A Celebration of Faith and Reason
Cardinal DiNardo Inspires College’s Largest Graduating Class

“Love the truth. Do the good. Allow the beautiful to overpower you.”

These words were the advice of His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, to 91 seniors — the largest graduating class in the history of Thomas Aquinas College — at the 39th annual Commencement exercises on May 11, 2013. Speaking before some 1,500 of the graduates’ family members and loved ones on the academic quadrangle, the Cardinal urged the College’s newest alumni to make good use of their education “by going out into the public square.”

“The culture needs correctives, but also positive enrichment from the kind of thinking you have learned,” said His Eminence, the first cardinal to represent a diocese from the American South. “You have to do it, and you have to do it in your profession, wherever you are going.” (See page 3.)

It is a charge that the Class of 2013 is taking to heart. Its members’ post-graduation plans include a wide variety of fields and vocations that involve influencing the culture in myriad ways, from public policy, to law, to journalism, to teaching, to the priesthood and religious life, with free members planning to enter seminaries or religious communities. (See page 11.) Having spent four years striving to love the truth, do the good, and allow the beautiful to overpower them, the graduates are ready to take what they have learned and, heeding Cardinal DiNardo’s exhortation, “bring it into the public square.” (See page 11.)

This year’s Commencement exercises began with the Baccalaureate Mass in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Seniors, the faculty, and members of the Board of Governors processed into the Chapel, clad in academic regalia. The College’s three chaplains, visiting priests, and Cardinal DiNardo followed, vested in red for this Mass of the Holy Spirit. His Eminence served as the principal celebrant and homilist, telling the graduates to hold firm in the knowledge they have acquired and the faith they have nurtured at the College. “Stay faithful and attuned to what you have learned here,” he advised, “not just in terms of the life of the mind, but in the contemplative life that comes through this chapel and through your prayer life.”

At the following Commencement ceremony, held on the east end of the quadrangle, Senior Class Speaker Liam Collins also stressed the unity of the intellectual and the spiritual life. “In our quest for the truth, we have come to realize that the truth is not a proposition which we can hold or demonstrate, not something we can possess,” he remarked. “It is a person, the person of Jesus Christ.” (See page 4.)

“Here, faith and reason are exercised more like a symphony than like a rhapsody,” said Cardinal DiNardo in his Commencement Address. “The elements are densely related and compact, orchestrated with precision,” he added. Bringing faith and reason together this way, he said, “is an essential obligation in our culture today, and I hope that it has been your delight in your four years here.”

Such delight was evident as the ceremony unfolded, with the seniors receiving their bachelor hoods and diplomas amid cheers and applause. The College also awarded Cardinal DiNardo and its head chaplain, Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J., its highest honor, the Saint Thomas Aquinas Medal. (See story below.)

“We are deeply grateful to His Eminence for traveling to our campus to preside at this joyful event, as we gradu- ate the largest class in Thomas Aquinas College’s history,” noted President Michael F. McLean, who also thanked the graduates’ parents and families. “We are grateful for your trust in us, for sending us these young people whose accomplishments we celebrate and whose futures we anticipate with great hope.”

Commencement 2013

Video, audio, photo slideshows & more: thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2013

Faithful Fathers
Cardinal DiNardo and Fr. Buckley Awarded College’s Highest Honor

The Saint Thomas Aquinas Medallion is the highest honor conferred by Thomas Aquinas College, and eligibility for it rests upon a single criterion: fidelity. Neither fame, titles, nor offices are sufficient qualifications; the honor is reserved solely for those who have demonstrated extraordinary dedication to God and His Church, as well as leadership in advancing the teachings of the Church.

Nearly every year since our first Commencement in 1975, we have taken a moment to pay tribute to the year’s Medallion recipients,” said President Michael F. McLean during this year’s Commencement ceremony. “This is a fitting time to do so, for we hope that as our graduates go forth from the College, they will emulate our honorees in their own lives.” At Commencement 2013 the College recognized two priests who have dedicated their lives to the service of the Church and its people: His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo and Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J.

His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo

Thomas Aquinas College’s 2013 Commencement Speaker, Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, is the youngest American cardinal, and the first cardinal archbishop from the Southern United States. In 2012 he celebrated the 35th anniversary of his ordination as a priest for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. It was also his 15th anniversary as a bishop, having been appointed to the episcopate by Bl. John Paul II in 1997.

In addition to his responsibilities within his own See, Cardinal DiNardo is an advisor to the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, a member of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, a member of the Board of Directors of Catholic University. He also sits on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism.

From 2009 to 2012 His Eminence served as the chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, in which capacity he spoke eloquently and passionately in defense of the unborn and against the threat to religious liberty posed by the HHS Mandate. Referencing the Cardinal’s commitment to the protection of human life, Dr. McLean said, “You will find, Your Eminence, that the graduates before you — and all our students — are zealous laborers in this vineyard of the Lord, and are most grateful for your leadership.”

With a smile, the Cardinal replied, “Thank you for an award that I accept on one level willingly, but also accept with some humility. Because I look to Aquinas as kind of like the master: You cannot get better than Aquinas? So this award is not so much for agency done as agency hoped for!”

Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J.

Fr. Buckley served institutions of higher learning for some four decades before coming to Thomas Aquinas College in 2004. He taught at the University of Santa Clara, Gonzaga University, and the St. Ignatius Institute at the University of San Francisco. He also served as president of St. Ignatius College Preparatory High School in San Francisco, and later as acting dean of the University of San Francisco.

