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“A Center of Seeking, Learning, and Teaching What is True” Archbishop Aquila Blesses New Classroom Building, St. Gladys Hall, at Convocation 2014

Throughout the first semester of the new academic year, the students of Thomas Aquinas College have had the joy of attending classes in the College’s newly completed building, St. Gladys Hall.

On Convocation Day, August 25, just after the morning’s Mass of the Holy Spirit, the community gathered on the building’s southern plaza for a blessing ceremony. Presiding was the Matriculation Speaker, the Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila, Archbishop of Denver, joined by the College’s four chaplains. Members of the Board of Governors and the faculty, as well as students and their families, prayed with His Excellency as he asked God to bless the building, the learning that will take place within it, and the students and tutors who will populate its classrooms.

“Today we ask God’s blessing on St. Gladys Hall, a center of seeking, learning, and teaching what is true,” said Archbishop Aquila. “We ask that those entrusted with the education of young people at Thomas Aquinas College may teach their students to join the discoveries of human wisdom with the truth of the Gospel, so that they will be able to keep the true faith and to live up to it in their lives.”

The Archbishop, attended by student acolytes, then walked through St. Gladys Hall, while members of the community remained on the plaza, joyfully singing the *Salve Regina*. His Excellency sprinkled the building’s walls, doors, and classrooms with holy water. Upon returning to the plaza, he offered the concluding rite,



saying, “May the all-knowing God, who is Lord, show us His ways; may Christ, eternal wisdom, teach us the words of truth; may the Holy Spirit, the blessed light, always enlighten our minds, so that we may learn what is right and good and in our actions carry out what we have learned.” Archbishop Aquila and the altar party then recessed through the building’s southern doors, leading all in attendance down its main corridor, out onto the



arcade, and up to St. Joseph Commons for the Matriculation ceremony.

This past summer’s construction of St. Gladys Hall — the 13th building erected since the College acquired its campus in the 1970s — was made possible through a \$3.2 million grant from the Fritz B. Burns Foundation of Los Angeles. Located on the southern side of the academic quadrangle, the building houses eight classrooms designed to facilitate the seminar

discussions that are at the heart of the College’s unique academic program. It is named for St. Gladys, a 5th century Welsh mother of six canonized saints, a queen and a contemplative, and the patron saint of Fritz Burns’ beloved wife, Gladys Carson Burns.

St. Gladys “is really a saint for our age, and I think it is fantastic that you named this building after her,” said Archbishop Aquila. “The fact that she was involved in the material world, yet lived the call to holiness in the vocation of marriage, seeking the sanctity of her husband and her children — and her husband seeking the sanctity of his wife and his children — shows what is possible for the family. You really want to hold her up for young people, for men and women to see what is possible for the family and what every family is called to.”

St. Gladys’s Hall “will be the site of the growth in intellectual and moral virtue for our faculty and our students,” said President Michael F. McLean. “We are deeply grateful to the Fritz B. Burns Foundation, whose generous donation made its construction possible. And we are deeply grateful as well to Archbishop Aquila for presiding at the blessing ceremony.”

On the evening of Convocation Day, the students and faculty of Thomas Aquinas College made use of St. Gladys Hall for the first time, as five sections of the Junior Seminar met around the classrooms’ large oak tables to discuss Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*.

A Providential Gift

Longtime Friends of the College J. R. and Claire Smeed Donate \$1 Million for Financial Aid

As Thomas Aquinas College began its new fiscal year in July, officials received some delightful news: J. R. and Claire Smeed of Bakersfield, California, were making an extraordinary gift of \$1 million to assist the College with its financial aid needs for the academic year.

Their gift did not come entirely as a surprise, but its timing could not have been better. Years ago the Smeeds decided to include Thomas Aquinas College in their estate plan, designating in their will that two commercial buildings they owned in San Marino, California, would be legacy gifts to the College. Yet over the years, the couple found managing the buildings to be onerous and did not want to saddle the College with that long-term responsibility. “When somebody came along and made an offer to buy the property from us, I thought, ‘This is going to solve the problem,’” says Mr. Smeed. The couple sold the complex earlier this year and, from the proceeds of that sale, made



a generous gift to Thomas Aquinas College this summer.

“We wanted to do something to help the College now, *before* we died,” says Mrs. Smeed. Adds her husband, “We hope that other people will see this and think, ‘We can do a little of the same thing, and we can do it now.’”

As spouses and business partners, Mr. and Mrs. Smeed have worked and lived throughout the world, with a broad range of business ventures, such as cable television, life insurance, banking, and

newspapers. Over the decades they have also been passionate philanthropists, giving largely to political and legal organizations that defend Constitutional freedoms. Indeed, the College first came to the couple’s attention in the 1990s when it successfully resisted attempts by a quasi-governmental accrediting agency to impose politically correct curricular norms.

When that controversy subsided, the Smeeds remained loyal friends of Thomas Aquinas College. They visited campus regularly for graduations, attended weekend-long Summer Seminars, and chartered buses to bring groups of their friends down from Bakersfield. “The more we saw of the College, the more we liked it. We liked what was taught and how it was taught,” recalls Mr. Smeed. Says Mrs. Smeed, “We admired the purity and the atmosphere of the College campus. You can safely walk around the campus anytime, day or night.”

For nearly two decades the Smeeds have belonged to the President’s Council, the organization of loyal benefactors who make up the College’s financial backbone. In 2009 they were inducted into the Order of St. Albert, the honorary society for those who support Thomas Aquinas College to an outstanding degree. “The College does not take government funds, so it has to get its money from outside supporters,” Mr. Smeed explains. “We want to do what we can to help out.”

“The Smeeds’ gift could not have come at a better time,” says President Michael F. McLean, who notes that, until it is fully endowed, the College must raise \$4 million each year to meet the financial aid needs of its students. “J.R. and Claire have been real blessings to the College over the years. We are deeply grateful for their generosity, and we hope, as they do, that their gift will inspire others as well.”

From the Desk of the President

On Vocations and Thomas Aquinas College

Note: The following text is adapted from a talk that Dr. Michael F. McLean gave to the Orange County First Friday Friars Club on September 5, 2014.

Presently we have 378 students, our largest enrollment ever, from all across the country and many other countries as well, and over 2,000 alumni. Our school is coeducational. We have about 50 percent men and 50 percent women, and even though I am speaking about vocations today, we are not a seminary.

Nevertheless, we now have 60 priests, 26 seminarians, and 44 consecrated men and women among our alumni. They are pastors, vocations directors, seminary professors, and monks and nuns. (For details, see page 6.)

Like all vocations, those of our alumni are the work of God, Who calls the grace-filled soul in the quiet of prayer and contemplation. But grace does build upon nature, and Thomas Aquinas College is certainly doing something right in fostering this impressive number of vocations.

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I can point to three areas in which the College excels and which, in my judgment, are directly related to the number of our alumni who are pursuing religious vocations: the educational program, the moral life, and the spiritual life. (Parenthetically, I want to point out that even though I am focusing on vocations, our alumni have entered a wide variety of professions. We have graduates in business, in education, in medicine, in law, in engineering. I am focusing on vocations, but believe me, our graduates are doing all kinds of things to serve their country and their communities.)

Educational Program

Because Thomas Aquinas College’s mission is education, I am going to focus on a few elements of our educational program that I think are especially important. Of fundamental importance is the fact that the education at the College is Christ-centered. It helps students to *think* as adults with Christ and the Church, and to *love* as adults with Christ and the Church.

Now, “thinking with Christ and the Church” means, among other things, that our education fosters a robust sense of the harmony between faith and reason. In the words of St. Peter, our students are “always ready to give a reason for the hope” which is in them. It also means that our education instills a strong sense of the natural law, which St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Romans, “is written on our hearts,” and a deep appreciation of the fact that human laws should be framed, and our consciences formed, in harmony with the natural law. Finally, it means that our education gives our students a thoroughly Catholic understanding of human happiness, the good life, and moral and political virtue — the elements of the “understanding mind” sought by King Solomon in the First Book of Kings.

“Loving with Christ and the Church” means, among other things, that our education deepens our students’ sense of the order and beauty of the natural world, a sense encouraged by the study of mathematics and natural science at Thomas Aquinas College and by the sheer physical beauty of the College’s setting and architecture. It also means that our education encourages a strong attraction to good and noble things (and a strong aversion to those that are evil and base), an attraction which



is strengthened by the study of the fine arts and great literature at the College. And finally, “loving with Christ and the Church” means that our education fosters fidelity to the two great commandments — love of God and love of neighbor — a fidelity which is the fruit of the study of Sacred Scripture and theology, which are at the center of the College’s curriculum.

Now there are two more points about our educational program that I want to mention that make Thomas Aquinas College unique and which encourage religious vocations. First, we ask our students to read only the greatest works of our civilization. This ensures that the great thinkers are the real teachers in our classes; chief among those are the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

Second, we conduct our classes as small-group discussions, which require our students to prepare seriously and to participate actively. So our classes are not the typical lecture-style classes you see at most colleges and universities. They are small classes between 15 and 17 students, and the discussions are led and facilitated by members of the faculty. Students are asked to prepare their readings carefully and to discuss the principal themes and issues that are contained within them. In this way, with this method, the students make the thought of the great figures in the Catholic intellectual tradition — figures such as St. Augustine, St. Thomas, John Henry Newman, and the popes of the Church — their own.

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An education like ours, which increases our students’ knowledge and love of God and which deepens their personal relationships with Christ, provides very fertile ground for God’s call to the priesthood and religious life. In my opinion, there is no shortage of religious vocations in this sense. God is calling men and women to the priesthood and religious life. He is calling as many as He ever has. The challenge we face in our culture and in our time is to find the kind of silence and quiet that young people need to hear that call and to have the kind of preparation and depth of faith that will enable them to respond to that call. And I think we have those at Thomas Aquinas College.

Moral Life

Now, unfortunately, what far too many schools have forgotten is that a seriously Catholic education is impossible without the support of a genuinely Catholic moral life. You cannot be trying to teach virtue and human happiness in the classrooms if your residence halls are occasions of sin and immorality. It does not work.

Accordingly, the College has a set of rules and guidelines for campus life that encourage the formation of Christian virtue and help minimize the occasions of sin.

For instance, we have single-sex residence halls with no visitation between them — none at all. We also have a dress code that fosters modesty and respect for one another. There are curfews, too — one for weeknights and another for weekends. These rules, and others like them, help our students to live ordered lives that befit their Catholic calling and are conducive to progress in the intellectual life.

