Habemus Papam!
College Greets Announcement of Pope Francis with Cheers, Prayers

News of the white smoke above St. Peter's first reached the campus of Thomas Aquinas College at about 1:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 13. The bells in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel began ringing shortly thereafter. Shouts of "Habemus Papam!" could be heard on the academic quadrangle, and students rushed for a place to take in the news.

Some descended upon the chaplains' residence, St. Ignatius of Loyola Hall — fittingly, it would turn out, given the election of the first Jesuit pope — to catch a glimpse of the Holy Father on television. Others went to Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel for the mid-morning Mass, and prayed for him.

By the time the Pontiff emerged on the papal balcony, Mass had ended, and Loyola Hall was filled to capacity. Crowded around the television set, students occasionally turned down the volume to recite the prayer to St. Michael or to sing "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name" and other favorite hymns. A group of young men proudly waved a Vatican flag, while others snapped photos of the joyous gathering on their cell phones. Those who could not fit into Loyola Hall waited anxiously in St. Joseph Commons, and when His Holiness Pope Francis greeted the world, the crowds in both buildings erupted with applause.

A few days later, video and images of the jubilant students in Loyola Hall were featured on the CBS Evening News as part of a story, "American Catholic Youth on Pope Francis." The story, shot entirely on campus, included interviews with two students and footage of the bells in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. "The humility that he shows is such a tangible example for young people," junior Andrea Florez told the Campus News.

A Time of Prayer

The election of Pope Francis marked the culmination of a busy time of prayer on campus that began with the news that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI — whose coat of arms is inlaid in the Chapel's marble floor — would renounce the Chair of St. Peter. In keeping with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' suggestion, and with the permission of Archbishop José H. Gomez, the College offered a special Mass in the departing pontiff's honor on the day before his resignation.

"Our beloved pontiff goes into seclusion within 24 hours to contemplate the pierced side of Christ," Chaplain Rev. Joseph Ill said as his homily. "Let us pray for this man," he added, "who will renounce the papacy within a few hours, but does so in great hope."

During the interregnum, the College entered into prayer for the Church, Her cardinals, and the next Holy Father. Anonymous signs appeared around campus inviting students to participate in a one-day fast in support of the conclavists, which many students joined. Meanwhile, Head Chaplain Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J., launched a novena — prayed by students, alumni, and friends of the College everywhere — asking the Lord to bestow courage and discernment upon the "selected oarsmen" who would soon "choose the new captain" for the Barque of Peter. The day after the novena came to an end, white smoke appeared above the Vatican.

On March 23, Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel was the site of another special Mass, this one in celebration of the installment of Pope Francis. The choir loft, packed with excited student singers, filled the Chapel with the music of Hauser's Missa Brevis, and a portrait of the Holy Father stood in the sanctuary, just below the ambo, surrounded by gold and white bunting.

"The Thomas Aquinas College community rejoices at the election of Pope Francis, and we pledge our loyalty to the new Vicar of Christ and head of the Roman Catholic Church," said Thomas Aquinas College President Michael F. McLean. "We join with our fellow Catholics around the world in offering prayers of thanksgiving for our new Holy Father and in asking God to pour forth His graces and blessings upon Pope Francis as he begins his pontificate."

Year of Faith

Working with the Church to Ensure Fidelity in the College's Teaching

"American Catholics are becoming increasingly aware of the growing tendency of Catholic colleges to secularize themselves — that is, to loosen their connection with the teaching Church and to diminish deliberately their Catholic character. Catholic parents in particular are becoming alarmed at the effects that this secularization has or threatens to have on the intellectual and moral formation of their children. The colleges themselves display a growing inability to define themselves in such a way as to justify their continued existence as Catholic institutions."

Thus begins A Proposal for the Fulfillment of Catholic Liberal Education, the founding document of Thomas Aquinas College. Published in 1969, the "Blue Book" not only lamented the secularizing trend in Catholic liberal education, but presented a bold vision of a liberal education which is undertaken in subordination to the teaching of the Church, and in which the Faith is "the light under which the curriculum is conducted."

A decade later, Bl. John Paul II ascended to the Chair of St. Peter with similar concerns about the state of Catholic higher education. Gradually the Holy Father proposed several reforms to Catholic colleges and universities. This process began with the promulgation of the 1983 Code of Canon Law; it continued by way of clarifications from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1989; and it culminated in Bl. John Paul II's 1990 Apostolic Constitution, Ex Corde Ecclesiae.

"The mandate represents both a solemn duty and a great honor for our tutors. We are humbled and gratified to receive our bishop's formal recognition."

Together these documents provide a basis for reform and an anchor of stability, laying down norms for Catholic institutions of higher learning. They also offer three directives that Catholic colleges and universities must follow if they are serious about teaching in communion with the Church — directives that Thomas Aquinas College is determined to uphold.

Profession of Faith & Oath of Fidelity

The Code of Canon Law requires that "teachers in any universities whatsoever who teach disciplines which deal with faith or morals" make a Profession of Faith at the beginning of their term of office. The Church additionally requires these educators to swear an Oath of Fidelity. At Thomas Aquinas College, only practicing Catholics may teach theology, and all Catholic members of the faculty make the profession and oath.

"It is one of the highlights of our Convocation ceremony every year when a new tutor places his hand on the Bible and makes these profound commitments," says Dean Brian T. Kelly. Before the entire faculty, members of the Board of Governors, and assembled students, the new tutors promise to "always preserve communion with the Catholic Church" and to "adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings which either the Roman pontiff or the college of bishops enunciate when they exercise the authentic Magisterium."

The Mandatum

The Code of Canon Law further requires that "those who teach theological disciplines in any institute of higher studies have a mandate from the competent ecclesiastical authority." Thus all members of the Thomas Aquinas College faculty who teach theology are required to submit written requests to the local ordinary, currently the Most Rev. José H. Gomez, stating that they intend to present the teachings of the Church faithfully in their classrooms and scholarship. To date, each of these tutors has received a favorable reply — formally known as the mandatum — acknowledging their intention to teach within the full communion of the Catholic Church, and calling on them to foster this communion as educators.

"The mandate represents both a solemn duty and a great honor for our tutors," says Dr. Kelly. "As a faculty, we are committed to teaching in fidelity to the Magisterium, and so we are humbled and grateful to receive our bishop's formal recognition." Although the mandatum applies only to theology, the College strives to teach with the mind of the Church in all disciplines. "There is only one Truth," Dr. Kelly adds, "and we aim to serve Him in all that we do."
The period of the 1960s was a time of great tumult in the United States, one that had devastating effects on the country’s institutions and mores. Its ravages could be seen perhaps nowhere more clearly than on college campuses. Truth gave way to skepticism and relativism, and expressions such as “free love” and “question authority” became the catchphrases of student life. Catholic colleges were not immune to these influences. Venerable institutions that for many scores of years had faithfully passed on the intellectual patrimony of the Church began to adopt the diluted curricula, methods, and aims of their secular counterparts. Not only was campus life at many of these institutions succumbing to the permissiveness of the time, a longstanding commitment to Catholic liberal education was quickly disappearing.

Going even further, it stated that the Catholic university “should carry on a continual examination of all aspects and all activities of the Church and should objectively evaluate them.” In other words, where once the measure of the Catholic university was the Magisterium of the Church, now the Catholic university would not only be its own judge, but in an audacious upending of the tradition, it would also be the measure of the Church. Truth, again, was a watershed moment for Catholic higher education in the United States.