Still, to the community at Thomas Aquinas College, he is “ours” — the beloved Head Chaplain famous for his charity, kindness, and quick wit. He has been a shepherd to all, and an inspiration to many students who, spurred by his example, have pursued vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.

Throughout his half-century in the priesthood, dur- ing an oftentimes troubled period in Catholic education, Fr. Buckley has remained faithful to the Magisterium. “He has served the students, faculty, and staff in innumerable ways, giving unstintingly of himself to one and all,” said Dr. McLean. “Above all, he has been an after Christus for this community, administrating the sacraments, nourishing our souls with the Word of God, and bringing to our altar each day the Real Presence of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.”

Upon receiving his Medallion, Fr. Buckley remarked, “The greatest part of my life has been spent here at Thomas Aquinas College, and it is a great honor for me to receive this medallion at this time when the Class 2013 is graduating. Our friendship will last not just for this life, but for all eternity. It is a symbol of that great reward that we will have if we are faithful to the Lord’s command- ment that we love Him and love and serve one another.”
From the Desk of the President  
Dr. McLean’s Remarks to the Class of 2013 at the President’s Dinner

You are coming of age in important and challenging times for the Catholic Church. A new pope has been elected, and the Church’s teachings on the natural law, marriage, and sexual ethics are under relentless attack.

Pope Francis has begun his pontificate by focusing on humility as a path to holiness and by emphasizing that his papacy is the foundation of our Christian vocation. In a recent homily, he pointed to your class patron — St. Joseph — who, with Jesus and Mary, traveled the “road of humility” to Bethlehem, and who “lowered himself to take on the great responsibility” of his bride who was with child.

The media, as might be expected, have picked up on some of this Holy Father’s external acts of humility — for example, his refusal to stand on the customarily platform above other bishops, his use of simpler vestments than his predecessors, the fact that he paid his own hotel bill after the conclave, and that he has opted out of the apartment that popes have lived in for a century in favor of simpler accommodations.

Your very youthfulness can make humility a difficult virtue to cultivate. With the enviable spirit of the young, your class quotation from Pope Emeritus Benedict provides a sobering reminder: “The ways of the Lord are not comfortable, but we were not created for comfort.” Our times — your times — are not comfortable for believing Catholics and Christians. But St. Thomas, citing Gregory, says there is nothing great in being humble toward those who treat us with regard — even worldly people do this. We should be especially humble, says Gregory, toward those who make us suffer. Imitating our Lord, St. Thomas says, “We may even go so far as lovingly to embrace external abandonment” (ST Q 161, A6, ad. 3).

Humility may or may not help us to win our temporal battles. However, if the witness of Pope Francis is any indication, we can hope that acts of humility are precisely what will draw people to Christ and the Church in these times. Whether or not this turns out to be true, we can be certain that humility will help us to win the one battle that really counts.

Humility as a Habit of Soul

I am certain, however, that Pope Francis, like many Fathers and Doctors of the Church, as well as churchmen throughout the centuries, knows that humility is fundamentally a virtue of the inner man — a habit of soul by which we “inclines to the lowest place” (St. Thomas, Summa, Q. 161, A1, ad. 1). Interestingly enough, St. Thomas says that “humility moderates the movement of hope, which is a movement of the spirit aiming at great things” (Ibid. A4, ad 2). For those appetitive movements which are an impulse towards an object, there is need of a moderating and restraining moral virtue, while for those which are a kind of recol, there is need, on the part of appetite, of a moral virtue to strengthen it and urge it on” (Ibid. A1).

Hope has for its object a future good — beatitude — which is arduous, but possible, to attain. Humility restrains the appetite from aiming at this good immoderately or contrary to right reason; the virtue of magnanimity, on the other hand, urges the appetite to aim at this good moderately or in accord with right reason. “It belongs to humility, then, that a man restrain himself from being borne towards that which is above him... and so he must know his disproportion to that which surpasses his capacity.”

Scripture, of course, and the Church Fathers emphasize the importance of humility in the Christian life. “Learn of me,” Our Lord says, “for I am meek and humble of heart” (Matt. 11:29). This, says St. Thomas, is an exhortation to avoid striving to become great in earthly things, a principal hindrance to our spiritual welfare. St. Augustine, for his part, says that “almost the whole of the Christian teaching is humility.”

Pope Francis is right to call humility the foundation of our Christian vocation. St. Thomas says, “That which is the first step in the acquisition of virtue is likened to the foundation, which is first laid before the rest of the building. Now the virtues are infused by God... [in which] the first step is the removal of obstacles: humility, thus, holds the first place, inasmuch as it expels pride... and makes man submissive and ever open to receive the influx of divine grace” (Ibid. A5, ad 2). In the words of St. James, “God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

Appropriately enough, St. Thomas says that humility is an especially apt virtue for young people to develop, because hope, which humility moderates, abounds in the young. “For youth,” he says, “has much of the future before it, and little of the past... it has little to restrain our own wills, acknowledge our own powers” (Ibid. A2). Out of reverence to aim at high things “confident in one’s own powers” (ST Q 40, A6). For similar reasons, by the way, St. Thomas says that hope abounds in drunkards... and so I would conclude from this that humility would seem to be doubly necessary in young adults who are drinking wine. But that is a talk for another time.