This is not to say, however, that our students’ lives are dull or dreary. In fact, there is a great camaraderie among them. They participate in acting troupes that put on Shakespearean plays and Gilbert & Sullivan productions; several choral groups perform a wide variety of music — from sacred music and operatic highlights to spirituals and ballads; instrumentalists provide wonderful recitals each semester; and there are dances throughout the year, some formal, some informal, but all featuring ballroom dancing.

Our location is a great blessing as well. Situated in the foothills of the Topatopa Mountains and at the entrance of the Los Padres National Forest, we are surrounded by beauty. There are many opportunities for hiking, and our enviable beaches are just a short drive away. In addition, we offer a busy schedule of intramural sports throughout the year.

This is the wholesome environment in which our students spend four years of their lives. They think about the highest things, they develop deep friendships, and they encourage each other to live virtuously. The result is that they have the inner quietude to hear God’s call to the priesthood and religious life.

Spiritual Life

In all of this, the College encourages students to establish a strong sacramental and prayer life so that, if God calls, they will hear His voice and be generous in their response. Our four chaplains celebrate Mass four times each day, and they hear confessions before and after each. We have a tradition of excellent liturgical music, Gregorian chant and polyphony. Adoration is offered daily, and the Rosary is recited in the evening in our chapel. Each night at curfew students gather in their residence halls to make the consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Their regular participation in these and other devotions instills in them the habits conducive to vocations and to a lifetime of Christian living.

Our daily Masses and other devotions take place, thanks be to God, in a magnificent chapel marked by beauty, permanence, grandeur, and tradition. Adorned with original statues, sacred artwork, and Biblical inscriptions, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel is a church that teaches. Its cruciform shape is a reminder of the Sacrifice that takes place during every Mass. Its seven arches symbolize the seven sacraments, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven dolours of the Blessed Mother, her seven joys, and the three theological and four cardinal virtues. Through its every detail and its very design the building invites our students to contemplate the greatest truths of the Faith. Moreover, it is named for Our Lady, our model in all things because of her unique relationship with the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, the study of which is the culmination of the College’s curriculum.

All of this makes a deep and lasting impression on the souls of our students, inspires them to pray fervently to know their vocation, and disposes them to respond enthusiastically to God’s call.

Power of Example

One final thought: good example is essential to the work of forming good moral and spiritual habits. It is hard to overestimate the effect that fidelity to the Church’s teachings by our Board, administration, and faculty members has on our students. Just as inspiring for them is the joy with which our governors, tutors, and staff members live out their own vocations to the lay or married state.

College Update

Recent Events and Happenings

HHS Mandate Update

The United States Supreme Court's ruling in this summer's case of *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, had a significant — but as yet, uncertain — effect on Thomas Aquinas College's legal fight against the HHS Mandate.

In the wake of the June 30 decision, the federal government amended its policy compelling employers to provide contraceptive, abortifacient, and sterilization coverage to their employees. Under this latest "accommodation," the College would be required to notify the Department of Health and Human Services of its objections to providing such coverage, while also furnishing the name and contact information of its plan administrator. The government, in turn, would arrange with the administrator to provide for the provision of the coverage.

"The revised accommodation does not address the College's concerns," says President Michael F. McLean. "The College's notification would still be the 'trigger' for the provision of the objectionable coverage, and the College would still be materially cooperating in the provision of coverage for morally objectionable procedures and medications." Consequently, the College has elected to continue its challenge of the Mandate as a violation of federal law and the U.S. Constitution.

In September 2013 the College filed a lawsuit, together with the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Washington, The Catholic University of America, and others, challenging the Mandate. That December the College succeeded in its challenge, with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issuing a permanent injunction against the government from enforcing the Mandate on Thomas Aquinas College. The government has since appealed that ruling, which is currently under review. On September 16, attorneys representing the College filed a brief charging that "the new regulations do nothing more than provide Plaintiffs with another avenue for violating their religion."

Says President Michael F. McLean, "Throughout this saga, the government has responded to each and every legal setback with only cosmetic concessions, thereby compelling further litigation. We are therefore left with no choice but to continue defending our religious liberty by seeking judicial relief."

Changes in the Chaplaincy

With the start of the academic year, there is a new head and a new member of the Thomas Aquinas College chaplaincy. Rev. Hildebrand Garceau, O.Praem. ('78), a graduate of the College who has served as a chaplain since 2011, has succeeded Rev. Joseph Illo as head chaplain. Meanwhile, Rev. Paul Raftery, O.P., who served as one of the College's chaplains from 2006 to 2012, is returning after two years in Alaska.

Fr. Hildebrand regards his new role as head chaplain as an opportunity to aid members of the community in the spiritual life. "The love of Christ and His church has gathered us together here at Thomas Aquinas College," he says. "By study, reflection, and discussion we come to know God; by prayer and contemplation we come to love Him. The chaplains help to facilitate that love by administering the Sacraments and providing spiritual direction so that the students may thrive humanly and spiritually."

Fr. Paul returns after two years as the parochial vicar at Holy Family Cathedral in Anchorage. "I have been supporting a truly rich Catholic liturgy, parish, and family life in the wilds of Alaska," he says. "The apostolate was inspiring. The winters I got through without too much

trouble, and the Alaskan wilderness I am definitely going to miss." Yet Fr. Paul is delighted to return to California. "I am once again privileged to be serving all the important work of the College," he adds. "What a great blessing to come back!"

Faculty Seminars

Twice during the summer break members of the Thomas Aquinas College faculty — tutors and senior administrators alike — participated in seminars about a topic of utmost importance to their work: the mission of the College.

"Many strong Catholic institutions of higher learning have collapsed, or lost their way, in part because they were not explicit enough about what they stood for," says Dean Brian T. Kelly. Careful to avoid this fate, the Thomas Aquinas College faculty meets each summer to discuss texts that deepen members' understanding of and commitment to the College's mission and its unique program of Catholic liberal education.

The first of this summer's seminars focused on a report that Dr. Glen Coughlin, a senior tutor, presented in 2001, when he was serving as the College's dean. The purpose of the report, as he described it at the time, was "to reflect on our experience and to recall our principles, in the hope that a useful clarity about the nature and purposes of the College may result." Intended to supplement the College's founding document, *A Proposal for the Fulfillment of Catholic Liberal Education*, the report aimed "to express more concretely and explicitly the character and mission of Thomas Aquinas College," says Dr. Kelly. "It was an attempt to shore up our self-understanding."

For the second seminar, the faculty read Pope St. John Paul's 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. "At Thomas Aquinas College we aim to serve the Church," says Dr. Kelly. "Our mission — to help students make a good beginning on the road to Catholic wisdom — must be informed by the teaching Church. Reading and discussing St. John Paul's great encyclical on faith and reason helps us to think and act with the magisterium."

The seminars were just one part of the faculty's summertime preparations, which also include the Tutor Summer Program and the annual retreat for faculty and staff that precedes the start of the new academic year.

Remembering Dr. McArthur

October 17 marked the first anniversary of the death of Thomas Aquinas College's founding president, Dr. Ronald P. McArthur. The day began with a 7:00 a.m. Requiem Mass, which Chaplain Rev. Paul Raftery, O.P., offered in the extraordinary form in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Then, later that morning, Head Chaplain Rev. Hildebrand Garceau, O.Praem., offered Mass in the ordinary form for the repose of Dr. McArthur's soul.

"As Jesus says in the Gospel, the grain of wheat must die in order to produce fruit," said Fr. Hildebrand in his homily. "Now that Dr. McArthur has passed from this life, we pray that the seed that he planted here, at this college, may continue to bear fruit for the building up of the Church; and we must pray for ourselves, that we may be vigilant in the Faith and may be also men and women of spiritual courage to continue the good work that he has begun."



Rev. Paul Raftery, O.P., and Rev. Hildebrand Garceau, O.Praem. ('78)

Fidelity & Excellence

College Receives Top Marks in Catholic and Secular Guides

The annual college guides have issued their editions for the 2014-15 academic year, and once again Thomas Aquinas College is alone among American colleges and universities in earning the highest praise from both secular and Catholic publications. Among the highlights:

- **The Princeton Review** places Thomas Aquinas College within the top 15 percent of four-year colleges, naming it one of *The Best 379 Colleges* in the United States. The guide gives the College scores of 98 for academics and 99 for financial aid, plus a score of 97 for quality of life. It additionally lists the College as one of the top colleges in the West, one of only 75 on its Best Value Colleges list, and one of only 10 on its Financial Aid Honor Roll.
- **The Cardinal Newman Society** has included Thomas Aquinas College among just 20 colleges and universities nationwide in its *Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College*. The guide praises the College for its "commitment to orthodox Catholicism" and its "impressive intellectual rigor."
- In the 2015 edition of its "Best Colleges" guide, **U.S. News & World Report** rates Thomas Aquinas College in the top third of the top tier of all American liberal arts colleges. It also lists the school as No. 26 on its "Best Values" list of liberal arts colleges, ranking it first in the country for the highest proportion of classes under 20 students (100%) and ninth for "Least Debt" at graduation.
- **The American Council of College Trustees and Alumni** has once again given Thomas Aquinas College a grade of "A" and a perfect rating for strength of curriculum. By earning an "A," the College rates among the top 2 percent of American colleges and universities, just 23 schools in all, named to ACTA's coveted "A List."
- The **National Catholic Register** has selected Thomas Aquinas College as one of only 38 "faithfully Catholic colleges and universities nationwide" recommended in its "Catholic Identity College Guide 2014." The College earned a perfect score on the *Register's* list of 10 questions that gauge the fidelity and spiritual strength of Catholic institutions.
- **Washington Monthly** has named the College among the nation's "Affordable Elite" — schools that "give high-achieving, non-wealthy students a break in price." The College ranks within the top 100 of such schools at No. 76.

"As a Catholic college first and foremost, we are pleased to receive the endorsement of faithfully Catholic sources such as the Cardinal Newman Society and the *National Catholic Register*," says Admissions Director Jon Daly. "It is also gratifying to see secular sources, such as the Princeton Review and *U.S. News*, recognize the quality and value of our academic program. These findings confirm our founders' belief that there is no conflict between maintaining a strong Catholic identity and achieving academic excellence; that, indeed, these goals go hand in hand."

To read these and other reviews in full, see thomasaquinas.edu/reviews.



