



THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

COMMENCEMENT 2015

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“Allow the Holy Spirit to Have His Way”

Sr. Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D., Encourages Graduates at Commencement Exercises

“Today you are concluding your studies at Thomas Aquinas College,” said Sr. Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D., in her address to the members of the Class of 2015 at the College’s May 16 Commencement ceremony. “You are to be congratulated and celebrated for your accomplishments,” she continued. “Truly, they are singular.”

Over the last four years, the 80 members of the Class of 2015 have completed a rigorous academic program that is unique in the United States — an integrated curriculum that spans all the major disciplines, consists entirely of the greatest works of Western civilization, and finds its culmination in the love, knowledge, and service of the triune God.

Yet for the most part Sr. Regina Marie, Vicar General of the Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles, focused less on the graduates’ accomplishments and more on their responsibilities, stressing their need to maintain a rich interior life of prayer and devotion.

“Coming face to Face with God every day in the integrity of your own soul is the most simple and most specific way of daily tapping back into the torrent of gifts you have received here in this oasis of grace in Santa Paula,” she told her audience of graduates, family members, and friends gathered on the academic quadrangle. “If you allow the Holy Spirit to have His way, the graces you have received will not only be preserved, they will increase and flow out to others.”

Turning to Jesus

This theme of turning to Our Lord, and then outward with the gifts of His love, echoed throughout the day, beginning with the Baccalaureate Mass that morning in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. “What



distinguishes Thomas Aquinas College is our search for the truth precisely as an expression of God’s love,” said Rev. Joseph Illo, a former chaplain of the College and now the pastor of the oratory-in-formation at Star of the Sea Parish in San Francisco. Vested in red at this Mass of the Holy Spirit, he continued, “It is yours now to give these truths, to do your modest part in sustaining what is authentically human in our culture.”

Shortly after the Mass, the congregation convened on the academic quadrangle for the Commencement ceremony. The seniors’ elected Class Speaker, Joshua Brittain (’15), urged his classmates to let the gifts of their education form their souls and enlighten the world. “I exhort the Class of 2015, when it leaves these hallowed halls for the last time, leave with hearts full of love,” Mr. Brittain said. “Then, whatever road Our Lord asks you to walk, walk with courage; walk with a humble heart that longs to serve God and His church; and know that you walk with the illuminating power of love in your heart.”

Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion

In a custom dating back to the its first Commencement 40 years ago, the College took the opportunity to confer its highest honor, the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion. Named for the College’s patron and established by its Board of Governors, the medallion exists to honor those who have demonstrated extraordinary dedication to God and His church, as well as leadership in advancing the teachings of the magisterium. Fittingly in this year, which His Holiness Pope Francis has dedicated to the consecrated life, the College awarded the Medallion to Sr. Regina Marie Gorman.

In presenting Sister with the Medallion, President Michael F. McLean cited her 40 years of service as a religious, including her recently completed leadership of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious in the United States. “We are deeply grateful to Sr. Regina Marie for embodying the ideal of the consecrated life so fully,” he said, “and for being for us all a faithful and joyful sign of Christ.”

After the various addresses, amid the customary cheers and jubilation, the graduates each approached the dais to receive their bachelor-of-arts hoods and diplomas. Then, as the ceremony came to a close, and the skies threatened (but did not deliver) a rare California downpour, members of the Class of 2015 sang *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini Tuo da gloriam* — “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name give glory.”

Commencement 2015

Video, audio, photo slideshows & more:
thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2015

First Teachers

College Honors Parents at Pre-Commencement Events

“We are most grateful to you parents,” said Thomas Aquinas College President Michael F. McLean in his introductory remarks at Commencement 2015. “Without your dedication, we would have no college and, hence, no occasion such as this to celebrate.”

Indeed, while the festivities surrounding Commencement are primarily directed toward the graduates, the College celebrates their parents as well. “Our debt to our students’ parents cannot be overstated,” says Dr. McLean. “They not only have prepared our students to receive the gift of a Catholic liberal education, they have also made great personal sacrifices to make that gift possible.”

This year the celebrations began on the Friday before Commencement, when Dr. and Mrs. McLean hosted a reception of wine and hors d’oeuvres for seniors, their parents, and members of the faculty. Most years, the gathering takes place on the lawn of the Doheny Hacienda, the official residence of the College’s president. This year, however, forecasts of rain led the College to move the event to St. Bernardine of Siena Library.

Under the library’s 17th century, hand-carved Spanish ceiling and surrounded by its 65,000 volumes, the seniors introduced their mothers and fathers to their friends and tutors in a beautiful, relaxed setting — prior to the rushed excitement that characterizes Commencement Day. Dr. McLean raised a toast to the parents. “Thank you for entrusting your children to our care,” he said. “It has been a pleasure to count them and you as members of our community. We wish our newest graduates well as they move forward, and we hope that you will all stay in touch in the years ahead.”

After the reception, graduates and their parents joined other friends and relatives at a newer College tradition — the Taco Dinner. The Alumni and Parents’ Associations jointly hosted the first such dinner last year, in a large tent outside St. Joseph Commons, but on account of the weather, this year’s event took place inside the building. Tlaquepaque, a popular local Mexican restaurant, served fresh tacos with all the fixings to some 460 soon-to-be graduates and their loved ones.

The event marked an opportunity

for the Alumni Association to welcome its newest members, the Class of 2015, and for parents to learn how their relationship with the College can continue through the Parents’ Association and its community of faith. Speaking before the group, Director of Alumni Relations Mark Kretschmer advised the soon-to-be graduates to make use of the Alumni Association to preserve friendships and to pursue networking opportunities. Robert Bagdazian, the director of the Parents’ Association, invited parents to see the Association as a way to continue their relationship with the College. As a token of the College’s gratitude, the Associations presented each family with a copy of *The Selected Sermons of Rev. Thomas A. McGovern, S.J.*, and a personal note from Dr. McLean.

“To the seniors, the Taco Dinner is a chance to say, ‘Congratulations.’ To the parents, ‘Thank you.’ And to seniors and parents alike, it’s intended to show that graduation need not mean goodbye,” says Vice President Paul J. O’Reilly.

“Above all else, the dinner allows us all to celebrate together. We can toast the



seniors for their hard work, commend the parents for their sacrifices, and give thanks to God for the many blessings of these last four years and those that are still to come.”

From the Desk of the President: The Hope of the Young

Dr. McLean's Remarks to the Class of 2015 at the President's Dinner

The idea for this talk came from one of those obscure but great articles in St. Thomas's *Summa Theologiae*. In Part I of the Second Part, Question 40, he asks "whether hope abounds in young people and those who love drink?" (*Utrum in iuvenibus et ebriosis spes abundet?*) The title alone promises that this will be one of the best articles in the *Summa*.

Despite the fact that you are young people and that you are enjoying moderate amounts of wine to celebrate your upcoming graduation, I will ignore, at least this evening, the "drink-loving" part of the article and focus on your youth and the hope that St. Thomas says "abounds" in you.

Hope is characteristic of the young, says St. Thomas, because it has for its object a good which is *future, arduous, and possible*. You have much of the future before you, and relatively little of the past, and since memory is of the past and hope of the future, you have rather little to remember and much to hope for. Likewise, you possess an abundance of energy and spirit, and so you are anxious to pursue the arduous and difficult. Finally, for you all things are possible because you have suffered few defeats. You are rightly full of confidence because you have relatively little experience of your shortcomings.

Soon you will leave Thomas Aquinas College and enter a world which places its hope in progress. First of all, a hope in scientific and technological progress rooted "in the foundations of the modern age," as Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his great encyclical *Spe Salvi* (loosely translated as "On Christian Hope"). Benedict points specifically to Bacon's *Novum Organum*, with its promise of "the triumph of art over nature ... and a new correlation between science and praxis." Reliance on science and technology alone, and a consequent hope in their possibilities, has become deeply rooted in modern man.

Likewise, trust in scientifically based politics and a hope of creating a perfect world has become rooted in man, inspired



in no small part by Marx's critique of political economy and his call to revolution. As I am sure you know, progressivism in politics and morals is rampant today and, among other things, manifests itself in relentless attacks on the natural law and Catholic moral teaching.