Genuine Academic Freedom

Implicit in this declaration of autonomy was a deeply flawed understanding of the meaning of freedom. The teachings of the Catholic Church had for centuries been understood as a guide in the pursuit of truth, assisting those engaged in rigorous intellectual inquiry and bolstering their pursuit of knowledge about nature, man, and God. The Land O’Lakes Statement, however, asserted the opposite — that the truths of the Faith were instead an impediment to legitimate academic inquiry.

In 1967, against this backdrop, Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame, convened a group of prominent Catholic educators in Land O’Lakes, Wis. Their aim was to chart a new course for Catholic higher education in America, one that would resemble all too well that of their secular counterparts. The meeting resulted in a document entitled, “Statement on the Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University.”

Hoping to garner the kind of reputation for academic excellence enjoyed by secular institutions of higher learning, the statement declared, “The Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself” (emphasis added).

In a key section of the Proposal, our founders describe the Faith as a “light … which illumines understanding and serves as an indispensable guide in the intellectual life…. Contrary to what is often assumed, liberal education does not take place in spite of or even apart from the Christian faith. Rather, the Christian student, because of his faith, can be liberally educated in the most perfect and complete way.” Thus reasserting fidelity to the teaching Church as its foundation, Thomas Aquinas College opened its doors in 1971.

From the Heart of the Church

In the years since, under the leadership of other courageous men and women, a number of additional faithful Catholic colleges have sprung up across the country. Moreover, some existing institutions have undertaken to re-establish their Catholic identity. On these campuses, Catholicism is not simply an addition to another otherwise secular project. It is at the heart of their endeavors. Together they are proving that fidelity to the teachings of the Church is no impediment to academic excellence.

Buttressing these efforts is the encyclical Fides et Ratio, promulgated by Bl. John Paul II in 1998, which describes the complementary nature of faith and reason, “the two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” Ex Corde Ecclesiae, issued in 1990, elaborates on this theme and provides practical directives. This apostolic constitution, in many ways a rebuttal to the Land O’Lakes Statement, articulates the nature and objectives of a Catholic university, stressing “fidelity to the Christian message” on the part of faculty members.

Yet the new Catholic institutions that have the Church’s teachings at their heart are providing an antidote not only for Catholic higher education but for our culture. Having been well-formed intellectually, morally, and spiritually, many of the graduates of these institutions are now teachers and professors themselves. They are committed to passing on the great intellectual tradition of the Church to young people at their alma maters, in seminaries, and perhaps most importantly, at institutions that have yet to embrace the principles of Ex Corde. Our hopes for Catholic higher education — and for our country — lie with them.

A Family Affinity

Walter J. Conn Elected to Board of Governors

The Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors has elected to its ranks a new member with a familiar name: Mr. Walter J. Conn of San Marino, Calif.

The Conn family and the College enjoy a long-standing friendship dating back more than 20 years. It began in 1992, when one of Mr. Conn’s brothers, Rev. Thomas Conn, S.J., came to the College as a chaplain, a position in which he faithfully served until his death from cancer in 1997. During that time, Fr. Conn was an enthusiastic evangelist for Thomas Aquinas College, introducing it to all those he loved, including his brother James, who has been a member of the Board of Governors since 1995, and Walter, who now joins James on the Board.

“I got to know the College because Tom was so pleased about it,” recalls Mr. Conn. “He liked that it was so strongly Catholic, and that it taught people about life rather than about business or something else so narrowly focused. He was very impressed with that, and he felt the College taught the Faith even better than some of the seminaries.” Inspired by his brother’s endorsement, Mr. Conn became a loyal benefactor of the College in 1993.

The son of Irish immigrants, Mr. Conn grew up in South Pasadena, Calif. He attended the University of Santa Clara through the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program, and upon graduating, entered the U.S. Army, where he served as a missile officer, first in San Francisco and then in Germany.

In 1963, having attained the rank of captain, Mr. Conn received an honorable discharge from the Army and decided to pursue a career in real estate. He took a job with Charles Dunn Co. in Los Angeles, and established what became one of the largest regional property management companies in Southern California. In 1995 he purchased the other divisions of Charles Dunn Co. and became its chairman. On April 1, 2013, he was named chairman of the Board.

Mr. Conn and his wife, Donna, have three adult children, all of whom work with him at Charles Dunn, and two grandchildren. In addition to his work for Thomas Aquinas College, he serves on the board of the International Theological Institute, and he is a trustee emeritus of Gonzaga University. He sits on the boards of the Los Angeles Opera, the California Hospital Medical Center Foundation, the Society Devoted to the Sacred Heart, and various other organizations.

“We are very pleased and grateful to have another Conn on the Board,” says Thomas Aquinas College President Michael F. McLean. “Walter brings vast experience, a generous heart, and a proven love for the College that will be of great benefit to our noble cause of Catholic liberal education.”

For his part, Mr. Conn says that he is glad to continue his family’s tradition of service to the College. “Thomas Aquinas is doing a great deal of good for its students,” he says. “It helps young people understand what is important in life and how to become better people through God’s teachings.”

“Thomas Aquinas is doing a great deal of good for its students. It helps young people understand what is important in life and how to become better people through God’s teachings.”
The Paschal Triduum
Marking the Passion, Death — and Resurrection — of Jesus Christ on Campus

With nearly half of the student body traveling during Easter Vacation, the campus of Thomas Aquinas College grows quiet over Holy Week. After the final classes on Wednesday afternoon, the classrooms go dark. For a brief time, the work, the studies, the myriad activities that dominate campus life cease. Thoughts and hearts turn entirely to Our Lord, His sacrifice, and His ultimate triumph.

For those students who remained on campus this year, the College offered a three-day retreat entitled “Holy Week Liturgy and Life,” which included the complete Triduum liturgy as well as three conferences each day. Rev. Luke Mata, a priest of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, served as the retreat master, leading the conferences between services.

On Holy Thursday, the College’s head chaplain, Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J., served as the principal celebrant at the Solemn Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper. In imitation of Christ’s service of the Apostles, Fr. Buckley washed the feet of 12 young men, recalling Jesus’ words in the night’s Gospel reading: “I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14).

After Holy Communio, a solemn procession of the College’s chaplains and acolytes brought the consecrated Hosts to the altar, removing the Eucharistic Lord from the tabernacle. Rev. Peter Buckley walked through the Chapel’s wide aisles, joined by three acolytes — two bearing candles; one, a covered crucifix — and led the devotion at each of the Chapel’s century-old, travertine stations. We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

On both Thursday and Friday evening, students came to the Chapel at 9:45 p.m. for Tenebrae (shadows, or darkness), a special celebration of the Matins and Lauds components of the Liturgy of the Hours. The ceremony involved the gradual extinguishing of 14 candles in the sanctuary, bringing the Chapel into complete darkness, followed by a loud bang, representative of the earthquake that followed Christ’s death. Then one last lit candle returned into view — a promise of the Resurrection — after which all departed in silence.

Easter Vigil
At 11:00 p.m. on Saturday, students, members of the faculty, and their families gathered on the Chapel plaza before the kindling Easter fire. Fr. Illo lit and blessed the Paschal candle and then, in solemn procession, brought it into the Chapel. As he made his way with the candle across the nave toward the sanctuary, he stopped three times to chants of Lumen Christi (light of Christ), to which the assembly responded, Deus Gratus (thanks be to God). Members of the faithful illuminated their own, small candles from its flame, with the fire passing from one person to the next, gradually bringing light to the whole building. Junior Thomas Quackenbush then chanted the age-old words of the Exsultet.

