the president, Christopher Check. I am so excited to serve the Church in this way.

On behalf of my fellow students, thank you, members of the Board of Governors, for all the work you do for our school. We are so excited for the New England campus and all the opportunities it will present for more students. I have been praying for you. Please pray for me. God bless.

Miss Sanchez is from La Mesa, California.

Senior Reflection

From Reluctant Student to Husband and Marine

Note: The following essay is adapted from comments made before the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its May 12, 2017, meeting.

By Thomas Ford ('17)



My path to Thomas Aquinas College wasn’t the shortest route. Immediately after graduating from high school, I was interested, but I ultimately chose to enroll elsewhere. It seemed to me that the College had something special in terms of its academics, community life, and strong Catholic character, but as an 18-year-old boy, those attributes held little weight compared to my desire to play college football at another Catholic school.

But after only one semester, I left that other college, realizing that playing the sport I loved wasn’t enough to keep me happy in life. So I returned to Southern California and began a full-time job with an opportunity to move up and make a comfortable living for myself. I also tried some community college courses here and there, but none of it satisfied me. None of it seemed very important.

I considered the possibility of never returning to college. After all, everyone I knew wanted to get their college degrees so that they could get a good job and live comfortably, but here I had already found a job with a good company, with potential to pay very well, and it was honest work. Why would I want to go back to school and jump through almost four years of hoops just so that I could get a more prestigious job that might actually pay me less?

So many friends and acquaintances had witnessed to

my suspicion that they didn’t *really* learn anything in college, that they just drank, partied, and jumped through the hoops so that they could get that paper that allows them to make more money. I didn’t want that. The thought of such an experience was repulsive.

Three years after I left my first college, a good friend from high school, Joseph Stack ('17), returned from studying abroad in Argentina as a student at the University of California, Los Angeles. He had met a priest down there who was a TAC alumnus, Rev. Anthony J. Myers, S.S.J. ('94). Fr. Tony left my friend Joe with a strong impression: He was very aware of the incredible way in which Fr. Tony could analyze any thought and always articulate reasonable positions.

I met with Joe at an IHOP for breakfast when he returned. Joe didn’t wait long before he let me know that, upon finishing UCLA that summer, he would begin college again at Thomas Aquinas, and he wanted me to join him. I was skeptical at first, after being away from school for so long, but Joe reminded me of how unique the program is in the way that it seeks the truth of the most important realities. The fact that the school isn’t “practical” was almost an incentive for me, since I am a stubborn guy, and the idea of getting an education just to get a job was unappealing. So I applied and, along with Joe, was accepted for the fall of 2013.

Four years later, I could not be happier with my decision to attend. The education and the spiritual maturing that I have received here are truly priceless, and I am extremely grateful for all those who have assisted in that. The nature of the Discussion Method always kept me focused in class, greatly deepening my understanding of the most important things.

Looking back at my studies here, I do not feel as though I wasted four years jumping through hoops. On

“I couldn’t have asked for a more practical education, since all of our actions are working toward achieving happiness, and I have never been happier in my life.”

the contrary, I could not imagine a better way to have spent these four short years. Surprisingly enough, I couldn’t have asked for a more practical education, since all of our actions are working toward achieving happiness, and I have never been happier in my life.

The luxury of being able to study things that are worth knowing for their own sake — and not solely for the sake of a job — is one of which few in today’s world can boast. I had the blessing of making many lifelong friends, as well as finding my lovely soon-to-be wife, Sophia (Cain '16). Thank you for the work all of you have done to make this truly once-in-a-lifetime experience possible.

I look forward now to an upcoming career as an intelligence officer in the United States Marine Corps, the greatest military organization on God’s green earth. I will be shipping out to report to Officer Candidate School on June 3, and I will hopefully receive a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant on August 12. I am honored to call this beautiful country home, and I am excited for the opportunity to serve as a reservist, so that I can also give appropriate attention to raising a good Catholic family.

May God give me strength to serve Him and our nation well, and may He bless all of you for making this education possible. Thank you.

Mr. Ford is from Costa Mesa, California.