As Benedict points out, however, and as you must remember, modern hope is inherently inadequate. Human freedom is always an obstacle to utopia; science and politics can both be misused, as recent history so clearly proves. Moral relativism is not enough; there is need for an unshakable moral criterion if science and politics are to be of true benefit to man.

One of your tasks as you enter the modern world, says Benedict, is to do what each generation must do — as he puts it, "you must discover the ethical for yourself." He does not mean that you must invent the ethical for yourself. Rather, you must apply anew the universal principles of morality and virtue to your particular situation and to the challenges you will confront.

Or, as Pope St. John Paul II put it in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*: "What is youth? It is not only a period of life that corresponds to a certain number of years, it is also a time given by Providence to every person and given to him as a responsibility. During that time he searches, like the young man in the Gospel, for answers to basic questions; he searches not only for the meaning of life but also for a concrete way to go about living his life ... the young are searching for God ... they are searching for definitive answers [to the question]: 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' This is the most fundamental characteristic of youth."

It is not enough that your hope, like modern hope, be grounded in reason alone. To find a secure moral foundation, and to find the answer to the young man's question, requires that faith inform reason just as reason must inform faith — always faith and reason together, working in harmony.

To be sure, says Benedict, "you need the greater and lesser hopes that keep you going day by day." You need to hope for marriage, for children, for friendship, for a profession, for a vocation — and that you will be generous to your alma mater after you have made your fortune. (Or perhaps this latter is something *we* should hope for.) Be that as it may, these all are natural goods, necessary for happiness and human fulfillment.

But faith brings with it "the great hope that sustains the whole of life ... man's great, true hope which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God — God who has loved us and who continues to love us 'to the end ... until all is accomplished.'"

The hope of the believer is the hope for eternal life, and "this is eternal life — that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

Your years at the College have prepared you well to commence ... to commence with "the great, true hope" that will withstand all of the vicissitudes of life.

First, as readers of Bacon, Marx, and other great modern authors, you are in an excellent position to see the true strengths and weaknesses of modernity and its hopes — to shun the illusory and to rest confidently and hopefully in the real.

Second, you have learned from St. Thomas to respect the universality of the natural and divine laws and to habitually search for the harmony between faith and reason. This is what the study of St. Thomas is all about — to prepare you to undertake your personal search for the ethical from a firm and principled foundation and to "always be ready to give a reason for the hope within you."

Third, you have enriched your spiri-

tual lives and deepened your relationships with Christ — abiding in Him, your hope in eternal life can truly abound.

Finally, with Christ at your side, you will have ever before you a model of One who "died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died." To live for Christ, Benedict says, means allowing yourselves to be drawn into His being for others.

As a consequence, this will require you to join the saints in their tireless love of neighbor. To take but one example, St. Augustine, embracing a totally new life after his conversion, said of the tasks before him, "The turbulent have to be corrected, the faint-hearted cheered up, the weak supported; the Gospel's opponents need to be refuted, its insidious enemies guarded against; the unlearned need to be taught, the indolent stirred up, the argumentative checked; the proud must be put in their place, the desperate set on their feet, those engaged in quarrels reconciled; the needy have to be helped, the oppressed to be liberated, the good to be encouraged, the bad to be tolerated; all must be loved."

Grounded as they are in fallen human nature, and in the circumstances of our time, these tasks are as much yours as they were Augustine's.

Considering this list, and the Christian life in general, Augustine said, "the Gospel terrifies me." So should it, in a sense, terrify us all. But this is the fear that is the beginning of wisdom. You can take great consolation in the fact that your duties as followers of Christ are set before you — that your path as sons and daughters of the Church is clearly marked and will be so marked no matter what claims, true or false, are made in the name of "progress."

Relying on God's abiding love and grace, striving to fulfill your duties and to stay on that path humbly and charitably, being not afraid, you can be certain as you leave Thomas Aquinas College that your greatest and most profound hopes will surely be realized.

Commencement Festivities

1. Madeline Schmitt tosses her text onto the fire at the thesis draft-burning party. 2. Kevin Cantu swings the bat in the annual tutor-senior softball game. 3. Patrick Conklin proudly announces the Class of 2015's accomplishments to the underclassmen during lunch in St. Joseph Commons. 4. Seniors celebrate the completion of their last exam with a swim in one of the College's ponds. 5. At the President's Dinner ... 6. ... Jack Grimm proposes a toast. 7. Genevieve McCarthy, Rebecca Six, and Kateri Brown ('17) at the Parents' and Alumni Associations' Taco Dinner.



“Come Face to Face with God”

Excerpts from the Commencement Address of Sr. Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D.

Our Carmelite community has always prayed for Thomas Aquinas College since its foundation. Now, for this particular graduating class, we have prayed for each of you by name. I am a consecrated woman religious and I am grateful for this honor of addressing you.

You are completing your undergraduate studies during the 5th centenary of the birth of the first woman Doctor of the Church — St. Teresa of Avila. She was born on March 28, 1515. My remarks to you today are drawn from a predominant theme that runs through all of her works. I pray that this reflection is inspired by the same Holy Spirit Who has been forming you very carefully and very intensely for the last four years.

The Mystery

All through the New Testament, in all of St. Paul's major Epistles, in all three synoptic Gospels, we hear about “*The Mystery*.” What do we know about this mystery? St. Paul tells us that it has been revealed. We can know it. He also tells us that everyone is included. No one is to be excluded. What is it?

That Almighty God, the Omnipotent One, the One Who has no beginning and will never have an end, Who is the foundation for all that is, the only God there is, has a preoccupation to be close to us; He has a heart wide open to share His own inner life with us. *This is The Mystery.*

In order to fulfill His desire to be near us, when the fullness of time had come, God, the uncontainable One, the Creator of all that is, asked of one of His creatures permission to be contained in her virginal womb. The humility of God. *This is The Mystery.*

The One Who created every star of every galaxy becomes a zygote in His creature's womb. For the next nine months His creature had control over His body, His nourishment, the places where He traveled. The One who can span the universe with a single thought had to learn how to walk from His creatures. The *Logos* was taught how to read by one of His own creatures. Do we have the proportions of *This Mystery*?

But this is not enough. No. *This Mystery* of God's essence being love, Trinitarian relationship now taking on the form of a man, must not be kept secret. It must be shared; Jesus was impelled to make His father known. That is what love does. Love is diffusive of itself. Love cannot be restricted or withheld.

So the God-man chose specific disciples to be with Him. They lived with Him. They shared life with Him. It wasn't a tidy life. It frequently became messy. They knew Him. They knew what He smelled like. They knew His ways. He knew their ways. They trusted Him, and He trusted them. They were friends.

Yet, this still is not enough. After the God-man suffered on the world's terms and before His ascension to His father, Christ sent forth the Apostles, commissioning them to proclaim the Gospel and baptize, promising, “I am with you always, even to the close of the age.”

This means *The Mystery* is still living. It is living no less now than at that moment when the Archangel Gabriel prostrated in adoration before the presence of the Word-made-Flesh in the womb of the humble Virgin. The *Mystery* has not become diminished whatsoever in 2015.

At all times and in all places God draws near to us. He



wants us to know Him. He reveals His Heart to us. He turns to each one of you, beloved graduates, as He has turned to me, as He has turned to your parents, to your siblings, to your priests, to your tutors. He wants to fill us with His love — the very same love that impelled Him to bring His father to the world and the world to His father, at any cost.

This is how important you and I are to His plan of salvation. This is *The Mystery*. Can we even come close to conceiving the extent to which the ardor and the humility of God will go?

Come Face to Face

This is my one piece of advice to you; my one challenge to you, beloved graduates. Every day, every single day for the rest of your life, come face to Face with God.

Practically, what does this mean, how does it look? It will *look* different for every one of you. It might be in the early hours of the morning, before the household is set in motion, when you turn yourself to God, or perhaps it is during a visit to the Blessed Sacrament on the way home from work, or while you are rocking your child in the stillness of night. For certain it means coming face to Face with Him in the Sacraments.

Coming face to Face with God means withdrawing for a moment from the endless interior chatter of our minds; mentally stepping aside from our prized accomplishments (both real and imagined), taking off our masks, allowing our ego a chance to become quiet and rest. Then we can come before God as we really are. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

It means exposing our heart to Him and turning our face to His.