Obstacles to Humility

Your very youthfulness can make humility a difficult virtue to cultivate. With the enviable spirit of the young, your class quotation from Pope Emeritus Benedict says, in part, that “we were created for greatness.” This is a noble aspiration. It is even a humble aspiration if we aim at high things “confident in one’s own powers” (Ibid. A2). Out of reverence for God, we must restrain our appetite from tending inordinately to great things and we must not deem ourselves to be above what we are. In humility, we should restrain our own wills, acknowledge our shortcomings, and put others before ourselves.

Your very education can also make humility a difficult virtue to cultivate. You have attained a certain familiarity and facility with great things. You have acquired a certain confidence in your grasp of the truth and in your own intellectual powers. Yet, as St. Thomas points out, humility requires that we not be in a hurry to speak and that we not be immoderate in speech. You should be mindful of how much you have relied on others, not only the authors of the great books themselves, but your tutors and fellow students. You should remember that, with respect to wisdom, you enter the world not as masters but as apprentices, having more to learn than to teach.

Finally, the very times we live in make humility a difficult virtue to cultivate. I said at the beginning that some of the Church’s central teachings are under attack. Nonprofit and for-profit Christian organizations, including the College, are under attack. We are threatened with substantial fines and penalties if we do not abide by the HHS mandate to provide insurance coverage for certain procedures and medications that are contrary to Catholic teaching. The mandate, in essence, requires the College to choose between its duty to obey the civil law and its duty to remain faithful to Catholic teaching. The mandate offers an “accommodation” to the College and others, but one that would continue to make the College complicit in the provision of questionable coverage. In this battle, the appropriate response for faithful Catholics appears not to be humility but rather righteous anger, legal challenges, and appeals to religious freedom.

Humility in Battle

Even when combating the enemies of the Church, however, we must remember that we are called to humility by great saints, by the authors of Sacred Scripture, by our new Holy Father, and by Christ Himself.

The remainder of your class quotation from Pope Emeritus Benedict provides a sobering reminder: “The ways of the Lord are not comfortable, but we were not created for comfort.” Our times — your times — are not comfortable for believing Catholics and Christians. But St. Thomas, citing Gregory, says there is nothing great in being humble toward those who treat us with regard — even worldly people do this. We should be especially humble, says Gregory, toward those who make us suffer. Imitating our Lord, St. Thomas says, “We may even go so far as lovingly to embrace external abandonment” (ST Q 161, A6, ad. 3).

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“Clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another,” says St. Peter, “your opponent the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour... resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your brothers and sisters throughout the world undergo the same sufferings. The God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory through Christ Jesus will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little” (1 Pet. 5:5-10).

With these words of reassurance, we welcome you as fellow pilgrims to a struggle — a struggle to win hearts and minds to Christ and to bring those whom we encounter closer to the good, the true, and the beautiful. In this effort, you must always conduct yourselves with prudence... always with humility of heart.

Thank you.

On May 8, 2013, Dr. McLean hosted the annual President’s Dinner for the seniors, faculty, and staff of Thomas Aquinas College. Clockwise from top left: Jesse Schenzynder speaks with tutor Dr. David Appleby; Director of Admissions Jon Daly and Thomas Lostutter; Catherine Molin makes a toast; Dean Brian T. Kelly bids farewell to the Class of 2013.
I am a real pleasure to be invited today for this Baccalaureate and Commencement ceremony. I want to thank President McLean for his kind invitation and hospitality. To the Board of Governors, the staff and faculty, and above all to the parents and students, their families and friends, and any alumni, friends, and donors of this Catholic place of dedication to wisdom: Thank you so much for what you do! I express my gratitude and admiration for your commitment, and I congratulate the seniors as you reach Commencement, a genuine beginning.

The great St. Augustine wrote: Ut esset initio, homo creatus est, priusquam erat nihil. “That there be a beginning, man was created before whom there was nothing.” Obviously St. Augustine did not mean there was nothing created before human beings, only that the very principle of initiating something, of creating the world in a creaturely, purposive way — only that happens when, “male and female He created them.”

Each human being is a great beginning, a unique newness. Education stimulates, disciplines, and beautifies that newness further, so that on a day like this, graduation day, this “beginning” may enter the world ready to shine and serve, contribute and effect things. This is the great freedom in this, not the freedom of the runaway left loose on the world, but the freedom of a person sent for the life of the world, and then — as you are made aware of here so frequently — for a life that continues beyond the life of the world, and then — as you are made aware of here so frequently — for a life that continues beyond the world’s confines. Thomas Aquinas College is based on and is concerned about the liberal arts; the liberal arts are the liberal arts in college education help to prepare a person for freedom — the new beginning. Education helps to draw out the implications that every person is someone new and represents a unique “newness.”

On Faith and Reason
Graduates, your education here has been an intense conversation with great ideas and great persons. The ideas and the people involved endure and have consequences. Not all of the ideas or the people that you have read are necessarily good, but they matter. Reason matters! Your conversation was not just with remembered ideas and past figures. It was a living dialogue with the past and with present interlocutors, with mentors and fellow students.

This is a Catholic college. Its entire curriculum is warmly wrapped in light, as in a robe, says Psalm 104, with the truth and beauty of Revelation, with the Word of God given in the Sacred Scriptures and Tradition, and most especially in the thinking and writing of St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas is the paradigm invitation as a Catholic writer, an invitation not just to thought and wonder, but to the essence and the teleo, the liberal arts, as applied to human beings. The ancient understanding of person today, and I hope that it has been your delight in your four years here.

To Know Something by its Ends
I admire the College’s syllabus and course descriptions, which I have read about in recent weeks on your website. Graduates, you are to be envied for the synoptic vision which you have received in your education, as well as for the more focused analyses which you have perused with your tutors in the various classes you have taken.