“Only the Childlike Attain True Wisdom and Learning”

The Baccalaureate Homily of Rev. Paul Scalia

“I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.”

My dear friends in Christ, at the risk of sounding a discordant note on a joyful occasion, allow me to say that there is something incongruous — perhaps even cruel — about this verse. At least for this occasion. Because today these young men and women bring to an end their years here of striving for wisdom and advancing in learning, and now we place before them Our Lord’s words *against* the wise and the learned! We have been encouraging them to grow up, and now they hear that they have to become like children. It doesn’t seem quite fair.

Of course, the Catholic heart knows that there is no contradiction here. In fact, Our Lord’s words in this Gospel (Luke 10:21-24) call attention to what makes for true wisdom and learning. They call attention to what is at the heart of Catholic education, what is the mission of this school, and what we hope these graduates take from their time here.

“You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned...”

It is not so much the Father Who hides His truths from the wise and learned, so-called. It is they themselves who, through their pride, blind themselves to His truths, and make themselves incapable of receiving what He desires to give. Of course, Our Lord intends here those who are wise and learned in the world’s estimation — or, even worse, in their own estimation. They represent a counterfeit kind of wisdom and learning, the kind characterized by a grasping at knowledge and a seeking for control.

In Our Lord’s day this counterfeit wisdom and learning was found in the Pharisees, and it is to them that He directs these words. They had ceased to be servants of the Word and had grown to consider themselves its masters. They had begun to use their knowledge of the Law as a means of control. Today this counterfeit wisdom and learning takes the form of relativism, the denial of truth, and in its place a grasping for more and more knowledge — Big Data, as it is called — all of those ingredients of the “technopoly” that characterizes our culture; the constant securing of information instead of wisdom; the securing of information not to grow in wisdom but to control and to become, well, like gods. It is, as always, a desire to manipulate and to control reality and even — if such a thing were possible — to redefine it. That is the counterfeit wisdom and learning that our culture suffers.



True wisdom, as Scripture tells us, comes from above. It is not so much obtained as it is received. Likewise, true learning is not a matter of just acquiring facts and data; it is more a matter of placing oneself at the feet of a master. And both those things require childlike dispositions. The truly wise and learned are such because they are first of all childlike.

“Although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.”

Notice that the opposite of the wise and the learned is not the foolish and the dumb. The opposite of wise and learned is *childlike*. Only the childlike can learn, because only the child knows that he does not know. There are, of course, various qualities that make for this childlike wisdom. For instance, wonder — or awe. The worldly wise



do not wonder. They do not see mysteries to be revered; rather, they see only problems to be solved and conquered. A child, however, knows his limits, so he is able to wonder at what is beyond him. The worldly knows no limits, and so today speaks foolishly of “transhumanism.” The worldly cannot wonder or be in awe because he thinks all things are within his grasp.

True wisdom is different. *Nascantur in admiratione*. This awe, this wonder — fear of the Lord, as Scripture calls it — is the first stage of wisdom. This gift of the Holy Spirit places within us that first requirement for wisdom and learning: to acknowledge our smallness, to wonder at the glory of reality, and to desire to receive its truth.

Related to this, of course, is another gift of the Holy Spirit — in fact, the next one up in the hierarchy — piety. The world is impious. It is giddy about an ever-elusive future and scorns what has come before or what the past may have to teach us.

Piety, however, is first of all that sturdy, natural virtue of the Romans; that reverence for those who give us life, for those who have gone before, and for what they have to give us. The pious look to receive the wisdom and truth that prior generations have to bestow. Piety does not scorn any truth as outdated. Piety does not ever consider itself to be on “the right side of history,” whatever that means.

For us Christians, of course, piety is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. It disposes us, in a supernatural manner, to see God as father, to say with Our Lord, “Abba, Father.” If fear of the Lord gives us the proper awe of Him, piety grants us the proper trust and affection. It disposes us to receive gratefully the truth He desires to give us; not to grasp for what is beyond us, but to receive what is only properly gained as a gift. That is a characteristic of piety and true wisdom.

