



# THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

## FALL 2016

VOLUME 44, ISSUE 4

### “You Have Come to a Great Place” Bishop Robert Barron Welcomes Freshmen at Convocation 2016

Thomas Aquinas College marked the beginning of its 46<sup>th</sup> academic year on August 22, and on hand to greet the 102 new freshmen was the College’s newly installed regional bishop, the Most Rev. Robert Barron.

“It is my privilege to welcome the incoming Freshman Class at Thomas Aquinas College, one of the premier liberal arts colleges in the country and the pride and joy of the Santa Barbara Pastoral Region,” His Excellency remarked. “You have come to a great place — and to a pivotal moment in your lives. For the next four years, you will have the opportunity to immerse yourselves in the best minds that the Western World has produced: Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Dante, Newton, Lincoln, and Einstein — among many others.” (See page 9.)

Convocation Day began with a morning Mass of the Holy Spirit in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, at which Bishop Barron served as the principal celebrant and homilist. His Excellency, clad in red vestments, was joined at the altar by the College’s four chaplains: Rev. Paul Raftery, O.P.; Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J.; Rev. David Gonzalez, O. Praem.; and Rev. Robert Marczewski. Following the clergy as they processed into the Chapel were members of the College’s Board of Governors and faculty, dressed in academic regalia.

The founder of the Word on Fire media ministry and the host of its award-winning *Catholicism* documentary series, Bishop Barron delivered a homily in which he likened the development of Christian doctrine to a centuries-long dialogue, directed by the Holy Spirit. “This great conversation, this great unfolding of truth under



the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has been now entrusted to us,” he said. “That is why you are here at an institution like this, so that you can learn this lively conversation, so as to enter into it for our time.” (See page 3.)

After the Mass, students, faculty, and staff convened in St. Joseph Commons for the Matriculation ceremony. There, members of the Class of 2020 — who hail from 5 countries and 30 states — officially began their tenure as students when Director of Admissions Jon Daly called their names. Each approached the dais, greeting President Michael F. McLean and Bishop Barron, and then signed the College’s registry.

In addition to the new students, the College wel-

comed its newest tutors: Blaise Blain, Vincent DeMeo, Joseph Haggarty, and Drew Rosato. With Fr. Paul leading them, the four scholars made the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity, as do all new Catholic members of the College’s teaching faculty. Dr. McLean then formally welcomed the freshmen in his Matriculation Address, in which he stressed the importance of natural science in the College’s classical curriculum, so as “to satisfy the *wonder* that is essential to our human nature” and to become better acquainted “with its place among the other disciplines.” (See page 2.)

President McLean then introduced Bishop Barron, noting that His Excellency discovered the works of St. Thomas Aquinas during his freshman year in high school, and this discovery ultimately inspired him to devote his life to God as a priest. “This is one of the very reasons for the College’s existence — for the minds and souls of young people to be transformed by the truth, especially as it finds its most complete explication in the writings of the Angelic Doctor,” said Dr. McLean. “Bishop Barron understands well the vital importance of the work you are about to undertake here at the College, and the power this unique education will give you to help transform our culture.”

In his own remarks to members of the Class of 2020, the Bishop encouraged the freshmen as they commenced “a study of the great minds of the West.” For the next four years, he told them, “you will set aside mere practicality, clothe yourselves in regal gowns, and become participants, however humble, in the most stimulating conversation of all.”

### A Special Intercessor and Patron College Celebrates Canonization of St. Teresa of Calcutta

When His Holiness Pope Francis canonized St. Teresa of Calcutta on September 4, the occasion was met with joy and celebration on the campus of Thomas Aquinas College, some 6,000 miles away.

The College has long maintained a special devotion to this widely beloved saint, who served as its Commencement Speaker in 1982. “When Mother Teresa visited us nearly 35 years ago, there was little doubt that we were in the presence of a future saint,” reflects President Michael F. McLean. “What a blessing it is that we can now call upon *Saint* Teresa of Calcutta as a special intercessor and patron.”

#### A Blessed Visit

While touring the United States in 1982, St. Teresa visited just three college campuses: Harvard University, Georgetown University, and — at the request of her friend Servant of God John Hardon, S.J. — Thomas Aquinas College. In addition to giving that year’s Commencement Address, she, like Fr. Hardon before her, received the College’s highest honor, the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion. She spent the night in the Doheny Hacienda, where it was discovered, upon her departure, that her bed had been untouched; presumably she had slept on the floor.



“She was just so full of joy,” observes Director of College Relations Anne S. Forsyth. “I remember holding her hand just briefly. Her hands were very cold but they were very expressive — lined and smooth at the same time.”

While delivering her Commencement Address, St. Teresa never stopped fingering the Rosary beads that she held on the podium. Flanked by College faculty and members of the Board of Governors, she wore only her simple white and blue sari and a plain gray sweater (against the “cool” — by Indian standards — Southern California day). Though extreme security measures, weeks in the planning,

were in place to assure the Albanian nun’s safety, she seemed unaware of it all, focusing instead on the 22 graduates of the Class of 1982 and the message she wished to deliver to them.

Noting, as she often did, that the poverty afflicting the U.S. is not material, but spiritual, in nature, St. Teresa urged students to be generous with their abundant spiritual gifts. “Your parents, your relations, your friends, even the whole world, is expecting that you be ... the light that Jesus said: ‘I am the light that you must light; I am the truth you must speak; I am the joy that you must share; I am the life that you must lead; I am the love that you must love.’ Go with that — the joy of loving.” Later in the day she also took questions at an on-campus press conference. (Videos of both St. Teresa’s Commencement Address and press conference are available at [thomasaquinas.edu/st-teresa](http://thomasaquinas.edu/st-teresa).)

“It was a singular privilege to have among us this ‘Saint of the Gutters,’” recalls Dr. McLean. “The warmth of her smile touched the hearts of all who encountered her.”

#### Celebrating the Canonization

A bronze bust of St. Teresa, commemorating her visit, is prominently displayed

in St. Bernardine of Siena Library. On the morning of her canonization, however, it was briefly moved into Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, where, after the 9:00 a.m. Mass, Head Chaplain Rev. Paul Raftery, O.P., bestowed on it a special blessing.

That afternoon in St. Joseph Commons the College showed a video of St. Teresa’s 1982 Commencement Address, as well as a video of her remarks at the 1994 National Prayer Breakfast, during which she gave an eloquent defense of the unborn — “the poorest of the poor” in an otherwise prosperous nation.

In the following days the College presented to all of its students and employees Miraculous Medals that had been blessed and placed on St. Teresa’s tomb. These third-class relics were the gift of an alumna of the College, Sr. Marcella, M.C. (Maggie Isaacson ’86), who knew and worked with St. Teresa as a member of her religious order, the Missionaries of Charity.

“We rejoice at the canonization of St. Teresa of Calcutta,” says Dr. McLean. “We pray that the Church’s new saint will intercede for the College and its many friends in all their needs.”

St. Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us!

# From the Desk of the President

## Admiration for the Beauty, Order, and Simplicity of God’s Handiwork

Note: Dr. Michael F. McLean presented the following address at Matriculation 2016.

Welcome to our incoming freshmen and to all of our returning students.

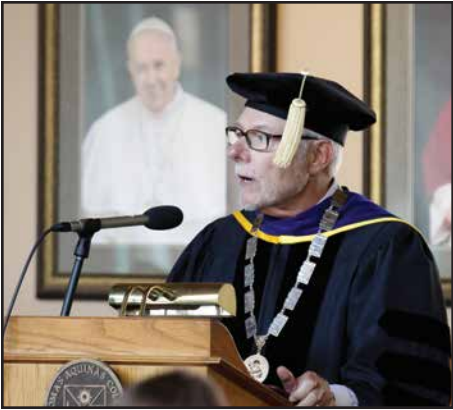
I will begin with a quotation from the 19<sup>th</sup> Psalm: “*The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.*” Essential to the Catholic intellectual tradition, and to the Church’s teaching on the relation between faith and reason, is the idea that the natural world is God’s creation, and that the existence, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator can be seen in it, not only with the eyes of faith, but by the efforts of natural reason.

The five proofs for God’s existence in the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas — which you will study in the Junior Year — exemplify these words of the Psalmist in that all of them begin from something learned from the philosophical study of nature, as undertaken, for example, in Aristotle’s *Physics*, which you will study in the Sophomore Year. Each of the ways concludes to the existence of God. The first way begins with the philosophical definition of motion and concludes to the existence of an unmoved mover. The second begins with the order of efficient causality seen in nature and concludes to the existence of an uncaused cause. The fifth begins with the philosophical principle that nature acts for an end and concludes to an intelligence governing the whole of the natural world.

If the general understanding of nature provided by philosophy is enough to anchor the proofs for God’s existence, one might ask why a program of Catholic liberal education requires its students to pursue the more detailed and particular knowledge of nature afforded by natural science. This is the topic for my reflections this morning.

The first reason for the study of natural science is to satisfy the *wonder* that is essential to our human nature and which, as the College’s mission statement, *A Proposal for the Fulfillment of Catholic Liberal Education*, says, “is the proper human motive for higher education.”

If one sees the general order in nature revealed by philosophy, there is, or should be, a natural desire to see that order in the more particular and determinate way that is the province of natural science. It is



one thing, and a very important thing, to learn — as you will, I trust, in your Sophomore Year — that motion is the “act of the potential as such.” It is quite another thing to learn that the heavenly bodies are tracing elliptical paths or that their motion around the sun is in accord with an inverse square law.

No one is saying these are easy things to see. They weren’t easy for Kepler, they weren’t easy for Newton, and they probably won’t be easy for you. One should take joy and pleasure in seeing these things, however, and, in doing so, one should grow in admiration for the beauty, order, and simplicity of God’s handiwork; for its intelligence, and for its proportionality to our intelligence. At Thomas Aquinas College, ours is the conviction that some knowledge is worth pursuing for its own sake and that it is intrinsically good to satisfy our desire to know the world and its creator in as determinate a way as possible.

Sophomores sometimes wonder, however, about the worth of studying a natural scientist, Ptolemy, for example, who turns out to be wrong. For I have been speaking of natural science as though it is part of the pursuit of truth even though it might be argued that much of it belongs in the realm of opinion or hypothesis. We should say, first, that natural science is a legitimate part of the pursuit of a determinate knowledge of nature, even if particular scientific theories do not always contain the complete truth about nature. The desire for such knowledge is proper to our nature as rational and wondering animals.

Ptolemy is an inspiring example of just such a *wonderer*, and his hypotheses about the motions of the heavenly bodies are natural beginnings insofar as they hew closely to our first experiences of the heavens, and to our intrinsic sense of what is beautiful and orderly. All subsequent

astronomy, moreover, is a reaction to Ptolemy and cannot be understood without some grasp of the Ptolemaic system. To make a long story short, natural science is worth pursuing even if it does not contain the fullness of truth or the certitude of the strictly demonstrative sciences.