Adam and Eve hid themselves among the trees in the Garden. Jonah ran from God and set sail for Tarshish. The rich, young, would-be disciple turned his back on Him and walked away sadly. Judas Iscariot began to distance himself and he no longer shared his heart with Jesus long before he went to Gethsemane in the stealth of that night.

The hiding that started in the Garden of Eden continues in our own hearts today. All of us suffer from the dregs of concupiscence, save she who was immaculately conceived. It is her son Who reverses this hiding syndrome.

In the Gospels we see Jesus, from the time the young adolescent stayed back in the temple until literally His dying breath, we see Him standing in integrity before His father and His people, hiding nothing, holding nothing back. His heart is laid bare. Meet Jesus in the unveiling of His heart. Be receptive to Him. Don't hide from Him because you feel unworthy. It is not about our worthiness. *This is The Mystery.*

This is revelation: God reveals Himself to us. He wants us to know Him. Listen to the Gospel proclaimed in Mass with great attention and sensitivity. He invites, “Come to Me and find rest” and not just for a second. He says, “Abide in My love.” He doesn't want us to feverishly toss our burdens in His direction and then anxiously run off. No. “Come to Me and find rest.”

When Jesus hung exposed on Calvary, many people saw Him. They looked toward Him, but not everyone turned to Him, stood face to Face with Him. Many were just passersby; some saw the God-man and shook their heads. Others jeered at Him. Who were these people?

What were their names? What did they accomplish with their lives? Who knows?

We do know for certain that on Calvary there were people who stood face to Face with God: Mary, His heart-broken mother; Mary Magdalene; John the Beloved, to name a few. Two thousand years later we all know their names. We know what they did with their lives. They are still living. They are here among us, members of the same body. The life they received from Him as they stood face to bruised and battered Face is what transformed them, defined them and impelled them to carry *The Mystery* to the ends of the earth.

And as for Peter, Andrew, Philip, James, and the rest, who in their weakness and confusion in the Garden that awful night allowed Jesus to only see their backs and the soles of their feet as they deserted Him, Jesus sought them out. On Sunday night, when they once again stood face to Face, Jesus' first word was “Peace,” and their response was sheer joy, not shame, not embarrassment. You will never find a trace of anything punitive in God: remedial, yes, reprisal, never. No. He then breathed on them the new life of mission, of purpose, and of still belonging.

“At all times and in all places God draws near to us. He wants us to know Him. ... He turns to each one of you, beloved graduates, as He has turned to me, as He has turned to your parents, to your siblings, to your priests, to your tutors.”

There is no need to be afraid. Children stood before Him. Lepers, tax collectors, and prostitutes were not afraid to turn to Him. However, the Scribes, the Pharisees who were filled with their own learning; the rich, young would-be disciple and Judas Iscariot who were filled with their own ideas of how life must be lived; the demons who were filled with their ulterior motives; these are the only ones in the Gospel who wanted to take leave of Jesus.

Never allow a day to pass that you do not stop everything and turn inward, turn and be present to the God Whose loves burns within you.

Tapping into Your Torrent of Gifts

Today you are concluding your studies at Thomas Aquinas College. Few people have been given the opportunities and blessings you have. You are to be congratulated and celebrated for your accomplishments. Truly, they are singular.

Your intentions today are to stay faithful to the graces and formation you have received. This is the desire of your heart, isn't it? But our world is becoming ever more feverish and agitated. The Tempter already has his plan for how he will try to divert each one of you from the plan the good Lord has for you. Human nature is weak.

Coming face to Face with God every day in the integrity of your own soul is the most simple and most specific way of daily tapping back into the torrent of gifts you have received here in this oasis of grace in Santa Paula.

Remember, as disciples, we are receivers, we are givers; we are never holders. If you allow the Holy Spirit to have His way, the graces you have received will not only be preserved, they will increase and flow out to others. Our Lord said to St. Margaret Mary, “Souls have no idea what I would work in them if only they didn't resist me.”

Then you will be credible witnesses to the world. And when that day comes when you close your eyes to this world and you open your eyes to the day of your *real* “final examination,” you will not be caught off guard. You will look into the Face of the One you love and you will, indeed, say with radiant confidence, “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!”

For the full text and audio of Sr. Regina Marie's address, see thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2015.



Sr. Regina Marie presents a diploma to Catherine Mary Birri ('15).

“Leave with Hearts full of Love”

Excerpts from the 2015 Senior Address

by Joshua Brittain ('15)

Sister Regina Marie Gorman, members of the Board of Governors, President McLean, faculty and staff, family and friends: The Class of 2015 thanks you for your presence today. You have graciously gathered to honor the 41st graduating class of Thomas Aquinas College. This four-year immersion into the wonder of the great books has been magnificent and challenging, and the community deems it fitting to crown our days as students with a dignified ceremony in front of family and friends. If it is right that we celebrate on this day, then may the College commend us, and may our parents be filled with the best kind of pride.

Giving Thanks

Graduates, let us remain ever mindful of this reality: The greatest thing worth celebrating today is the priceless gift we have been given. As the undeserving recipients of that gift, let us not neglect our most urgent duty to give thanks to Almighty God, from Whom all blessings flow, and to give thanks to all those who have lovingly made our celebration today possible. I am eager, on behalf of my peers, to do so. To begin, we would like to posthumously thank Dr. McArthur, Dr. Dillon, and Mr. Berquist, men whose love of the truth and love of the one, true faith was made manifest by humble, lifelong service to our beautiful college. We pray they rest in peace and we pray they know that their labor and love have borne the fruit of an institution that has bettered so many lives.

We thank our benefactors, whose generosity made the dream of our visionary founders a reality and whose continued assistance has enabled this college to provide its unique education to students who would otherwise be unable to attend. A special expression of thanks is due to our priests and teachers, the day-to-day heroes of our community. The priests obediently serve the magisterium by humbly and faithfully serving us, bringing God to us through the Sacraments. Their service brings forth the holy hush of our beautiful chapel, and their service is what makes Thomas Aquinas College truly Catholic. We thank our teachers, whose love of the truth and love of students have illuminated the dark and rugged path to knowledge, and whose docile and steadfast love of the Church has shown the young souls of students what it means to study as Catholics. Together our priests and teachers realize, on a daily basis, our unique mission: to provide a Catholic liberal education.

Lastly, we thank our loving parents. You, who have loved and supported us since the day we entered this world, are the biggest cause of our being who we are today. We thank you for the gift of life, but more importantly, we thank you for the gift of faith. Your loving hands presented us at the baptismal font, where we became part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Your prayers now fall from our lips, your creed is now our creed, and the God that you loved before us has now become the God Whom we long to serve.

In my own case, I thank my father, Tom Brittain ('96), a shining example of consistent Catholic manliness and the best man I have ever known. And with enduring awe, I thank my beautiful mother, Melissa Brittain, the rock of our family. Thank you for your “yes” to life, and thank you for giving this lousy son his 10 siblings, the 10 greatest gifts any young man could ever ask for.

Parents: Our thanks pales in comparison to what you



The Class of 2015 elected Joshua Brittain as its Class Speaker ...

have done for us, but know that we love you and that our thanks comes from the deepest part of our hearts.

Knowing and Loving God

My fellow graduates, we have officially completed a demanding course of study that will stand us in good stead as long as we live. In our time as students we have been graced with the opportunity to join the conversation regarding a set of perennial questions that naturally arise in the hearts of all men, for God has given them a desire to understand. Standing on the shoulders of intellectual giants, we have, Lord willing, allowed our intellects to shine ever brighter with every passing day.

“My fellow graduates, we have officially completed a demanding course of study that will stand us in good stead as long as we live. In our time as students we have been graced with the opportunity to join the conversation regarding a set of perennial questions that naturally arise in the hearts of all men, for God has given them a desire to understand. Standing on the shoulders of intellectual giants, we have, Lord willing, allowed our intellects to shine ever brighter with every passing day.”

More importantly, in our efforts to better understand revealed theology, we have been gifted with the rare privilege of being led by a saint whose writings recommend themselves to us not only for their scope and their clarity, but most importantly, by the seal of approval they have received from the magisterium. By studying at the feet of our patron, St. Thomas, the path to knowledge has become a little brighter, for in a small way, we have put on the mind of Christ: truth and illumination itself.