“Desire Wisdom”

The Convocation Homily of the Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila

Note: The Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila, Archbishop of Denver, was the principal celebrant of the 2014 Convocation Mass of the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel reading for today (Jn. 7:37-39), Jesus speaks to each one of our hearts and gives us the invitation, “Let anyone who thirsts come to Me and drink.” My dearest sisters and brothers, in that invitation Jesus invites us to encounter Him, to enter into relationship with Him. We can recall the words of the Gospel, too, in which He says, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

It is precisely in the personal encounter with Jesus that we come to discover the depth of God’s eternal love for each one of us. In His eternal love for the world, Jesus has laid down His life for each one of us. The Father in His eternal love has given to us His Son, Who loved us to the end. Every time we look at a crucifix, we see the very revelation of the length to which God will go to show the human person His love for them.

Humanity, thinking that it had conquered God through the death of Jesus, did not understand how powerful His love is, that Jesus rose from the dead. Not only did He rise from the dead, but He also poured forth his Holy Spirit upon us, so that we may be the adopted sons and daughters of the Father. Man’s rejection, man’s hatred of God, man’s pride, cannot ever separate us from God’s love. The Father never stops loving us.

We are told in the second reading of today from Romans (8:22-27) that we await adoption and the redemption of our bodies. St. Paul reveals the truth of our identity as Christians: We truly believe that, in Christ and in our baptism and confirmation, we have become the adopted sons and daughters of the Father. That is the true identity of each and every one of you. And if you hear a voice within you saying, “That cannot be; I am not,” that is the voice of the devil. That is the voice of the evil one, denying the truth of who you really are.

It is essential, as Christians, that in our encounter with Jesus we receive that truth. St. Paul says elsewhere that it is through the Spirit living within us that we cry out, “Abba, Father” in our prayer. He speaks in today’s readings of the groan-



“It is only in saying ‘yes’ to the word of Jesus and responding to His invitation that you will truly become great.”

ings that are within our hearts. Within our weakness the Spirit comes to aid us. We must be open and receptive to the truth that God is truly for us in His love for us. He seeks only the true and the good for us in the encounter with His Son. He even tells us that the Holy Spirit intercedes within us, for the holy ones according to God’s will. And we know that the will of God can never be for evil. The will of God is always for the true, the good, and the beautiful. The will of God is for the salvation of the world, that we receive His love and encounter His Son.

The Father’s Unique Plan

You, my dearest young people who are beginning another academic year here at Thomas Aquinas College, and you who are faculty, must come to know that truth within your own encounter with Christ. The Father has a unique plan and a unique and particular love for each and every one of you. One of the most important things that you can discover in your education is that particular love and that particular plan that the Father has for you. You truly are His beloved daughter. You are truly His beloved son, and He has given to you the gift of the Spirit. You must open your heart to that gift and receive that gift.

One of the greatest problems for us as Americans is we think we have to do it ourselves. It all depends on me, or it’s all about me. My brothers and sisters, it does not depend upon me, nor is it all about me. It is about receiving the love of God and living that love out. That is what it is about, discovering the truth of who I am in Christ.

I remember one time a confessor saying to me, “Have you ever confessed your sin of self-reliance?” I kind of choked, and I said, “No.” I said I hadn’t. I had been formed so well by American culture that I had failed to see the pride within it, that I thought I had to earn God’s love, that I had to prove myself, that everything depended on me. It really prevented me from receiving the gift of the Spirit, because I did not have that hope and confidence that St. Paul speaks of, or that trust, in the Spirit.

It is essential for you to pray to the Holy Spirit. Listen to the promises of Jesus. He tells us that the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Love, the consoling Spirit. He also promises us the Gifts of the Spirit, those sevenfold great gifts of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, counsel, fortitude, fear of the Lord, and piety. All of you who are baptized and confirmed have received those seven gifts! Do you desire them? Do you run to them? When you sit down to study, do not look at the book and say, “Ah, I need to read this,” or think, “I’ll never understand this.” All of those are words of discouragement, and all of them are words of the devil. They are not of God.

In your studies, my dearest sons and daughters, open your heart to the Spirit. Before you sit down to read the great books that you will read, whether it be Dante, whether it be the *Iliad*, whether it be the works of Thomas More, or St. Augustine and his *Confessions*, always pray before you study: “Lord, open my heart in understanding. Grant me understanding as I read.” It is a simple prayer that you can speak from the heart. It takes you away from your pride, your own self-reliance, and turns you to the Spirit so that you may be led closer to the Father, to Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit. Pray for those graces. Desire wisdom. Desire understanding, and turn to the Spirit in the midst of that.

Two Great Saints of our Time

Our education is not about ourselves, or to make a name for ourselves, as the people of Babylon and Babel wanted to do. They desired to do whatever they presumed to do, and the Lord sees right through that. It is still a problem in our culture today. The situation of our culture and our society is not something new. If you truly know history, you can see the rise and fall of cultures. It is because we abandon God and move away from Him. We as a people are not called to make a name for ourselves, but to give worship and adoration to God. And then God will make the name.

All you have to do is look at the two great saints within our own lifetime, Bl. Teresa of Calcutta and St. John Paul the Great. They were not ones who sought things about themselves. They were not ones who ran out to make a name for themselves. They were ones who were faithful to Our Lord. One, yes, was a scholar and intellectual, a brilliant philosopher and theologian. The other was a simple, humble woman. And both of them transformed our church and world because of their faithfulness, because of

their trust, because of their humility. Each and every one of us here — and especially you, the young people — have the same call. You can either receive it and say “yes” to it, or you can fret and be anxious — and if you are that, hear the words of Jesus, “Be not afraid.” Or you can say no to it completely. But it is only in saying “yes” to the word of Jesus and responding to His invitation that you will truly become great.

Open Your Heart

As we continue with our celebration today, my deepest prayer for you is that you may come to hear in your own hearts the invitation of Jesus, “Let anyone who thirsts come to Me and drink.” Encounter Jesus: Open your hearts to Him, He Who will give you happiness. Even in the midst of the struggles, the temptations, the trials, and the sufferings that every human being endures, always remember Jesus endured them, too. He went so far as to die on the Cross for us, and when we really meditate upon that suffering and the love revealed within it, then you realize that even when I am suffering, because I am joined with Christ, I have nothing to fear.

Secondly, always open your hearts to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Remember those sevenfold gifts! At times when I am at confirmations and celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation, I will go to the parents and to the adults present and ask them, “Name me the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit” — and I lose eye contact very quickly. They cannot remember those gifts they have received. It is important to remember those gifts, to desire them. They are there, but we have to want them, and we have to pray for them and open our hearts to them.

Pray before your studies. Open your hearts to the Spirit. Faith and reason are not separate. As St. John Paul II reminds us, they are together.

Finally, as we come to Holy Communion today, I encourage you, as you return to your places, that you open your heart to Jesus and you speak to Jesus, heart to heart. Each and every one of you has your particular relationship with the Lord. You have your own identity, your own anxieties, your own desires, but turn to Jesus and drink from Him. The closest and the most intimate you will ever be with Jesus is when you receive the Eucharist. Open your hearts, my sons and daughters, and speak heart to heart with Him, expressing your desires, expressing your hopes, sharing with Him your fears, your anxieties.

And yes, if you find during the course of the year there is a professor you struggle with, hold that professor up to the Lord, or hold that student up to the Lord, and pray for that person. Hold that person up to the Lord. It is essential that we have confidence in the promises of Jesus.

May our hearts burn ever more fully this year with a deep love for the Lord, and may that love continue to grow as it does, and did, in the life of every saint. And may we hear the invitation of Jesus today, “Anyone who thirsts, come to Me and drink.”



“What I Did Over Summer Vacation”

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

David Langley ('15)

When he was applying to colleges, David Langley was admitted to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He declined the offer, however, opting to attend Thomas Aquinas College instead. “It seemed that the best way to specialize in any future endeavor was first to understand the whole of which my interest is just a part,” he says. So he chose to pursue a liberal education first, and then specialize in the study of chemistry later.



This past summer, Mr. Langley did, indeed, study chemistry at MIT as one of three visiting undergraduate scientists with the Jamison Group on the Neglected Tropical Diseases Project. His work consisted of two parts: First, he helped to organize an undergraduate laboratory for MIT’s organic chemistry course. Second, he contributed to the development of biofuel technology via a new technique known as flow chemistry. “As opposed to batch chemistry, flow chemistry is done using pumps and tubing and syringes,” Mr. Langley explains. “The advantage is you are not limited volumetrically, the way you are when you use beakers and such; you have an injector pump which controls the volume in the reaction.”

Having studied not only natural science, but also mathematics, language, literature, music, philosophy, and theology as part of Thomas Aquinas College’s integrated curriculum, Mr. Langley says he has acquired the tools to “grasp the ultimate significance of the subjects studied at a more particular level.” Three years later, he was able to pursue his dream of studying chemistry at MIT. “Only now,” he remarks, “I believe I was much more prepared.”

Mary Massell ('15)

Last spring Mary Massell prayed a novena to find a summer job, and it worked — for her brother, who promptly received an offer. She then prayed the novena once more, and this time *she* received an offer — from a world-class poet, writer, and former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.



Dana Gioia, the Judge Widney Professor of Poetry and Public Culture at the University of Southern California, was looking for an archivist to help file and catalogue more than four decades’ of his correspondence, manuscripts, and other papers.

Earlier in the year Miss Massell and several fellow Thomas Aquinas students had met Mr. Gioia at a poetry reading in Los Angeles. “I was very impressed by how well read they were,” he recalls. Over Christmas vacation, she saw him again after attending Mass with her family in Santa Rosa, California. When Mr. and Mrs. Gioia were looking for someone to assist them with their archiving project, they thought of her.

“It was a great learning opportunity,” says Miss Massell. “Mr. Gioia took me under his wing. Every day he taught me something new. He would play operatic music and then explain it to me while I was working, or talk to me about poetry, or issues facing the Church.” For his part, Mr. Gioia notes that “the job was huge,” but Miss Massell acquitted herself well. “She is a lovely young lady. Both my wife and I felt lucky to have her help us.”

Michael Bors ('15)

Combining his love for classical texts and his interest in liberal education, Michael Bors spent his summer editing curricula for the Arts of Liberty website (artsofliberty.org). An online educational resource, Arts of Liberty provides courses in the liberal arts, study guides in the



great books, and other resources for both students and teachers of classical liberal education. Its director, Dr. Jeffrey S. Lehman, is a professor of education at Hillsdale College who was previously a member of the Thomas Aquinas College teaching faculty. Dr. Lehman initially hired Mr. Bors two years ago after serving as his Sophomore Mathematics tutor.