Soon thereafter, the candles were extinguished and the Chapel was dark once again, as lectors read Scriptural passages that spanned the course of Salvation history. Then, as the Choir sang the Gloria — which had been missing from the Liturgy throughout Lent — the lights came back on, and the bells rang out. The epistle and St. Luke’s account of the Resurrection followed.

This year, those attending the Easter Vigil were blessed to witness the entry into the Church of Abigail Retallick (‘14), a student from Hot Springs, Mont. Miss Retallick, who had received instruction in the Faith from Fr. Buckley, took the name Mary Magdalene and received all three Sacraments of Initiation — Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation. “Before coming here, I had said that I would never convert, but God blessed me immensely by leading me here and showing me how Christ’s teachings are being followed today,” says Miss Retallick. “I feel like I have become a part of a huge, wonderful family and that I’m ready to start my new life in Christ with all of the love and support of this community.”

Late Night Celebration
By the time the Vigil ended at about 2:15 a.m., students were tired but invigorated. They headed over to St. Joseph Commons for an Easter-morning celebration complete with feasting, dancing, and chocolate eggs.

The festivities, however, did not end there. After the last dance, a few hearty souls took to the hills surrounding campus for an early-morning hike. With the sun rising over the campus, they contemplated the glory of the Risen Son, delighting in the views of the surrounding mountains and oceans that attest to His glory.

Alleluia, alleluia, He is risen! He is risen, alleluia, alleluia!
Campus Update
Recent Events and Happenings

College Joins Protest of HHS Mandate
“"No other federal rule has so narrowly and discriminat­nately defined what it means to exercise religious con­science, and no regulation has ever so directly violated plain statutory and constitutional religious freedoms.”

So declares an April 5 memorandum to the Obama Administration, signed by Thomas Aquinas College and 21 other Catholic institutions of higher education, formally protesting the HHS mandate that compels Catholic organizations to participate in the provision of contraceptive, abortifacient, and sterilization coverage to employees and their dependents.

The joint comments, organized by the Cardinal New­man Society and prepared by the Alliance Defending Freedom, were filed prior to the deadline for public com­ments about the Administration’s latest modifications to the mandate. The memorandum asks the Administra­tion to exempt “all stakeholders with a religious or moral objection from being forced to provide, offer, pay for or in any way participate in a health insurance plan that cov­ers or specifically triggers coverage of ‘contraceptives’ … sterilization, and related education and counseling.”

The College has also submitted its own comment in conjunction with the statement, stressing “in the stron­gest possible terms” its “vigorous opposition” to the mandate.

“Central to the mission of Thomas Aquinas College is its fidelity to the teachings of the Church and its com­mitment to reflecting those teachings in its educational programs,” writes President Michael F. McLean. “Thomas Aquinas College is also committed to maintaining a student residential community and a workplace fully in accord with the moral principles of the Catholic faith.”

Western Dominicans Visit Campus
Over the course of a weekend in February, Dominican friars from St. Dominic’s Priory in San Francisco, Calif., visited campus to meet with students who are contem­plating religious vocations. (Approximately 10 percent of Thomas Aquinas College alumni pursue priestly and/ or religious vocations, with 58 alumni priests currently serving in diocesan and religious communities through­out the world.) Among those visiting were two recent graduates of the College, Br. Thomas Sundaram (’09) and Br. Mason Peddemorses (’12). The friars met informally with students throughout the weekend and also hosted a well-attended presentation, at which they described their vocational experiences and answered questions.

“We are grateful that Thomas Aquinas College kindly hosted us for a weekend and allowed us to share our vocation stories with the students,” said Br. Gregory Liu, O.P. “We were all impressed with the students’ dedi­cation in searching for the Truth above all.”

Alumna Tutor Earns Doctoral Degree
When alumna Elizabeth Reyes (’03) joined the Thomas Aquinas College teaching faculty in 2011, she had completed her doctoral studies in literature at the University of Dallas, but not her dissertation. Since then, she has spent her summers and other free moments working on her thesis, “Ishmael’s Catological Quest: A Progression of Imagination in Melville’s Moby-Dick.” She has now earned the title of doctor. In February, Dr. Reyes successfully defended her dissertation, with honors, at the Braniff Graduate School’s Institute of Philosophic Studies at the University of Dallas.

Dr. Reyes’ thesis brings together two of her passions: wildlife and literature. A lifelong lover of animals, when she was a student at the College, she was fascinated to explore this interest across the breadth of the College’s curriculum — studying Creation not only through the natural sciences, but also in literature, philosophy, and theology. Her senior thesis examined how animals can help lead man to God, a theme that has endured throughout her academic career, including her doctoral dissertation about Ishmael’s epic journey in pursuit of the great whale.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream
On the evening of Saturday, February 16, 2013, the St. Genesius Players of Thomas Aquinas College presented a production of William Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. In Dr. Joseph Commons, directed by seniors Molly McAlister and Megan McGuire. Photographs and video from the performance can be found online at thomasaquinas.edu/midsummer.

Links, Learning & More
Upcoming College Seminars and Events

The Seventh Annual Thomas Aquinas College Golf Classic
thomasaquinas.edu/golf

The historic Sherwood Country Club in Westlake Village, Calif., will be the site of the seventh annual Thomas Aquinas College Golf Classic, hosted by the Greater Los Angeles Board of Regents. Designed by Jack Nicklaus, Sherwood is considered one of America’s premier golf courses. Professional players appreciate the challenges it offers, and amateurs and pros alike enjoy the sheer beauty of the course.

With various levels of competition, the Thomas Aquinas College Golf Classic provides a delightful outing for golfers of all skill levels. Moreover, the event serves a good cause, raising funds for the 78 percent of Thomas Aquinas College students who need financial assistance to afford the gift of a Catholic liberal education. Capping the event, a reception in the Sherwood Club House, complete with a performance from the College’s student singers and an awards ceremony for the day’s winners.

Conference: “Philosophy and the Arts”
thomasaquinas.edu/SATS

This summer a number of faculty members, graduates, and fellow scholars from across North America will participate in the annual West Coast meeting of the Society for Aristotelian/Thomistic Studies. An interna­tional organization founded in 1974 “for the purpose of promoting friendship in the pursuit of wisdom,” the Society examines current issues of scientific or philo­ sophical significance.

This year’s conference, which will focus on the theme “Philosophy and the Arts,” will feature panel and ques­tion-and-answer periods with six scholars from across the country, including several alumni and tutors from the College.

Conference: “Faith and Religious Liberty”
thomasaquinas.edu/socialdoctrine

Immediately following the Society for Aristotelian- Thomistic Studies’ conference will be the fifth annual Conference on the Social Doctrine of the Church, spon­sored by The Aquinas Review. Attendees will take part in a series of three seminars concerning the fundamental principles underlying the Church’s teachings on econom­ics and social justice. The theme of this year’s conference is “Economic and Religious Liberty.”

The inspiration of Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, founding president of Thomas Aquinas College, tutor, and editor of The Aquinas Review, the seminars will examine relevant­ works of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Second Vati­can Council. Conference attendees will split into small groups, led by members of the College’s teaching faculty, to analyze and discuss the meaning of the texts. They will also come together for Mass, meals, and a lecture over the course of the weekend.

The 2013 Summer Seminars: Marriage & Family
thomasaquinas.edu/summerseminars

Each July, the president of Thomas Aquinas College hosts two Great Books Summer Seminar Weekends. These weekends take place on the College’s campus, nestled in the foothills of the Topatopa Mountains, just outside of Santa Paula, Calif. Attendees gain an inside look at the unique edu­cation the College provides its students, while enjoying good fellowship and forming lifelong friendships.