We may have put on the mind of Christ, but have we grown closer to His Sacred Heart? Have we grown in charity? I humbly believe that our theological studies have deepened our love for God. For we can only love that which we know. So every new truth that we come to understand about our heavenly father gives us another reason to love Him.

Sadly, however, our time studying theology at Thomas Aquinas College has ended. So, as the door to a new chapter of our lives opens, how are we to face what lies waiting for us on the other side? Our patron asserts that “the perfection of the Christian life consists simply in charity,” reminding us that, above all, we are to live our lives with a soul that strives to love. Nevertheless, a longing to do what we ought to do is not enough; we must succeed in our efforts. We must love. How are we to do so? I surely do not have a sufficient answer to this question, but if I may, I would like to offer a place where we can start.

If we are to love God as much as we can while on this earth, it is essential that we love Him in the mode in which He is to be loved, as a common good. It is essential that our love help build Christ’s Church on earth.

In doing so, the theological truths, which we have come to better understand at the College, will serve us well. But the greatest teachers in the world, even the great teachers of Thomas Aquinas College, whom we have grown to love and admire, and whom we hope to emulate, are not great simply because of what they know, but because their goodness of soul far exceeds the good of knowledge. For true teaching and true evangelization begin with contact with the heart.

Love Will Conquer All

To love rightly we need both knowledge of the truth and goodness of soul, which make us effective instruments to build Christ’s Church. When the building of the Church on earth is complete, it will possess all the fitting perfections. No one Christian man can provide these perfections. The Church needs all to do their part, for every Christian provides a different gift of soul.

So, Andre Shepherd and Heather Waldorf, the kindest people I have ever known, continue to love by being the kind and gentle souls that make all who know you want to call you friend. Martin Beers, intellectually you are the most prepared to teach the Faith, but your greatest gift to the world may lie in your humility. Continue to love by being that humble servant who longs to help anyone in need. Luke Burnham and Rocky Brittain, my dear brother, men with more confidence and more conviction than any men I have ever met: You two are leaders because these two gifts of soul make men want to follow you. With love in your heart, use these gifts for the betterment of the Church, and you will surely change the world.

To all my other classmates whose gifts of soul are just as strong, just as alive, and just as important, know this: The greatest warrior is the one who loves that which he defends. So, while the threats against our faith may in fact be legion, love will conquer all. Strive to be who you were made to be, and strive to love how you were made to love, by getting the most out of your unique gifts of soul. And remember the words of St. Catherine of Siena, “Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire,” a fire that is ignited and a fire that is fueled by love.

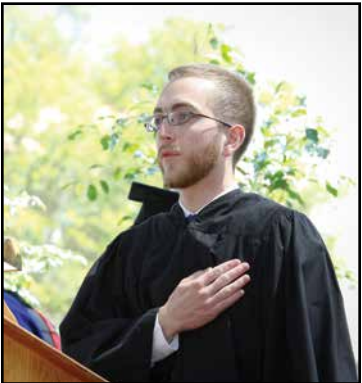
Now it is time for me to say farewell. Though I am no valedictorian, this is our valedictory address. I take my leave by telling the Class of 2015 this: My heart is filled with love. I love my classmates, I love my teachers, and I love Thomas Aquinas College, my alma mater. I am filled with love because God loved me first, and He loves me today. So, I exhort the Class of 2015, when it leaves these hallowed halls for the last time, leave with hearts full of love. Then, whatever road Our Lord asks you to walk, walk with courage; walk with a humble heart that longs to serve God and His church; and know that you walk with the illuminating power of love in your heart. For it is love that you have fostered, and it is love that stands as a lighthouse for your soul.

Love. For the greatest crime against the grace we have been given will not be tragedy or grave sin, but the cancer of gradual indifference which makes one’s love grow cold.

Love. So that at the end of time, on judgment day, we all may receive the ever-merciful greeting that Our Lord longs to give all those who love Him: Well done, my good and faithful servant.

God bless you.

For the full text and audio of Mr. Brittain’s address, see thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2015.



... Martin Beers to lead the Pledge of Allegiance ...



... and Carmel Richard to sing the National Anthem.

The Class of 2015 and Senior Thesis Titles



Knowing the Continuous
Through the Discrete: The Role
of Arithmetic Proportions in the
Knowledge of Geometric Entities

MARTIN ABRAHAM BEERS
Blacksburg, Virginia



“He Will Frighten the Hell out of
You”: Whether Fear of the Lord Is
Said Equivocally with the Passion Fear

MARA RACHELLE BIEGEL
Anchorage, Alaska



St. Pope John Paul II and Aristotle’s
Varying Views on the Value of
Woman Illuminated Through Their
Respective Understandings of
Feminine Receptivity

CATHERINE MARY BIRRI
Metuchen, New Jersey

The Controversy of Christianity
in the *Three Tales*

JOSEPH STEPHEN BITTMAN
Spruce Grove, Alberta, Canada



On the Relation Between the Natural
and the Empirical Methods
in the Study of Nature

MICHAEL JAMES BORS
Annapolis, Maryland



On the *Imago Dei*: An Account of
Man’s Special Likeness to God

RACHEL MARIE BRIGHT
Mesa, Arizona



Theotokos: A Defense of the Doctrine
of Mary as the Mother of God

GARY ROCK BRITTAIN
Tempe, Arizona



Courage Under Fire: A Reconciliation
of the Apparent Paradox Found When
Investigating a Christian’s Call to Turn
the Other Cheek and the Call to Be
Courageous

JOSHUA BRITTAIN
Tempe, Arizona



“Cursed Be the Hands”:
An Interpretation of *Frankenstein* as
a Commentary on Science
and Happiness

MATTHEW JAMES BRYAN
Mount Shasta, California

Escaping David Hume:
Kant’s Response to Hume’s
Denial of Causality

LUKE ALEXANDER BURNHAM
Farmington, New Mexico



Where’s the Justice?
An Explication of the Justice in
Christ’s Suffering and Death

KEVIN PETER CANTU
Clearwater, Florida



Man Fears, and He Is Wise to Do So

**PATRICK STEPHEN
JOHN CONKLIN**
Mount Angel, Oregon



Brothers Karamazov:
The Conscience and the Interior Lie

BENEDICT COUGHLIN
Santa Paula, California



The Tragedy of Ophelia

**MADELEINE LETOURNEUX
DALY**
Berwyn, Illinois



“When She Died She Was Called
a Holy Woman”: A Reading of
Gunnar’s Daughter by Sigrid Undset

MARY CECILIA DILLON
Lunenburg, Massachusetts

Gregorian Chant as a Sacramental:
How Gregorian Chant Fulfills the
End of Liturgical Music as a Means
of Increasing Devotion

JOHN ANTHONY EVICH
Cedar, Michigan



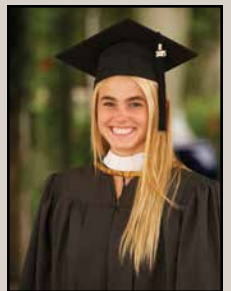
This All Men Call God: A Justification
of the Five Ways of Thomas Aquinas
as Arguments to the Existence
of One and the Same God

WILLIAM FAUSETT
Thompson Falls, Montana



“There Is Something in Humility
Which Strangely Exalts the Heart”:
An Investigation of How Knowing
Oneself Is Necessary for the
Attainment of Perfection

**SAMANTHA MARIE
GERMAINE FLANDERS**
Muscatine, Iowa



“I Want to Paint the Way a Bird
Sings”: That Fine Art Produces
Imitations

**LUCIA MARIE CARMEL
FROULA**
Waterbury, Connecticut



The Hunt: An Investigation into
Tolstoy’s Conception of the Happy
Life

**MORGAN ELIZABETH
FURORE**
Suttons Bay, Michigan



What Is the Point of Gravity?