Working as an assistant editor, Mr. Bors received study-guide and course materials — submitted to Arts of Liberty by scholars from across the United States and the world — and then edited and prepared them for online publication. This summer he worked primarily on study guides, both for early modern philosophy and literature, and for a few longer courses, including one about Newtonian physics as outlined in the *Principia*.

“The Arts of Liberty Project is trying to promote the kind of education that we value here at the College to a much broader audience,” says Mr. Bors. “Thus I see its mission and purpose as very important. The work was also a pleasure. I got to review these materials and, in some small way, to contribute to spreading these ideas within society at large.”

Morgan Furore ('15) and Genevieve McCarthy ('15)

When a representative from the Intercollegiate Studies Institute came to campus last spring to recruit students for its summer “Principles of Liberty” conference, Morgan Furore and Genevieve McCarthy took notice. The idea of spending a week discussing political theory and great books with some 40 college students from across the U.S. appealed to them. They each completed the application, which included writing an essay about their favorite political thinker. (Miss Furore chose Hamilton; Miss McCarthy, Locke.) Shortly thereafter, both received word of their admission.



At the end of July, the two met in Philadelphia for the all-expenses-paid conference, held on the campus of Villanova University. They attended lectures and seminars about various works of political import, including several that are part of the Thomas Aquinas College curriculum. “The premise of the conference was to look at the foundations of the five different cities described in the texts — Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, London, and Philadelphia,” explains Miss Furore. “These are the cities from which we have drawn the principles that make possible the freedom we enjoy today.”

Adds Miss McCarthy, “It was an interesting way to synthesize texts we read at the College and put them together in a way I hadn’t thought of before.” With both ladies contemplating public-policy work after they graduate, the experience, they agree, was invaluable.

Martin Beers ('15)

As a high school student, Martin Beers performed so well in his advanced Latin classes for Mother of Divine Grace School that, when he graduated, the distance-learning academy invited him back as a teacher. Thus, during his first three years at Thomas Aquinas College, Mr. Beers logged on to his computer each day to offer online instruction in Latin (and sometimes Greek) to groups of 10–12 high school students across the country. This past summer, he took his work a step further and revised the school’s advanced Latin curriculum,



“After I had taught all three years of the curriculum, I had a lot of ideas about how we could improve it,” he says. “When I mentioned that to my supervisor, she said, ‘Oh, we can pay you to work on that over the summer,

and I have some other projects for you, too.” Mr. Beers reorganized the curriculum and its use of various classical texts. He also prepared an accompanying teachers’ manual, designed quizzes for a Greek class, and edited a new curriculum for middle-school Latin.

“I have found that the Discussion Method used at the College has really helped me to become a better teacher, because it requires me to understand the text in advance of class and explain what it means,” he says. “These are the same skills involved in teaching.” After he graduates, Mr. Beers hopes to continue teaching, perhaps at the college level.

Heather Waldorf ('15)

This past summer Heather Waldorf walked clear across the United States — from Seattle to Washington, D.C. — in support of the unborn. She made her pilgrimage as part of the Crossroads Walk Across America, four separate, simultaneous journeys of college students traversing the U.S. and Canada to promote the pro-life cause.



Accompanied by a chaplain to provide spiritual assistance and an RV carrying supplies, Miss Waldorf and her peers worked their way across 3,000 miles and 11 states, day and night, five days a week. They attended Mass daily and prayed Rosaries for the unborn as they walked. On weekends they stopped at local parishes to bear witness to the culture of life and to raise funds for their journey.

“I’m walking this summer in the hope that I can imitate the mother of God,” wrote Miss Waldorf on the Crossroads website. “She traveled to meet Elizabeth to share the good news that God had done great things for her. She did this when Christ was within her. I want to go out like her, with Christ within my heart, to tell my brothers and sisters that God has given me life, and blessings, and hope. ... My hope is that by my witness to the good news of life, America might have life, and have life more abundantly.”

Brian Schardt ('16)

For three days this summer, Brian Schardt enjoyed the sort of experience that would be the envy of most young Catholics. “I was in this beautiful hotel,” he says, “talking about the Faith with the Church’s leading intellectuals.”



Attending the Napa Institute’s 2014 Conference at the Meritage Resort in Napa, California, was the ultimate perk in Mr. Schardt’s summer job. Working for Timothy Busch, the owner of the Meritage and chairman of the Napa Institute, Mr. Schardt helped to organize the conference that brought prominent Catholics to the Napa Valley to discuss issues such as economic justice, beauty and the arts, and faith and reason. The conference’s self-styled “tech and media guy,” Mr. Schardt designed a smartphone app to keep attendees informed of the various goings-on, maintained its website, and arranged logistics for guests and speakers.

A graduate of St. Michael’s Abbey Preparatory School in Silverado, California, Mr. Schardt first made the acquaintance of Mr. Busch shortly after his high school graduation, and he has worked for the Napa Institute for the last two summers. Meanwhile, Mr. Schardt has also established his own business, Inova Sound (inovasound.com). The online company manufactures and sells violins that Mr. Schardt personally designs.

Although Mr. Schardt plans to work full-time for the Napa Institute after he graduates, in the long term, he hopes to be self-employed. “My goal is to have my own business,” he says, “but to put my work at the service of the Church.”

Laborers in the Vineyard

Celebrating Thomas Aquinas College's 60 Alumni Priests

On May 10, 2014, Rev. Matthew Busch ('04) received the Sacrament of Holy Orders at the hands of the Most Rev. Gregory Parkes, Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. With Fr. Busch's ordination and by God's grace, the College now has 60 priests among its alumni, drawn from 40 graduating classes. These men serve the Church and the faithful as monks, as pastors, as seminary professors and scholars.

Each has his own unique story about when and where he heard God's call, and about how the Lord led him to his particular vocation. Yet running through these disparate accounts is the common thread of Thomas

Aquinas College. For some alumni, it was reading the great works of Church doctors and saints that first led them to seek the priesthood. For others, it was the spiritual life of the College and living in a community of faith. Others still cite the witness of the College's chaplains, tutors, and founders.

The College thanks God for these holy men, who are a credit to the Church and, more important, who are instruments of Christ's grace in the lives of the souls entrusted to their care. Below are brief testimonials of some of these priests about the role the College has played in helping them to discern, to answer, and to live out their vocations.

Rev. Hildebrand Garceau, O. Praem. ('78)

Head Chaplain, Thomas Aquinas College
Santa Paula, California

"I have always considered Thomas Aquinas College to be a milestone in my human development because it really helped to form my way of thinking and strengthen my faith. It provided me with the basics for my theological and intellectual formation and stayed with me throughout my theological formation in the seminary. It was immensely helpful to me in developing discipline and good habits in my intellectual and personal life."



Rev. Mark P. Bachmann, O.S.B. ('82)

Co-Founder and Subprior
Our Lady of the Annunciation of Clear Creek Abbey
Hulbert, Oklahoma

"I must acknowledge my education at Thomas Aquinas College as one of the greatest influences toward my embracing this wonderful gift of God. At the College I learned theology, and grew to love it; I learned the Gregorian chant, and grew to love it; and I had many opportunities to pray, both in community and in private, and I grew to love this."

Rev. Brendan R. Kelly ('85)

Pastor, St. Wenceslaus Church
Professor, St. Gregory the Great Seminary
Lincoln, Nebraska

"The abilities, the confidence, and the knowledge I received during my time at the College helped me to accept the call of Christ to serve Him as His priest. I received a better preparation at the College than I could have at any seminary at the time. A priest has to converse with anybody, and everybody, about anything, on their grounds. He must be able to analyze a position, and both lead and follow in a discussion. These are the skills I learned and honed at Thomas Aquinas College."

Rev. Paul C. Moreau ('89)

Parochial Vicar
Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic Church
Woodstock, Georgia

"What I received in my years at the College helps me nearly every day as a priest. I have acquired two other degrees since then — one in philosophy and one in theology — studying five more years in one of the best pontifical universities in the world. But what I use most is what I learned at the College: how to break things into principles and present them in an easily understandable way. I use this mostly in spiritual direction — helping with difficult moral and family issues — but also in all the homilies and talks that I give. There is a little piece of Thomas Aquinas College in every conference, homily, meditation, and retreat I preach. I could not do what I do now without the College. I will forever be grateful for that gift."



Rev. Gary B. Selin, Ph.D. ('89)

Formation Director and Professor of Theology
St. John Vianney Theological Seminary
Denver, Colorado

"As soon as I set foot on campus, I had a feeling that I later heard College tutor Dr. Molly Gustin describe, when speaking of the major key in music: It was that 'home-again feeling' — a sign from God that He wanted me there."

Rev. John Higgins ('90)

Pastor of the Church of the Assumption
Peekskill, New York

"I rediscovered my faith at Thomas Aquinas College. Not all peer pressure is bad, and at the College, there was good peer pressure. The majority of my peers attended daily Mass, and one of my classmates talked me into joining the Legion of Mary. That was a key turning point in my life. It soon became clear to me that God was asking me to give my life to Him."



The Very Rev. John M. Berg, F.S.S.P. ('93)

Superior General, Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter
Fribourg, Switzerland

"The College passes on the Faith through uniting it with reason. This rational explication and defense of the doctrines of the Church were, for many of us, the first attempt we had ever seen made to defend many doctrines. The Faith — for the first time, perhaps — could be seen as something coherent, reasonable, and defensible."

"I know that I speak for many graduates in saying that if it weren't for the College, it would be difficult to know where we would be even with regard to our own faith. And so we owe the College a great debt."



60 Alumni Priests

- 22 diocesan priests, serving 18 dioceses across the country
- 38 priests in religious orders in the U.S. and abroad
- A Superior General (Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter)
- 6 parish pastors
- Dean of a seminary (Our Lady of Guadalupe, Lincoln, Nebraska)
- 5 seminary professors
- A director of an Office of Worship (Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St. Paul)
- A superintendent of a diocesan high school
- A canon lawyer in training (Archdiocese of New York)
- A director of Hispanic Ministry (Archdiocese of Lincoln)
- A co-founder and subprior of a religious community (Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey)
- A head of campus ministry at a state university (Emporia State, Kansas)





Rev. Sebastian A. Walshe, O.Praem. ('94)

Professor of Philosophy, St. Michael's Abbey Seminary
Silverado, California

"I would not be a priest today if I had not gone to Thomas Aquinas College. I think I speak for many of the priests and of the religious who have come through the College. It is really a blessing you find there — the possibility to hear the call of God that you would not find in other places."