Then, as this Gospel passage indicates, there is also joy. The passage begins with a remark about Our Lord rejoicing in the Holy Spirit. The world’s wisdom is not joyful, but cynical. It does not laugh, but sneers.

True wisdom, in a sense, *requires* that joy that is characteristic of a child. That is, that self-forgetfulness of a child. Children are not afraid to laugh, to lose themselves in a game, or to forget themselves in play. It is only as worldly wisdom infects us that we become self-conscious, less likely to play or to laugh. We want everything confined to our own estimation. The joy of a child is always looking to what is beyond us and to that in which we are in awe.

Joy is also the fruit of wisdom — a fruit of the Spirit Himself — because the more we receive this wisdom from above, the more we rejoice. And this is what the world needs to encounter in us, as children of God who rejoice not in just the knowledge of the things of this world, but in the wisdom from above.

The Mass this morning is a votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, as is fitting for such occasions. But as many of you know, today is also the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima and the 100th anniversary of her first apparition. Just this morning the Holy Father canonized two of the shepherd children to whom Our Lady appeared: Francisco and Jacinta. For those who seek wisdom, the Holy Father has put forward for veneration and imitation two completely obscure, illiterate, and unaccomplished children ... which also serves as a rebuke to the counterfeit wisdom

of this world. It was also a rebuke when, in 1917 — as the wise and learned of this world presided over the suicide of Europe — it was the childlike at Fatima who received true wisdom.

Again, there is a certain paradox here. These two uneducated peasants may seem to be the least fit to propose to college graduates, almost the antithesis of what your last four years have been about. But of course these two saints — St. Francisco and St. Jacinta — embody those qualities of *awe*, *piety*, and *joy*.

Awe in the terrible beauty of Our Lady of Fatima, both that supernatural quality of hers and the beauty of hers. No matter how gentle and familiar she may have become to them, they never lost that proper fear.

They embody *piety* in their childlike trust of Mary. They were willing to be taught by Our Lady and to trust in her words. Years after the apparitions, Sr. Lucia testified that when hell was revealed to these shepherds, they would have died of fright had Mary not been right there by their side. That is the power of that simple quality of piety, that powerful gift of the Holy Spirit: to look at what can be frightening and daunting, and to look at it peacefully because we know that Our Lady is at our side.

And because of that trust, we find in them a disarming *joy* in their childlike acceptance of mortifications and penances. They embraced them not begrudgingly, but with joy, because they knew that they were fulfilling Our Lady’s wishes.

“Our Lord’s words in this Gospel call attention to ... what is at the heart of Catholic education, what is the mission of this school, and what we hope these graduates take from their time here.”

When I graduated from college a popular book at the time was entitled *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. I never read that book. Why would I read a book whose title tells me that I don’t need to? The kind of childhood that we speak of here is nothing so trivial as that book conveyed. Nor is it the childishness and the worship of youth that Chesterton termed “Peter Pantheism.” Rather, the childhood we speak of here is divine filiation, a share in the Sonship of Christ Himself, through Whom we have God as our father and Mary as our mother.

On occasions such as this it is customary to exhort you, graduates, to pursue your dreams (which I am not going to do, because I do not know what your dreams are), to encourage you to go make a difference, to change the world. Please God, you do make a difference and change does come to the world, but not by dint of your own efforts. It seems such a small thing — to just go change the world, make a difference — in comparison to what a Christian is called to do. That is, to change himself, to become a child, to yield in all things to the Holy Spirit’s promptings.

You have been blessed to study at a school that understands this Christian paradox: that only the childlike attain true wisdom and learning. You have been blessed to study under the patronage of a saint whose intellect soared because he was first willing to humble himself.

May the Holy Spirit, Whom we invoke at this Mass, always grant you that wonder, piety, and joy that is essential for true wisdom and learning. May the Eucharist that you receive today nourish that divine filiation within you. And may Our Lady of Fatima, who appeared to the shepherd children 100 years ago today, secure in your souls these fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Rev. Paul Scalia is the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy in the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, as well as the chaplain for Thomas Aquinas College’s Washington, D.C., Board of Regents. For audio of his homily, see thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2017.