**HOWARD WILLIAM
GALLOWAY**
Pine Mountain, California



Prior Convictions: An Investigation into Where Philosophers Disagree and Man’s Ability to Be Certain

JEROME CHRISTOPHER GERRARD
Laguna Hills, California



Mathematics—A Preparation for Natural Philosophy: Whether Man Can Know Natural Causes by Mathematics

JOHN PAUL GERRARD
Laguna Hills, California



Is Sensation of Things or of Ideas? Aristotle Versus Locke on Sensation

ELIZABETH ANNE GOYETTE
Santa Paula, California



“Seek His Face Evermore”: A Justification of the Study of the *Summa Theologiae*

PAUL LAWRENCE GRIMES
Chestertown, Maryland

Do Whatever He Tells You: How the Immaculate Conception Points Toward Christ

JOHN BAPTIST ANDREW JUSTIN MARTYR CYPRIAN GRIMM
Ojai, California



Where Were You When I Laid the Foundation of the Earth?

MAGDALEN ANN GRISMER
Santa Rosa, California



You are Pure Potential: On the Ethics of the Induced Pluripotent Stem Cell

KATHERINE GUILFORD
Guilford, Indiana



Why You Shouldn’t Be Paranoid About the Android

REBEKAH KAYLIN HALL
Helena, Montana



“The Greatest of These Is Love”

SUSANNAH ROSE JACKSON
Manassas, Virginia



“The Beauty of the World, the Paragon of Animals”: A Defense of the Substantial Unity of Man

LUKE CHARLES AMBROSE JOLIAT
Waterbury, Connecticut

Are There Objective Moral Truths? A Defense of Aristotle’s Notion of Nature and Explication of It as a Principle of Ethics

JOANNA LUCIA KAISER
Ojai, California



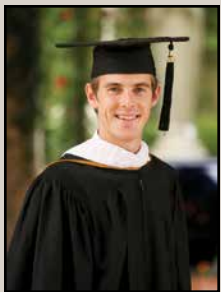
Behold, the Bridegroom: An Explanation of the Fittingness of Marriage as a Figure for the Union of Christ and the Church

REBECCA GRACE MARIE KAISER
Ojai, California



To Whom It May Concern: Whether the Education of Children Belongs to the State or the Family

CHRISTENA MARIE KHATTAR
Mount Aukum, California



A Rebirth in Blood and Water: An Analysis of Vigdis’ Act of Will in *Gunnar’s Daughter*

ANDREW JAMES PATRICK KUENSTLE
Tehachapi, California



“And the Rain Fell, and the Floods Came, and the Winds Blew and Beat Against That House, and It Fell; and Great Was the Fall of It”: Christianity as the Mainstay of Society

JOHN FRANCIS KURZWEIL JR.
Ventura, California



Picking Up the Pieces: The Enigma of Judges 19

JOHN ANDREW LAFAVE
Butte, Montana

The Role of Aristotelian Method in a Beginner’s Study of Chemistry

DAVID MICHAEL LANGLEY
Camarillo, California



On the Relation Between the Inverse Square Law and the Conic Sections

JORDAN JAMES LIND
Edina, Minnesota



Bless Me Father, for I Have Sinned: A Probable Cause Found of the Horror of Tolstoy’s Ivan Ilyich

STACEY ELIZABETH LOEFFLER
Upland, California



Marriage, Maternity, and Pregnancy: An Essay on the Morality of Frozen Embryo Rescue

ELIZABETH MARIE LOTH
Woodbridge, Virginia



The Living Way: An Inquiry into John 6:53-57

RENÉE LOUISE LYONS
Ventura, California

Senior Thesis Titles



Freely Composed Providence:
Reconciling the Reality of
Human Freedom with the
Certainty of God's Plan

**JUDE THADDEUS
MACFARLANE**
Rocky River, Ohio



The *Filioque* Controversy:
An Eastern Catholic Perspective

SOPHIA MARIE MACIK
Brecksville, Ohio

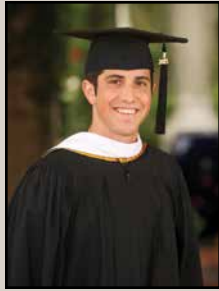


I Am: A Defense of the
Embryonic Person

**MARY KATHERINE
MASSELL**
Santa Rosa, California

"I Call You Now Friends"

ANTHONY DAVID MAZA
Tempe, Arizona



Smart for His Own Good

**MAIREAD ROSE
THOMAS MCARDLE**
Poughquag, New York



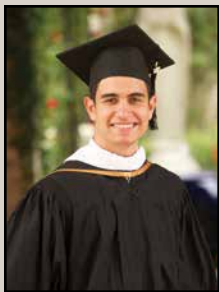
The Widow's Way: Huckleberry
Finn's Journey to Christianity

SARAH RUFF MCCAFFERTY
Jackson, Mississippi



A Tale of Two Cities: The Proper
Relationship of Church and State

**GENEVIEVE CATHERINE
MCCARTHY**
Minnetonka, Minnesota



Do We Believe in Magic? A Defense of
the Use of Magic in Literature

**MICHAEL BRIAN
CASIMIR MCCARTY**
La Crescenta, California



The Soul Tells Us Why She Loves
Beauty: How Beauty Pleases Through
What Is Natural

ANDREW DAVID MELUCH II
University Heights, Ohio

"He Must Increase, but I Decrease":
An Exposition of the Order
Between the Annunciations of John
the Baptist and Christ and the Old
and New Testaments

TORI MARIE RITA MILLER
Venice, Florida



The Sense of Touch as the Primary
Cause of Affirmation in Infancy

ROSARIO MIRANDA
Los Angeles, California



The Cosmos and Man:
A Treatise on the Indeterminacy
of Nature and Its Perfection
Through Man's Reason

ELAINE MARIE OAKLEY
*Coquitlam, British Columbia
Canada*



Testing the Limits: A Mathematical
Treatment of the Methods for
Taking Limits

**MICHAEL FRANCIS
ALBERTUS MAGNUS
O'HARA**
Hebron, New Hampshire



Moral Culpability: Whether
Ignorance of the Natural Law Caused
by Society Removes Guilt

MONICA MARIA O'HEARN
Ventura, California



Killing Them Softly

CONNOR O'LUANAIGH
Cheshire, Connecticut

Reason as a Judge:
An Examination of the Kantian
Principles of Knowledge

JOSEPH RICCIO
Cobourg, Ontario, Canada



Pax Christi in Regno Christi:
An Examination of the
Kingship of Christ

CARMEL ELYSE RICHARD
San Jose, California



"Et Tu, Brute?":
Brutus' Participation in
the Slaying of Caesar

DEMITRIA ROSE RICHARD
Concord, California



"The Splendor of Order":
An Exposition of the
Beauty of Mathematics

SARAH MARIA RIVERA
Kendall Park, New Jersey



How the First Things Known to
the Mind Can Manifest the Real
Distinction Between Essence and
Existence

PATRICK MICHAEL ROONEY
Oakhurst, California



Sitivit Anima Mea: Man's Path to God

MADELINE LOUISE SCHMITT
Leominster, Massachusetts

The Class of 2015 and Senior Thesis Titles

On Man’s Path to Knowledge
Against the Existentialists
ANDRE JOHN SHEPHERD
Vancouver, Washington



Two Wrongs Do Make a Right:
Punishment as the Restoration of
Order in the Understanding
JOAN MARIE SHORT
Ojai, California



Playing Games Is a Leisure Activity
PETER THOMAS SIMONSE
Edina, Minnesota

Number as Relational Quantity
DAVID RAYMOND SIX
Bath, Pennsylvania



“I Literally Can’t Even”:
The Oddness of Catharsis
REBECCA ANNE SIX
Bath, Pennsylvania



“To Thee Do We Cry,
Poor Banished Children of Eve, to
Thee Do We Send Up Our Sighs,
Mourning and Weeping in
This Valley of Tears”
SARA ROSE SMILLIE
Lancaster, Massachusetts



Conversi ad Dominum: Turning
Towards the Lord in Liturgical
Worship
**ERIN DAVID
DOMINIC STRAUB**
Portland, Oregon



On the Superiority of Realism
over Nominalism: On the
Topic of Human Nature
JEFFREY STRONG
Twinsburg, Ohio



“Blessed Are the Meek, for They
Shall Inherit the Earth”: The Call to
Meekness, the Forgotten Virtue
**CECILIA ELIZABETH
MARYA TEICHERT**
Oak View, California



A Chivalrous Interpretation
of the Fall of Man
**THOMAS ANTHONY
EPHRAIM TRULL**
St. Louis, Missouri