Rev. Nicholas E. Callaghan ('96)

Student of Canon Law for the Archdiocese of New York
Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas
Rome, Italy

"At the College I had time to sit and think and pray for a long time about the possibility of a vocation. And in those hours of thinking and praying, I was able to give myself the time to hear God's voice clearly. It was through living at Thomas Aquinas College, and participating in the sacramental life that is so strong there, that the pull to the priesthood became stronger and more concrete for me."

Rev. Ramon Decaen ('96)

Pastor, Cristo Rey Parish
Coordinator of Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese of Lincoln (Nebraska)

"The College's academic program really helped build the foundation by which I moved on to the priesthood. And the spiritual life — daily Mass, evening Rosaries, the opportunity to spend time before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, the incredible College chaplains — all were very instrumental in preparing me for my vocation."

Rev. John M. Bingham, O.P. ('00)

Pastor, Blessed Sacrament Parish
Seattle, Washington

"The culture at the College, the community, was very formative for me. I saw joyful people living their Catholic faith, doing it to the best of their ability, and not being ashamed of it. I was exposed to St. Thomas, really for the first time in a deep way. The theology, the Scripture study, the St. Augustine and St. Thomas readings, gave me a framework with which to view the world that I think is extremely valuable."



Rev. John Paul Erickson ('02)

Director, Archdiocesan Office of Worship
St. Paul, Minneapolis

"My time at Thomas Aquinas College showed me that, yes, the priesthood is a life of sacrifice, but it is also a life in which faith is lived so vibrantly and so totally that it can be a great source of satisfaction and joy."

Rev. Edmund Waldstein, O.Cist. ('06)

Cistercian Abbey Stift Heiligenkreuz
Vienna, Austria

"I am very grateful that I went to the College because it has been a big help to me in the religious life. Having seen the intellectual life as ordered to God has prepared me for the monastic life, because the whole point of monasticism is to order one's life to God."

Rev. Francis Marotti ('07)

Associate Pastor, St. Philip Roman Catholic Church
Battle Creek, Michigan

"When you start studying the great books and are around students who are obviously more serious about life than you are, it really challenges you. There is just no way to get through it without being forced to consider your vocation. I thank God for the College. It really saved me from that kind of complacency with life, of just kind of going along. I can't think of how I would have come to the position in life where I would discern my vocation so seriously as I did at Thomas Aquinas College. That's why the Lord put me there."

Loving God More Fully

The College's 60th Alumnus Priest:

Rev. Matthew Busch ('04)

"Sixty," reflects Rev. Matthew Busch ('04), upon learning that he is Thomas Aquinas College's 60th alumnus priest. "That is a very *divisible* number."

These wry words bespeak two notable characteristics about this newly ordained priest of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. First, Fr. Busch is a mathematical thinker, ruminating on the works of Galileo and Decartes and, in his spare time, devising patentable software algorithms. Second, he is personable, even gregarious — at ease in any crowd and quick with a joke or a witty rejoinder. These two qualities both played an important role in helping him to discern his vocation.

Not that he was thinking of Descartes back when, as a high school senior, he decided to come to the College. "I did not go to the College for the intellectual life," Fr. Busch admits. The second of three sons, he grew up attending public schools in Tallahassee, where Catholics make up just 4 percent of the population. He spent much of his teenage years debating religion with his non-Catholic friends, defending the existence of God and the divinity of Christ, and disputing charges about the Crusades and the Inquisition. ("I was usually on the defensive," he remembers.)

So when it came time to choose a college, he sought one that would offer a vibrant Catholic community. "I had no friends who were Catholic, and so I thought, 'Here is my chance to be around people who are *all* Catholic!'" he recalls. Thomas Aquinas College would be his refuge from conflict, a "city on the hill," as he put it. Academics were an afterthought.

"But what actually happened when I got to the College was that I fell in love with philosophy and the intellectual pursuits," says Fr. Busch. "In every class I kept discovering new truths. It made me fall in love with God in a different way, through His creation. I could see what St. Augustine calls 'the vestiges of the Trinity' at work in everything, and that opened up new avenues of prayer for me. It caused me to grow spiritually."

Meanwhile, learning by way of the Discussion Method in the College's classrooms nurtured his humility, especially when — as happened more than once — Fr. Busch found himself on the wrong side of an argument. "We gain nothing by being right all the time," he observes. "It is only when we are wrong, and then admit it, that we gain new insights, new knowledge, new growth." Humility, he came to realize, is an essential part of the intellectual life *and* the spiritual life. "If you don't have humility, you are not going to get very far when it comes to finding the truth and grasping it. That truth is God, and God just does not deal with the prideful. He does not share His secrets with them."

Quite unexpectedly, Fr. Busch found that the intellectual life of the College had an even greater effect on his spiritual growth than did the Catholic community that he had initially sought. Although he had once imagined the College to be "Catholicville, this little paradise on earth," he learned that his faithful peers were just as prone to normal human failings and weaknesses as he was. Moreover, he had come to miss defending the faith among unbelievers. "It helps me to keep the blade sharp," he remarks. That insight allowed him to see that his was a diocesan vocation. "I have a lot of respect for people who thrive in a monastic atmosphere," he says, "but I am not one of them."

Still, it would take some time before he was ready to pursue his vocation. When he graduated from the College in 2004, he "wasn't ready," he concedes. "I still wasn't mature enough." So he traveled in Europe for a few months and then, for several years, dabbled in real estate, tutoring, and other ventures before entering the seminary in 2009. Although it typically takes seminarians nine years to prepare for ordination in his diocese, Fr. Busch was able to do so in five, having already completed the necessary theological training at the College.

On May 11, his bishop, the Most Rev. Gregory Parkes, ordained him to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and a few weeks later Fr. Busch began his first assignment. He is the parochial vicar of Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Tallahassee, where he himself was baptized 33 years earlier. "Now I am baptizing babies here," he says. "And I am hearing confessions and celebrating Masses. We have a hospital up the street and a school attached to the parish. I am always busy."

His is the active life of a secular priest, working among God's people, in whom His glory is ever visible.



The Most Rev. Gregory Parkes, Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee, confers the Sacrament of Holy Orders on Rev. Matthew Busch ('04) at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Pensacola, Florida, on May 10.

“The Only True Road to Freedom Is if We Live in the Truth”

The Matriculation Address of the Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila

Note: The Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila, Archbishop of Denver, was Matriculation Speaker at Convocation 2014.

President McLean, honored faculty and students, it is truly a great joy to be with you here today. I have looked forward to seeing this campus for a number of years.

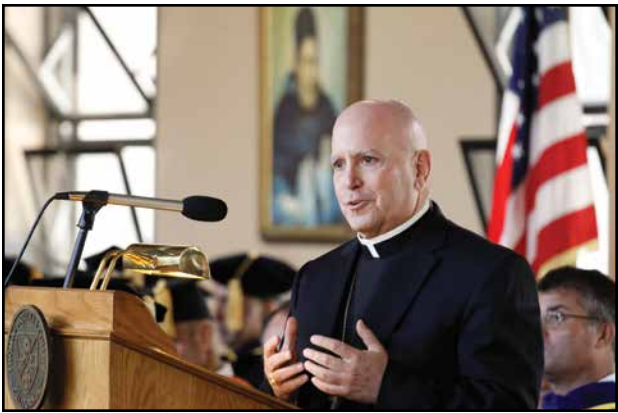
Forty-six years ago, when I went to college, it was in great contrast to what I am experiencing here today with you. I went to the University of Colorado in Boulder. There were over 2,000 students in my freshman class, and I remember being told, “Wait here,” and being handed the registration form for my classes and not having a clue what to do with it, or even what classes to take. And then the person asked me, “Where did you go to high school?” I said, “I went to Crespi Carmelite in Encino, and there were 104 students in my class.” She then looked at me and said, “We have a special place for students like you to go.” That began my learning experience.

Never in my wildest imagination at that point in time did I think that I would be a priest, let alone an archbishop. Those four years of college were, very honestly, four years that I would never, ever want to go through again because of society at that time. At times when I tell new seminarians about it, they just look at me like, “Are you serious? There was that much turmoil?” Yes, the whole sexual revolution was taking place. The cultural revolution was taking place. There were student strikes taking place. There was the canceling of classes taking place, and education was not taken all that seriously. It was only when I did my graduate studies as an already ordained priest — because even my seminary formation was not that good — that I really began to discover the goodness and the truth and the beauty of education, and especially of Catholic education.

It is good we gather here today to commit ourselves to the most worthy of endeavors — the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty, which is ultimately the pursuit of God. It was beauty that drew me to the University of Colorado. As I shared with President McLean yesterday, when I drove over the hill from the road that goes from Denver to Boulder and I saw the beauty of the campus and the Flatirons and the mountains that sit behind the campus, I said to myself, “This is where I am going to school,” little knowing that that beauty would change my heart and soften my heart, and open my heart to the truth of God and to the goodness of God.

I can remember being on top of a mountain, getting ready to ski down, and looking out and thinking to myself, “Who am I to have this, this sheer majesty and beauty that surrounds me?” It was precisely in that question and in that encounter that I discovered God’s love, that God had given me that moment to see and to recognize that beauty is His gift, as a revelation of Who He is.

This morning, we reflected on the difference between the two ways to obtain wisdom: First there is man’s prideful grasping at wisdom, and then there is God’s path to true wisdom, which requires, most of all, the virtue of humility. It is that virtue of humility that we must embrace. It was humility that I was taught in that encoun-



ter with beauty, that I was nothing compared to the beauty that surrounded me. Then I discovered the uniqueness of my own beauty in the eyes of God, that God had created me in His image and likeness, had placed me at this point in history, had placed me on this mountain to encounter Him. It is all gift. What humility recognizes most is the gift of God’s love, the gift of God’s goodness, and His particular call to each one of us.

“You, my dearest freshmen, are blessed to be attending Thomas Aquinas College. You are blessed because it is an academic institution that acknowledges that true wisdom comes from God, not from the latest technological or scientific advances, divorced from faith and a true understanding of the human person. In these halls of learning, you will have the chance to seek God and His truth.”