There is a tendency today in education to put an emphasis on making people quick-witted and nimble without knowing the substantial ends of such things. Education produces rational agents, but not necessarily reasonable ones. Anyone who possesses a sheer nimbleness of mind, but lacks any appreciation for the end of things, is a person of a vice, says Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics. And what does Aristotle say about such people? They are knaves! They are all around today, sisters and brothers. The knaves are invading!

But I have great hopes of hope about the graduates here, since I have read of what happens in courses and tutorials at this college, how being rational is insufficient; one must also be reasonable and attentive to how words name things by naming them at their best. Res ipsa loquitur. This college does that and goes even a step further by naming things in the light of God. Theological mind is welcomed here!

The Human Person
For three years I served as chair of the Pro-Life Committee for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. It is a very active committee, with the staff in Washington. I was on the phone every day, and every day something was happening — local, state, national. The bureaucratization of the human person is going on, sisters and brothers. And if you’ll excuse my vulgarity, it isn’t pretty. You are prepared, though, because of your study, to understand a little more carefully what we must do to combat this problem.

The traditional definition of a person was given by Boethius. He says, “A person is an individual substance of a rational nature,” a spiritual subject. “Person” always refers to an individual and is not exactly a common noun, like “man.” It is more like a demonstrative pronoun — “this.” We normally would say, “I want to show you a man out in the forest.” We do not normally use the expression, “I am going to show you a person in the forest,” do we? A person is a “this.” It is a demonstrative, right here.

A person is a singularity. Initial developments of the understanding of person came about because of Judeo-Christianity, particularly in the problems dealing with Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity. It was in light of trying to figure out the notion of person relative to Jesus Christ that things began to develop relative to the notion of person as applied to human beings. The ancient Greeks knew about spiritual subjects, but they rarely ever talked about person.

Rational and free agents are denoted by the term “person,” but always as singulars. In his commentary on the Sentences, Peter Lombard makes the observation: “Being a part is at odds with being a person.” Jacques Maritain, in his political philosophy, noted that a human being is part of a larger whole, but being a person means transcending an “all.” Being a person involves a special kind of agency, one that shows forth understanding and freedom. Because of that, persons are incredibly significant. Yet we are watching in our culture the notion of person being denatured.

In Christianity, within our Catholic understanding, there is also an analogous use of “person,” because the divine is understood as “personal.” The three Persons of the Trinity, one God, are beyond Creation. Creation is an act of complete generosity and love. God has no need of Creation, and even our creativity desire to praise Him is His gift. But God is personal, and the three Persons of the Trinity are in a total relationship of mutual love and indwelling. Thus, even the notion of the human person is already ipse in a larger whole, but being a person involves a special kind of agency, one that shows forth understanding and freedom. Because of that, persons are incredibly significant.

The Public Square
The alternative is to the Judeo-Christian understanding of person today? No longer is the alternative paganism or even forms of deism of today. Atheistic materialism is the major alternative. Atheistic materialism holds that everything is matter in motion. It can be very sophisticated matter in motion, but that is all it is. Christian faith and classical understanding see the holes in that argument. Have you ever read any of these ancient writers? “You know who you really are?” they say in their books, even as they are trying to persuade you. Well, if you are trying to persuade me, why do you need arguments, if I am nothing but matter in motion? In actu exercito, in actu signato.

You are equipped, friends, to start answering the uncoherence in this kind of thinking. You have to do it, and you have to do it in your profession, wherever you are going. This cannot be kept just at the theological, theoretical level. In light of B. John Paul II, who treated the human person so eloquently in Veritatis Splendor and Fides et Ratio, I propose that you not only keep the tradition in mind, but expand it by going out into the public square.

The current intellectual environment is not healthy. It needs corrective, but also positive enrichment from the kind of thinking you have learned to bring into the public square. So I am delighted whenever I see a group of young people who are going to graduate and know something more than just what they get dished out of their computers, who are not just nimble and rational, but who are up to good, and are interested in more than just money. Jesus uses us just as He used the Twelve, and He moves us to understand the human person more. He is going to expect more from you because you know more. You understand more. You have got to utilize the knowledge you have been given, so that our culture can be touched anew.

For audio of Cardinal DiNardo’s address, see thomasaquinas.edu/commencement/2013.

Defending the Human Person in the Public Square
Excerpts from the Commencement Address of His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo

“He is going to expect more from you because you know more. You understand more. You have got to utilize the knowledge you have been given, so that our culture can be touched anew.”

Idefix
I am filled with deep emotion at finding myself standing here, in this place, where were collected together the wisdom, the patriotism, and the devotion to principle, from which sprang the institutions under which we live.” Thus spoke Abraham Lincoln, at Independence Hall, in February of 1861. Lincoln spoke about the founding of one of the great nations on earth, the nation under which this college is blessed to live, which nation was at that time under dire threat of civil war.

We come together to celebrate a commencement ceremony for less than 100 graduates. Like all serious institutions, we at this college are engaged in the continual struggle to better understand, articulate, and give life to the principles from which we draw our existence. It is not always easy for us to see beyond our daily assignments to the deeper beauty and meaning of what we are doing. This struggle is perhaps particularly pressing now, as we here still mourn the loss of several of the men who gave birth to this college and nourished it from its earliest days, and we must begin to look to a younger generation for leadership. But whatever minor pains we go through as a college are nowhere near as dire as the threat of civil war.