In addition, to the extent that the theories of Ptolemy, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton, for example, borrow their principles from mathematics, and apply those principles to the motions of natural bodies, they are examples of what Aristotle and St. Thomas call subalternate sciences, and, as you will learn later on, it is useful in Catholic liberal education to be familiar with such examples.

“It is intrinsically good to satisfy our desire to know the world and its creator in as determinate a way as possible.”

This leads naturally enough to another reason for the study of natural science — viz., to become better acquainted with its methods and with its place among the other disciplines. We want to be able to distinguish between what is known or proven in science, on the one hand, and what is assumed, or is a matter of hypothesis, on the other; between what is empirical or mathematical, on the one hand, and what is philosophical on the other. Studying the works of the great natural scientists enables us to make these judgments for ourselves, and helps us to see what in science is more or less certain or perhaps not certain at all.

A proper understanding of the order of the disciplines helps us to see that nothing in science can contradict the general, philosophical understanding we have of nature, an understanding rooted in common sense and common experience. It helps us to see as well that nothing in science can contradict what we know to be true by Divine revelation. Being able to judge these things for ourselves helps us to find our way in the modern struggle between faith and reason, and between religion and science.

The faith of entirely too many Catholics has been needlessly weakened by the mistaken idea that modern science has

refuted central claims of the Catholic faith, or otherwise rendered our belief in them unreasonable. Well-educated Catholics should not be subject to this danger. “A specific part of a Catholic university’s task,” said Pope St. John Paul II in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, “is to promote dialogue between faith and reason so that it can be seen more profoundly how faith and reason bear harmonious witness to the unity of all truth.”

Having given some account of the importance of natural science to Catholic liberal education, let us conclude by considering its place in the curriculum as a whole. Again in the words of our mission statement, “divinely revealed truth will be the chief object of study at Thomas Aquinas College as well as the governing principle of the whole institution, giving order and purpose even to the teaching and learning of the secular disciplines.” Theology is the queen of the sciences and occupies pride of place in our curriculum.

Second to theology is philosophy. As our mission statement says, “under the Christian dispensation, philosophy is seen not only as worthy of pursuit for its own sake, but as a handmaid to theology.” Only after theology and philosophy do we get to the seven liberal arts of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, wherein is found natural science along with mathematics and logic. The seven liberal arts are ordered to the study of philosophy and, hence, to theology. In the words of Hugh of St. Victor, “The seven liberal arts are introductory disciplines by which the lively soul enters into the secrets of Philosophy.”

Yours are lively souls. You freshmen will soon join your fellow students in experiencing the power of natural science to provoke wonder about issues proper to philosophy and ultimately to theology — questions about instinct, purpose, the infinite, place, time, motion, and the continuous, for example — and you will soon experience the power of the College’s curriculum and pedagogy to satisfy that wonder. You will also soon experience the power of natural science to manifest the teaching of the Book of Wisdom — “He has disposed everything in weight, number, and measure” —and so deepen your knowledge of God and His marvelous works.

Thank you, and may God bless your years at Thomas Aquinas College.

## Dr. McLean Reappointed as President of Thomas Aquinas College

At its spring meeting, the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors voted unanimously to reappoint Dr. Michael F. McLean as president of Thomas Aquinas College. “Dr. McLean has served ably over the past six and a half years,” said Chairman R. Scott Turicchi. “On behalf of the Board of Governors, I extend to him my deepest gratitude and my sincere congratulations.”



Pursuant to its bylaws, the Board asked Dr. McLean last year if he wished to be considered for reappointment as president, to which he replied affirmatively. The Board and the College’s faculty then conducted an extensive review, consulting with many constituents, including tutors, administrative faculty members, founders, alumni, chaplains, and benefactors. “The consensus was a strong endorsement of Dr. McLean’s performance and a desire for him to continue as president,” says Mr. Turicchi. The process then concluded with the Governors’ unanimous vote and Dr. McLean’s formal acceptance of his reappointment.

Speaking for the Board of Governors, Mr. Turicchi

praised Dr. McLean “for his leadership of the College during his first term, for his deep commitment to preserving the mission of the College as our founders envisioned it, and for his tireless efforts to secure its needs both now and for many years to come.” Dr. McLean, in turn, thanked the Board for its confidence. “I am grateful to the Governors for entrusting me with the honor of being reappointed as the president of Thomas Aquinas College for another term,” he said. “I pray for the graces to fulfill worthily this great responsibility, and I ask the College’s many friends to join me in this prayer.”

# Unfolding Truth Under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

## The Convocation Homily of the Most Rev. Robert Barron

A very pleasant good morning to everybody, and thank you, President McLean, and to the whole faculty and to all the Board of Governors, for inviting me to this wonderful occasion. Thank you for having me.

Why, precisely, do we call the Mass at the commencement of an academic year in a Catholic institution the Mass of the Holy Spirit? Well, you could say, in general, we are praying for the Holy Spirit to guide us, lift us up, literally inspire us, but there is a more specific reason, I think. And in the Gospel for today, which is one of the most precious texts in the whole Tradition, taken from that wonderful high-priestly prayer of Jesus in the Gospel of John (14:23–25), we find a clue: Jesus speaks of the gift of the Holy Spirit, Who will “teach you all things and remind you of everything that I have said.”

In a very real sense, the Father spoke all that He could possibly speak in speaking the Son, Who is properly called the *Logos*. So in this *Logos*, the full treasury of the Divine Being and wisdom is, indeed, disclosed to us. It would be inappropriate to look for any further revelation. The Father spoke everything in the Son. Nevertheless, the unfolding of the meaning of that revelation takes place only over large swaths of space and time. Think of the way the acorn grows into the mighty oak, or how a river over much space and time deepens and broadens. Think of the radical difference between the source of the Mississippi and the mouth of the Mississippi, the latter being far more impressive than the former.

“You learn the moves. You study the masters. You hone your own skills. You train your minds. You discipline your hearts. And then, today, at this Mass, you say, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, come, Holy Spirit, to guide us into all truth.”

John Henry Newman, in his great text on the development of Christian doctrine, said the deposit of faith is not passed on dumbly, like a football. Rather, Newman said, it is like a diamond, which is tossed up into the air, to catch the light in different ways, revealing different facets. And then, when it is caught, it is thrown up again. This is the long process of debate and argument and sifting and wondering that goes on in the great tradition. I love this line from Newman’s text. He says, “A real idea is commensurate with the sum total of its possible aspects.” There is a whole semester course in that one line. The content of a real idea — an idea like the Incarnation, an idea like



the Eucharist — is commensurate with the sum total of its possible aspects. In other words, we never get it all at once, we in our finite and historically conditioned minds.

No, but as the aspects of this great idea gradually unfold — and the process of throwing that diamond up to catch the light in different ways — that’s how a real idea emerges. Newman (here he anticipates people like Lonergan in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) says the mind is empty at first, but not empty like a box, just dumbly empty. It is empty more like a stomach; it is empty but it knows what it wants. In other words, when the mind takes in an idea, it plays with it, Newman says, in a lively way, thinking about it, turning it over, wondering about it, looking at it from different perspectives. And then, when one lively mind finishes its work, it tosses the idea to another lively mind, which then engages in a similar set of operations. And then it is tossed to another, and then to another, and then to another. In this long, sustained play of conversation, the contents of a real idea gradually emerge.

So, with Newman’s image in mind, think of this wonderful play of the Catholic intellectual tradition over the centuries. St. John knew the Incarnation personally. St. John knew the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and he said, “What our eyes have seen, what we have looked upon, what our eyes have touched” — that was St. John’s direct contact, if you want, with the idea of the Incarnation. But then John, who certainly turned that idea over in his *very* lively mind — witness the Gospel — John tossed that idea to St. Polycarp, who tossed it to St. Irenaeus, who threw it to Origen of Alexandria, who passed it on to Augustine, who gave it to Thomas Aquinas, who shared it with Robert Bellarmine, who spoke it to John Henry Newman, who tossed it, passed it on to Congar and de Lubac and Rahner and von Balthasar, who have finally given it to us — the contents of this real idea of the Incarnation emerging in this lovely play of minds, over much space and time, and finally passed on to us.

Now, what guarantees that this process does not devolve into chaos? What is the guarantee that, in this play of lively minds over the centuries, development does not devolve into corruption? Newman’s answer: the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. Now, remember the words of Jesus: *We will give you this gift of the Holy Spirit, Who will lead you into all truth*. Later on in that same discourse, Jesus says, *You cannot bear the fullness of truth now, but the Spirit will lead you into all truth*. It is the Spirit of God that guides and directs this great conversation of the Tradition, Who disciplines it, allowing it to move forward with confidence.

Now here is an uplifting truth that brings us back squarely to this day and to the patron of this place. Thomas Aquinas said that God “delights in using secondary causality.” I know it sounds like a bit of dry, scholastic academicism, but think about that: God could accomplish all He wants by Himself. Of course He could! God doesn’t need the world. God could achieve all He wants on His own. God could make sure all this happens at once. But God *delights* in using secondary causality. That means people like us. He gives us, if you want, the great privilege of carrying the conversation forward. I love how he speaks of the *dignitas causalitatis*, the dignity of causality, that we, too, can participate in His own causality as we move the great conversation forward.

We listen to all the voices — honoring what Chesterton, of course, as you all know, called the “democracy of the dead.” We listen to this great conversation, and then we inherit it, and we ourselves enter into it.

You know what Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Bellarmine, Newman, Chesterton, Balthasar all have in common? They are all dead.

Now, I mean no disrespect. They are alive in Christ! What I mean is, they are not in the arena any more. But *we* are ... but *we* are ... but *we* are. And this great conversation, this great unfolding of truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has been now entrusted to us. See, friends, that is why you are here. That is why you are here at an institution like this, so that you can learn this lively conversation, so as to enter into it for our time.

You learn the moves. You study the masters. You hone your own skills. You train your minds. You discipline your hearts. And then, today, at this Mass, you say, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, come, Holy Spirit, to guide us into all truth.

*Note: The Most Rev. Robert Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, was the principal celebrant of the 2016 Convocation Mass of the Holy Spirit.*

## The Perfect Gift ... *A Christmas Novena of Masses*

Beginning on December 17, the chaplains of Thomas Aquinas College will offer a novena of Masses in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Each person enrolled in the Novena will receive a beautiful, personalized card from the College. (Cost: \$5 per card, includes shipping and handling. All names must be received by December 15.)