“And the Word Was Made Flesh and
Dwelt Among Us”: An Investigation
into Stories As Caused by
Salvation History
**JACINTA MARIE GILBERT
KAROL VAN HECKE**
Hartland, Wisconsin



“I Will Put Enmity Between You
and the Serpent”: An Exposition
of the Opposing Natures of
Woman and Satan
HEATHER ANN WALDORF
Chico, California



“Let Us Eat and Drink, for
Tomorrow We Shall Die”:
Why Health of Body is a
Moral Obligation
MARGARET GRACE WALSH
Tehachapi, California



The Living Word
GILLIAN CLAIR WEYANT
New Milford, Connecticut



On the Family and Its Necessity in
the Political Community
KHYBER ARAKELIAN WHITE
Ventura, California



What Is Laughter?
**JOHN PARKER
AUGUSTINE WILMETH**
Anderson, South Carolina



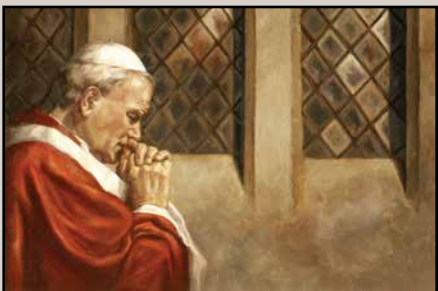
On the Compatibility of
Magnanimity and Humility
MARIA PEARL YAKLIN
Bellevue, Iowa



How Sensible Beauty Is a
Principle for Knowing God
**CLAIRE ELIZABETH
YANOSCHIK**
Ada, Michigan



Patron of the Class of 2015:
Pope St. John Paul II



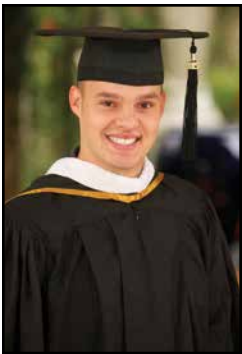
“The Love that Saves,” by Maria Rangel (’99)

Class Quotation:
“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”
– Rev. 22:20

Senior Reflections

Generations of Blessings

Note: The following essay is adapted from comments made before the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its May 15, 2015, meeting.



By Rocky Brittain ('15)

President McLean, members of the Board of Governors, good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to tell you a little bit about myself and to thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for our beloved college.

I am the fourth of 11 children, and for over two decades my family has been immeasurably blessed by Thomas Aquinas College. In the summer of 1992, my father, Tommy, told my mother, Melissa, that although they had recently welcomed their fourth child, and despite his having just finished a master's in English, he wanted to pursue a bachelor of arts at a small Catholic college in California.

At this point in my parents' lives, neither was a practicing Catholic. My father had left the Faith in his late teens, and my mother was raised Protestant. Despite the peculiarity of my father's new idea, however, they came, and my father graduated from Thomas Aquinas College in 1996, three days after the birth of his fourth son and sixth child, Zachariah. In addition, my mother converted, and my father came back to the Faith in the middle of his Sophomore Year. So, long before my journey through Thomas Aquinas College, the history of the College and the Brittain family is rich and beautiful.

My father always encouraged us to attend the College, but he did not make us. Nevertheless, his two oldest

daughters and now his two oldest sons are graduates; and his fifth child, Anthony, will be a sophomore in the fall. I know it is one of my father's greatest gifts of thanksgiving that all of his children have been lovingly nurtured by the same tender mother as he was.

I did not always want to come here. I was a gifted athlete in high school and a state champion in track and field, and I was eager to not squander these gifts. As my senior year waned, however, my desire to pursue athletics in college mysteriously dwindled as well. When applications were due, I applied only here. I did not know what to expect; I only knew that my siblings and my father loved it, and that it was going to be difficult.

"I almost immediately saw God's providence at work. I fell in love with the intellectual life to a degree that I was not expecting. During my time here, that love has only grown."

Nevertheless, I almost immediately saw God's providence at work. I fell in love with the intellectual life to a degree that I was not expecting. During my time here, that love has only grown. I remember being so impressed with the clarity of Euclid, the insight of Fabre, and the beauty of Homer. It is safe to say that from my freshman year I knew that I was destined to read these kinds of works for the rest of my life.

It was not until my sophomore year, however, that my zeal and interest became more focused. In St. Augustine's *Confessions* I experienced a depth of understanding, a spirituality, and a love for Christ that I had never known, and I thought to myself, I need what St. Augustine has.

Thomas Aquinas College has taken that revelation I had and shaped, nurtured, and developed it. I have loved reading Milton, Darwin, Shakespeare, Einstein, Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard, and even Kant, but my heart and soul have been captivated by the crown jewel of the intellectual life, Sacred Theology. Through reading saints like John of Damascus, Augustine, Anselm, and especially St. Thomas Aquinas, it became very clear to me that reading these types of works in particular is what I needed to be doing.

This love of the intellectual life, and especially theology, has only been strengthened by the wonderful community here. I have been so blessed that during these very important years of my life I was welcomed into a deeply Catholic community that is utterly devoted to the one, true church. I owe Thomas Aquinas College so much. Almost all of the good things in my life I have the College to thank for. My parents gave me my faith, but I made it my own within the walls of this chapel. I have found something that I am good at and that I love, and I will pursue that love further at Ave Maria University where, this fall, I will enter the master's program in theology. It is here that I met my beautiful fiancée, Caitlin, whom I will marry next month.

I have great cause to love Thomas Aquinas College, and so I have a tremendous duty to thank you for all of your time, financial support, and prayers. The good you have done and will continue to do for Christ's church will not go unnoticed, and the Lord is never outdone in generosity. May God continue to bless this holy place, and may your hearts always burn with the fire of Christ's love. God bless you.

Mr. Brittain is from Tempe, Arizona.

Spreading Hope

Note: The following essay is adapted from comments made before the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its May 15, 2015, meeting.



By Morgan Furore ('15)

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to be here with you today and, above all, thank you on behalf of my fellow students for your generous support of the College as members of the Board of Governors. The education that we have received

here is truly priceless, and it would not be possible without your support. Thank you.

I was lucky enough to have a friend in high school who learned about Thomas Aquinas College in the *Newman Guide*. She convinced me to attend the High School Summer Program, which was my first encounter with the great books and the discussion method. I ultimately chose the College because it offered me something truly unique: Not only would I earn a liberal arts education, but it would be liberal in the truest sense, because it would be rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

After my first two years here I knew that I was beginning to think about things in a new way, but it was still pretty difficult to gauge the extent to which I was being transformed. At the end of my sophomore year, however, I had an experience that helped me understand more clearly just how much the College was beginning to change me.

When the year came to an end, I got onto a plane to return to my family's home in Michigan, and I sat down next to a man who began asking me about where I was coming from and where I was going. I told him that I was a student at Thomas Aquinas College and that I was studying the great books.

I proceeded to ask him about where he was coming from and where he was going. I learned that he was an executive producer for an Emmy Award-winning TV series on the Discovery Channel called *The Deadliest Catch*, and that he was flying to my hometown to give a TED talk about the importance of storytelling. Suddenly he turned to me and asked, "Why do you think storytelling is important?"

A smile immediately spread across my face. Just a few days earlier I had had my Sophomore Seminar exam with Mr. Dragoo, and the first question that he had asked me was, "What is the importance of storytelling?" Because of this preparation, this television producer and I ended up talking about *The Aeneid* and *The Odyssey* and all of these great texts, and at one point he even asked if he could practice his speech in front of me so that I could tell him what I thought. It was incredible — I never would have expected anything like that!

What was more surprising to me was that, toward the end of the trip, he began asking me about my faith, and about what my views were on controversial topics such as abortion. We realized pretty quickly that we didn't see eye to eye, but I found myself asking him questions about his own position, pushing him to point out the principles upon which he was basing his argument. I didn't realize it at the time, but it occurred to me later that what I had been doing was exercising the very skills that I had learned at the College.

At the end of the flight he shook my hand and thanked me for taking the time to talk with him. He told me that I had given him hope that there are schools out there that are doing a good job of educating students in a way that forms them into thoughtful and positive young people who are enthusiastic to share what they have learned with the world.

It was at this moment that I realized how greatly my education was affecting the way that I think and speak. Throughout my four years here, this has become more

"He told me that I had given him hope that there are schools out there that are doing a good job of educating students in a way that forms them into thoughtful and positive young people who are enthusiastic to share what they have learned with the world."

and more clear to me — I have seen how each day I have spent here has been a blessing on my life.