Under the guidance of the president, the dean, and several faculty members, guests participate in a series of classroom discussions centered on timely and important themes. Between seminars they enjoy delicious meals served both indoors and outdoors. In addition, the Col­lege’s chaplains offer daily Mass and confession in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel.

This year’s theme will be “Year of Faith: Marriage and the Family.” Cost is $750 per person or $1,200 per couple, including seminar, meals, lodging, and readings. (Space is limited. Priority will be given to members of the President’s Council.)

Seminar on Human Work
thomasaquinas.edu/napa

What is the spiritual nature of work? How does it affect the relationship between labor and capital? How should concerns about rising technology, threats to the environment, and globalization affect economic policy and decision-making? Such questions, which press upon our current political situation and will weigh heav­ily on the lives of Catholics in the Next America, lie at the heart of Catholic social teaching.

President Michael F. McLean and Vice President Paul J. O’Reilly will host a complimentary breakfast and lead a seminar about the meaning of Laborum Exercens, Bl. John Paul II’s 1981 encyclical on human work. The seminar will kick off the day’s events at the Napa Institute’s 2013 conference, Catholicism in the Next America, in Napa, Calif. The seminar and breakfast are open only to regis­tered attendees of the Napa Institute Conference.
was a parish priest for 20 years, and now I am a college chaplain. What’s the difference? In the parish I prepared people for divorce, and at the College I prepare them for marriage.

In the parish, people generally don’t come to the priest until they have a problem, and most of those problems are marriage problems. Some couples come with strong faith in God and solid hope for their marriages. Most, however, come for the last rites. Usually they’ve been living a “married singles” lifestyle for years before I see them. I would ask: “Do you pray the rosary together?” No, father, we don’t know how. “Do you attend Mass on Sundays?” No, father, we haven’t gone to Mass for years. “Are you contracepting?” No, father, we don’t know rosary together?” No, father, it’s too late now. “Have you tried marriage counseling?” No, father, we haven’t gone to Mass for years.

“No, father, we don’t sleep in the same bed. “Are you contracepting?” No, father, we haven’t gone to Mass for years. “Have you seen a counselor?” No, father, it’s too late for that.

I felt like asking them sternly why they disregarded the Church’s precepts, and why they ignored Her wisdom, and why they didn’t come to a priest sooner. But all I could do was comfort them as their marriage broke apart, and as they entered into the dreary and painful desert of the divorced. They could still be saints, if they faced the ongoing trauma of custody battles, financial crises, and darksome loneliness by turning to God in prayer. Many do become saints precisely through the tragedies of divorce, in the way that widows and widowers turn to God. Nevertheless, “preparing people for divorce” greatly pains and discourages the parish priest.

At the College, on the other hand, most of the people I serve are under 21. They are too young to drink, but not too young to prepare for lifelong marriage. Courtship at the two dozen or so serious Catholic colleges in the United States is a major occupation, and rightly so. Not only does College afford them intellectual, social, and spiritual formation — it affords an unprecedented pool of faithful and marriageable Catholics.

Interestingly, a significant percentage of students at these colleges have been called to the consecrated state. But living with authentically beautiful men and women anneals their call to virginity for the sake of the kingdom. For the rest, most of those who postpone marriage, a lifetime of happy marriage awaits them. They have only to follow the rules. They prepare for marriage by learning to pray alone and together, by sharpening their minds and their bodies for the contests ahead, and by assimilating the patrimonies of art and science. No one expects perfect happiness in their marriages, and they know grave marriage problems are always possible. But the smiles and lightness of foot among these couples lift us all up.

In the parish, a priest can come to resolve marriage preparation. Precious few engaged couples take their faith as seriously as they must to avoid divorce. As we witness their vows, we wonder how many will flee for divorce within the decade. At the College, however, I have rediscovered the joy of marriage preparation. These young couples — witnesses to purity and joy — have restored my confidence in marriage. If we have despaired of the very nature of marriage (as is evident in the ludicrous push for homosexual “marriage”), we need look no further than these young people to be reassured.

Rev. Joseph Illo, a chaplain at Thomas Aquinas College, served for 13 years as the pastor at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Modesto, Calif. This story originally appeared on his blog, From the Pastor’s Laptop, frillolblog.com.

Nature Morte Vivante
Student’s Botanical Paintings Grace Science Hall

Hanging in the hall of the Albertus Magnus Science Hall are two new scientific illustrations of native plants, the handiwork of Mariana Langley (14), a junior from Savannah, Ga. Earlier this year, while tending the campus grounds as part of her work-study job, Miss Langley noticed that senior tutor Dr. Thomas Kaiser had placed labels on the various plants around campus. That gave her an idea — and, in turn, a new work-study assignment.

“The idea of creating a botanical series was really a natural one,” she explains. “While working in the gardens around campus, I daily discovered interesting and new subjects for my sketchbook. Reading Fabre and Goethe in my freshman Natural Science tutorial encouraged me to investigate more closely, more exactly, the plants I was finding.” Her discoveries led her to approach Dr. Kaiser about creating scientific botanical illustrations for the College, and he readily agreed.

“Miss Langley’s idea very much fit with one of my own,” Dr. Kaiser recalls. “I had been working on a flora of the campus to go along with the freshman Natural Science class, so that when tutors take students for walks around campus, they can more easily identify the plants. We have numerous species that are closely related and are therefore hard to identify. I thought that if we could have scientific illustrations of those, where we could point out the differences, that would be very helpful.”

Now instead of tending to the campus plant life, Miss Langley illuminates it, using pencil, pen and ink, and watercolor on paper. Her aim, as she describes it, is “to integrate empirical and descriptive exploration with creative intent.” This combination of scientific accuracy and artistic beauty makes her illustrations a good fit not only for Dr. Kaiser’s intellectual project, since it investigates and then reconfigures nature in a specific and tangible synthesis,” she explains. “Inspired by Goethe’s empirical approach to the study of nature, I practice the art of drawing as a prelude to understanding nature and as a way to penetrate the surface appearances of things so as to discover their underlying structure.”

The resulting illustrations, says Dr. Kaiser, “are as instructive as they are beautiful.”

St. Vincent de Paul Lecture and Concert Series

Endowed by Barbara and Paul Henkels

Highlights from the Last Quarter

• Periodically members of the Thomas Aquinas College teaching faculty present informal lectures, followed by question-and-answer sessions, on campus. These late-afternoon gatherings afford an opportunity for tutors to speak, usually on the areas of their expertise, and for other members of the community to benefit from their experience and wisdom. On February 6, Dr. Elizabeth Reyes presented one such tutor talk on the subject, “Home few and the City in William Faulkner’s ‘Barn Burning.’”

• In honor of President’s Day, on February 22, Dr. Jeffrey Tulis (above), a professor in the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin, delivered a lecture entitled, “Is the Presidency too Strong?”

• Dr. William H. Donahue, director of laboratories at St. John’s College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, spoke on the subject of “Kepler’s Radical Aristotelianism” on March 15.

• The Thomas Aquinas College Choir performed its spring concert, featuring a selection of beloved operatic choruses, on April 12.

• The College invited Dr. Scott Crader, an associate professor of English at the University of Dallas, to present the final lecture of the academic year on April 19, “Figures Unethical: The Rhetoric of Marriage in Macbeth.”