[thomasaquinas.edu/christmas-novena](http://thomasaquinas.edu/christmas-novena)

# “Best of the Best”

## Secular & Catholic Guides Rank Thomas Aquinas College Among the Top in the Nation

### U.S. News & World Report

**T**he most dramatic jump in the National Liberal Arts Colleges rankings,” write the editors of *U.S. News & World Report* in their annual college guide, “came from California’s Thomas Aquinas College, which rose 29 spots from a tie at No. 82 to a tie at No. 53” — the top third of the top tier.

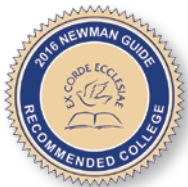


Other accolades from the 2017 edition of the magazine’s “Best Colleges” guide include:

- No. 2 in the nation, after Princeton University, for highest alumni-giving rate
- No. 11 among the top 25 national liberal arts colleges for “Least Debt” at graduation
- No. 24 among the Top 40 “Great Schools, Great Prices” in the United States
- One of just 66 schools nationwide that promise to meet students’ full financial need
- First in the country for the highest proportion of classes under 20 students (100 percent)
- First in the country for the lowest proportion of classes with more than 50 students (0 percent)

### The Newman Guide

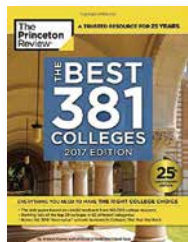
In the 2016-2017 edition of *The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College*, the Cardinal Newman Society once again recommends Thomas Aquinas College as one of 29 Catholic institutions nationwide with a strong Catholic identity, lauding it for its “impressive intellectual rigor that is matched by a commitment to orthodox Catholicism.”



*The Newman Guide* notes that Thomas Aquinas College was “the first in a wave of new Catholic colleges born from the crisis of Catholic identity in American Catholic higher education.” It goes on to explain that while Thomas Aquinas College’s “success has encouraged the emergence of other faithful Catholic colleges, including some that share its emphasis on the Great Books, it still has the distinction of being the only Catholic college in America that teaches exclusively from these classic works of Western civilization.”

### The Princeton Review

The Princeton Review features Thomas Aquinas College in the 2017 edition of its annual guide, *The Best 381 Colleges*, which includes only about 15 percent of America’s 2,500 four-year colleges. Among The Princeton Review’s ratings for Thomas Aquinas College are the following scores (maximum 99):



- Academics: 96
- Quality of life: 95
- Financial aid: 99

The guide also reports 62 ranking lists of “Top 20” colleges in various categories, based entirely on its survey of some 143,000 students. Thomas Aquinas College ranks No. 1 for “Most Religious Students” and No. 10 for “Best Classroom Experience.”

### American Council of Trustees and Alumni

On its “What Will They Learn?” website, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) has



posted its annual evaluations of major public and private colleges and universities in all 50 states. For the eighth time in as many years, ACTA has given Thomas Aquinas College a grade of “A” and a perfect rating for requiring students to take classes in all seven disciplines that ACTA identifies as essential for a core curriculum.

By earning an “A,” the College rates among the top 2 percent of American colleges and universities, 25 schools in all, named to ACTA’s coveted “A List.” Moreover, the College is one of only four schools, or the top 0.4 percent nationwide, to earn a perfect score for the strength of its curriculum.

### Forbes

In assembling its annual list of “America’s Top Colleges,” *Forbes* magazine distinguishes itself from other guides by its emphasis on students’ “Return on Investment” from their four (or more) years’ time and tuition payments. “ROI matters most,” the magazine proclaims. Thus it focuses not on selectivity metrics — such as acceptance rates and SAT scores — but on five measures of achievement: student satisfaction, post-graduate success, student debt, graduation rates, and academic success.



Judging by these criteria, *Forbes* has once again named Thomas Aquinas College to its selective list. Only about 15 percent of American colleges and universities are included on the *Forbes* list, and among those, the College ranks within the top half. The business magazine also lists the College among the nation’s top private institutions and the top 50 in the Western United States.

### “Best Colleges for ENTPs”

CollegeMatchUp.net, a site that helps high school students choose a college based on their Myers–Briggs personality types, has ranked Thomas Aquinas College among the country’s “Best Colleges for ENTPs” (Extraversion, iNtuition, Thinking, Perception). According to the site, ENTPs “see problems from many angles and choose the best possible solution for most any given situation,” making them “great governors, judges, statesmen and group leaders.”



As such, CollegeMatchUp.net concludes, ENTPs are a natural fit for the College, where all classes are conducted via the Discussion Method. “They will find Thomas Aquinas welcomes their inquiring minds with open arms,” the author observes.

“We are confident that ‘ENTPs’ would be, and indeed, are, very happy with our unique program of Catholic liberal education,” says Director of Admissions Jon Daly. “But I hasten to add that students of all personality types do well here. In fact, the success of the Discussion Method requires the interplay of different kinds of thinking and thinkers.”

### LendEDU

LendEDU, an online marketplace for student loans and loan refinancing, has compiled a list of the four-year colleges and universities with the lowest student-debt loads in the United States. Thomas Aquinas College ranks near the top of that list, No. 42 out of some 1,300 schools, and No. 25 among private institutions.



Analyzing the current student-debt levels of those who graduated from college in 2015, LendEDU found that the average student debt per borrower among Thomas Aquinas College’s 2015 graduates was \$16,901 — nearly half of the national average of \$31,710 for graduates of private colleges and universities, and also significantly below the national average of \$26,872 for graduates of public institutions.

### Washington Monthly

Whereas most college guides rely on “measures of wealth, exclusivity, and prestige to evaluate schools,” *Washington Monthly*’s editors aim for a more noble measure: “contribution to the public good.” By that measure, Thomas Aquinas College has earned a spot among the magazine’s list of the “Best Colleges and Universities,” which rates schools “based on what they are doing for the country.” Only 239 institutions are included on the newly published 2016 list, and among those, Thomas Aquinas College ranks in the top 100, at No. 56. The College also ranks at No. 25 on the magazine’s list of schools that offer the “Best Bang for the Buck” in the Western United States.



### National Catholic Register

On the cover of its 2016 college guide, the *National Catholic Register* features a story about colleges that yield

“abundant vocations” — and first among them is Thomas Aquinas College.

“Since TAC’s founding in 1971,” reports author Jim Graves, “about 11% of the student body ... have pursued vocations to the priesthood or religious life.” This blessed trend, the story quotes Director of College Relations Anne S. Forsyth as explaining, is “the natural fruit” of a faithful, Catholic education. “Our whole way of life at the College,” Mrs. Forsyth continues, “encourages students to think about their vocations,” which also leads to many fruitful, faithful alumni marriages.



This “whole way of life” is the focus of the *Register*’s Catholic Identity College Guide 2016, which highlights 35 “faithfully Catholic colleges and universities.” The guide bases its assessment on schools’ responses to 10 questions which, the *Register* notes, are designed such that “a ‘YES’ answer reflects essential elements of the renewal of Catholic identity called for by Pope St. John Paul II’s 1990 apostolic constitution on higher education, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (Out of the Heart of the Church), its 2000 ‘Application to the United States,’ canon law and other relevant Church documents.” Thomas Aquinas College answers all 10 of the *Register*’s questions affirmatively.

### College Raptor

College Raptor, an online consultancy for high school students and their families, has included the College among the “prestigious colleges and universities” in its 2017 “Top 25 Best Colleges in the West” rankings.



What distinguishes College Raptor from its various counterparts is that the service aspires to a more personalized approach, offering college recommendations based on students’ particular interests and financial needs. Its list of “Best Colleges” rankings, writes author Liz Skogerboe, is a survey of “the best of the best.”

### College Choice

College Choice has named Thomas Aquinas College No. 25 on its list of the “Best Colleges in California, 2016.” The list, which highlights only 50 of the roughly 400 colleges and universities in the Golden State, calls the College “principled” for its refusal to accept direct government funding, and observes that it “offers students the unique opportunity to learn using the Great Books.”



### About Great Books

About Great Books, a website dedicated to promoting excellent literature and a love of reading, has ranked Thomas Aquinas College third on its list of “30 Great Small Colleges for Book Lovers,” campuses where “books are cherished and book lovers will feel right at home.” The authors have included some of the schools on the list for “their extraordinary libraries or other resources for book lovers,” and others “for their unique dedication to the great books.” In the case of Thomas Aquinas College, however, which is blessed with an extensive library and a curriculum that employs only the great books, both explanations pertain.



“Set against a beautiful, hill-covered backdrop, Thomas Aquinas College, a Roman Catholic college, is the perfect setting in which to dive into the great books,” the website reports. “Students study using only primary sources and texts, meaning book lovers will have plenty of opportunity to read all of the classics, including Homer, Shakespeare, Plato, Euclid, St. Augustine, Descartes, and Newton, to name a few. Even better, students have the opportunity to discuss the great books with each other and their professors, most of whom are some of the foremost scholars in their fields.”

# “What I Did Over Summer Vacation”

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

### Marcus Porto ('20)

While many freshmen have studied some Latin before coming to Thomas Aquinas College, Marcus Porto is one of very few students — in the world — who can claim something much greater: conversational fluency in the ancient tongue. For one year leading up to his matriculation at the College, he studied classical language, culture, and history at Accademia Vivarium Novum, a small school in the Roman countryside that offers complete immersion in both Latin and ancient Greek. “I can now read these languages directly,” he says. “I speak them with my friends over Skype.”



After completing a year of study at the Accademia, Marcus remained for the summer to help teach new students. He left the school in August, though, to pursue a new academic adventure: enrolling as a freshman at Thomas Aquinas College, which he learned about from an Accademia classmate who is also a TAC graduate, Joshua Lo ('12).

### Zoe Appleby ('18)

“I am interested in museum work as a career after college, and I thought that working at one of the local museums would be a fun way of getting more involved in the community and getting some experience,” says Zoe Appleby. Thus, for the last two summers, Zoe has interned at the Santa Paula Art Museum, just a few miles from the Thomas Aquinas College campus. Initially her responsibilities consisted of research and cataloguing, but this summer officials asked her to curate her first exhibit.



As curator, Zoe selected “People of the West” as the exhibit’s theme. “The museum’s main exhibit features paintings by a Santa Paula artist, Gail Pidduck, that depict local landscapes and animals,” Zoe explains. “I wanted to choose something that complemented that theme by showing the *people* of the region.” She chose all of the artwork for the exhibit, labeled and hung it, and wrote the accompanying descriptions and introductory text.

### Clara Diodati ('17), Megan Reichert ('16) & Emily Sanchez ('17)

For one week in June, Clara Diodati, Emily Sanchez, and Megan Reichert participated in the GIVEN Catholic Young Women’s Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C., organized by the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious. The purpose of the all-expenses-paid conference, which included 375 Catholic lay and religious women from across the U.S., was to aid attendees in their work or apostolates. Participants had to complete a rigorous application that included detailed action plans for upcoming projects that they hoped to pursue, and which they would refine over the course of the week-long leadership event.