In the Footsteps of St. Teresa

What's Next for the Class of 2017

At the start of the 2016-17 academic year, members of the Thomas Aquinas College community celebrated the canonization of a saint who once graced the College's California campus, St. Teresa of Calcutta, the 1982 Commencement Speaker. Fittingly, then, when the academic year drew toward a close, and seniors set out to choose their class quotation, they turned to the words of St. Teresa, "Go out into the world today and love the people you meet."

For the members of the Class of 2017, this injunction is not a mere platitude, but a directive for how to live their lives. Although their plans for the future are diverse, they are united in their common commitment to service. Like the newly canonized saint they venerate, these newly graduated alumni seek to go into the world, wherever they are called, and to love the people they meet, wherever they may be.

Missionary Work

"I have been drawn to both Mother Teresa and St. Thérèse, and in the way that they try to love deeply," says **Rachel Beck**. Inspired by these saints' example, she will soon depart for a three-month missionary trip with St. Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, after which she will take a job with an organization that supports girls who have been victims of human trafficking. ... **Grace Metilly** will spend two weeks in a missionary program with the Carmelite sisters in Alhambra, California, after which she intends to serve the mentally disabled at L'Arche in France.

Priesthood & Religious Life

Of this year's graduates, the first to answer God's call to the priesthood or religious life will be **John Anderson**, who is entering the Western Province of the Dominican Order on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption. ... Three days later, **Maggie Conklin** will join the Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles. "Having the Chapel as the center of our campus and our lives here at the College, everything centers around Our Lord," she reflects. "You can't help being drawn in and being with Him."

Education

Rosalie Simoneau could not have imagined becoming a teacher until she spent last summer teaching English to Italian schoolchildren. "It tapped something inside of me that brought out more love than I knew I was capable of," she says. "Even though I was so exhausted and working so hard, I just knew: I am going to become a teacher." In the fall, she will teach fourth grade at Saint Therese Carmelite School in Alhambra, California.

Among other Class of 2017 graduates who are going into the field of education, **Bridgette DeBates** will teach middle and high school mathematics at Ville de Marie Academy in Scottsdale, Arizona. ... **Veronica Kuenstle** will teach Latin to freshmen and sophomores at St. Mary's Catholic High School in Phoenix, Arizona. ... **Holly Smith** will work as a tutor in her hometown of Deerwood, Minnesota. ... **Phil Steigerwald** will teach philosophy, theology, Latin, and physics at Chesterton Academy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Deeply grateful to the wheelchair-sports coaches who have guided him over the years, **Nicholas Van Hecke**



will train to become an adaptive-sports instructor. ... With the goal of attending the Julliard School in one year, **Giorgio Navarini** will first teach logic, Latin, philosophy, and music at Saint Thérèse Classical Academy in Goleta, California. ... **Elizabeth Yanoschik** has accepted a position in the business office of Mother of Divine Grace School, the widely heralded distance-learning program founded by alumna Laura Berquist ('75).

The Arts

"If you are well formed, if you know what the truth is and you want to seek after it, then your art is going to reflect that," says **Rosie Simonse**. Looking to put her formation in and love for the truth in the service of her art, Miss Simonse will study graphic design this summer at the Rhode Island School of Design, then enroll in a fulltime graduate arts program. ... An independent artist, **Monica Morel** already has her first two commissions, illustrating a book about Tobit and a collection of fairy tales. ... **Kat Sockey** will travel to Italy this summer for a six-week intensive program in oil painting, figure drawing, and art history at the Academy of Art in Florence.

Business

In recognition of the value of liberally educated employees, several corporations now recruit from the College's Senior Class. This year, Anthem Inc. — which already employs five alumni in its sourcing department — has hired two more: **James Knuffke** and **Scott Schardt**. ... **Alexander Sebastian** has accepted a marketing position at Dataspeed, Inc., an engineering firm that specializes in the design and construction of autonomous cars and mobile robots, and whose CEO is fellow alumnus Paul McCown ('10). ... **Rose Carlman**, who trained horses last summer, will learn the business side of the equine industry by working for a trainer in Malibu, California, while applying to MBA programs.