As for my future plans, beginning this summer I will have the privilege of working for the Intercollegiate Studies Institute in Wilmington, Delaware, as a development associate. The institute's motto, "Educating for Liberty," is, after studying at Thomas Aquinas College, near and dear to my heart. I feel incredibly blessed to be given the opportunity to share what I have learned at the College with the world through my career.

As graduates, we are given a charge to bring our light into the world and to share it with others — which is a duty, but it is also a gift. Thank you for providing me and my fellow students an education that is not only a gift for us to have, but enables us to share our gift with the world. We are, as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI says, and as is found in the marble work in our chapel, "*cooperatores veritatis*," or, "co-workers of the Truth" — the Truth here being not just some abstract intellectual pursuit, but a *Person*.

On behalf of my fellow students, I would once again like to thank you, members of the Board of Governors, for all that you do. We, who now have the privilege of being co-workers in the Truth alongside you, will always be praying for you. God bless you, and God bless Thomas Aquinas College.

Miss Furore is from Suttons Bay, Michigan.

Caritas in Veritate

The Baccalaureate Homily of Rev. Joseph Illo

I wish to thank President McLean for welcoming me back to my “alma mater,” even though I did not receive a degree from this institution. Many of us who have spent even a little time on campus consider Thomas Aquinas College dearer than the universities at which we earned our degrees. Many thanks to our dear chaplains, Frs. Hildebrand, Buckley, Paul, and Michael, for their fraternal welcome. I told Fr. Buckley at breakfast that seeing his rakish academic regalia from the University of Paris alone would have been worth the drive from San Francisco, to which he replied that one should not make fun of St. Thomas’s alma mater.

I can’t tell you what it means to be in this chapel again, filled with our beloved students, faculty, and parents. This chapel, a sanctuary and a home for all of us, recalls solemn liturgies as well as quick visits between classes; it echoes the nightly student Rosary and the funerals of the College founders. It is a refuge from a storm-battered world, where we make our peace with God in these confessionals. Among its carefully planned appointments, I point to the papal arms of St. John Paul II and of Pope Benedict XVI, which stand at the head and the foot of our 14-arched nave. John Paul’s motto, *Totus Tuus*, brings us to Our Lady, temple of the Divine Trinity. Benedict’s motto, *Cooperatores Veritatis*, recalls us to community’s first end: faith seeking that degree of understanding permitted to the human intellect. And not just do we seek the truth, but we lay hold of it — *Carpe Veritatem* — as we see on so many College sweatshirts.

Caritas in Veritate

Pope Benedict’s first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, sought to express the full truth about love, and his last encyclical speaks of the relationship between love and truth: *Caritas in Veritate*. There are plenty of institutions, from universities to think tanks to high-tech companies, that are seeking a species of truth; all seek to “develop” society in some fashion. What distinguishes Thomas Aquinas College is our search for the truth precisely as an expression of God’s love. Pope Benedict begins his last encyclical with these words: “Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and all humanity.”

Our dearest graduates will now move into the world of human development, whether in building a family, a legal career, an education plan, a medical practice, or a consecrated apostolate. As God gave our first parents the mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (that is, to develop Creation according to God’s plan for its ultimate end, to its full potential), so your mandate is to develop that part of Creation given to your faithful stewardship. We have not immersed ourselves in the truth for four

years to keep it to ourselves. *Caritas Christi urget nos*, “The love of Christ compels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all ... that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him.” Authentic human development, the development of societies and cultures, is driven by this conviction that Christ gave His life for us, and that His sacrifice brings order to all human activity. This is the truth, born of love, that you must take with you into the world.

St. Teresa Benedicta, also known as Edith Stein, wrote: “Do not accept anything as truth if it lacks love, and do not accept anything as love if it lacks truth.” A respected philosopher, a lover of wisdom, she died a martyr, a witness to both love and truth, in Auschwitz on August 9, 1942.

Babel, Pentecost, and the Paraclete

Let’s consider our Scriptures, beginning with the Tower of Babel. Many of us complain that we can’t rationally discuss contentious issues like marriage and the human person with our contemporaries because we don’t even speak the same language. Thomas Aquinas College graduates are particularly susceptible to this frustration: increasingly, postmodern discourse is reduced to mere opinions and feelings. We are progressively reduced to babel.

In the days of Babel, a common language gave men a unifying rational power. It gave them a high degree of *techné*, and so they began building a great tower. The tower and the city in time collapsed, as will any society that makes man the measure of all things. Our closest expression of this tower without foundations is the 1992 Supreme Court opinion in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*: “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.” No prescriptive law can take that gibberish seriously, but it rationalizes the abortion license in our country and could conceivably rationalize any human aggression. It is not a rational expression but quite simply babel.

As the fathers of the Church noted, Pentecost reversed Babel. Only the Holy Spirit emanating from the Father’s love for His son and the Son’s love for His father can unify this kind of garble. The disciples at Pentecost spoke a word comprehensible to all, and what they spoke were the mighty acts of God, which is to say the love of God. Divine Love is the core dynamism of the universe, and indeed, of any human endeavor. Divine love brings together the scattered tribes of Babel; it inspired our forebears to build a Christian culture; it can rebuild that Christian culture. That’s where our dear graduates come in.

Jesus had promised another advocate. We pray to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity before every class. We prayed for His coming at the beginning of this divine liturgy itself: “Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful; enkindle in them the fire of Thy love ... that we may be truly wise.”

“When He comes,” Jesus had promised His disciples, “He will teach you everything.” Isn’t that why we come to Thomas Aquinas College? To learn *everything*? An integrated program teaches math and science and philosophy and theology. It teaches the *Elements* and searches for bugs with big nets. It muses over conics and discusses Trojan wars and muses on Relativity. And it concludes where it began, with *de Trinitate*, studying the ineffable love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus, the Truth, will only be known by those who love Him; that is, by those who keep His commandments. Study, as distinct from curiosity, is fundamentally an act of love. “We propose,” wrote the founders in the College’s seminal document, “the founding of a four-year Catholic college ... [that] will explicitly define itself by the Christian Faith and the tradition of the Catholic Church. Thus theology will be ... the governing principle of the whole school.” Philosophy is the love of wisdom, but theology is



“Philosophy is the love of wisdom, but theology is the study of God, Who is love itself. A college that defines itself by the study of love — that is the surest foundation of truth.”

the study of God, Who is love itself. A college that defines itself by the study of love — that is the surest foundation of truth.

No Truth Outside of Love

Jim Heilman, a friend of my family in Pennsylvania, was a student at this college in 1980. Toward the end of his Freshman Year he was diagnosed with melanoma and came home that summer to die. A few weeks before his death, he made a quiet observation that I will never forget: “I wonder how there can be any truth outside of the Church.” Jim faced his death with the peaceful conviction that even his mortality was a truth spoken by a loving Father. He grasped this truth at Thomas Aquinas College, when the campus was still a bunch of trailers on a muddy hillside.

Those deeper truths have all but been clouded over by the babel of competing desires incessantly shouted at us by modern media, desires so shallow that they last only the length of a nine-second Internet ad. Our College has given you to drink from deeper truths, and you thirst for more. It is yours now to give these truths, to do your modest part in sustaining what is authentically human in our culture.

Pope Benedict concludes his third encyclical with these words: “Development needs Christians with their arms raised towards God in prayer, Christians moved by the knowledge that truth-filled love, from which authentic development proceeds, is not produced by us, but given to us. For this reason, even in the most difficult and complex times, besides recognizing what is happening, we must above all else turn to God’s love. Development requires attention to the spiritual life, a serious consideration of the experiences of trust in God, spiritual fellowship in Christ, reliance upon God’s providence and mercy, love and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace. All this is essential if ‘hearts of stone’ are to be transformed into ‘hearts of flesh.’”

There are plenty of stony hearts out there. You have learned to love truth by loving God first, and love of neighbor as an ineluctable corollary. To speak this truth, we all must maintain an intense interior life: the Mass, the Rosary, spiritual reading, regular confession, penance for our souls and the souls of all the world. I recommend you to Our Lady, who gave herself completely in love. Only a love that gives itself absolutely is true. As Our Lady is the mediatrix of all graces, so she is the mediatrix of all truths. The patroness of this chapel, she stands at the head of this college, her benevolent image drawing students of truth through these portals to her son. *Carpe veritatem*, yes, but *caritas in veritate*.