For their project, Clara and Emily founded a new on-campus apostolate, *Pacem*, which aims, as Emily describes it, “to take what we learn in the classroom and apply it in our everyday lives through virtue, charity, and service.” Megan, meanwhile, worked at the forum on her — now successfully implemented — plans to launch a second Thomas Aquinas College chapter of Education on the Nature and Dignity of Women (ENDOW), a women’s study group that reads and discusses magisterial documents pertaining to the vocation and role of women in the Church.

### Siobhan Heekin-Canedy ('18)

Before coming to the College, Siobhan Heekin-Canedy was a world-class ice dancer who competed in the 2014 Olympic Games. Because her skating partner was Ukrainian, she traveled often to the Ukraine and Russia, where she developed a love for the peoples, the cultures, and the languages. This past summer, with an eye toward a possible career in international diplomacy, she participated in a rigorous language and cultural immersion program in Vladimir, Russia, about 200 miles east of Moscow.



As a recipient of a U.S. State Department Critical Language Scholarship, Siobhan lived with a Russian host family and took four hours of classes each day, requiring an additional 2-3 hours of nightly homework, plus side classes on Russian culture and folklore. “It was a great experience in how universal human nature is,” she says, “and how our cultural differences can enrich our relationships as opposed to creating barriers.”

### Jason Huang ('20)

As a resident of Shanghai (China’s largest city, with a population of 14 million), Jason Huang does not ordinarily get to experience the outdoors as much as he would like. So, following the advice of a favorite high school teacher — the one who suggested that he attend Thomas Aquinas College, and whose influence ultimately led him to enter the Church — Jason chose to spend his summer *entirely* outdoors. For three months, he lived aboard a 112-foot sailboat with a crew of 22 fellow college students. In all, the group sailed some 4,900 nautical miles around the Caribbean Sea.



Despite never having previously sailed, by summer’s end, Jason had become an expert sailor and certified navigator as well as a VHR radio operator. A personal highlight from the voyage: “We anchored in El Salvador and there, on the beach, I saw a plaque marking the site of the first Mass ever offered in the New World.”

### John Jost ('17)

A high school state champion swimmer, John Jost returned this summer to his childhood team — the Trails of Algonquin, Illinois — as head coach. The youngest person ever to hold that position, he was responsible for 120 swimmers, ages 4 to 18, as well as four assistants, most of whom had little or no coaching experience. “It was an honor,” he admits, “but also a challenge.”



After a disappointing first meet, in which the Trails lost nearly every event, John worked his athletes hard, stressing fundamentals. At night, following a long day of practice, he would stay up late, choosing optimal lineups that maximized his team’s chances of winning the next meet. His efforts paid off. At the end of the season, the Trails won first place in their division, and as such will move up to the league’s top division next summer, when John plans to return as head coach.

### Patrick Nazeck ('19)

Deep in the Mojave Desert, some 100 miles northeast of Bakersfield, California, the U.S. Navy maintains its Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, where it conducts research, flight tests, and systems analysis. Among the 7,500 active military, civilians, and contractors working at the facility this summer was sophomore Patrick Nazeck, an



engineering intern with the Navy’s Pathways program for select high school and college students.

“They don’t usually take students from liberal arts programs; they generally go for engineering, science, or math majors,” Patrick says. “But I got hired because of the nature of the College and its emphasis on critical thinking.” As long as he continues to post strong grades and keep up his security clearance, he can resume work at the base during Christmas and summer vacations, which he intends to do, with the longer-term goal of entering the Navy after graduation.

### Jeannette Richard ('17)

As she enters her senior year, Jeannette Richard is considering a career in journalism, for which she acquired invaluable experience this summer as an intern for the Media Research Center’s Cybercast News Service. During her two months in the nation’s capital, Jeannette would daily attend Capitol Hill hearings or press conferences, or else scour the Web and press releases, searching for material for news stories. By summer’s end, she accumulated some 40 bylines.



In working as a reporter, Jeannette says, she found herself often drawing upon her education at the College. “There were a lot of hard, dense texts I had to read, such as pending legislation or legal briefs and opinions,” she remarks. “Doing all these readings here, having to find all the main points of a text, summarizing a passage in a way that accurately reflects what is being said — was really helpful preparation for my work there.”

### Caleb Skvaril ('19)

In the last week of his summer vacation, Caleb Skvaril left his home in Guam for Seoul, South Korea, where he served as a judge for that country’s National Mock Trial competition. In high school, he had participated in Mock Trial, winning two “best attorney” prizes at the U.S. national championship. Now he was playing the role of judge, ruling on evidentiary matters and offering advice to the competitors.



Caleb, who plans to pursue a career in law, sees strong similarities between what takes place in a courtroom and his classroom discussions at the College. “In class, you may come into a conversation with an idea about what the text says, but then someone else will offer a completely different idea,” he explains. “You have to argue your position, citing examples from the text in order to prove your point or come to a better understanding of what it actually says.”

### Megan Youngblood ('18)

Each year the American Council of Trustees and Alumni produces a report assessing the core curriculum requirements of American colleges and universities in the U.S. (Thomas Aquinas College has earned a perfect score every year.) The evaluation is an exhaustive process, as Megan Youngblood can attest.



As an intern at ACTA’s Washington, D.C., offices this summer, Megan was part of the team that systematically analyzed the published course requirements and class catalogues of the more than 1,100 colleges and universities under consideration. “Between superfluous courses, rising tuition costs, and grade inflation, it’s easy to see signs of decline in American higher education,” she says. “But it was great to help address these issues in a more positive way, by noting where things are improving, where we can enact change, and how we can help students who are in the process of choosing a college.”

Note: The Most Rev. Robert Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, was Thomas Aquinas College’s 2016 Convocation Speaker.

**Were you surprised by your appointment to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles?**

Yes, normally if you become an auxiliary bishop you are in your own diocese and kind of brought along. If I had been made auxiliary in Chicago, that would have been a piece of cake. In my case it was much more challenging, because I was sent out here when I knew almost nothing about Los Angeles. The learning curve was extremely high, and for the first several months it was just a tsunami of novelty every day — meeting people I didn’t know, going places I’d never been before, learning the history of places I knew nothing about. That was challenging.

In addition, most of my priesthood has been spent teaching, writing, reading, lecturing — an academic life. In the last 10 or 12 years, though, my Word on Fire media ministry came along, and that prepared me in many ways for the administrative work a bishop does: I had to raise money, work with a board, deal with personnel issues, do strategic planning, and organize an office. Then in 2012 Cardinal George made me the rector of Mundelein Seminary, putting me right at the heart of administration and, I think, preparing me for what would come next. There I had to deal with the same things — personnel, a lot of fundraising, business meetings, money, fixing roofs, all of it. So I did have a fair amount of administrative experience as I came here.

I arrived here September 1 last year, and I was ordained September 8. So I have just celebrated my first anniversary in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. So much has happened to me in this year, and it has all been so totally new to me, that it seems like I’ve lived here for a long time.

**What about your pastoral duties?**

I started, of course, as a pastoral person. In my day, in Chicago, we spent a year as a deacon in a parish. I was in a very busy inner-city Chicago parish, and then as a priest spent three years at a parish in the suburbs near O’Hare Airport. So I had four solid years of doing intensive pastoral work in two big, busy parishes. I have always said that even though most of my priesthood was spent teaching and writing, there is really nothing a parish priest does that I haven’t done at some stage, everything from wedding preparations, to funerals, to visiting the sick, going to hospitals, going to the schools, taking care of kids. Honestly, I just followed what the Archbishop of Chicago wanted me to do, and then finally, to my infinite surprise, what the Pope wanted me to do, coming out here.

**When you entered the priesthood, did you think you would become a renowned teacher of the Faith, as you have?**

No, I did not see that. I knew I would be in a parish for a time, but then I thought I would teach, perhaps at a seminary (even in seminary they were wanting me to get my doctorate), and then maybe I would go on to a university to be a professor. The Word on Fire project opened up in a way that was completely unexpected. And it *caught* fire in a way that I did not expect at all. Cardinal George played an important role in that. I was

being recruited by various universities to teach, and he gave me permission to go for interviews. But when the job was offered, he would tell me he didn’t want me to take it. His line to me, as Word on Fire was just getting off the ground, was, “You’d be very good as a professor, a director of doctoral dissertations, and I can see you with your black briefcase walking around campus. But,” he said, “I just think there’s a bigger stage for you.” At the time, it was somewhat disappointing; but I look at it now and I think there was some Providence in it. He really fostered that side of my ministry. I think of Word on Fire as another assignment because Cardinal George gave me permission to step away from the seminary a bit and to do the *Catholicism* series, which took off in ways that I never anticipated. Now we have a new series coming out, *The Pivotal Players*. And the YouTube videos I’ve made for Word on Fire have been viewed something like 20 million times.

**You must be known wherever you go. Is that hard to bear?**

Sometimes I feel an enormous responsibility. I was in Krakow for World Youth Day, and people came up to me from all over the world, from New Zealand, Holland, England, Australia. I make these videos now up in my room here, and we made them for years back in Chicago. And I’ll knock one off, I’ll write an article, and I’ll do a video. But I have no idea whom it will affect. I have a print of Van Gogh’s great work, “The Sower,” which is one of my favorites because it is my ministry in many ways: You sow these seeds, and you have no idea how they will land — and video enables you to sow them all over the world.

It is my conviction that this is what we need to do. People are not coming to us anymore, at least not the way they were. They do not come to us to be evangelized. We have got to go out and find them.

“There has never been anyone in the West more dedicated to reason and to science and to the life of the mind than Aquinas, even as he witnessed so clearly to what lies beyond it. And so it is especially today, when our besetting problem is that religion is being dismissed as irrational, that we need to recover Aquinas.”

**You have a very large pastoral region. Have you been able to visit all your parishes?**

Yes, I’ve visited them all — except one in New Cuyama, way up north. In addition, we have deanery meetings on a regular basis, and unless there’s a priest who’s just been hiding, I think I’ve met all the priests of this region. So I have gotten to know this region, I think, pretty well now and feel comfortable, knowing where to go, knowing the parishes, the priests. Because Los Angeles is so giant, though, I still don’t know all the priests of the Archdiocese, though those I’ve met have been great to me.

**How often do you meet with Archbishop Gomez and the other regional bishops?**

Twice a month we have a bishops’ meeting with Archbishop Gomez. Because I’m the farthest away from the chancery (about two hours away, in good traffic), I arranged early on to have rooms at the Cathedral, just to make the transportation easier. As a result, I probably see the Archbishop more than the other auxiliaries do. We also have the Presbyteral Council meeting, once a month, on a Monday. So typically I am in Los Angeles once a week and stay overnight at the Cathedral when I am there.