Wisdom and Truth

This morning at Mass we heard the story of the Tower of Babel from Genesis, which at the heart is about the battle between how to obtain wisdom — whether to follow our own course, and the course of secular society, or to follow the course of God, and encounter God. (See page 4.) In the Babylonian language the word “babel” means “gate of God.” Genesis tells us that “the people desired to make a name for themselves by building a city and a tower with its top in the heavens.” With this etymological background and the insights of Scripture, we are able to see the decision to build the Tower of Babel was rooted in pride. It represented an attempt by the people of Babel to force their way into heaven, to access the Divine through their own power and wisdom. Some scholars have noted that it might have even been an attempt to escape another epic flood and protect them from God’s judgment — yet another exercise in pride and self-reliance.

The story of the Tower of Babel is really an echo of the lie that Satan whispered in the ear of Eve as he tempted her to eat of the fruit of the tree that God had warned them not to eat. The devil spoke to her heart: “You certainly will not die. God knows well that, when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, who know good and evil” — the great temptation to be God.

For the people of Babel this lie took the form of believing that they could obtain heavenly wisdom on their own, without God. Throughout history the same story has repeated itself with slightly different twists to the plot, but always the same essential elements. Our current culture’s twist on this narrative has its roots in the French Enlightenment, which declared that science and reason are the only measures of truth, and that faith and religion must be dismissed as superstition. We have heard Pope Emeritus Benedict speak of the Dictatorship of Relativism that totally rejects the truth. Young people, it is important for you to understand that truth exists, that it is real.

One time I was talking with a philosophy professor. When the students came into his class in their freshman year, he asked them if they believed in the truth, and if

truth was real. Of course, being formed by the secular world, they said, “Well, no. Everybody has his or her own different truth.” The waves of relativism flowed out of the young people’s mouths. He then looked at them and said, “Well, if you truly believe that, then my truth tells me that women are smarter than men, and all the women in my class are going to get A’s, and all the men are going to flunk.” He said, “That is my truth.” And of course there was all sorts of hemming and hawing going on. Then he looked at them and said, “Then you *do* believe in objective truth. You do believe that there are ways to tell.” It is important — and certainly that is a frivolous example in some ways — but it is out there in our world today.

Say “Yes” to God

Pope St. John Paul the Great, in his two wonderful encyclicals *Veritatis Splendor*, *The Splendor of the Truth*, and *Fides et Ratio*, *Faith and Reason* — hopefully you will study those two encyclicals — has pointed out so clearly the need for faith and reason to be our two wings, and the need for every Christian to embrace the beauty of truth itself. Because we know truth is a person. It is Jesus Christ, Who is the way, the truth, and the life, Who identifies Himself as truth. We also know that the only true road to freedom is if we live in the truth. “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

It is important to embrace that. You, my dearest freshmen, are blessed to be attending Thomas Aquinas College. You are blessed because it is an academic institution that acknowledges that true wisdom comes from God, not from the latest technological or scientific advances, divorced from faith and a true understanding of the human person. In these halls of learning, you will have the chance to seek God and His truth, to experience the beauty that surrounds you in these hills, the beauty of this campus and the Chapel. You will have the experience of the beauty of community and worship, and to know the life-changing goodness of an intimate friendship and communion with the Father, with Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit — and with one another.

I encourage you to set forth on your educational journey with confidence and trust that God alone understands the human heart and knows what will lead to your true happiness. As the Psalmist says, “Lord, you have probed me, You know me. You know when I sit and stand. You understand my thoughts from afar.” Let that truth remain with you as you seek wisdom and understanding.

I also urge you to make the most of this time in your life when you are able to dive into the great books and engage in the pursuit of virtues, above all. I pray that during these four years you will truly fall more deeply in love with the Trinity, with the Father, with Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit. I pray you will truly develop a personal relationship with each person of the Holy Trinity. For they, the three persons in the one God, are the source of all that is true, good, and beautiful. And their deepest desire for each one of you — whether you believe it or not — is that you share in that, to be truly happy.

As St. Thomas Aquinas, your patron saint, prayed: “Grant me, O Lord, my God, a mind to know You, a heart to seek You, wisdom to find You, conduct pleasing to You, faithful perseverance in waiting for You, and a hope of finally embracing You.” I pray that his prayer may become your prayer, that God will bless you abundantly in these four years. But also know that you must cooperate. You must be willing to receive the truth and say “yes” to it. That is essential, because God leaves you free either to recognize His truth, His goodness, and His beauty, or to say “no” to it.

I pray that you will give it a resounding “yes,” and that you will discover the Father’s plan for your life. My plan was to be a doctor. The Father’s plan was that I be His priest and bishop. He has a particular plan for each and every one of you. May you receive that plan and discover the joy that only He can bestow.

God bless you all.



Members of the Class of 2018 sing “Come Holy Ghost” as Archbishop Aquila and the faculty process into the Matriculation ceremony.

Liberal Education in the Job Market

Catholic Business Leaders Offer Students Advice at Career Forum

“You have the gift of being able to look at the world a little bit differently,” said Tim Ristoff, founder and CEO of TriVista Business Group, to an audience of Thomas Aquinas College students at a September 28 Career Forum in St. Bernardine of Siena Library. “That’s going to make you unbelievably successful, should you elect to go into the business world.”

How the College’s students can get started in that world — and how they can best showcase the gift of their liberal education in job interviews — was the subject of the afternoon forum, sponsored by the College’s Office of Career Advisement. Over the course of two hours, the students received expert advice and strong encouragement from a panel of four distinguished business leaders with deep ties to the College.

“When you really think about the most successful companies out there — Microsoft, Google, eBay, or GE — there wasn’t any particular engineer that developed that creative, innovative new product,” said Mr. Ristoff. “There was a group of people that thought differently, that observed the world from a different perspective, that were keenly aware of the way people interacted. That didn’t come from somebody reading it out of a textbook, and that’s what you have.”

Joining Mr. Ristoff on the dais was his wife, Laura, a longtime human-resources manager in the real-estate development sector; Donald Swartz, president of Quest Property Corporation and a member of the College’s Board of Governors; and his wife, Rita, director of development for the Little Sisters of the Poor in San Pedro. The panelists each presented brief talks, focusing on ways students can prepare for a job interview, respond to interviewers’ questions, and demonstrate the value of a liberal education in the workplace.

Advice and Affirmation

The first speaker of the day, Mr. Swartz, set the tone for the afternoon by discussing the job interview, which he likened to both “the hurdle and the gateway” to one’s desired employment. He encouraged students to know what they want in a job, to brush up on their accounting and computer skills, and to “speak in short, declarative sentences” at their interviews.

“What do you really have to offer a company?” Mr. Swartz asked. “For graduates of Thomas Aquinas, it’s a list of virtues” — reliability; analytical skills; coachability, stewardship (“you know how to be accountable and transparent”), deliverables (“you know how to convert a



conversation into a concise, legible, transmittable note or memo”), and candor. “You believe there is truth,” he told the students. “And you’re willing to search for it and find it.”

Following her husband, Mrs. Swartz described how her career began in mathematics, then shifted to computers, followed by marketing and, after some time off to raise her children, culminated in fundraising for Catholic causes. “While you are discerning your dream, be flexible, because your dream will change throughout your lifetime,” she advised. “Observe yourself as you grow, know your strengths and weaknesses, fill in skills as you go, keep learning, have fun, and most of all keep a positive attitude and a positive approach.”

The next speaker, Mrs. Ristoff, observed that “a great interview is what makes the difference between a job candidate and being hired.” The keys to a successful interview, she continued, are researching the company beforehand, asking intelligent questions, and learning about the culture of the company and what qualities it seeks in its employees.

“During your interview process you will need to be able to articulate the skills you have developed here at Thomas Aquinas,” Mrs. Ristoff continued. “These are what will set you apart from all other candidates: your strong analytical skills; your ability to solve problems, to look at ideas from different positions, understand them and find solutions; your ability to effectively formulate, present, and defend your positions; your strong ethics; your determination to do the right thing; and how your experience in small discussion groups has helped you to develop your oral and presentation skills.”

Ending the prepared portion of the presentation was Mr. Ristoff, who likewise stressed that employers value

ethical workers. “Thomas Aquinas College epitomizes ethics, and when you are in your interview, if you do not properly articulate why you came here and how your value system grounds you in everything you do, I will tell you right now you are foolish,” he said. “At the end of the day, when employers have a challenge, when we have an issue that arises, we want to know: Are you going to do the right thing?” In conclusion, Mr. Ristoff told the students, “You absolutely are primed to be great leaders, and I know we would all love to help you be successful.”

Making Connections

The panelists then took questions from students and talked with them over refreshments. The students were interested and eager to speak — long after the initial presentation was over, some of them could still be seen chatting with the speakers in the arcade outside the library.

“The advice the Ristoffs and Swartzes gave will be very beneficial in my career search after graduating from the College,” said sophomore Peter Covington. “It was reassuring to hear that my education will be very applicable in the business world, and it was instructive to see how I can apply my skills in business.” Added senior John Paul Gerrard, “The panelists gave clear examples of how the education at TAC will benefit the students in their careers.”

Calling the event “a great time together for everyone,” the College’s Director of Development and coordinator of its Parents’ Association, Robert Bagdazian, praised Mr. and Mrs. Ristoff and Mr. and Mrs. Swartz for sharing their wisdom and expertise with the College’s students. “Tim, Laura, Don, and Rita have an extensive executive history,” he said. “They also have a real understanding of the College. The Ristoffs’ son Brandon is a sophomore, and the Swartzes are actively involved through Don’s work on the Board of Governors. So they were a perfect fit, combining practical business experience with a deep appreciation for the College’s unique educational approach and faithfulness.”

The Career Forum was one of several such events that the Office of Career Advisement has planned for the year, including talks about medicine (see below) and media, as well as a workshop on résumé writing and interview preparation. The Office is also hosting on-campus visits from employers, including WellPoint and the Great Hearts Academies, and numerous graduate schools in a wide range of disciplines.

Focus on Medicine

The Office of Career Advisement arranged two talks this semester for students who are considering careers in medicine. One was organized to give the College’s would-be physicians insights into the medical-school admissions process, and the other to discuss career opportunities in the nursing profession.

Doctors in Training

To speak about applying to medical school and becoming a physician, the Office of Career Advisement invited a husband-and-wife team of Catholic doctors who are the parents of a Thomas Aquinas College graduate, Drs. Mary J. Kotob and Barton Billeci.