“Thus spoke Abraham Lincoln, at Independence Hall, in February of 1861. Lincoln spoke about the founding of one of the great nations on earth, the nation under which this college is blessed to live, which nation was at that time under dire threat of civil war.”

On this fine spring day, then, we gather for reasons which are perhaps neither as weighty, nor as imminently critical, as those that moved Abraham Lincoln to speak over 150 years ago. Yet despite the differences in our situation, Lincoln’s words are strikingly fitting on this occasion. Our college is, indeed, an institution brought forth by outstanding wisdom, patriotism, devotion to principle, and — I should add — devotion to the teaching Church. While it may fall short of the global significance of the United States, this college has formed each one of us graduates in good, deep, and lasting ways, making this occasion a truly momentous one — even if not for the whole world, at the very least for us graduates and our friends and loved ones. It is, therefore, a deeply moving honor for me to stand here before you in an effort to represent the largest class in the history of Thomas Aquinas College.

But just what exactly is the speaker in my position supposed to say? There are many subjects which I am not the best one here to talk about, many ways in which we graduates have looked, and will continue to look, to you all and to others for leadership and wisdom.

**Graduation and Humility**

This leads me to let my first major statement be one made in what I hope is the spirit of humility to which President McLean exhorted us just a few nights ago at dinner. (See page 2.) We will not leave this campus as self-sufficient units of knowledge and power, but rather as members joining a larger body in which all have different roles to play. We hope, indeed, that we can contribute something significant to the great work of bringing the world to God, but we need not fear that we will be all alone in this work.

In a longstanding tradition, we will soon be given a piece of paper certifying that we have attained to a degree of knowledge. I take no issue with this tradition; a school which cannot claim to impart knowledge would surely be hard-pressed to justify its very existence. But we must always remember that the knowledge we have gained is not a complete and total understanding of all that is; nor does the knowledge which we do have mean anything if it does not lead us to greater love of God and neighbor.

Having acknowledged that we are part of something far beyond ourselves, though, we must also remember that true humility does not fail to recognize the blessings it has been given. It therefore does seem appropriate for me to speak about what we students have received in this education, not from some grand, metaphysical perspective, but rather in terms of what we have perceived here as good and beautiful, what has enabled us to live in a spirit of joy and love.

**What Have We Been Given …**

What we have been given for the past four years is a truly wonderful life. By wonderful, I do not just mean generally pleasant and good, though it was certainly that. Rather, I mean a life deeply filled with awe and wonder, with astonishment at the workings of God. We have pondered the beauty of the stars, wondered at the straightness of light rays, and been moved by the order of fine music. We have been given the opportunity to ask the questions men long to ask, starting with questions about ourselves and the natural world around us, and culminating in questions about our Maker: What is life? What are we? Why are we here? What can we really know? How should we know it? How ought we to govern ourselves? Who made us and the world around us?

These are not immediately practical questions, and very few have the time and freedom to dwell on them we have. For four years, we have been freed from the drudgery of repetitive work, and have been guided through the thoughts of the greatest minds of Western Civilization by wise and dedicated tutors. These tutors have taught us as equals in free and open discussions, and we have learned not only to hold what others have told us, but to truly think in a mature and free way.

One who did not realize that Christ had redeemed all suffering might think that a life like ours was the best life, or even the only life that was really worthwhile. We have been as separated from the passing things of this earth as it is possible to be on a natural level, thinking about eternal truths, like the demonstrations in geometry, or the things known by the ethicist, the politician, the scientist. We, for our part as Christians, know that we are called not to be served but to serve, and that the road to eternal life is often found in the lowest and most mundane of tasks.

But our freedom from the mundane here has given us a far better sense of the depth and wonder of the world, and has aided us in seeing the deeper ideas that explain ourselves and underlie many of the occurrences in human history. We hope, that by doing these things, we have begun along the path to being able to speak wisely about such things.

I would speak falsely if I gave the impression that we have not suffered at all, though. In immersing ourselves in the history of human thought — to some extent, even living it out in our own lives — we have submitted even those things held most dear to serious questioning, not in a Cartesian desire or intent to question all ruthlessly, but rather in the serious hope that we can be open to what is true. We have struggled to see the complementarity between faith and reason, and to more fully articulate not just what we hold, but why we hold it.

In this struggle together, we have become dear friends, continually looking to each other for insight, aid, and encouragement. I think there is no doubt in any of us that, even as we say our goodbyes today, the friendships we have formed here will last a lifetime.

**… and What We Must Do**

What does all this mean? How ought we to draw it together?

I attempted to decide what to do with Jesus Christ, Pontius Pilate asked the question, “What is truth?” Our Lord did not respond in words; instead, He submitted Himself to death for the salvation of all mankind. Even as we have come to see the wonders of the natural world and to grow in Wisdom, we have become ever more aware of the weakness of our own intellects. In our quest for the truth, we have come to realize that the truth is not a proposition which we can hold or demonstrate, not something we can possess. It is a person, the person of Jesus Christ.

The fact that we are not all-knowing, then, is no cause for despair. All we must do is follow Christ, Whose yoke is easy, and burden light. Surely this is the greatest blessing of all.