For the text and audio of Fr. Illo’s homily, see thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2015.



“Credible Witnesses to the World”

What’s Next for the Class of 2015

In her Commencement Address, Sr. Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D., Vicar General of the Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles, urged members of the Class of 2015 to become “credible witnesses to the world.” In discerning their vocations and launching their careers, the graduates have clearly taken this charge to heart. Whether in the courtroom or the classroom, the marketplace or the monastery, the College’s newest graduates will put their faith, their talents, and their education to service as “credible witnesses” for the Kingdom of God.



Medicine

After interning at an MIT chemistry-research laboratory in 2014, **David Langley** has decided that he needs more human interaction and is thus studying for the Medical College Admission Test. ... **Peter Simonse** is completing prerequisite courses for medical school at the University of Pennsylvania. ... **Margaret Walsh** is taking prerequisites for graduate studies in nutrition, and **Rosaria Miranda** for psychology. ... It was seeing his sister Rosie (’10) die of cancer during his Junior Year that prompted **Jack Grimm** to pursue a nursing career in pediatric oncology. “There was so much peace and hope, despite the fact that it was such a sad situation,” he says. With the aim of bringing that hope to other families, he is entering a nursing program at Ventura College this fall. ... **Suzie Jackson**, **Renee Lyons**, **Mairead McArdle**, and **Demitria Richard** are in various stages of preparing for or applying to nursing school.

Marriage

On June 12, less than one month after Commencement, **Rocky Brittain** wed Caitlyn (Griffith ’14) in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. ... Eight days later, **Mara (Biegel)** married her high school sweetheart, Michael El-Khoury, in their hometown of Anchorage, Alaska. ... Four other members of the Class of 2015 expect to marry within the next year, but there are no intra-class engagements ... yet.



The June 12 wedding of Caitlin (Griffith ’14) and Rocky Brittain (’15)



Education

Every year education is a popular career choice among the College’s graduates, and 2015 is no exception. “I want to share the wonder that this education has given me with other people,” says **Rebecca Six**, expressing a sentiment that is shared widely among her classmates. This fall she will teach at Archway Lincoln Academy, a new member of the Great Hearts consortium of classical charter schools that is rapidly expanding throughout the Southwest. ... Other members of the Class of 2015 who have accepted positions at Great Hearts academies are **Joshua Brittain**, **Lucia Froula**, **Sarah McCafferty**, **Michael O’Hara**, and **Sarah Rivera**.

Paul Grimes will be an enrollment counselor and teacher for the Mother of Divine Grace distance-learning program. ... He will be joined by **Andrew Kuestle**, who will teach while earning an advanced degree in literature at the University of Dallas, with the eventual goal of teaching the subject at the collegiate level. ... **Elizabeth Loth** will work as a private tutor in Austin, Texas. ... **Thomas Trull** will teach drama, doctrine, and mathematics alongside several other alumni at St. Monica Academy in Pasadena, California.



Science & Technology

“The main reason I am so interested in geology,” observes **Magdalen Grismer**, “is that it shows the presence of the divine in a science — that God would have created a world that works so perfectly without apparent assistance all the time.” Miss Grismer is currently taking prerequisite courses so that she can study volcanology and plate tectonics at San Jose State University. ... **Jeffrey Strong** will study engineering at the University of Akron, and **Howard Galloway** is considering chemical-engineering programs. ... **John Gerrard** seeks to study physics, with the ultimate goal of earning a doctorate. ... **Luke Joliat** has accepted a job in Web development.

Public Service

“A police officer has to be prepared for anything at any time, and a liberal education does just that — it prepares you for anything,” says **Connor O’Luanaigh**. Mr. O’Luanaigh has applied for positions with several police departments in Ventura County, California, and he anticipates enrolling in the Police Acad-

emy come October. ... **Patrick Conklin**, meanwhile, is pursuing a career as a firefighter. He expects to work on a wildland fire crew this summer and then shift to a municipal department.

Arts & Architecture

John Parker Wilmeth will soon travel to South Bend, Indiana, where he will enroll in the graduate classical-architecture program at the University of Notre Dame. ... **John Evich**, who has studied organ for 10 years, intends to play at the parish level after graduation while considering a master’s degree in music. ... **Claire Yanoschik** will put her artistic talents to work as an illustrator for Mother of Divine Grace School.



Philosophy and Theology

“I really enjoyed reading the political philosophers we covered in Junior Year,” says **Elizabeth Goyette**, who will next study political philosophy at Baylor University. “I liked reading and discussing Plato, Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Politics*, the American founders, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau. Studying these works here has made me want to explore them further.” ... **Rocky Brittain** and **Anthony Maza** are pursuing advanced degrees in theology at Ave Maria University and the Augustine Institute, respectively. ... **Martin Beers** will study history and the philosophy of science at the University of Notre Dame. ... **Michael Bors** is entering a joint master’s-doctoral program in philosophy at The Catholic University of America.



Public Policy

This past year **Catherine Birri** held an internship with the Center for Family & Human Rights (C-Fam), a prominent Catholic NGO at the United Nations, writing for its International Youth Coalition blog. While continuing her writing, she now aims to turn her internship into a full-time position with either C-Fam or a similar group. ... **Morgan Furore** will work as a development associate for the Intercollegiate Studies Institute in Wilmington, Delaware. ... As part of the Associate Program at the Charles Koch Institute, **Genevieve McCarthy** will study public policy while working in a development role at the National Taxpayers Union Foundation.



Business

Although he seeks to one day become a commercial airline pilot, **Joseph Bittman**’s more immediate plans are to open a martial-arts school in his hometown of Edmonton, Ontario. ... Fellow entrepreneur **Heather Waldorf** will expand her homemade-soap business to farmers’ markets and the Internet. ... **William Fausett** will likely work for an insurance firm, and he hopes, in the long term, to get into consulting and business analysis. ... **Kevin Cantu** is beginning his business career with Southport Financial Services, Inc., a firm that specializes in affordable housing development in Tampa, Florida.

Law

Three women from the Class of 2015 are enrolling in law school this fall: **Sophia Macik**, who is taking advantage of a full scholarship at Ave Maria University that the school’s founder, Tom Monaghan, has offered to Thomas Aquinas College graduates; **Katherine Guilford** at the University of California, Davis; and **Monica O’Hearn** at Pepperdine University. “The College teaches you to think logically and analyze arguments the right way,” says Miss O’Hearn. “I think that will be a great preparation for practicing law.”

Apostolate

“I know I’ve been showered with love all my life, and I want to share that with people who have never experienced it,” says **Joanna Kaiser** who, with **Samantha Flanders**, plans to travel to Haiti to work with the Missionaries of Charity. ... **Jacinta Van Hecke** is joining a new campus-ministry program, sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, at the University of Wisconsin. ... **Khyber White** is heading to Jamaica, where he will volunteer as a tutor in a Catholic school.

Priesthood or Religious Life

It is always a joy when a graduate answers God’s call to a priestly or religious vocation. A steady 10 percent of the College’s alumni have pursued a vocation, and there are now 62 men who have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Among this year’s graduates **Patrick Rooney** is answering the call by applying to the Western Province of the Dominican Order. “This college was a major influence in getting me to where I am now, and most of that had to do with the books that we read in the philosophy and theology classes and the excellence with which we offer the liturgy,” he says. ... **Andre Shepherd** also aspires to join the Dominicans, after spending two or three years engaged in an active apostolate. ... **Erin Straub** is discerning a secular vocation as a priest in his home diocese of Portland, Oregon.



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Calendar of Events

For more information, please see www.thomasaquinas.edu/calendar

- Summer Great Books Program for High School Students
thomasaquinas.edu/summerprogram July 19–August 1
- Seminar: “Sacraments, Grace & Free Will”
Napa Institute 2015 Conference
thomasaquinas.edu/napa July 30–31
- Freshman Orientation..... August 20–23
- Residence halls open for returning students August 22
- Convocation
The Most Rev. Thomas Olmsted,
Bishop of Phoenix, presiding August 24

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