**Is there anything you really miss about your past life, prior to your appointment to Los Angeles?**

Yes. I miss the time for serious reading and research. I still do it, and I am keeping my hand very much in the academic world. But I don’t have time anymore; I can’t sit down and say, “I’m going to read Charles Taylor’s latest book” — 600 pages of dense philosophy — “and I’m going to think about it, and I’m going to write something on it.” I just don’t have the time. I am still trying to keep up, but it’s much harder, and I do miss that.

**Is there something that you have been surprised by here, something you wouldn’t have expected?**

Well, I would say, honestly, the disparity, economically, within the region surprised me. The immediate reaction people had to the news of my appointment was, “Santa Barbara! Wow! You’re going to be with the movie stars.” On arriving, though, I began hearing about intense gang warfare in Oxnard; I got a letter from someone in Santa Maria ministering in the emergency rooms of hospitals, saying “they’re filled with gunshot victims.” And even here in Santa Barbara there are so many homeless. All of this genuinely surprised me. I wasn’t surprised, though, about the traffic. I’m from Chicago, so the traffic has not thrown me that much. And the weather I love. During the day it’s gorgeous, and in the night it cools down beautifully, so you sleep like a baby.

**Do you have particular goals for your pastoral region, in addition to your regular work?**

Yes. For my first year here the goal was simply to get to know the region — to visit every parish, every place, see everybody, get out to all the institutions. Going forward, I have two goals, the first of which is to help our deacons — we have a lot in this region — in their formation, both spiritually and intellectually. We have some programs in place, beginning with a retreat I’m going to give at Mission Santa Barbara this fall.

I am big on public Catholicism and public intellectual Catholicism. So my second goal is that we should be “in the conversation.” I want to do here in Santa Barbara something I did in Chicago: give lectures, maybe at lunchtime, downtown, not on Church grounds, but on secular grounds, and invite business people, those that have maybe been away from the Church for a long time. I plan to talk about some basic things — about Jesus, about God, about the Church. So I’m going to try that this year, to be a voice in the secular space. If it works maybe I’ll go around to other parts of the region and do it.

**Would you explain what the mission of Word on Fire is and what the ministry is all about?**



# It's a Good Time for the Battle"

## h Bishop Barron



Word on Fire is my media ministry, and its stated purpose is to engage in the New Evangelization. Using the new media, especially social media, the goal is to reach out to the “nones” (those unaffiliated with any organized religion), and to reach out to the increasingly secularized world. It is the New Evangelization, through all kinds of different media.

**Do you think it also has an effect on practicing Catholics, inspiring or encouraging them?**

Yes, I hope so. I always see it in terms of concentric circles. We have been targeting fallen-away Catholics as the first circle, then disaffected Catholics, then active Catholics, and then reaching out to the wider Christian world. Then we have had a special focus on the “nones,” because that is the fastest-growing group in America, and they are increasingly among the young, those in their late teens and twenties. We are trying to target them in a big way. But yes, I hope, too, to encourage Catholics and reinvigorate their faith a little.

**Do you find that it is easier to reach the “nones” than those who hold to the tenets of, for example, a Protestant sect? Are there fewer barriers to break down?**

Yes, “nones” could be easier to reach, because a lot of them just have never been adequately exposed to the real thing. When they hear “religion,” they think oppressive sexual morality, they think corruption, they think institutional oppression. But have they really heard the message of Jesus, of God, of eternal life, of salvation? So in some ways I would say probably yes, it might be easier to reach them when they finally hear the real thing.

**Following the tremendous success of your documentary series *Catholicism*, Word on Fire is set to release its newest production, *Catholicism: The Pivotal Players*, about key figures who shaped the Church and changed the world. How did you determine who were pivotal?**

It was hard! Roughly speaking, I wanted to cover the span of the Church's life. So we chose among the patristic figures, medieval figures, early modern, contemporary, you know. Secondly, I was looking for people who not only made a decisive difference in the life of the Church but also influenced the wider society — people who are really of epoch-making significance. The third criterion was that I couldn't do people I had already covered in the earlier series, such as in the saints episode where we featured the Little Flower, Teresa of Calcutta, Edith Stein, and Katharine Drexel. I had substantial sections on them and many other females, some of whom I would identify as “pivotal players.” So I couldn't cover them again. That put us in a somewhat awkward position vis-à-vis women.

But Catherine of Siena is included, and I think she really is a pivotal figure.

We are coming out now with the first six of what will be 10 or 12 episodes.

**Why is it important for Catholics, and “nones,” and everybody else, to know these pivotal players?**

I'm with Balthasar, the theologian. He said the saints are the *players*. If you want to learn baseball, watch the greatest players, watch how they play. If you want to learn Christianity, you can do it abstractly, which is fine and important; but better is to watch these people; watch the great practitioners of it. I think this is the best way in for people — through lives, through narratives. And once they're in, I'm delighted that they run off and read all the books and explore all the ideas. But they are a door, an attractive door, I think, the lives of saints. And they are not all saints. We have Michelangelo, who is not a formal saint, of course, and Chesterton, whom we call “The Evangelist.” What I like about him — and there is so much to love about Chesterton — is the joyfulness of his approach. He was not censorious. He was clear, and he called a spade a spade; but it was always with a sense of joy and laughter. I love that part of Catholicism — that we're not a cramped, sort of puritanical, religion. I loved filming the episode on Chesterton: We went to one of the pubs in London that he would frequent, and we filmed in there. I think it captured the sense of fun in Chesterton that I wanted to communicate.

Now that we have done six pivotal players, I suppose the symmetrical thing would be to do six more, 12 in all. I have four new scripts finished, and our team is working on those, researching the places to film and making arrangements on the ground, getting permissions. Their work is so important. For instance, the cover for the *Catholicism* series was taken at about 6:30 in the morning at Sainte-Chapelle. We had to pay a fair amount, of course, to get in there, before the crowds got in. The photographer said to me, “Why don't you just open the door and come in, and I'll take the picture.” So we did, and the minute we saw it, we said, “That's the image for the whole series.” It is a stunning shot, and people often ask how we got it. Well the answer is money — and getting permissions.

It has been a wonderful adventure, doing the filming for both series. For the first documentary, we went all over the world, from Africa, to Calcutta, to Mexico. This new series is a little more restricted; we're doing mostly Europe and America so far.

**“If you want to learn Christianity, you can do it abstractly, which is fine and important; but better is to watch these people; watch the great practitioners of it.”**

**You have said that you discovered St. Thomas Aquinas when you were a freshman in high school and that studying his works eventually led you to discern your vocation. What is it about St. Thomas that is so powerful, and why should we study him?**

St. Thomas is the Common Doctor, the *Doctor Communis*. He is well known as the *Doctor Angelicus*, the Angelic Doctor, but he really is the Common Doctor because he is a touchstone. There is something that is so fundamental and basic about St. Thomas that, no matter where you range theologically, you kind of come home to him. There is a capaciousness to the breadth of his mind, and there is a sensibility that is just extraordinary.

For me, St. Thomas meant so many things. It was 1974 when I discovered him — a post-conciliar time and a time of great confusion; religious education, in particular, was not being done well. We certainly didn't think of religion as something reasonable or intellectually appealing. But then along comes Aquinas and he just opened

the eyes of my mind to the fact that religion *is* intellectually compelling and that, in fact, there is nothing more fascinating on the table than these religious questions.

So Aquinas is especially important because of our rampant secularism and the general consensus of the culture that religion is “irrational.” There is no better figure than Aquinas to rise up and say, “Religion is not irrational.” There has never been anyone in the West more dedicated to reason and to science and to the life of the mind than Aquinas, even as he witnesses so clearly to what lies beyond it. And so it is especially today, when our besetting problem is that religion is being dismissed as irrational, that we need to recover Aquinas.

Another Thomas, Thomas Merton, also had an influence on me as I discerned my vocation. Thomas Aquinas awakened the intellectual fascination, but when I was 16, I discovered Merton's *The Seven Story Mountain*, which is about someone falling in love with God. That opened up the affective side to me. I think that combination, that one-two punch of Thomas Aquinas and Thomas Merton, was very powerful, and I began thinking more about the priesthood.

These were pivotal players in my life, to be sure. I know Merton made moves that I would be less than happy with, and he didn't get everything right, but he was such an important player for me and for many others in opening the door to the Catholic spiritual mission.



**What advice do you have for the College's students and graduates who want to take part in the New Evangelization? Who are some models for them?**

My advice would be to read — a lot. I would caution them not to rush into the new technology. Make sure they're really grounded and formed. Think of Fulton Sheen, who had advanced degrees from Louvain and was very, very well acquainted with the Catholic philosophical and theological tradition. Think of Chesterton and of Newman, of Lewis and Peter Kreeft. Those are the models. My fear is that people are going to rush into the new media, and Facebook, without something substantial to say. I really believe it is the old technology that you have to do first. It's books! I would read, and read, and read. That would be my advice.

Going back 10 years or so now, when Hitchens, Dawkins, and others were advancing the New Atheism and doing a lot of debates, it was terribly frustrating to see the pathetic efforts Christians were making to engage with them. We had dropped our intellectual tradition, our apologetic tradition, and just run into the arms of the culture; then, when the culture turned on us with knives and guns, we had nothing; we were just mowed down. And so, one thing I tried to do — this was very early on in my new media work — was to respond to the New Atheists with YouTube videos, countering their positions and trying to answer them. I know those have been widely viewed, and I'm happy about that.

We have to be the new Fulton Sheens. This is what I have told the students at Thomas Aquinas College, that they must be the vanguard. I want them to realize that they are in the arena now. What I would say to them is, “It's up to you. This has been passed on to you, and you must defend it.” As Tolkien said, “It is not ours to choose the time we're in, but to decide what to do with the time that is given us.” So yes, we're in a very tough time, but it's a good time for the battle.

# Ordinations Bring Number of Alumni Priests to 66!

## Rev. Deneys Williamson ('10)

When Rev. Deneys Williamson ('10) left his home in Johannesburg, South Africa, to become a freshman at Thomas Aquinas College in 2006, he scarcely thought of becoming a priest. "I came as a young, arrogant, 19-year-old, thinking I was probably called to marriage, and hoping to meet a nice, beautiful American girl," he says. "I had a few inklings of a priestly vocation, but I put those on the back burner."

Still, he was open to God's will. "I realized that I was at a stage in life where I had to make a choice and either start practicing my faith seriously or reject it and start acting like a pagan," he remarks — and by God's grace, he made the right decision. On October 8, 2016, the Most Rev. Buti Joseph Tlhagale, Archbishop of Johannesburg, ordained Fr. Deneys to the priesthood of Jesus Christ in the city's Immaculate Conception Church.