Looking back, what do we hope for at this commencement of our lives beyond this campus? When we look back in 5 or 10 years — when we look back on this day and try to assess how we have lived up to the dreams that we had at the completion of our college career — what will we see, what will we hope to have done? Let us hope and pray that we can share the childlike sense of wonder that we first encountered here in the Ancient Greeks. May we never forget the force of the question, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” Let us always strive to live with thorough joy in Christ, to lead others with wisdom and charity. Let us strive not to forget the times or studies we had together here, but to bring them to our lives. And let us always have faith in the Lord, that “whether our tomorrows be filled with good or ill, we may triumph through our sorrows, and rise to greet Him still.”

Thank you.

For the full text and audio of Mr. Collins’ address, see thomasaquinas.edu/commencement2013.
The ways of the Lord are not comfortable, but we were not created for comfort. We were created for greatness.”

– Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

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MARTIN JOHN ZEPEDA
Alhambra, California

Patron of the Class of 2013: St. Joseph
Cardinal DiNardo: “A Gift of God in Christ Jesus through His Spirit”
Adapted from the Homily at the 2013 Baccalaureate Mass

Sisters and brothers, it is the 44th day of Easter — eight more to go. St. Augustine says that, indeed, the Christian community fasts for 40 days, and feasts for 50 days. Apparently Catholics prefer fasting to feasting!

Eight more days of Easter hilaritas, as Augustine would say — the joy of God’s achievement of salvation in the newly baptized, the newly confirmed. There are first communions, ordinations, and graduations. Easter season is a beautiful time to recognize Christ’s Paschal victory in all of those who, through His achievements, also can look at their own achievements as mysteriously fulfilled.

We are with Mary and the Apostles in the upper room. They are getting ready for the Pentecost. With an impoverished faith of the 12 that is genuine, but expectant, the Church goes along with them and awaits the fullness of God’s Holy Spirit, Who already is present in Christ’s Resurrection. In John’s Gospel, the Apostles are in the Upper Room, then the Risen Jesus enters, and the first words out of His mouth are, “Peace be with you.”

As I tell all the confirmation children in Houston, thank God He didn’t say, “Where were you on Good Friday?”

From Ascension to Pentecost

With the Ascension of the Lord, Jesus has taken our poor humanity, elevated it, and brought it to the Father. He goes away to get near. He goes away to get near.

For those of you who want to unpack that, read Pope Leo the Great’s seven homilies on the Ascension, the most essential doctrine about that mystery of Death, and Resurrection, at the Ascension. Those homilies on the Ascension, the most beautiful, beautiful day.

First of all, at this liturgy our very selves are moved to prayer: prayers of thanks, prayers of gratitude to God, the prayers of the faculty and administration, the prayers of the parents and families, prayers for donors, prayers of intercession for the graduates, prayers like incense for the whole church. It may be that, in one or two cases, there may even be prayers of relief, as well. I don’t know.

The grace has appeared. God’s grace is here at this Mass for ongoing illumination and inspiration of the Spirit upon these 90-plus graduates, the largest class in the history of this wonderful college. It is a beautiful, beautiful day.

The Book of Ezekiel is a strange book. It has more odd metaphors than almost any book of the Old Testament. In fact, when I was a young priest and taught this section of the Book of Ezekiel to high school seniors (not brilliant college seniors; these were smart-aleck high school seniors), one of them said, after reading the passage of Ezekiel 37, “What, Father, was he smoking when he wrote this?”

That is the famous vision of the dry bones: the open fields, bones strewn about. How dry they were! Then God says, let the Ruah, let the Spirit come, and they start coming together. Pretty soon there is a massive, massive group, but there is still no spirit of breath to give them that vitality. So Ezekiel calls for that, the spirit comes, and they rise up, in army.

Sisters and brothers, can these bones live? Listen, oh House of Israel. It is not because of you. It is because of me and my faithfulness. This passage calls to mind the death and burial of Christ, and the promise of eternal life that accompanies His resurrection. As the Letter to the Hebrews says, when Jesus went back home to His abba-daddy: Here I am, Father, and all of the kids you gave me. Ezekiel 36 is the anticipation that, not because of Israel, but because of God — after 30 chapters of Ezekiel saying to Israel, “you’re bad, you can’t repent, who cares about you, Israel?” — everything changes. Do I really want you to have sorry hearts? I want you to have new hearts, hearts, of flesh! So I will do it. I will send my Ruah.

Saving us from Spiritual Amnesia

Can you imagine the night of the Last Supper, when Jesus turns to the 11 around Him? Remember, in the Gospel of Matthew, the Last Supper is about 30-35 verses long. In Mark, it is 30. In Luke, it is about 38 verses. In John, it is five chapters. Obviously John thinks the Last Supper is very important! And in the midst of that, what does Jesus say to the 11 (at this point Judas is already gone) about Ruah?

Note the personalization that goes on here. Jesus is using the first-person singular that it has never been used before, talking about his abba: Me and my abba/father. Do you know we want to make a home with you? We want you to be a temple. Do you know how that is going to endure? I promise a Spirit, and what is the Spirit going to do? Teach and save you from religious annihilation — a particularly virulent virus that is all around right now. I will save you from spiritual annihilation through the Spirit. He will teach you. He will remind you.

Do you notice the incredible spiritual poverty of Jesus in the Spirit? In their relationship to one another and the Father, they do nothing except what they do together. This is incredible. Graduates, when you are looking at what you have achieved, do you see the way Jesus speaks about achievement? His achievement is total obedience to the Father.

So on this day, with these beautiful readings, we are mesmerized by what Ezekiel promises, and what Jesus accomplishes — sending us a personal spirit, the love of Father and Son. And just so we do not get overly mystical before we go to Communion, the lectionary planners decided to put Galatians as the second reading. You talk about coming down a step!