Text and audio from select lectures and concerts are available at thomasaquinas.edu/lectures.
A Call for Conversion

By Michael Masteller ('13)

My own walk for life started before I had even left the campus of Thomas Aquinas College. For me, it was the sermon that one of our college chaplains gave Friday morning before we left that began this journey. We were celebrating the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, and in his homily, Rev. Joseph Illo compared our drive to San Francisco to St. Paul’s trip to Damascus. He stressed that we should think of our journey as a pilgrimage, and that just as St. Paul was converted, we too should be converted and strive to make this a prayerful event.

Although there was no doubt about our mission — we were going to march for life and stand up for the rights of the unborn — I was glad Fr. Illo made this clarification. It is easy to participate in an external way; the internal participation is a bit more difficult. We were not going merely to enjoy the City, or to convert abortionists; we were embarking on a journey of prayer and penance to bear witness to the Truth — and hopefully to be changed by this experience.

With this goal in mind, we set off for San Francisco after classes in two buses, with many more students taking their own cars. Our drive went very smoothly. We amused ourselves with sleeping and watching Star Wars movies; to keep a balance in the force, we also prayed a Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet so as to remain focused on our mission.

We arrived in the city around midnight and all piled into the basement gymnasium of Saints Peter and Paul Church, which were generously opened for us to use as temporary dormitories for our weekend stay. One could not ask for a better location: Not only were we within walking distance of downtown and other popular parts of the City, we also had access to Adoration all night. After we got situated in the basement, many students went upstairs to the church to pray and to prepare ourselves for the Walk for Life the next day. It was very peaceful upstairs to the church to pray and to prepare ourselves for the Walk for Life the next day. It was very peaceful.

Walking the Walk

The next morning we headed to St. Mary’s Cathedral for the pro-life Mass. As we approached the cathedral, we could see that the whole block was surrounded with police cars and motorcycles to pave the way for our march. As we drew closer, I could not help but feel a certain heaviness come over me. Having so much anger and hate being directed at you is what to expect from these protestors. As we drew closer, I could not help but feel a certain heaviness come over me. Having so much anger and hate being directed at you is an easy thing, but we raised our voices in song, and with smiles, pushed through. There was a stark contrast between the wild ferocity and anger of the protesters and our calm peacefulness and prayer.

At this year’s Walk for Life West Coast, students wore matching sweatsuits bearing the phrase, “In Memory of Andrew ‘Kent’ Moore, Class of 2014”. Last summer, Kent, then a rising junior, participated in a Crossroads Walk Across America. Tragically, on the morning of July 20, 2012, he was struck and killed by an oncoming vehicle alongside a highway in Indiana. Since then, this shy, young defender of the unborn — who tirelessly prayed outside of abortion clinics when he was a student at the College — has become a hero to a generation of pro-lifers. In his honor, the Archdiocese of Washington asked the College to prepare a video that was featured at a youth rally prior to this year’s March for Life in Washington, D.C. The video is available via the Andrew Moore tribute page on the College’s website, thomasaquinas.edu/andrew-moore.

Reflections from the Walk

Mr. Masteller is a senior from Santa Paula, Calif. This story originally appeared on Zeronet.org.
The cry began at the front of the line, where I walked with 12 other leaders of the Walk for Life West Coast. Soft at first, the noise swelled as it passed from person to person, growing in intensity and passion until a tidal wave of sound echoed back as a dull roar from the end of the line a mile and a half away.

The outburst was an encomium for those whose greatness we will never know; a memorial to those faces we will never see; a lament for those whose loss we will never fully realize. We were raising our voices for those who have no voice. And all the horror, grief, and frustration that had accumulated over the continual destruction of inarticulate innocents was contained in that outraged and anguished cry. Yet, for all its heart-wrenching emotion and passion, the cry itself was inarticulate — it too, in some fundamental way, was voiceless. This made me wonder, even as I contributed to the sound, “Is this all that we can do? Is this the extent of the power of my voice?”

Reflecting on the Walk for Life, I have often wondered why, given the training we receive, the College doesn’t encourage us to be more active during our time here. After all, if our formation is so ideal, it seems as though we ought to seek opportunities to practice the virtues we’re learning. Why wait until after graduation to become active in the world around us?

It seems to me there are two reasons why the school imposes these limitations. First, activism requires training — and training requires commitment. Extra activities are distracting and sometimes all-consuming; my own participation in organizing the Walk this year caused several days of poor class preparation and even some absences. There is also a necessary order of development: I must first determine my convictions, because I cannot be an activist if I lack true conviction as the motivation for my action. This is our time to prepare, to develop our thoughts, spirits, and hearts. Thomas Aquinas College’s decision not to endorse extra activities, while it might seem arbitrary, is an attempt to ensure our focus on the primary goal: to train in virtue.

Second, Thomas Aquinas College’s seclusion offers our students a unique opportunity to form our own characters. This goes beyond the strengthening of our spiritual lives and the peaceful opportunity to develop habits of virtue in a strong moral community. Through the College’s decision not to endorse extra activities, my participation in them becomes truly my own. I don’t take part in such events because they are convenient, but rather because they are necessary to my formation. My activism is not as a TAC pro-lifer, but as Zachary Reynolds, who is being equipped to choose the pro-life position for my life and to live in conformity with that conviction.

In this respect, the school’s policy of limiting our extra-curricular activities becomes its greatest strength; my pure commitment to my formation here produces my ability to lead and to act. Thomas Aquinas College is not merely a beginning from which one may fall away; rather, the education is a firm foundation upon which to build our lives.

Going to San Francisco each year is an opportunity to use the abilities we students are gaining, but one that doesn’t prematurely launch us. Experiencing the Walk for Life makes us excited for what we can do, but also makes us more to our voice than an impassioned cry; that we are capable of so much more than mere noise. Through Thomas Aquinas College’s dedication to purpose and each student’s dedication to the education it offers, we are developing voices that are worthy of being heard and that will have something of value to say.
early 500 people arrived on the campus of Thomas Aquinas College Saturday, February 16, filling the pews of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel to remember and to pray for the soul of John W. Blewett. A former vice president of the College who, for 18 years, oversaw the development of the campus, Mr. Blewett played a key role in the history of the College. He was famous for his reverence, his friendliness, and his determination—all of which were reflected in the day’s memorial.

The morning began with a requiem Mass in the Chapel, offered in the extraordinary form, and fittingly so, given Mr. Blewett’s love of the Tridentine Mass. Serving as celebrant was one of Mr. Blewett’s grandsons, the Rev. John Blewett, SJ, parochial vicar of Holy Cross Parish in Mazomanie, Wis., joined in the sanctuary by all three of the College’s chaplains and numerous visiting priests. The Thomas Aquinas College Choir and Schola Cantorum filled the Chapel with sacred music from the choir loft, while Mr. Blewett’s casket rested just outside the sanctuary under the dome.

A long caravan of vehicles then left the campus for a brief graveside service at Santa Paula Cemetery, where one of the College’s founders, Mr. Marcus A. Berquist, and its late president, Dr. Thomas E. Dillon, are also buried. The vehicles then returned to campus for a luncheon and memorial, where Mr. Blewett’s children, grandchildren, friends, and former colleagues shared memories of a man who was tireless in his devotion to God, in his care for his family, and his love of his friends.

When he was a college student, attending Seattle University on a basketball scholarship, Mr. Blewett was a fighter, diving for every loose ball and battling for every rebound. After his graduation in 1951, he would bring that same intensity to his work as a longshoreman, a sportswriter, a labor negotiator for the Kaiser family of companies, and ultimately as a vice president of Thomas Aquinas College.