Ten years prior to his ordination, when he was still in high school, Fr. Deneys learned about Thomas Aquinas College from an ad in a magazine. "When I saw what the College offered in terms of a program, I realized that it was



exactly what I was looking for — a classically liberal education. Nothing like that exists in South Africa," he says. "So I shipped off to Southern California, the other side of the world, to take a chance."

Over the course of what he describes as "four wonderful and happy years on a bucolic campus," he gradually discerned his calling. "When I was at the College the seed of my vocation was slowly nurtured and watered by the friendships, by the sacraments, by being introduced to a life of prayer, thanks to the work of the chaplains, and the intellectual life," he says. Particularly helpful was time spent before the Blessed Sacrament and his Junior Theology class. "Reading the first 12 questions of St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae*, about the qualities of God, was a seminal

moment in my intellectual life and journey," he observes. "Seeing the primacy of God, both in the universe and in our own lives really lit the desire within me."

By late junior year he began to think more seriously about the priesthood, particularly the religious life, but he was still uncertain. So after graduation he returned to Johannesburg and taught for a year while continuing his discernment. "There was a need for priests in my city, a scarcity of priests, and the Bishop was calling for young men to step forward," he recalls. "That's when I put two and two together. 'Why don't I give it a try?' I thought. And so that's what I did."

In August 2011 Fr. Deneys became a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Johannesburg. He then spent five years in Rome, where he completed his philosophy studies and earned a licentiate in sacred theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross before returning to South Africa this past August.

The day after his ordination, Fr. Deneys offered his first Mass at the church where he now serves as curate, or assistant priest, "a large, active parish," Johannesburg's St.

John the Apostle. Only weeks into his priesthood, he is already busy offering Masses, hearing confessions, leading catechetical programs, and providing adult formation and spiritual direction.

St. John the Apostle is a multicultural parish, reflecting both South Africa's diversity and the legacy of the country's troubled history. "I was born toward the end of Apartheid, and grew up in post-Apartheid South Africa, so I don't know what it was like living under the policy of racial segregation, but it's clear that the scars and wounds still remain," Fr. Deneys reflects. "The Church, however, can play a big role in helping the country to heal."

Citing the Second Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, he notes that the Church is called to be a symbol, or reflection, of the unity of the human race. "If you translate that to our situation in South Africa, our job is to show that it is possible for people of different cultures to live together, that we *can* live together, that our relationships go deeper than skin color," he says. "We are all brothers and sisters in Christ, because His blood flows through all of us."

## Rev. Reginald (Ryan '97) Wolford, O.P.

On Saturday, October 1, the Most Rev. Robert J. Hermann, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of St. Louis, Missouri, laid hands on Rev. Reginald (Ryan '97) Wolford, O.P., conferring upon him the Sacrament of Holy Orders. For Fr. Reginald, the timing of his ordination could not have been better. "I love St. Thérèse, and I have read her autobiography many times, including on my pre-ordination retreat. So I was honored to be ordained on her feast day."



He did, however, have one "small regret." Because he and his fellow Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Albert the Great would be celebrating his ordination, they would be unable to celebrate St. Thérèse's feast day. Fortunately, providence intervened. "I offered my first Mass the next day at Little Flower Church in St. Louis, which was granted the privilege of celebrating its patroness' feast on Sunday," Fr. Reginald explains. "So when I arrived that morning, I learned that my first Mass would be for St. Thérèse. I think she might have worked it out that way."

Providence has "worked out" much in the life of Fr. Reginald, who arrived at Thomas Aquinas College in 1993 as a teenager whose religious convictions fell somewhere between indifference and agnosticism. "My family was not Catholic," he says. "I was baptized at the age of 10 in a Disciples of Christ church, but by the time I came to the College, we didn't really go to church at all, and I didn't know if I believed in anything."

When Fr. Reginald was in high school, an ad for the College had caught his eye. "I was very interested in studying the great books via the Discussion Method," he recalls, so he drove the 100 miles from his family home in Rancho Cucamonga, California, to visit. "I felt so at home there," he says, "that I didn't apply anywhere else."

He did not remain spiritually indifferent for long. "I had been thinking about the Faith and had a few conversations around the dorm, and then someone invited

me to Mass, so I showed up," he says. The experience was transformative. "I was just fascinated by it all — the Latin, the Gregorian chant, the incense, the silence. I was hooked from that moment." He soon began receiving religious instruction from one of the College's chaplains, the late Rev. Wilfred Borden, O.M.I., and at that year's Easter Vigil received a conditional baptism, his confirmation, and his first Holy Communion.

"From the time of my conversion I suspected I had a priestly vocation," he notes, but careful to temper his convert's zeal, he proceeded cautiously. After graduating from the College in 1997, he looked into a few religious communities but was "not ready to take the step yet." So he spent some time testing various careers and interests — working in the arts in North Carolina, teaching at a boys' middle school in Harlem, and earning a master's degree at Austria's International Theological Institute.

Finally, in 2006, he entered the Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception, a small religious community based near the College's campus in Santa Paula, California. While with the Canons he earned an STB at the Angelicum in Rome, was ordained to the transitional diaconate, and pursued a doctorate at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago.

During his time in Chicago, however, he began to question his vocation — not to the priesthood and the religious life, but to his particular community. "I met a Dominican friar and, in talking to him, began to discern a desire for the Dominican Order," he says. "I think it's kind of a natural fit for me, having been educated in the Dominican tradition at the College. The academic apostolate, the study of St. Thomas, the Dominican tradition — I find it all very fascinating. The Dominicans are the itinerant preachers who are trying to reconcile people to the Church through their preaching. That is a role I hope to embrace."

With the permission of both orders, Fr. Reginald thus began a three-year transitional period, which concluded in August, thus paving the way for his ordination. "All I can say is that it has all been the blessings of Providence," he says. "I may have dragged my feet here and there, but I have tried ever to follow the Lord's plan for me, and I am attempting to give myself to it fully."

## IN MEMORIAM

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

**Dr. Timothy Fangman** — June 6, 2015  
*Father of Ellen ('97)*

**Rev. James R. Tursi, O.S.A.** — January 14  
*Legacy Society member*

**Robert E. Dean** — April 16  
*Legacy Society member*

**Tibor Kerekes** — April 19  
*Legacy Society member*

**Patrick Gavan Duffy Riley** — May 30  
*Father of Joseph '87 and Gavin '96*

**Mary White** — June 2  
*Mother of Clare (Daly '84), Maureen (Smillie '87), Elizabeth (Dillon '92), and Anne White, a member of the College's New York Board of Regents. Grandmother of Elizabeth ('13), Madeleine (Mohun '15) and Joseph Daly ('19); Marie (Cantu '10), Therese ('13), Sara ('15), and Michael Smillie ('18); and Cecilia Dillon ('15); Margaret White ('95); and Paul White ('95), a member of the Washington, D.C. Board of Regents*

**Zach Cheeley ('08)** — June 13  
*Alumnus*

**Paul S. Laubacher** — June 15  
*Grandfather of Laura ('07), Monica (Gisla '09), Charles ('17), and Clare Gisla ('19)*

**Kathleen Dahl** — July 31  
*Benefactor*

**Phyllis Schlafly** — September 5  
*Grandmother of Sr. Maria Battista of the Lamb of God (Maria Forshaw '07)*

**Charlotte Mangan** — September 25  
*Former employee*

**Joseph Henry Dean Peterson**  
September 30  
*Son of Mary (Gisla) and Matthew Peterson (both '01)*

# “Clothe Yourselves in Regal Gowns”

## The Matriculation Address of the Most Rev. Robert E. Barron

Thank you all very much, and thank you, Dr. McLean, for that very kind introduction, that very gracious introduction, which I fear will be longer than my speech! Thank you for that. It is always a joy to come here.

I came to Thomas Aquinas College before I was a bishop. I have told this story before, but I gave this talk that I thought was going to be a little too heavy. It was late at night; I had flown in from Chicago and driven here; and I thought, “Oh, this talk is going to bomb.” And then I finished it, and there was this hour of questions from all of you! So I got a direct taste of the intellectual vitality of this place, which has always been a joy.

One of the joys when I received the news that I was coming out here to this region was that Thomas Aquinas College is in the region. So, always a privilege. Let me just share a few simple thoughts with you, focusing especially on this incoming Freshman Class.

It is my privilege to welcome the incoming Freshman Class at Thomas Aquinas College, one of the premier liberal arts colleges in the country and the pride and joy of the Santa Barbara Pastoral Region. You have come to a great place — and to a pivotal moment in your lives. For the next four years, you will have the opportunity to immerse yourselves in the best minds that the Western world has produced: Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Dante, Newton, Lincoln, and Einstein — among many others.

In doing so, you will be standing very much athwart the contemporary culture, which holds that truth, both theoretical and moral, is relative and that personal freedom trumps objective value. Your instructors here don’t drift with the cultural mainstream; they believe, with G.K. Chesterton, that an open mind is not an end in itself but rather is like an open mouth, designed to bite down on something solid and nourishing. And they maintain, with



Pope John Paul II, that authentic freedom always subsists in tight correlation with the truth. In light of this, please know that you are going to be formed, whether you like it or not, as warriors; for the vision of life that you will take in here will not be widely shared by your contemporaries. Expect opposition; expect a struggle; but enter into the lists with what the French call the *joie de combat*.

Young friends, know that you will engage in a study of the great minds of the West precisely because this college is dedicated to Jesus Christ and His gospel. St. John tells us explicitly that “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” It is crucially important to grasp — especially in our relativistic time — that Jesus is not one teacher among many, one more in a long line of prophets and sages, but the very truth that every teacher, prophet, and sage has sought. But if He is the *Logos* in person, then every particular expression of the *Logos* — whether it is found in mathematics, poetry, chemistry, physics, or metaphysics — speaks, in some way, of Him.

This is the ground of Christian humanism and the explanation as to why the best representatives of the Catholic tradition never drove a wedge between faith

and reason. It is also why the patron of this school, when asked by the Lord Himself what he desired as a reward for his service, famously responded, “*Non nisi Te, Domine*” (Nothing but You, Lord). Thomas Aquinas understood that in receiving Christ, he would receive everything else of value besides.

A final consideration, which might seem a tad trivial after all of this high-flying talk. The study of the greatest minds is, quite simply, a delight. Machiavelli is a thinker with whom I rarely agree, but he said something that I have always treasured. He observed that when he entered his study to read the most sublime philosophers, he took off his mud-spattered workaday clothes and put on a regal gown, for he knew that he was entering into communion with masters. For the next four years, you will set aside mere practicality; clothe yourselves in regal gowns, and become participants, however humble, in the most stimulating conversation of all.

Blessings on you all as you commence this adventure! Please pray for me!

