An Open Letter to President Obama

The following open letter to President Barack Obama appeared on the back page of the May 20, 2012, issue of the National Catholic Register:

On January 20, 2012 Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, declared that, “Nonprofit employers who, based on religious beliefs, do not currently provide contraceptive coverage in their insurance plan, will be provided an additional year…to comply with the new law [requiring that such coverage be provided]… This additional year will allow these organizations more time and flexibility to adapt to this new rule.”

It is manifestly an affront to the American conception of religious liberty and to the first amendment of the United States Constitution to demand that citizens “adapt” to a violation of conscience. As if in recognition of this fact, you issued what you called an “accommodation” on February 10th. Unfortunately, this new final decision did nothing to change your demand that Catholics and other religious groups violate their consciences. Your new requirement aims to offer a range of free contraceptive services, including sterilization and abortifacients, to all women no matter where they work. As president, you have decided to require that insurance companies pay for these services and insist that this change frees the employer from any moral culpability.

It is obvious, however, that the employee only qualifies for these services because the employer has signed her up and paid her premiums. If the employer stops such payments the health insurance company will discontinue these services. It is false to claim that these services will be totally unconnected with the employer when the employer pays for the policy that provides access to these services.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops points out that “where the employee and insurer agree to add the objectionable coverage, that coverage is still provided as a part of the objecting employer’s plan.” Putting it simply, when the employer pays, the contraceptive services are provided; when the employer stops paying, the contraceptive services are discontinued. Clearly there is a causal link between the employer’s payment and the provision of services.

With Archbishop Chaput we decry this mandate as “coercive and deeply troubling in its implications for the rights of conscience.” With the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops we call on the Department of Health and Human Services “to rescind the mandate of these objectionable services.” We insist that there is room in this great nation for the Catholic citizen. Our Faith calls us to do more than worship in common on Sunday. We must also heed the commands to feed the poor, tend the sick, and instruct the ignorant. That is why there is such a rich tradition of Catholic action in founding and supporting charities, hospitals, and schools. If this mandate stands it will not only make it impossible for us to provide insurance for our faculty and staff but would make it very difficult for us to continue this great tradition without violating our religious beliefs.

It is opposed to the spirit of American religious tolerance and to the letter of the Constitution to demand that citizens choose between their civic and religious obligations. It puts people of faith in an untenable position. When forced to choose, we will say, as Peter and John did to the rulers and elders in Acts 4, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God, you must judge.”

R. James Wensley
Chairman, Board of Governors

Michael F. McLean
President

Members of the Board of Governors

Members of the Faculty

Vol. 40, No. 3
Summer 2012

Thomas Aquinas College Newsletter
From the Desk of the President

Defending Our First Freedom

In the months since the United States Department of Health and Human Services issued its mandate requiring Catholic institutions such as Thomas Aquinas College to provide insurance coverage free of charge for contraceptive services, including abortifacients and sterilization, the governors and faculty of the College have deliberated about the course of action we should take. The open letter to President Obama featured on the front page of this issue of the Newsletter is a distillation of our thoughts on the matter, and articulates our objections to the contraceptive mandate. It will come as no surprise that to date we have received no response.

While hoping, as so many did, that the issue would be rendered moot by a decision of the United States Supreme Court, we nevertheless opened preliminary discussions with legal experts about how we might mount a challenge to the mandate. Now that the Supreme Court has allowed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to stand, we have taken up these conversations again and will come to a determination in the early fall about whether we should move forward, and if so, when that move should be made. As we have already seen, a number of cases filed in the spring have been dismissed on the grounds that the issue is not yet “ripe.”

Exercising First Principles

Meanwhile, here at the College we have had occasion in these last months to spend some time thinking about the principles on which our country was founded, and the degree to which freedom — in all things, including religion — was cherished by those who risked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to bring our nation to life.

In particular, we have just completed two summer seminar weekends during which we studied and discussed with friends of the College a series of readings about the character of America. A wide range of readings was available, but after some research and consideration we settled on a short story by Hawthorne written in 1857, “The May-pole of Merry Mount,” two seminal political deliberations of James Madison from The Federalist Papers; and selections from Alexis de Tocqueville’s wise and penetrating observations of American government, religion, and culture, Democracy in America, Volume 1 of which was published in 1835, Volume 2 in 1840.