A gynecologist and gynecological surgeon in Newport Beach, California, Dr. Kotob Billeci earned her medical degree at Loyola Medical School in Chicago and studied plastic surgery at Yale University. Her husband, Dr. Billeci, is a primary-care physician in Irvine

and a fellow graduate of Loyola Medical School. He is also the medical director of Concordia University and a clinical assistant professor at the University of California, Irvine, School of Medicine.

“We invited the Billecis because they have a unique perspective to share with our students,” says Director of Student Services Mark Kretschmer. “As physicians, they know what type of person is a good fit for the healthcare profession, and they can give the students good advice on how to determine which type of medicine to go into and how to avoid potential pitfalls. As parents of a College alumna, they also appreciate the formation that our students receive, and the way it can prepare graduates for any career.”

The College’s students, Dr. Billeci says, are well suited for the practice of medicine. “My advice is that, once their medical school prerequisites are met, they will be more than qualified,” he notes. “The vocation of medicine is best served with a comprehensive understanding of the human person, encompassing both the physical and spiritual aspects of health. In over 30 years of medical practice, I have found that the finest, most compassionate, and most thoughtful physicians have had some prior education or experience in the liberal arts.”

Careers in Nursing

On a quiet Sunday afternoon this fall, Charlene Niemi, RN, MSN — the College’s nurse and a member of the nursing faculty at California State



University, Channel Islands — spoke to a roomful of students eager for her expertise and counsel. Nurse Niemi discussed the various nursing programs that are available to college graduates, as well as the best way for Thomas Aquinas College students to make use of their liberal arts degrees in applying for such programs.

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

College Welcomes its Newest Tutor

Dr. Marco Emerson ('97)

“I always thought it would be great to come back here,” observes Dr. Marco Emerson, a graduate of the Thomas Aquinas College Class of 1997. For a time he envisioned himself returning to his alma mater, inspiring students with the truths of the Catholic faith, as a priest and chaplain.



He was right, in part. Seventeen years after his graduation, Dr. Emerson has returned to campus, but not as a chaplain. After pursuing a religious vocation, he discerned a different call, one that has led him back to Thomas Aquinas College as the newest member of the teaching faculty.

Guadalupano

The son of a Mexican mother and an American father, Dr. Emerson grew up in various parts of Northern California and Washington and made long trips to Mexico at least once year. As a boy he developed a deep admiration for Mexican piety and a devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. “We would visit her shrine every time we were in Mexico City, and I remember watching so many visitors, including elderly men and women, approach on their knees. It was very inspiring,” Dr. Emerson recalls. “There’s a line in ‘*La Guadalupana*,’ the devotional song for Our Lady of Guadalupe, that says, ‘*Desde entonces para el Mexicano ser Guadalupano es algo esencial*’ — ‘to be a Mexican is to be a Guadalupano.’”

There were few Guadalupanos, though, in Stanwood, Washington, the dairy town some 50 miles north of Seattle where the Emersons moved when Marco was 11 years old. In this community founded by Norwegian immigrants, he stood out not only for his darker features but, more significantly, for his Catholicism. Although he thrived in his public high school — as both a student and a football player — he came to realize that he was not prepared to defend the Faith. He therefore sought an

authentically Catholic school for his college education. Of course, he had a secondary motive for this choice. “I knew very few Catholic girls at the time,” he says, “and thinking I might want to marry one someday, I wanted to go somewhere where I might meet some.”

At Thomas Aquinas College Marco found, to his surprise, not a wife, but a desire to enter the religious life. “When you read about heroism, for the Greeks and Romans, it was about pursuing the great, the noble, and the best of things. Then, when you look at that in the light of faith, you see that the greatest heroism is Christ on the Cross,” he says. “As a student, I was animated by this idea of pursuing the noble, the good, and the arduous. And I thought, ‘What is the greatest battle that has to be fought now?’”

Discerning a Vocation

Despite a lingering sense that he may be called to the married life, Marco decided to seek the highest calling and discern his vocation at St. Michael’s Abbey in Silverado, California. His vocations director encouraged him to think of the years ahead as a time of discernment, rather than a definite preparation for the priesthood. Taking the religious name of Juan Diego, he spent several years with the Norbertines, completing a bachelor’s degree of sacred theology at the Angelicum in Rome and then starting work on a licentiate.

After a lengthy period of discernment, however, it became clear that his vocation was not to the priesthood. “I sensed a deep and enduring call to the married life,” Dr. Emerson reflects. “I had a strong sense of soldier-like duty, to fight the good fight and, if you get hurt, to fight hurt. But as I went on, I realized you cannot live your life as a religious and a priest that way; that you cannot simply will to live what God has not given.” Crediting the counsel of his abbot and spiritual directors, Marco left the seminary. He moved to Washington, D.C., to attend the Dominican House of Studies, and there, at a dinner party, met his future wife, Susanna.

In due time, Marco completed his licentiate, and the couple married, relocating to South Bend, Indiana,

where he pursued a doctorate in theology at the University of Notre Dame. Over the next five years, the Emersons were blessed with their first three children: Maria (3), Corazon (2), and Simeon, who tragically died of a genetic condition shortly after his birth. In the midst of their sorrow, however, they have been consoled to learn that they are expecting again, with a baby due to arrive in March.

Back on Campus

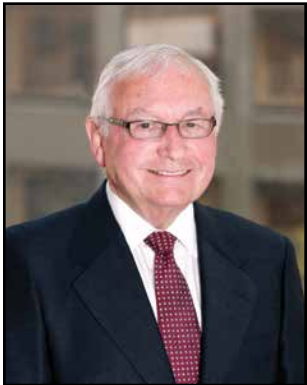
The Emerson family is now settling into its new California home, and Dr. Emerson, after completing his Ph.D. this spring, joined the Thomas Aquinas College faculty on Convocation Day. He is teaching Freshman Theology and Natural Science, while co-leading a Freshman Seminar with President Michael F. McLean. “I now have an even greater appreciation for the integrated curriculum here that allows us to teach across the disciplines,” he says. “The faculty work together and share a common vision, which is just not the case at most schools.”

More important, he says, is being able to guide students through an academic program that provides “not just an intellectual formation, but a spiritual formation,” as it did for him. “The fruits of this education have to be knowledge and praise of God,” says Dr. Emerson. “It’s about trying to make the life of wisdom your own, and that will always fall short if it is not founded in Christ.”

In Memoriam

Walter J. Conn, 1934 – 2014

When Walter J. Conn joined the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors in 2013, the event marked one more milestone in the longstanding friendship between the College and the Conn family. Sadly, his tenure would prove to be short-lived. Soon after joining the Board, Mr. Conn learned that he had multiple myeloma, a form of bone-marrow cancer. He fought a valiant fight against that disease for the next year, but on September 18 moved on to his eternal reward.



The relationship between the Conns and the College began in 1992, when one of Mr. Conn’s brothers, Rev. Thomas Conn, S.J., came to campus as a chaplain, a position in which he faithfully served until his own death from cancer in 1997. During that time Fr. Conn was an enthusiastic evangelist for Thomas Aquinas College, introducing it to all those he loved, including his brother James, who has been a member of the Board of Governors since 1995, and then Walter.

“I got to know the College because Tom was so pleased about it,” Walter recalled last year. “He liked that it was so strongly Catholic, and that it taught people about life rather than about business or something else so narrowly focused. He was very impressed with that, and he felt the College taught the Faith even better than some

of the seminaries.” Inspired by his brother’s endorsement, Walter Conn became a benefactor of the College in 1993. “Thomas Aquinas is doing a great deal of good for its students,” he said. “It helps young people understand what is important in life and how to become better people through God’s teachings.”

The son of Irish immigrants, Mr. Conn was born in Canton, Ohio, and grew up in South Pasadena, California. He attended the University of Santa Clara on a football scholarship and through the Reserve Officers Training Corps. Upon graduating, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He served in a variety of positions and ultimately as a missile officer, first in San Francisco and then in Germany.

In 1963, having attained the rank of captain, Mr. Conn received an honorable discharge from the Army and decided to pursue a career in real estate. He took a job with Charles Dunn Co. in Los Angeles and founded its property-management division. He grew the business from a single small apartment building to one of the largest regional property-management companies in Southern California, with several hundred employees and a portfolio of over 25 million square feet. In 1995 he purchased the other divisions of Charles Dunn Co. and served as the company’s chairman until his death.

“Walter was a friend, a valued member of our Board of Governors, and a great supporter of the College,” says President Michael F. McLean. “We pray for his eternal rest and also for the consolation of his wife, Donna; their children; his brother, Jim; and the entire Conn family.”

IN MEMORIAM

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

Lillian E. Del Chicca — November 19, 2006
Legacy Society member

Onnalee Olson Doheny — October 10, 2013
Benefactor

Margaret Mary Hammond Hanlon
March 7, 2014
Benefactor

John L. Shrake — April 7, 2014
Benefactor

Edward F. Waterbury — May 25, 2014
Father of Damian ('93), grandfather of Peter ('17), and Legacy Society member

John Reginald Barry — May 31, 2014
Father-in-law of tutor Sean Collins ('79); father of Patricia ('80); and grandfather of Liam ('13), Paul ('14), and Mary Collins ('16)

Peter Daniel Doran II ('06) — June 4, 2014
Graduate

Br. Robert Eckenrode, FSC — June 11, 2014
Legacy Society Member

John T. “Terry” Spillane — June 27, 2014
Benefactor

Thomas A. Geary, Jr. — June 29, 2014
Legacy Society Member

Kevin Gregory Long ('77) — August 19, 2014
Husband of Martha (Schaeffer '76)

Alan Teague — September 11, 2014
Former Member of the Board of Governors

Walter J. Conn — September 18, 2014
Member of the Board of Governors

Esther Escartin — September 22, 2014
Mother of College accountant Pablo Escartin

Wagering Eternity

Why We Study Blaise Pascal

By Dr. Brian T. Kelly ('88)



Note: The following remarks are excerpted from Dean Brian T. Kelly's report to the Board of Governors at its February, 2014, meeting. They are part of an ongoing series of talks about why the College includes certain authors in its curriculum. To read the full talk and the rest of the series, see thomasaquinas.edu/whywestudy.

Although he lived only 39 years, Blaise Pascal is regarded one of the most brilliant mathematicians and scientists of all time. His father, Etienne, oversaw his education personally, and the results were astonishing.