*Note: The Most Rev. Robert E. Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, presided at the College’s 2016 Matriculation ceremony.*

### St. Vincent de Paul Lecture and Concert Series

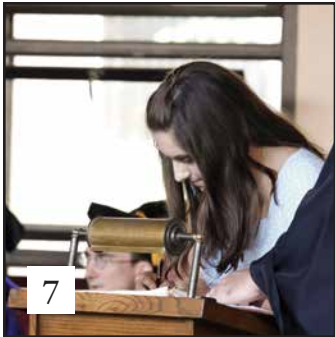
*Endowed by Barbara and Paul Henkels*

#### Highlights from the Last Quarter

- On August 26 **Dr. Michael Augros**, a member of the College’s teaching faculty, presented the year’s opening lecture, “Why Philosophers Disagree.”
- A trio of flute, piano, and cello — members of the J. Concert Artists of Los Angeles — performed works by Vivaldi, Handel, and J.S. Bach at the Fall Concert on September 9.
- Dr. John Finley**, an assistant professor of philosophy at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, spoke on September 23 on the subject, “The Extraordinary Unity of the Human Being.”
- 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 7 and focused on *Gunnar’s Daughter*, by Sigrid Undset.
- On October 17, **Dr. Stephen F. Shivone**, assistant dean for academic affairs and an assistant professor of English at Belmont Abbey College, delivered a lecture entitled, “Odysseus Earthward: The Paradox of the Human in the *Odyssey*.”
- 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 28, tutor **Dr. John Nieto** gave one such talk, “Two Views of Human Knowledge: Illumination vs. Enlightenment,” and on October 12, tutor **Dr. Joseph Hattrup** spoke on the subject, “The Presence of the Blessed Mother in the Junior Seminar.”

*Text and audio from select lectures and concerts are available at [thomasaquinas.edu/lectures](http://thomasaquinas.edu/lectures).*

## Matriculation 2016



1. Dean Brian T. Kelly introduces the faculty to members of the Class of 2020. 2. New tutors Vincent P. DeMeo, Joseph M. Haggarty, Drew Rosato, and Blaise Blain make the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity. 3. President Michael F. McLean and His Excellency Robert Barron welcome freshmen Rachel Pipes ... 4. ... and Samuel Bagdazian. 5. Members of the Class of 2020 sing “Immaculate Mary.” 6. Oscar Rangel (’20) ... 7. ... and Cecilia Cammarota (’20) add their names to the College’s student registry.

# New Faces in the Chaplaincy and Faculty

## College Welcomes New Tutors, Chaplains, and Head Librarian

### Blaise Blain ('10)

Before Blaise Blain arrived at Thomas Aquinas College as a freshman in 2006, he imagined that he would follow in his parents' footsteps and become an engineer. That plan changed, however, as the College's integrated curriculum revealed to him some hitherto undiscovered passions.



"I was always interested in math and science, so those classes were right up my alley," Mr. Blain recalls. "But what I didn't know was how reading philosophy and theology can have its own intellectual rigor. Put another way: When you read Aristotle, you realize how *good* it is, and then you want to keep doing it."

After graduating in 2010, he departed for The Catholic University of America to pursue a master's degree and doctorate in philosophy. Two summers later, he was joined there by his new bride, Therese (Fox '12). The couple now has two small children, the younger of whom, Agnes (age 9 mos.), was born at 2:00 a.m., Eastern Time, on January 29 — which, her father likes to point out, was still the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas (January 28) back in California.

Having studied and taught only philosophy for the last six years, Mr. Blain is now delighted to reacquaint himself with his earlier intellectual passions — math and natural science — which he is teaching, along with seminar, to sophomores. "What's really fun is that, here, you can teach both math and science in a philosophical way," he says. "You get to step back and ask philosophical questions, to think about both in a more profound way."

### Richena Curphey ('02)

"I find working with students very rewarding, and I love librarianship," says Richena Curphey. "There is always a new puzzle to solve. You get this book and have to decide, where does it belong? How will our community be best served?"



After five years as assistant librarian, Miss Curphey is succeeding the College's head librarian of 45 years, Viltis Jatulis, who continues to work in St. Bernardine of Siena Library on a part-time basis. "It's a little bit intimidating, following Viltis, who is such a big part of this community," says Miss Curphey. "There is no way I can fill her shoes, but I do hope to follow her example."

A member of the Class of 2002, Miss Curphey explored several careers and vocations — including teaching, managing youth summer camps, and the religious life — before earning a master's degree in library and information science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "It helps that I was a student here because I understand how our students use this library," she notes. "The mission and goal of the school are clear, and that makes our collection-development strategy clear."

Besides librarianship, Miss Curphey professes two other "great loves" — farming and the Faith. She lives on a ranch in nearby Fillmore, where she tends ducks, dairy goats, a llama, and a goose. On weekends she can be found at her local parish, praying with children as a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd catechist.

### Dr. Vincent DeMeo

"I have been hearing about Thomas Aquinas College for 15 years," says Vincent DeMeo. "So I have always wanted to come here and experience it for myself."

A professor of theology at the International Theological Institute (ITI) in Trumau, Austria, Dr.



DeMeo is teaching at Thomas Aquinas College as part of a one-year sabbatical. He is, effectively, trading places with a full-time member of the College's teaching faculty, David Quackenbush. While in the area, he and his wife, Eva Maria, and their four children are even living in the Quackenbushes' Ojai home.

"ITI's founding president, Dr. Michael Waldstein ('77), is a graduate of Thomas Aquinas College," Dr. DeMeo notes. "He would often highlight how the origins of ITI stem from several elements of the principles, mission, and pedagogy of the College — for instance reading the great masters of the philosophical and theological tradition, especially St. Thomas Aquinas; employing the Discussion Method in our classrooms; and doing it all within the context of Christian community living and a shared life."

Dr. DeMeo earned his bachelor's degree in theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, his master's and licentiate at ITI, and his Ph.D. at Rome's Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum. At ITI he teaches a Scripture course modeled on the College's Freshman Theology class, which he is now teaching at the College, along with Junior Philosophy.

### Rev. David Gonzalez, O. Praem.

Growing up in a non-practicing Catholic home in Southern California, Rev. David Gonzalez, O. Praem., remembers entering a Catholic church only once during his childhood — for a wedding. Yet when he was in high school, his mother stumbled upon a flier for the confirmation program at the local parish and, for whatever reason — the Blessed Mother's intervention, he surmises — she insisted that he enroll. His life would be forever changed.



In that class Fr. David learned for the first time about beautiful, astonishing concepts such as the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, enkindling in him a love for Our Lord and His church. Within two years, he would be confirmed and, within three, enter the postulancy at St. Michael's Abbey in Silverado, California. Fast forward another 12 years, which included three years' studying at the Angelicum in Rome and, in 2014, he would be ordained a priest.

Over the course of his 14 years with the Norbertine Order, Fr. David has taught at numerous Catholic high schools in Orange County. His latest assignment as one of the College's four full-time chaplains is his first working with college students. "It is just a fantastic environment here," he says. "It is well suited for the goal that the College has, and that is to bring about a greater perfection of the Catholic mind, the Catholic intellectual life, and also devotional life, so as to lead students to true wisdom."

### Dr. Joseph Haggarty ('99)

Three semesters into his undergraduate career at Yale, Dr. Joseph Haggarty experienced a sort of intellectual crisis. Neither his original major, physics, nor his new one, classics, yielded the sort of search for truth that he craved. "I began to doubt whether the kind of thing I was looking for was out there," he says. "If it wasn't going to be at a place like Yale, where would one find it?"



A friend's recommendation led him to Thomas Aquinas College, where he "fell in love with this education," he says. His four years as a student offered the pursuit of wisdom that he had sought; they also begat a deepening of faith. Upon graduating he considered various courses of graduate studies before settling on medieval philosophy, earning his master's and doctoral degrees at Boston College.

During that time he and his wife, Caroline, welcomed five children. They raised their young family in Boston, where Dr. Haggarty was teaching at the Archdiocesan seminary, until he learned of the "wonderful opportunity" to return to his alma mater.

As a Thomas Aquinas College tutor, teaching Sophomore Theology, Seminar, and Natural Science, Dr. Haggarty says he has a newfound appreciation for the subtle but important role that his tutors played in his own life. "I took for granted what they were doing for me," he remarks. "Now I hope to come close to giving what I received."

### Rev. Robert Marczewski

Born in the Polish city of Gdansk, Rev. Robert Marczewski first came to the United States while a seminarian. "I came to Ss. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Michigan, the Polish-American seminary," he recalls. "Traditionally it has provided priests for the needs of the Polonia in the U.S., but more recently its priests have served wherever there is need, and that brought me to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia."



Ordained in 1995 by the late Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua, Fr. Marczewski served for 14 years in Philadelphia parishes. He then returned to Ss. Cyril and Methodius Seminary, where he was for seven years the dean of spiritual direction. He is the author of the book *A Legacy of Saint John Paul II: The Reception of John Paul II's Theology of the Body in the Catholic Church in the United States of America*.

"I was blessed to meet John Paul II several times in person, and I always took something from these meetings," Fr. Marczewski reflects. "He could be in the presence of many people, but when you were before him, he gave all his attention to you."

In his new assignment as a chaplain at the College, his work with students is "the best part," Fr. Marczewski observes. "Seeing young people in the Chapel, attending daily Mass, availing themselves of the Sacrament of Penance is very inspiring. I am much impressed by the desire for God that I see in them."

### Dr. Drew Rosato

A native of Ohio, Dr. Drew Rosato studied philosophy and theology as an undergraduate at New York's Fordham University. It was there that he "first had the opportunity to study the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas," he says, giving rise to an intellectual curiosity that would eventually bring him to this college named for the Universal Doctor.



Upon graduating from Fordham, Dr. Rosato pursued graduate studies at the University of Notre Dame, where he earned a master's in theology and a Ph.D. in medieval studies. There he made the acquaintance of his future wife, Jennifer, with whom he now has four children. He also met several graduates and others connected to Thomas Aquinas College, which led him to look into the College more deeply and, ultimately, inspired him to seek a position as a tutor.

"When I read the founding documents of the College and came to understand its vision — and see that this vision took root in the way the school operated — that was very attractive," he says. Having previously taught philosophy and theology at the College of Saint Mary Magdalen, the University of St. Thomas (Minnesota), and Mount St. Mary's University, Dr. Rosato was also drawn by the prospect of teaching across the disciplines in the College's classical curriculum. "The real coherence and integrity of the curriculum was a very big attraction for me," he says. In his first year he is teaching Freshman Math, Seminar, and Philosophy.