When Paul wrote his letters, at the beginning he would always say something like: Grace and peace be yours. This is Paul, and I thank God for how beautiful you are, Corinthians or Philippians, and how God’s grace has worked in you. There is only one letter in which St. Paul does not say any such words at the beginning. That is Galatians. Boy, was he mad! He opens the letter, Grace and peace, and then says: I’m wondering why it is that you so soon abandoned everything in the Gospel. He then spends four chapters just smacking them around.

When he gets to the end, though, isn’t it beautiful how he says, with a little dig: “The law is a contest, the law is a law against滙 patience, you Galatian circumcizers. No, I’ll tell you what the problem is. The issue is the flesh, and the flesh is in backsliding, as well as sexual immorality, and it is tearing apart the community. In St. Paul the flesh is anything opposed to Christ Jesus.”

Perhaps even on a day like today we need to hear that. We need to hear that there is, indeed, in the Christian community, as in us, a need. There are things we should not be doing, and things God allows us to do in Christ Jesus. I personally would rather dwell on Ezekiel and John today, but the Church’s liturgy calls us also to Galatians. There the list of vices and the beauty of the virtues that spring from the grace of Jesus Christ are presented to us.

At the conclusion of this section, St. Paul says so beautifully, “Behold one another’s burdens.” That is stating the whole point. Sisters and brothers, it is a great day for you. I hope that you will go from today illuminated, delighted, proud of your achievements. But never forget that they are a gift of God in Christ Jesus through His Spirit, Who keeps you knowledgeable, and Who solves and heals the religious annnesia in our society. We desperately need that gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Gift of Wisdom

May the Spirit so operate in you. Congratulations! What a great day. What a beautiful alleluia we can sing on this, the 42nd day of Easter, first of all because of the Resurrection and Ascension, and second of all because of you. That is good. Please stay faithful and attuned to what you have learned here, not just in terms of the life of the mind, but in the contemplative life that comes through this chapel and through your prayer life.

May Jesus Christ Himself be your lord. May the Father of all mercies smile upon you and keep you safe in the days and years ahead. May you never forget Thomas Aquinas College, where you first learned of the gift of wisdom.

For audio of Cardinal DiNardo’s homily, see thomasaquinascollege.edu/commencement2013.
Not Comfort but Greatness
What’s Next for the Class of 2013

When the Class of 2013 met to choose a class quotation, its members selected the following observation from Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: “The ways of the Lord are not comfortable, but we were not created for comfort. We were created for greatness.”

Looking over the plans of the graduates who have settled on a vocation or career path, it is clear that the Class of 2013 is taking the Pope Emeritus’s words seriously. These graduates are foregoing comfort — in many cases taking on years of additional study or other personal sacrifice — to follow the ways of the Lord. They are committed to sharing the fruits of their education and the gifts of their faith, whether in the workplace, in the home, in the classroom, or from the pulpit. They are taking their talents, as Cardinal DiNardo encouraged them, “into the public square,” and they have set their sights on greatness.

Priesthood and Religious Life

Jeffrey Hanley first became aware of a calling to the priesthood while in high school, but “my experience at the College has only strengthened that vocation,” he says. “Being enriched in the tradition of the teaching Church has helped open my eyes to the depth of thought in the Catholic Church, and it has enriched both my prayer life and my intellectual life.” This fall Mr. Hanley will enter formation for the Diocese of Kalamazoo, where he will be joined by a classmate and fellow Michigan native Maxmillian Nightingale. Some 5,000 miles away, Philip Wilmeth will enter into a life of prayer and penance with the Benedictine Order at the Monastery of San Benedetto in Norcia, Italy. Nicole Madro also hopes to join a religious community, possibly the Norbertine Sisters, after working for a year to pay off student loans.

Marriage

During their time at the College, several members of the Class of 2013 were blessed to discern vocations to the married life. “Four years of training in this program have taught Peter and me to be more comfortable and capable of discussing all of our thoughts and concerns, and to work as a team in pursuit of something higher and better than the two of us,” says Clare (Ryan), who wed Peter Asper ’12, one week before the Class of 2013 wedding is planned for later this summer.

Business

“I worked for a construction company in Washington, D.C., last summer,” recalls Nathaniel Roberts. “I was supposed to be a helper on the job site, but they ended up being shorthanded; so my boss kept assigning me more and more responsibilities that a superintendent would normally do. Eventually I was running the site.” Impressed with Mr. Roberts’ attention to detail and decision-making, the company contacted him earlier this year and offered him a superintendent’s position starting this summer. He will be in charge of a work site, supervising employees, and organizing the subcontractors, schedule, and budget.

Mr. Roberts’ story is typical of those members of the Class of 2013 who are pursuing careers in business. For the last three summers, Arielle Dunkel worked for Morningstar Paving in Santa Nella, Calif. — an experience that has landed her a full-time job with the company in research and office support. Following a successful summer working for All-Terrain Marketing in Milwaukee, Thomas Lawlor has been promoted to a field coordinator, managing event promotions for Chevrolet in the Indianapolis market. Having worked two summers at the Owen Roe Winery in St. Paul, Ore., (owned by David O’Reilly ’87), Alexander Tombelli foresaw a career in winemaking, starting with a job at a winery in Ojai, Calif. Katherine Edison is building on her three years’ work-study experience in the Thomas Aquinas College kitchen with a position at a food and catering company in Portland, Ore.