As a testament to God’s providence, Mr. Blewett arrived at the College on October 7, 1980. It was the start of the third academic year on the then-new campus near Santa Paula, Calif. With just one permanent building, the College teetered on the verge of insolvency, and it was mired in a land-use conflict with local oil interests. What it needed was someone who could oversee a massive building project, operate on a razor-thin budget, and stare down a barrage of corporate lawyers and negotiators.

Enter John W. Blewett, 52 years old, with decades of business experience under his belt. With two daughters enrolled at the College, he understood both its predica- ment and its promise. “We can truly say of him, more than anyone else, that without his help we might not have been able to shape the campus as it is today,” says Dr. Ronald P. McCarthy, the College’s founding presi- dent. “There was never anyone who could doubt his sin- cerity of purpose, and as such he remains an example for all of us who have undertaken the good fight.”

During his tenure, Mr. Blewett oversaw the construc- tion of the College’s first classroom building, St. August- ine Hall; St. Bernardine of Siena Library; and three of the College’s founders: Katharine Masteller (‘82), Margaret Wall (‘82), and Paul (‘85). To date, four of their 28 grand- children also have gone on to attend the College: Joseph DeTier (‘11) and Mary Colette (‘11), Michael (‘13), and Anna-Maria Masteller (‘16).

“John loved this school. He gave his heart and soul to this school. For that we will be forever grateful,” says President Michael F. McLean. “The repose of his soul will remain in the prayers of this college community going forward, now and forever.”


A long time friend of Thomas Aqui- nas College from afar, the Most Rev. John M. D’Arcy, Bishop Emeritus of Fort Wayne–South Bend (Ind.), had planned to make his first visit to campus this summer.

Alas, God called him on another journey instead. After a brief bout with brain and lung cancer, Bishop D’Arcy died on February 3, exactly 56 years after offering his first Mass after his ordination to the priest- hood in 1957.

“I look forward to this special day and to visiting your campus,” the Bishop wrote last year, accepting President Michael F. McLean’s invitation to serve as the College’s 2013 Convocation Speaker. “I hold you and your college in high regard,” says Dr. McLean. “Bishop D’Arcy was a fine man and a faithful priest. We are sorry for his loss and sorry that he will not be here for Convocation; but he will be in our prayers, and we are confident that he is praying for us, too.”

The son of Irish immigrants, Bishop D’Arcy was born and raised in Boston, thus explaining this Midwestern prelate’s Massachusetts accent and his lifelong love of the Red Sox. He entered the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Boston at the age of 25, serving as a parish priest and a teacher at St. John’s Seminary in Boston until his ordina- tion as an auxiliary bishop in 1975.

During his time in the Archdiocese, which would become grueling given his tireless work for the priestly abuse scandals, Bishop D’Arcy was notable for his defense of children in the Church. In 1984, years before the scandal garnered serious media or ecclesiastical attention, he wrote a pro- phetic letter to his superior, Bernard Cardinal Law, then the Archbishop of Boston, strenuously objecting to the transfer of an abusive priest. Twenty years later, the U.S. Bishops’ National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People heralded Bishop D’Arcy as “a voice in the wilderness” for his role in bringing the abuse crisis into the public eye.

In 1988, BL John Paul II named him Excellency the Bishop of Fort Wayne–South Bend, the diocese that includes the University of Notre Dame. During that time, Bishop D’Arcy developed a friendship with Thomas Aquinas College by way of numerous alumni who attended Notre Dame for graduate school, some of whom later returned to the College as members of the teaching faculty. “I have met some of your undergraduate students at Notre Dame,” Bishop D’Arcy once wrote in a letter to Dr. McLean. “They are strong in their faith and in their devotion to learning. You and your college deserve great credit for this.”

One of those students was Thomas Aquinas College Dean Brian T. Kelly who, after graduating from the Col- lege in 1988, earned a master’s degree and a doctorate in medieval studies at Notre Dame. “As a graduate student I was blessed to have Bishop D’Arcy as my local ordinary,” says Dr. Kelly. “He was a true pastor; he cared nothing for public acclaim but only for the souls placed under his care. He was a humble and cheerful man.”

As in Boston, at times during his tenure in Fort Wayne–South Bend, Bishop D’Arcy was compelled to take unpopular stands on behalf of the Church and Her people, doing so with strength and humility. Most nota- bly, in 2009 he led 82 other American bishops, archbish- ops, and cardinals in protesting Notre Dame’s decision to grant President Barack Obama an honorary degree, despite the president’s public support of legal abortion.

“Bishop D’Arcy prudently and courageously stood up for the beauty and the truth of Church teaching,” reflects Dr. Kelly, “even in the face of strong public pressure.”

He was, above all else, a priest — a shepherd and protector of souls — a duty he considered his greatest blessing. “Over everything, I am grateful for the gifts of the Holy Priesthood,” the Bishop wrote in his last public statement to his people of Fort Wayne–South Bend. “I never felt worthy of it. I thank God with all my heart that I was appointed by Christ through the Church as sheep- herd of our beloved diocese.”
The College mourns the loss of a dear friend and the former Vice Chairman of its Board of Governors, James L. Barrett, who died March 14, surrounded by family and loved ones.

A graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles, and Loyola University Law School, Mr. Barrett served on a submarine for two years during the Korean War. When he left the Navy in 1951, he began practicing law in Los Angeles, and in 1959 opened his own firm, which quickly expanded. At its peak, Barrett, Stearns, Collins, Gleason & Kinney had 26 attorneys and specialized in shopping-center development.

In 1972 Mr. Barrett left his law practice and purchased an abandoned vineyard in Napa, launching a new career as a vintner. Only four years later one of his Chateau Montelena chardonnays stunned the wine-drinking world by besting nine prestigious French counterparts at a Paris blind tasting. That event, chronicled in the book Judgment of Paris: California vs. France and the History of the 1976 Paris Tasting that Revolutionized Wine, is still widely regarded as the defining moment in the history of American wine, and Chateau Montelena Winery is still acclaimed as one of the world’s best.

With his wife, Judy, Mr. Barrett began supporting Thomas Aquinas College in its early, “pioneer” days. “We got into a sacred Conestoga wagon and set across the plains for the promised land,” he once joked. Soon after becoming the College’s second president, the late Dr. Thomas E. Dillon and his wife, Terri, visited the Barretts, and a close bond was instantly formed. “We became blood brothers,” Mr. Barrett remarked, noting that he and Dr. Dillon collaborated in many ways to help firmly establish the College.

The Barretts first became members of the College’s President’s Council in 1987. Over the years, they gave generously to the annual scholarship fund as well as to the construction of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. In 1992 Mr. Barrett joined the Board of Governors, serving as vice chairman from 2004 to 2008, and retiring in 2010, at which time he was named an Emeritus member.

“For us, Thomas Aquinas College is a spiritual, cultural, and intellectual oasis in a cultural wilderness,” Mr. Barrett once said. “We have tremendous confidence in the bright, articulate young men and women that are, and will be, graduating from here. These are young men and women committed, morally and spiritually, to fighting for the good of our society and a sound Catholic Church in America.”

“Jim was surely an Irishman who kissed the blarney stone. A man with a great sense of humor but also a driven man regarding those causes he believed to be important. Thomas Aquinas College was one of his passions. He was always a dedicated and very involved Board member. He would never hesitate to express his views to the Board and provide valuable counsel. Often he would call me a few days after a Board meeting to add emphasis to his views expressed at the meeting. The welfare of our school was ever on his mind. I will miss him.”