# Philosophy is a Preparation for Death

## Why We Read the *Phaedo*

By Dr. Steven R. Cain

The following remarks are adapted from tutor Dr. Steven R. Cain's report to the Board of Governors at its May 13, 2016, meeting. They are part of an ongoing series of talks about why the College includes certain texts in its curriculum. To read the full text and the rest of the series, see [thomasaquinas.edu/whywestudy](http://thomasaquinas.edu/whywestudy).



A few years ago, Dean Brian T. Kelly spoke to you about the importance of Plato in our curriculum. Plato's dialogues are a great place to begin the pursuit of the intellectual life, for they introduce one to the life of the mind in a charming and inviting way, and they introduce us to Socrates, or at least Plato's representation of him, who in many important ways embodies the virtues necessary for and the joys that spring from the pursuit of the truth. Through the figure of Socrates, Plato raises so many questions — so many important questions — and discusses them in such a searching way, that Alfred Whitehead once said that all Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato.

If this is true about his dialogues in general, it is particularly true about the work I would like to talk about today, the *Phaedo*. I first became acquainted with this dialogue when I was about 15 years old, and it had an immediate and profound influence on my life. It is an influence, I am sure, that the work has exerted, to a greater or lesser degree, upon all of our students.

But I am afraid that my first meeting with Plato, and with this book, arose from rather unflattering circumstances. I was one of the brighter students in my school, and I took an unhealthy pride in that. This led me to sign up for a book club called the Classics Club, or something like that. I did so not so much to learn from the classics and become wiser (I was not yet wise enough to want that), but so that I could boast about having read them, and so *appear* wise to my peers. However, as God is in the habit of doing, He took my foolish pride and worked it to my good.

The first volume that I received from this club was a volume of Plato's dialogues, and I sat down and read through them. I enjoyed them, and was intrigued by Socrates, and so continued with them until I came to the *Phaedo*, which was, I believe, the last of the dialogues in the volume. In this dialogue, Plato relates what purports to be a conversation between Socrates and his friends on the day of his death. He had been condemned to death because of his habit of questioning those who thought themselves wise to see if, in fact, they were. As it turned out, most of those he questioned were found not to be wise, and this caused Socrates to be resented by some fairly powerful men. They trumped up charges against him and had him condemned to death, as is related in the *Apology*.

At the beginning of the *Phaedo*, his friends have come to visit Socrates for the last time. As they are lamenting his fast-approaching death, Socrates attempts to comfort them, and in response to their wonder at his peacefulness on this fateful day, he says that it would be ridiculous for him to shrink from what he has been working toward his whole life, for, he says to them, philosophy is nothing other than the preparation for death.

His friends are shocked at this, and so was I. At 15, I had hardly given death a thought. I was not particularly religious, and I was enjoying the pleasures of life with youthful, largely thoughtless, exuberance. I had given myself somewhat to the life of the mind, but as I pointed out, this was mostly because of the acclaim it brought and because it fed my pride. To think that such a life should be aimed at death shook me deeply. Socrates now had my attention in a way that he had not before. Like his friends,

I was seriously in need of being convinced that this was so. And so I read on. How his arguments affected me is curious, and I still look back upon it with grateful wonder.

Here is a quick summary of the course of the rest of the dialogue: To see that philosophy is aimed at bringing one to death well-prepared, one must see that there is some good for the soul that will come to it after death. Therefore one must see that the soul survives death, that it is immortal. Most of the dialogue, then, is devoted to showing that it is.

At the heart of this discussion lies Plato's famous doctrine that knowledge is recollection, which in turn leads to the theory of the forms. What it means for us to know, to really know something, shows us that the soul must be immortal. Then there needs to be some assurance that, given the soul's immortality, there is some life for it that comes after death that depends on how one lives in this life. Socrates gives his listeners a likely account (what he calls a myth) about what such a life will be: Those who, in this life, have separated themselves as much as they can from the pleasures of the sensible world, and raised their minds to what is really true, good, and beautiful, will enter into a life of blessedness with the gods, while those who have given themselves over to these false goods will spend a period of purification before being sent back into bodies so that they can be tested again.

**“The work shows very concretely the importance of the philosophical life, the importance of pursuing the goods of the soul rather than those of the flesh, and leads the reader toward the study of nature, the study of logic, the study of ethics, the study of metaphysics, and even points toward a greater object of pursuit, but one that depends upon the gift of faith.”**

There were a number of things in his arguments that immediately put me off. The notion of reincarnation that is implied in the theory of recollection, the notion of the forms, which are what we really know but are entirely unaware of, and the fundamental opposition between the soul and the body are ideas that I was uninclined to accept as true, and so it was hard not to be suspicious of the arguments that follow from them.

I recall having serious misgivings about these arguments when I first encountered them, but I also remember being strangely moved by them, being led to think that, in spite of my misgivings, there might be something to those arguments. I have since come to see that, though somewhat missing the mark, these arguments, in fact, contain much that is true. At the time, however, I was unable to account for this double effect of the dialogue, finding Socrates' arguments at once compelling and not compelling.

But what is even more curious, and points to Plato's greatness as a teacher, is that he anticipated this effect. He inserts into the middle of the conversation a little digression. Just as everyone is becoming convinced of his account of the soul, a couple of his friends raise objections to what he has been saying. These objections are felt to be quite strong by those who are there with Socrates, and there is a sense of despair that arises among them because of this.

Socrates breaks from his arguments in order to attend to this despair. He points out to them that if we cannot see the truth or falsity of these arguments, we must attribute that not to the arguments but to ourselves, and recognize that if we are to advance to the sight of these truths, we must develop in ourselves the art of reasoning well so that we can see more clearly when our arguments are good and when they are not. This only increased my wonder and made me think, not that the question of

the soul's immortality was something unattainable, but rather that, in fact, it was attainable. What I had sensed in his arguments to be compelling gave me that hope. But I also realized that if it was to be attained it would not be easily attainable; that bright as I was, I was in the presence of truths that were greater than I, and if I wanted to understand these truths, I would have to devote much time and energy to doing so.

This was really the beginning of the life of the mind in my own soul. Socrates' insistence that philosophy is a preparation for death raised in my mind the importance of finding out what life is really all about. His arguments for the immortality of the soul, though they did not convince, nevertheless compelled me to wonder if it was and to try to find out. His exhortation to develop in myself the art of reasoning pointed the way to how to begin to find out, and his myth at the end of the dialogue showed me that there were limits to how far the human mind, on its own, could see into these things. He showed me, in other words, the need for faith to fill out our understanding of the soul and to see clearly why our life should be a preparation for death.

Though, at 15, these impressions were only seeds that would take some time to grow to fruition, God, in His providence, kept prodding me on. Through the influence of this book, I became drawn to the study of philosophy, and through philosophy, into the Catholic Church. I owe Plato a great debt.

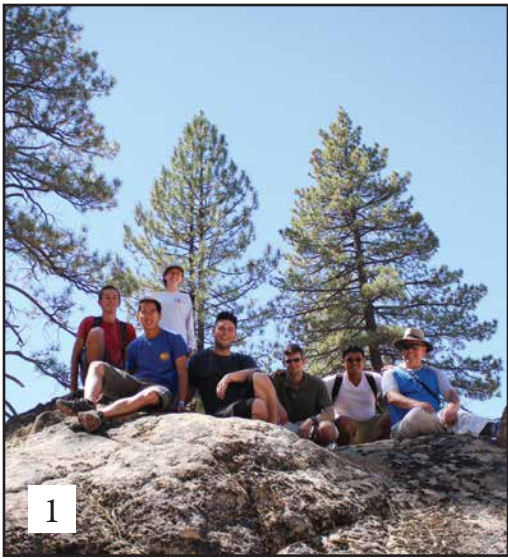
These talks are supposed to be accounts of why we read what we do in our curriculum, but I have been speaking about the *Phaedo*'s influence on my life. I have done so because I think that it moved me the way Plato intended it to move all his readers, and the way I believe it moves our students, at least to some degree. The work shows very concretely the importance of the philosophical life, the importance of pursuing the goods of the soul rather than those of the flesh, and leads the reader toward the study of nature, the study of logic, the study of ethics, the study of metaphysics, and even points toward a greater object of pursuit, but one that depends upon the gift of faith. And it does so in a way that moves the reader to desire to pursue these things. It is truly, I think, one of the seminal texts in our curriculum.

### The McArthur–Newman Scholarship Endowment



Named in honor of the College's founding president, Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, and his wife, Marilyn, as well as Bl. John Henry Newman, to whom Dr. McArthur developed a deep devotion in his later years, this newly created endowment will provide a dedicated stream of revenue for financial aid at Thomas Aquinas College. Every gift to the McArthur–Newman Endowment is an investment in the College that the McArthurs helped to found and in the students who are their legacy.

**Please make your gift today!**  
[thomasaquinas.edu/mcarthur-newman](http://thomasaquinas.edu/mcarthur-newman)



## CAMPUS LIFE



1. Students enjoy a break during a hike, led by tutor Dr. Greg Froelich and recently retired tutor Dr. Carol Day, along the borders of the Sespe Wilderness north of the Topatopa Mountains. 2. On September 8, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Chaplain Rev. David Gonzalez, O. Praem., leads a campus Rosary procession. 3. Students play volleyball at this fall's All-College Picnic. 4. After enjoying this year's fall concert, "Bach and His Contemporaries," students and tutors square off for their annual Trivial Pursuit match. 5. Student volunteers help to make pizzas for the party that followed ... 6. ... this fall's All-College Seminar, in which they discussed Gunnar's Daughter, by Sigrid Undset. 7. Head Chaplain Rev. Paul Raftery, O.P., offers an outdoor Mass during a men's campout in late October.

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

Weekdays	Saturdays & Civic Holidays	Sundays & Holy Days
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 confirm Mass times at [thomasaquinas.edu/masstimes](http://thomasaquinas.edu/masstimes).

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

### Calendar of Events

For more information, please see [www.thomasaquinas.edu/calendar](http://www.thomasaquinas.edu/calendar)

Christmas Vacation .....December 17–January 8

Lecture: "Anachronism and the Historian"

Dr. David Appleby

Tutor, Thomas Aquinas College .....January 13

Seminar: The Sacraments and Salvation

Legatus Summit, Naples, Florida

[thomasaquinas.edu/legatus-summit](http://thomasaquinas.edu/legatus-summit) .....January 26

Dramatic Production: *Vianney*

Leonardo Defilippis, St. Luke Productions.....January 27

Spring All-College Seminar.....February 3

Presidents' Day Lecture

Dr. Paul A. Rahe

Professor of History, Hillsdale College..... February 24

St. Thomas Day Lecture

Rev. Joseph Koterski, S.J.

Associate Professor of Philosophy, Fordham University ..... March 7

THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE  
10,000 Ojai Road  
Santa Paula, CA 93060-9622

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