The wedding of two of the May-polers provides the grounds that the issue is not yet “ripe.”

The Church Speaks

Tocqueville here echoes St. Thomas Aquinas, whom we often read in our summer seminars. St. Thomas stresses the dependence of the human law on the eternal and natural laws, and the ordination of government to the common goods of moral, intellectual, and ultimately theological virtue. It is good for Catholics to be reminded of the essential role religion plays in public life.

In so reminding us, Tocqueville anticipates the words of one of our modern popes, Pope Pius XII, who in his 1944 Christmas Message quoted Pope Leo XIII’s 1888 Encyclical Libertas, in which Leo wrote that “it is not forbidden to prefer temperate, popular forms of government, without prejudice, however, to Catholic teaching on the origin and use of authority… adding that “the Church does not disapprove of any of the various forms of government, provided they be per se capable of securing the good of the citizens.”

After quoting Pope Leo, Pope Pius outlines in his own words the nature of true democracy and its ideals of liberty and equality: “In a people worthy of the name, the citizen feels within him the consciousness of his personality, of his duties and rights, of his own freedom joined to respect for the freedom and dignity of others; in a people worthy of the name inequalities based on the nature of things, inequalities of culture, possessions, social standing — without, of course, prejudice to justice and mutual charity — do not constitute any obstacle to the existence and the prevalence of a true spirit of union and brotherhood … on the contrary, so far from impairing civil equality in any way, they give it its true meaning: namely, that, before the State, everyone has the right to live honorably his own personal life in the place and under the conditions in which the designs and dispositions of Providence have placed him.”

As we go to press with this issue of the Newsletter, I am preparing to travel to Northern California where my colleague, Paul O’Reilly, a longtime tutor and our vice president for development, and I will take part in the Napa Institute’s conference on “Catholics in the Next America.” On the first morning of the conference, we will each lead a seminar discussion about the meaning and implications of Dignitatis Humanae, the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom. We will ask, “What are the responsibilities of government toward religious communities?” and “What deference must believers accord to civil authorities?” These questions and others like them have great urgency in our current political situation and will weigh heavily on the lives of Catholics in America for years to come.

Please keep Thomas Aquinas College in your prayers in the coming months. The threat posed by the HHS mandate to the well-being of this institution is very real. As we continue to consult with our legal counsel, we will look to the example of Thomas More, layman, scholar, statesman, and saint. We pray that in this matter of law, government, and prudence, we might serve God as he did, confident in the authority of a well-formed conscience, a conscience guided by the teaching authority of the Catholic Church.

Andrew Kentigern Moore (’14)
1991 - 2012

As this issue of the College Newsletter was headed to press, we received the sad news that one of our rising juniors, Andrew Kentigern Moore, was struck by an automobile and killed while participating in the Crossroads Pro-Life Walk Across America. The accident took place just outside of Indianapolis, Ind. Andrew and a fellow walker were praying the rosary at the moment he was hit. Please pray for the repose of his soul and the consolation of his parents and four brothers and sisters. May he rest in peace.

For more information and tributes to this young champion of the pro-life cause please visit the College’s website: www.thomasaquinas.edu/andrew-moore.
Sir Anthony Hopkins Visits College, Takes Questions from Students

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Foundation Makes Largest Grant to Date

Among the College’s most enduring challenges is meeting the financial aid needs of the more than 70 percent of qualified students whose families cannot afford the cost of tuition. That hurdle has just become somewhat lower, however, thanks to the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations. The Foundations, which in the past have supported the construction of St. Monica’s Hall and Albertus Magnus Science Hall, recently announced their largest single gift to the College — a $250,000 endowed scholarship fund.

“We are profoundly grateful that the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations are helping us to keep our commitment that no student ever be turned away from the College for financial reasons,” said Dr. McLean. Noting that the Foundations award grants, in part, on the basis of an institution’s alumni support, Dr. McLean also thanked the College’s alumni, whose giving rate is among the top 10 in the country.

Sixth Annual Thomas Aquinas College Golf Classic

Sherwood Country Club in Westlake Village, Calif., was the site of the sixth annual Thomas Aquinas College Golf Classic, hosted by the Greater Los Angeles Board of Regents on May 21. The Classic benefits the many students who rely on assistance from the school’s scholarship fund. Sixty-six golfers participated in this year’s event, which was followed by a clubhouse awards ceremony and reception, at which student singers performed for their benefactors. President Michael F. McLean and Greater Los Angeles Board of Regents Chairman Scott Daily were also on hand to speak about the College and to present awards to this year’s winners.