– R. James Wensley
Chairman of the Board of Governors

“Jim was a compassionate and generous man who worked and fought for what he believed in. The history of Thomas Aquinas College would look very different without him. He was not only one of the most generous men I ever met, but beyond this he initiated his own generosity. He supported the College handsomely and always made discussions of his support relaxing experiences. All this was done in the spirit of the Gospels: We needed his support in order for our school to survive, and he was bound by that very Gospel to offer it in a spirit of equality. I have for this reason never forgotten Jim, but one could go on at much greater length about the other virtues surrounding his generosity. I thank God I met Jim Barrett. He has been for me an anchor in those parts of my life that have touched upon the support of Catholic institutions. Though in later years I did not see Jim very much at all, it was yet a pleasing thought to think that he was among us in our pilgrimage. I can’t help but think that God will reward him and take him to the eternal life he so lived for.”

– Dr. Ronald P. McArthur
President Emeritus

“Jim was a man of faith, a pursuer of the truth, full of fun and laughter, and a true friend. He was a leader, a gifted and talented man concerned with supporting good causes. Jim had great interest in the intellectual life and was a generous benefactor to Thomas Aquinas College. My late husband, Tom, and I considered Jim and Judy Barrett to be the dearest of friends. Tom and Jim were true comrades. Tom had such respect, love, and gratitude for all the many ways Jim supported him and his endeavors during his tenure as president of Thomas Aquinas College. They had so much fun together, even while engaging in noble pursuits. It was a real delight for me to be in their presence. These two dear friends are now with God in Whom love and friendship reign forever. May the Lord make His face to shine upon Jim and give him peace. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. Thank you for everything, my dear friend, Jim Barrett.”

– Terri Dillon

“Jim was a man of culture. I first met 25 years ago at a Summer Seminar at Thomas Aquinas College and immediately took to each other as brothers. The impression I’ve had of him over the years was that of a very devout and devoted Catholic who endeavored during his tenure as president of Thomas Aquinas College. ‘We got into a sacred Conestoga wagon and set across the plains for the promised land.’ He once joked. Soon after becoming the College’s second president, the late Dr. Thomas E. Dillon and his wife, Terri, visited the Barretts, and a close bond was instantly formed. ’We became blood brothers,’ Mr. Barrett remarked, noting that he and Dr. Dillon collaborated in many ways to help firmly establish the College. The Barretts first became members of the College’s President’s Council in 1987. Over the years, they gave generously to the annual scholarship fund as well as to the construction of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. In 1992 Mr. Barrett joined the Board of Governors, serving as vice chairman from 2004 to 2008, and retiring in 2010, at which time he was named an Emeritus member.

“As evidenced by his years of committed service to the College as a governor, Jim was a compassionate and generous man who worked and fought for what he believed in. The history of Thomas Aquinas College would look very different without Jim and Judy’s dedication and friendship.”

– Maria Grant
Member of the Board of Governors

– Richard Grant
President, Dan Murphy Foundation
I still remember so vividly, even though it was the summer of 1999, when I went to sleep one night thinking, "This is it. This is where I am going to college." It was about the fifth or sixth day at Thomas Aquinas College’s Great Books Summer Program, and I was excited to be there, but I wasn’t too aware of the unusual purpose of the College.

I reflected about the days having fun, making friends, thinking about my upcoming year of high school, but not really trying to understand the program itself. In fact, I hadn’t spoken in my class yet, content instead just to listen and follow the conversation of the rest of my peers as they animatedly discussed the readings in our daily seminar sessions. I was intrigued by the works we read, and had many thoughts on them, but did not have the confidence to present them out loud. What my classmates said seemed fine to me, and so I sat, and thought, and listened.

However, all that changed one evening after dinner when I was chatting with a friend on the steps by the Our Lady of Guadalupe fountain. A summer program worker and current student at the College stopped by to say hello, and asked us how we thought the program was going. I blurted, “Great! It’s so beautiful here, I love California, and I love how everyone is so friendly and faithful and fun to be around.” He replied, yes that’s true, but what about the program?

Oh, the program? He then sat down with us and asked a question: Tell me one thing that is important in your life? I replied, “My family.” And his response was, why? With that came a shrug and initial hesitation; but with more questions, the added comments of my friend, and the wheels of my mind thinking and turning things over in various perspectives, I came to a deeper realization and understanding of my immediate answer. I had discovered a new perspective on my family, and not just them, but on families in general, and their importance and impact on human nature, society, life, and even the afterlife. I had discovered a truth that took hold and stayed with me.

It was quite the conversation, one that took us to curfew, and one that I was surprised I had contributed to so much. As I went back to the residence hall and settled into sleep, the thoughts still whirling in my head, I came to that realization as clear and vivid then as it is now, “This is it. This is where I am going to college. This is what I want to do.” I wanted to think, to discover the truth about things, to reason and reflect on what matters in our lives, to understand the world around me from a perspective unhindered by another’s bias or predetermined mindset. I wanted to grapple with the questions that man has always grappled with, and to learn the answers as best I could.

I had realized that education was not about the amount of knowledge learned, but about how it was learned. I wanted to take control of that knowledge, guided by the wisdom of Thomas Aquinas College’s tutors, the insights and fresh perspective of my peers, and by the faith of my Catholic beliefs.

And so did I. I’ve been in school practically all my life; I’m currently finishing up my doctorate in graduate school. My undergraduate years at the College, however, were the four most challenging and the four most rewarding years of them all.

After that conversation it took me a couple of more classes before I gathered my courage to enter into my class conversation. Once I did, it was the light turning on again. This was how school should be! To be responsible for my learning, to develop my critical thinking skills, to learn how to effectively communicate, to read and discuss these texts without the filter of an editor was all in my grasp. I wanted to skip the rest of high school and enter Thomas Aquinas College right away. Yet I returned to high school with a new perspective on education, and found myself more frequently raising my hand to ask questions or propose comments. An education is not passive; it is active, alive, and all within reach at a college such as Thomas Aquinas, where to be liberally educated is to be truly free.

Being a Prefect

Over the years, I have been blessed to take part on the other side of Thomas Aquinas College’s Summer Program, working as a prefect to help with the running of the program, but more importantly, to help the high school students understand the program. Many students came from a mindset similar to my own at that age: unsure of the purpose of studying the great books, unfamiliar with the meaning of liberal arts, and uncertain of presenting their own thoughts in a seminar class. Slowly but surely, as the days passed and as their friendships deepened and the texts became more intriguing, it was wonderful to see their minds take charge, jumping into the discussions with animation and resolve.

I remember one of the students coming up to me after a class on Macbeth, saying, “Kathleen! I just made an awesome point about Lady Macbeth and the prophecy in class! Look, here…” and he pulled out his text, pointed out the passage in question, and began explaining his insight with enthusiasm as I followed along, question-ing and commenting on his assessment. It was especially rewarding because I remember this student groaning earlier in the day because he had to read an entire Shakespeare play in one afternoon. We made a point of sitting at the dinner table together so that we could continue the conversation with other students.

Discussing a Shakespearean tragedy over chicken and mashed potatoes with eager young minds as if the only thing that mattered right then was discovering the truth of this particular interpretation… such is an everyday occurrence at Thomas Aquinas College. Truth matters, and it should be shared. It is so exciting to see those high school students discover it, discuss it, and delight in it.