Medicine

"Medicine allows me to use both my mind and my hands, and it is helpful for other people," says **Jerry Coughlin**, who will complete prerequisite classes and take the MCAT in order to apply to medical school. ... Fellow aspiring physicians include **Cecilia Washburn** and **Cecilia Goyette**, who is working as a medical scribe while taking her medical-school prerequisites. ... **Cristina Batt** and **Grace Bueche** are likewise preparing for nursing programs.

Marriage

Just one week after Commencement, **Thomas Ford** returned to campus, where he and Sophia (Cain '16) wed in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. There are four more weddings scheduled for members of the Class of 2017 within the next year, including one between two '17 classmates. More are believed to be forthcoming!

Engineering

"When I talk to alumni engineers, they all say that an engineering degree will help you get a job, but the TAC education will help you excel at that job," says **Michael Zepp**. Driven by a strong interest in physics that he has developed at the College, Mr. Zepp will take prerequisite courses this summer en route to studying nuclear engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



... Other 2017 graduates who plan to enter graduate engineering programs are: **Aaron Langley**, **Helen McDonough**, **Michael Mulvanny**, **Sean Son Phan**, **Christopher Schmidgall**, and **Sebastian Schmitz**.

Military

Three weeks after his wedding (see above), **Thomas Ford** set off for Quantico, Virginia, for 10 weeks of Officer Candidate School with the United States Marine Corps. Joining him was classmate **Thomas Matthews**. "Reading Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* made me realize the importance of the common good, the role of society in forming men of virtue, and the importance of men serving their country," says Mr. Matthews.

Theology & Philosophy

Four years of theology at Thomas Aquinas College whetted the appetite of **Clara Diodati** for more. She will begin advanced theological studies at Ave Maria University this fall. "I get to keep studying the beautiful truths that we studied here," she says, "but they are so much greater than four years of study can cover!" ... **Julia Wall** will undertake graduate work in theology at the University of Notre Dame. ... Pursuing graduate studies in philosophy are **Jonathan Culbreath** (Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium), **Joseph Rivera** (The Catholic University of America), and **Peter Gardner** (University of St. Thomas, Houston). "I'm looking forward to learning more," says Mr. Rivera, "especially the authors I have grown to love at the College — Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine and, of course, St. Thomas Aquinas."

More Graduate Programs

Theology and philosophy are but two of the many disciplines that members of the Class of 2017 will study at the graduate level. **Nnadozie Onyekuru**, who hails from Nigeria, will be one of 38 students from 21 countries in the inaugural class at the University of Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs. ... **Brandon Ristoff** is pursuing a master's degree in public policy at Pepperdine University. ... Fellow members who intend to undertake graduate studies after retiring student debt and/or completing prerequisite courses include **Michael Douglass** (mathematics) and **Charles Laubacher** (computer science).

... and More!

Some members of the Class of 2017 are following professional paths that are wholly unique: **Greta Becher** is working for an attorney in Camarillo, California. ... **Theresa Donnelly** is studying in the Bread & Pastry Arts Program at the Northwest Culinary Academy in Vancouver. ... **Jeannette Richard** will remain on campus next year as the College's resident assistant. ... **Emily Sanchez** is the new executive assistant at Catholic Answers in San Diego.





The Class of 2017

Commencement 2017 Keepsakes!



Order photos and portraits at
thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2017

Calendar of Events

- For more information, please see www.thomasaquinas.edu/calendar
- Summer Seminar Weekends: "On Friendship and Charity"
thomasaquinas.edu/summerseminars July 14–16 and 21–23
 - Summer Great Books Program for High School Students
thomasaquinas.edu/summerprogram..... July 23–August 5
 - Seminar: "St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians"
 Napa Institute 2017 Conference
thomasaquinas.edu/napa July 27
 - Convocation
 The Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley,
 Metropolitan Archbishop of Oklahoma City, presiding.....August 21

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