When the teenage Pascal published a treatise on conic sections, eminent geometers suspected that the elder Pascal had ghostwritten it. Their doubts evaporated over the subsequent years as Blaise made remarkable discoveries and innovations, not only in geometry, but also in algebra, hydraulics, natural science, mechanical calculation, and even public transportation. Here at the College we read his mathematical and scientific treatises in Sophomore and Senior Year.

Christianity and the Paradox of Man

Over a period of years that included several crucial moments of conversion, Pascal turned away from the fields of study that had won him renown to focus on spiritual and theological writings, most especially apologetics. He had experienced the lure of vanity and success. He had rubbed elbows with the young urban professionals who seemed more attracted by ambition and pleasure than by the call of the Christian God. He labored to reach them.

Despite publishing many influential scientific and mathematical treatises, Pascal won his greatest fame for the book of Christian apologetics that he never wrote. The *Pensées*, which we read in Junior Seminar, are fragments that he intended to work up into a book, though he died before he could do so. His prose is rich and vibrant, and the fragmentary nature of the work lends it an enigmatic character that invites wonder. The fragments are orderly enough so as to give a broad sense of his argument, and in one case a short section called "The Wager" is extremely clear and cogent.

I first want to say just a few words about the broad strokes of his argument, and then look at "The Wager" more closely. Pascal views man as "a monster that passes all understanding," a "freak," and above all else, "paradoxical." Man is simultaneously "judge of all things, feeble earthworm, repository of truth, sink of doubt and error, glory and refuse of the universe." For Pascal this notion of disharmony in the human condition is especially apparent in our recognition that we are called to happiness but are at the same time inadequate to achieve happiness. It is only through Faith that we can make sense of these contradictions. "Man infinitely transcends man," he writes; "without the aid of faith he would remain inconceivable to himself."

But how can faith help us to understand ourselves? And what religion can do so? Pascal argues that if any religion can help, it will have to somehow deal with this most obvious fact of man's existence. This ultimately leads him to suggest that, of all the great religions, only Christianity recognizes our greatness (we are called to be sons and daughters of the living God) and our baseness (we are all subject to concupiscence because of Original Sin). And Christianity provides a way for us to escape the difficulty and achieve happiness. So if there is a God, and He has provided a supernatural way for us to get beyond our monstrous predicament, this way is found in the Catholic Church.

The Wager

But that presupposes that there is a God who cares to help us. How can we know that? Pascal is not interested

in providing a proof that God exists. He thinks that such proofs are extremely difficult and will not work for the souls that he is trying to reach. He proposes another line of reasoning, which he calls "The Wager."

Much hinges on the question of God's existence. If He exists, then it is necessary to obey Him and honor Him, to curb our passions and live virtuously. If He does not exist, then we are left to our own devices, to pursue pleasure or happiness as we see fit. Which way should we go? Which way should we wager?

Pascal suggests that we must wager. At every moment of our lives, we behave as though God exists or as though He does not exist. Every moment we effectively choose. It is a game of chance, and so it makes sense to weigh the possible outcomes and the odds and the potential payout or loss. Pascal, in other words, proposes that we analyze the situation with the gambler's sense of logic and calculation.

The outcome of the wager is either that God exists or that He does not. As far as we can know, the odds are 50-50. What is the potential payout or loss? If we bet that God exists, and He does, we stand to gain an eternity of joy. If we bet that He exists, and He does not, we lose whatever earthly pleasures we might have gotten if we had not restrained our passions and lived virtuously. Effectively we would lose nothing. If we bet that God does not exist, and He does, we lose an eternity of joy, and gain an eternity of pain. If we bet that He does not exist, and He does not, then we are correct but gain nothing.

Pascal argues that the gambler's calculation compels the gambler to wager that God exists. If you must wager, and the odds are even, there is no reason to choose one side or the other. The calculation then hinges on the payout. If the payout is slightly bigger on one side than the other, the prudent gambler would choose the side with the bigger payout. What if the payout is twice as much on one side as the other? In that case you would be even more strongly compelled to bet on the side with the bigger payout. But in the wager about God the payout is *infinitely* bigger since eternity hangs in the balance. And the bigger the payout is, the more compelling the calculation. So the infinitely greater payout carries infinitely more compelling force.

Prudence demands that we gamble on God. In Pascal's words, "Reason impels you to believe."

But where does that leave the nonbeliever? Can we really choose to believe because it is in our best interests? If you persuaded me that it was in my best interests to believe that Big Brother loves me, that still would not mean that I automatically believed it. Belief does not work like that.

Pascal therefore proposes that it is time for the unbeliever to clear away the impediments to faith. Undisciplined appetites and passions war against reason. By curbing the passions, the unbeliever can make room for faith. By submitting to the devotional practices of the Church, the unbeliever asks for faith, which God is surely eager to give. As a believer it is hard to know how persuasive the wager actually is to a nonbeliever, but it has certainly influenced many Christian philosophers.

A Final Act of Humility

Pascal lost his mother when he was only three. His father and two sisters doted on him. He amazed the world from a young age. It was difficult for him not to be distracted by worldly success. Ironically he was bolstered in his determination to resist vanity and stay committed to God by his association with a heretical community, the Jansenists of Port Royal, though they were not declared heretical until late in Pascal's life. For a time Pascal became the public, albeit anonymous, mouthpiece for the adherents of Jansenius, attacking the Jesuits and defending Jansenist views of predestination and grace.

He was also beset with physical suffering. He is thought to have suffered from tuberculosis, stomach

cancer, and brain lesions. His frequent headaches and illnesses helped keep human regard in an appropriate perspective.

Eventually Pascal experienced a strange personal vision or revelation that moved him to abandon the world and live for God alone. On the night of November 23, 1654, he experienced what he called "a night of fire." He tried to put his experience into words on a parchment that he kept with him until he died. He wrote, "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars ... Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy ... 'This is life eternal that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent.' Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ ... May I not fall from Him forever ... I will not forget Your word. Amen." Upon his death eight years later this note was discovered sewn into the lining of his jacket.

Late in his life Pascal found himself the determined opponent of Pope Alexander VII, who had condemned five key Jansenist theses; Pascal was convinced that the Pope had simply misunderstood the text. He argued bitterly to no avail; he even publicly urged Port Royalists not to back down. But with weeks to live, suffering excruciating pain from his illness and, perhaps more, from the medical treatments he endured, he faced up to the fact that he could not be a faithful Catholic and align himself against papal authority. He took the very difficult step of formally and completely submitting himself and his views to the judgment of Rome. He died on August 19, 1662, at the age of 39, having asked for and received the Last Rites. May his soul rest in peace.

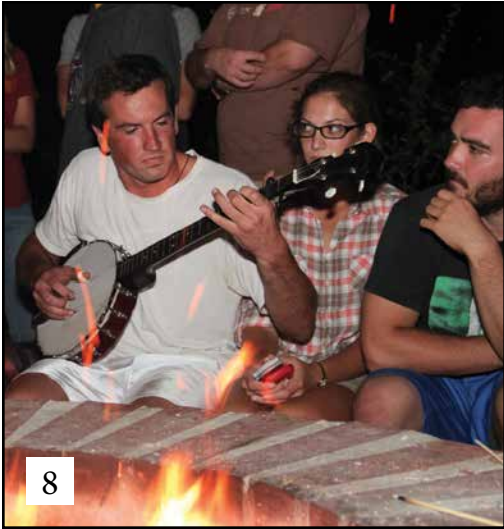
St. Vincent de Paul Lecture and Concert Series

Endowed by Barbara and Paul Henkels

Highlights from the Last Quarter

- On August 29, **Dr. John J. Goyette**, a member of the College's teaching faculty, presented the year's opening lecture, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Faith Seeking Understanding."
- Dr. Sarah Ruden**, a visiting scholar in classical studies at Wesleyan University, spoke on September 12 on the subject, "Virgil's *Aeneid*: Reaching Inward and Outward with Words."
- One Friday night each semester, the student body and teaching faculty gather for the **All-College Seminar** — simultaneous meetings of small groups (about 20 students, drawn from all classes, and two tutors) to discuss a pre-selected reading. The fall semester's seminar took place on October 3 and focused on Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.
- On October 17, **Dr. Richard Sternberg**, principal investigator at the Biologic Institute, delivered a lecture entitled, "What is a Gene? Not a Particle but a Process."
- Periodically members of the faculty or chaplaincy present on-campus "tutor talks," informal lectures followed by question-and-answer sessions. These late-afternoon gatherings afford an opportunity for the speakers to discuss some topic of interest to them and to share their thoughts with other members of the community. On September 17, Head Chaplain **Rev. Hildebrand Garceau, O.Praem**, gave one such talk, "The Sanctification of Time and the Liturgy of the Hours," and on October 8, **Dr. Joseph Hattrup** spoke on the subject, "Virgil's *Aeneid*: Signs and Simulations — The Fall of Mount Atlas."

Text and audio from select lectures and concerts are available at thomasaquinas.edu/lectures.



CAMPUS LIFE

1. Tutors and parents mingle at a reception during Freshman Orientation. 2. Contestants battle in the tug-of-war at the annual All-College Picnic. 3. Juniors perform a comical hula skit at their welcome dance for members of the Freshman Class. 4. Students relax at a Saturday-morning pancake breakfast, hosted by Resident Assistant Sarah Dufresne ('13). 5. A hearty group of Thomas Aquinas College women watch the sun rise after an early-morning hike. 6. On a sunny fall afternoon, two volleyball teams meet on the College's sand court. 7. Students pray at the Lourdes Grotto as part of a campus procession on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. 8. With guitars and banjos on hand, students sing songs and roast marshmallows at the new campus fire pit, a gift of the Class of 2013.

Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel Schedule of Masses *

Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays
7:00 a.m.**	7:15 a.m.**	7:15 a.m.**
11:30 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	9:00 a.m.
5:00 p.m.		11:30 a.m.

* Schedules may vary; please call in advance to confirm Mass times.

** The first Mass of each day is offered in the extraordinary form.

Calendar of Events

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

Advent Concert	
Handel's <i>Messiah</i>	
The Thomas Aquinas College Choir	December 5
First Semester Examinations	December 15–19
Christmas Vacation	December 20–January 11
Lecture	
Dr. David R. Arias	
Thomas Aquinas College	
“St. Thomas on Substantial Form”	January 16
St. Thomas Day Lecture	
Rev. Romanus Cessario, O.P.	
St. John's Seminary, Boston	
“On Contingency in Nature”	January 28
All-College Seminar.....	February 1

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