I remember another time helping a student work her way through a Euclidian proposition. It was a difficult proposition, and it took some time, but the moment when the light turned on for her — the moment when she saw how the steps logically followed to the conclusion — that moment is the best. It takes me back to my childhood days of begging my parents to “Watch me! Watch this!” since the desire to have a companion in good things never diminishes. That one student made me smile as she sighed in relief, turned to me, said joyfully, “Now watch how she demonstrates to the rest of us!”

The amount of Summer Program students who return to the College for a visit, who apply to the College, who attend and graduate from the College, is a sign of the worth of those two weeks. In a short time, students come to realize one of the vital necessities in life — we are given the gift of reason, and with that comes the responsibility to develop it and use it.

In the great books program, by encountering the original thoughts and minds of the thinkers of the past, these young students are both enabling their minds to think rationally and training their minds to communicate clearly. Freeing themselves from the shackles of ignorance, especially in the faith-filled atmosphere of the College, these young students become more aware of their purpose in life, become more certain in their hope for a life eternal, and become more eager to live a rational, moral, and ethical life — to live the good life.

Kathleen Sullivan (’06), a doctoral student in literature at the Catholic University of America, has served as a prefect for the College’s High School Summer Program for each of the last eight years. To learn more about the Summer Program, see www.thomasaquinas.edu/summerprogram.
From Philosopher to Physician

Alumni Profile: Caroline Johnson, M.D. ('97)

A Change of Plans

In short order, Dr. Johnson abandoned her pursuit of philosophy in order to become a physician. She returned to her childhood home in Western Canada and enrolled at the University of Victoria, where she completed the prerequisite courses to apply to medical school. Although she could have pursued her study of medicine more quickly had she taken the prerequisites as an undergraduate, Dr. Johnson does not begrudge the great books curriculum she studied at the College. “If I had to do it over again 100 times, I would not do anything differently,” she insists.

“In this life, there’s really only one goal, and that’s to get to Heaven at the end and to serve God here. To do that you need to prepare — no matter what you are, a ditch-digger, a garbage man, or a neonatologist — you have to have the proper formation, and you cannot get it from books. They can teach you the science. They can teach you the technicalities. They can teach you the latest breakthroughs. But they cannot teach you the love of God through the soul of another person. They cannot teach you Christian charity. They cannot impress upon you that this corporal work of mercy is what it is.”

Dr. Johnson’s experience at the College proved invaluable not only for her personal and spiritual formation, but also for the medical-school admissions process. “When I was applying, the schools looked at me as a nontraditional student, in large part because of the classes I had taken, and they loved it,” she says. “They told me that to get to Heaven at the end and to serve God here. To do it over again 100 times, I would not do anything differently.”

Medical School and Beyond

In 2002, as she was preparing for her first year of studies at Rush Medical College in Chicago, Dr. Johnson underwent a routine physical examination that resulted in a shocking discovery — a malignant ovarian tumor. She underwent surgery, and the tumor was removed. Dr. Johnson then received treatments including chemotherapy.

“Usually the hospital will have an emergency-room doctor, but for everything else, it’s me,” says Dr. Johnson. “It can be anything from an infection of the skin to some- one coming in with pain in the chest. In extreme cases, we can airlift a patient anywhere, but for the most part, we don’t have the benefit of a specialist. I can’t call in a gastrointestinal doctor to come see a case of liver disease. It’s up to me. I have to be prepared for situations I could not possibly have expected.”

“Unusually the hospital will have an emergency-room doctor, but for everything else, it’s me,” says Dr. Johnson. “It can be anything from an infection of the skin to someone coming in with pain in the chest. In extreme cases, we can airlift a patient anywhere, but for the most part, we don’t have the benefit of a specialist. I can’t call in a gastrointestinal doctor to come see a case of liver disease. It’s up to me. I have to be prepared for situations I could not possibly have expected.”

A Work of Mercy

Looking back, Dr. Johnson now sees the College’s program of liberal education as ideal preparation for a medical career — but that is not why she enrolled some 20 years ago. It was not the four years of natural science or the breadth of the classical curriculum that appealed to her, but the College’s students. “They were very outgoing, very friendly, very genuine,” she recalls of a trip to campus while in high school. “They were the first and most poignant example of what I was going to get into.”

Dr. Johnson entered the College in 1993 with her brother, Benjamin, who went on to marry a classmate, Brigit (McNally ’97), and is now a father of four and a lieutenant colonel in the United States Marine Corps. Reflecting on her and Benjamin’s time on campus, Dr. Johnson says, “It solidified and blossomed the bud of faith for us both.” Four years later, she left the College with — she thought — a strong sense of what she wanted to do with her life: study philosophy. “I had applied and was accepted to the Angelicum in Rome, with a long-term plan to go into education,” Dr. Johnson says. “But the Lord kept leading me, by way of little signs in my life, sug- gesting that He had something else in mind for me.”

What that “something else” was first became apparent shortly after graduation, when she and her brother paid a visit to Rev. Thomas Conn, S.J., a beloved chaplain at the College who was then dying of cancer. They were blessed to be with Fr. Conn at his deathbed, witnessing his passing into eternal life as well as the corporal works of mercy administered by those attending to him. “I remember watching his nurse,” says Dr. Johnson. “She had this nice, practical approach to medicine. That really stuck with me.”

And when she was not traveling, she shares a home with her sister Katherine (’06), a nurse in Phoenix. She also occasionally gives talks to area medical students, advising them about the medical profession, and reminding them of their purpose as physicians. “Our society can put men on the moon. We can make fancy phones and computers. But the human body is a mystery to us and always will be,” she says. “As doctors, we need to have a basic recogni- tion of who we are in relation to God and the world, and a sense of humility.”

Calling to mind a lesson she first learned at Fr. Conn’s bedside, she notes, “Although there is much we cannot do, there is also so much we can do. It is our gift to help others in their suffering.”

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805–421–5928

Because the future needs the wisdom of the past...
1. The women of Thomas Aquinas College square off in the annual “Powder Puff Bowl,” a friendly game of flag football. 2. Students celebrate St. Patrick’s Day with green garb, Celtic music, and Irish dance. 3-4. There were kilts and bagpipes, and the tossing of stones and cabers, at the campus Highland Games in March. 5. Students perform in the Spring Schubertiade in St. Bernardine of Siena Library. 6. CBS News correspondent Carter Evans interviews Martin Zepeda ('14) as part of the network’s March 17 story, “American Catholic Youth on Pope Francis.” 7. Students enjoy one last pre-Lenten night of music and feasting at the Mardi Gras dance.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekdays</th>
<th>Saturdays</th>
<th>Sundays</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 a.m.**</td>
<td>7:15 a.m.**</td>
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<td>11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>11:30 a.m.</td>
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* Schedules may vary; if traveling from afar, please call in advance to confirm.
** The First Mass of each day is offered in the extraordinary form.

Calendar of Events

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

Commencement, Cardinal DiNardo Presiding .............................................May 11
Alumni Association Dinner ......................................................................... June 2
Thomas Aquinas College Golf Classic
Sherwood Country Club.................................................................................. June 3
West Coast Meeting of the Society for Aristotelian-Thomistic Studies
thomasaquinas.edu/SATS. ...........................................................................June 13-14
Fifth Annual Conference on the Social Doctrine of the Church
thomasaquinas.edu/socialdoctrine .......................................................June 14-15
Summer Seminars 2013 — The Year of Faith: Marriage and the Family
thomasaquinas.edu/summerseminars .........................July 12-14 & July 19-21
Summer Great Books Program for High School Students
thomasaquinas.edu/summerprogram .......................July 21-August 3
Seminar: “On Human Work”
At the Napa Institute 2013 Conference ................................................ August 1

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