Arts & Entertainment

“Reading works at the College about the dignity of beauty made me want to pursue that as a career,” says Augustin Zehnder, who intends to earn a master’s degree in violin performance at California State University, Long Beach, and then work as an orchestral violinist and composer. A cartoonist and comedienne, Elizabeth Rosema is moving to Chicago where she will try to land a spot with the Second City improv/comedy-screenwriting school. David Trull is staying in Southern California to begin a career as a professional singer and songwriter.

Teaching

Every year, teaching is the most popular career choice among the College’s graduates, and 2013 is no exception. “It is important to instill in children an interest in what’s going on around them, a love for the truth, and a strong foundation for their lifelong search,” says Margaret Mary Cain. For this reason Miss Cain looks to become a teacher, first earning a master’s degree in education, and then teaching at the elementary level.

A number of this year’s aspiring educators will head to Arizona, where the Great Hearts Academies — a consortium of charter schools that boast a classical curriculum — is expanding rapidly, and thus requires a steady stream of qualified new teachers. Starting this fall, Dustin Bates will teach the arts and poetry to students in grades 5 through 12. Jordan Brittain will be an assistant teacher, and Katherine Huffman a teacher’s aide. Megan McGuire will be teaching 7th-grade English literature and composition and 11th-grade drama, and Molly McAlistier, high school drama and 6th-grade fine arts.

Rose Langley and Andrea McCann will also be teaching classical curricula, in their case at private Catholic schools. Miss Langley has accepted a job at The Lyceum in South Euclid, Ohio (founded by Mark Langley ’89), and Miss McCann with the Mother of Divine Grace distance-learning program in Ojai, Calif. (founded by Laura Berquist ’75). Others plan to teach at conventional K-12 public and parochial schools, including Patrick Dodd, Elizabeth Urban, Maggie Harrahall, and Alyssa Eubanks. Still others have more specialized teaching goals: Michelle Lawless has accepted a position with the Institute for Excellence in Writing in Hulbert, Okla.; Lindsay Astalos, who taught piano part-time while at the College, will expand her business; Athena Motà de Alcántara expects to pursue graduate studies in, and then teach about, marriage and the family.

Education Administration

Three other members of the Class of 2013 will work in education administration. Peter LaFave has applied for development and marketing positions at various Catholic institutions. Christopher Sebastian is the new director of public relations and marketing for Mother of Divine Grace School. Although she has a long-term vision of becoming a Montessori teacher, Jean Collins will first return to her alma mater as the College’s resident assistant.

Theology

Because the whole of the Thomas Aquinas College curriculum is ordered toward a study of theology, it is not surprising that every year at least a few gradu- ates undertake further studies in this discipline. After a year of teaching, Bridget Coughlin plans to study theology at Ave Maria University because, as she puts it, “theology makes me love God more.” Sarah Cotugno looks forward to deepening her theological knowledge through graduate studies at the Augustine Institute in Denver, Colo.

Medicine

Between her sophomore and junior years, Eleanor Logdaal took a year off from her studies and worked with the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta at a home for the destitute and dying. “I fell in love with the work there, just taking care of people,” she reflects. Inspired by that experience, she will spend the next year completing the prerequisites to apply for a nurse-practitioner program, after which she wants to assist surgeries or work in an emergency room. Maggie McCann will also spend the next year completing prerequisites, and then apply to veterinary school. Alexandra Montes has accepted a position for the WellPoint insurance company, and Catherine Mohun will work in elder care, but both also seek to earn nursing licenses, as does Therese Pfeiffer. The oldest of 11 children, Jane Grimms has a love for babies which will serve her well as she studies to become an obstetrical nurse or midwife.

Public Service

Upon graduating, Salvador Miranda will begin the process of applying to the Air Force, where he aims to serve his country as a pilot. Robert Richard intends to put his talents to work for his community as a firefighter. “I’ve wanted to do that ever since I was a little kid,” he says. “It’s a good job and a good way to help people.”

Public Policy

“At the College you get to think about ideas on a really big scale, and that was helpful for me to clarify my thoughts and opinions about government,” says Maria Santos. The beneficiary of a Collegiate Network fellowship, Miss Santos will spend the next year as an editors’ assistant at The Weekly Standard, pitching and writing articles about politics and policy. George Thomas is enrolling in a master’s program in cultural studies at the William Carey University, with the goal of working eventually for an NGO, most likely in the developing world.

… and More!

Some members of the Class of 2013 are following career paths that are unique to them alone: Combining a lifelong love of sewing with an admiration for the way the College’s dress code “disposes us toward acting in a modest and Christian manner in the classroom and in our community,” Catherine Baer hopes to nudge American fashion in a more positive direction as a professional in the material-textile industry. Rebecca Lemioux, who credits the College with helping her to “recognize the beautiful,” yearns to bring more beauty to family life as an interior designer. After completing his aviation license, Alexander Buesche will go on to graduate school in aerospace engineering. Laurretta Brown, Mara Gawarecki, and Liam Collins are applying to graduate school to study law, English literature, and physics, respectively.
Andrew Rossi raises his glass at the President’s Reception for Seniors and their Families, held the evening before Commencement. Seniors celebrate the completion of their last exam with a swim in one of the College’s ponds. Jonathan Dickman proudly announces the Class of 2013’s accomplishments to the underclassmen during lunch in St. Joseph Commons. Commencement Speaker Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, meets with some of the College’s Texan students. Salvador Miranda tosses his text onto the fire at the thesis draft-burning party. Enjoying one last get-together at the Junior-Senior Dinner.