College Hosts Spring 2012 Legatus-Aquinas Forum

On March 24 Thomas Aquinas College hosted the annual Legatus-Aquinas Forum for some 17 members and guests of the Ventura-North Los Angeles and Orange County chapters of Legatus, the international organization of Catholic business executives. The day began with Mass in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel and concluded with a 90-minute seminar on T. S. Eliot’s Murder in the Cathedral. Dr. and Mrs. McLean then hosted a luncheon in the Doheny Hacienda, at which Dr. McLean presented a talk about the reading and its timely insights regarding Church-state relations.

The Legatus-Aquinas forum is a wonderful opportunity to experience a small taste of the educational method that Thomas Aquinas College students participate in every day,” said R. Scott Turiciuchi, a Legate and vice chairman of the College’s Board of Governors. “It requires a careful reading of the text, an ability to articulate your thoughts clearly, and to think on your feet. I hope that the students appreciate such a unique experience and the valuable critical-thinking skills that it will provide them for the rest of their lives.”

Social Doctrine Conference

On the weekend of June 22-24, the College hosted the fourth annual conference on the Social Doctrine of the Church, sponsored by The Aquinas Review, with more than 60 alumni and guests in attendance. The theme of this year’s conference was “The Nature of Private Property.” Attendees took part in a series of three seminars concerning fundamental topics underlying the Church’s teaching on economics and social justice.

These conferences are, in part, a response to a request, in 2005, from Renato Raffaele Cardinal Martino, then-Prefect of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Having just published the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, His Eminence asked the College to help advance the understanding of the Church’s social teaching. In the spirit of that request, Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, president of Thomas Aquinas College, tutor, and editor of The Aquinas Review, launched the annual conference. At this year’s gathering attendees participated in three seminars examining readings from Aristotle’s Politics and St. Thomas Aquinas’ Summa Theologiae.

Aristotelian Convergence

On June 14-15, a number of faculty members participated in the annual West Coast meeting of the Society for Aristotelian Studies, an international organization founded in 1974. The topic for this year’s symposium was “The Soul and Biology.” The event featured lectures and question-and-answer periods with six scholars from across the country, including several alumni and tutors from the College.

The titles of this year’s lectures were: “The End of Life and Biology as We Know It” (Dr. John Brunardi, The Catholic University of America); “Is DNA the Soul?” (Dr. Thomas Kaiser ’73, Thomas Aquinas College); “The Biologist’s Need for Philosophy” (Dr. Marie George ’79, St. John’s University); “Pluralism and the Definition of the Soul” (Mr. David Arias ’02, Thomas Aquinas College); “Are Human Cell Lines Human?” (Dr. Thomas Nelson, Mayo Clinic Arizona); “An Empirical Study of the Interior Senses” (Dr. John Nieto ’89, Thomas Aquinas College).

Marking the “Fortnight for Freedom”

Each July Thomas Aquinas College invites members of the President’s Council — the backbone of the College’s financial aid fund — to one of two Great Books Summer Seminar Weekends. At these weekends President’s Council members get an inside look at the unique education that they so generously help to make possible. They attend a series of classroom discussions of great books led by the College’s president, dean, and other senior members of the teaching faculty. Between seminars, attendees also enjoy delicious meals served both indoors and outdoors on the campus, as well as daily Mass and confession offered by Rev. Cornelius M. Buckley, S.J., who serves as chaplain for the events.

This year’s Summer Seminars were held just after the close of the Fortnight for Freedom, during which the American bishops had called Catholics to prayer, study, and action to promote public actions, aware of the importance of preserving the fundamental right of religious freedom. In that spirit, the theme of this year’s Summer Seminars was religious tolerance and freedom. Participants read “The May-pole of Merry Mount” by Nathaniel Hawthorne, selections from The Federalist Papers, and excerpts from Alexis de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America. At the Saturday-night dinners on both weekends, College President Michael F. McLean presented a talk about the readings and their particular significance in light of current events.

“It is vital for Catholic Americans to be familiar with the country’s founding principles if we are to respond effectively to the attacks the Church is facing today,” says Dr. McLean. “This year’s summer seminars provided a great opportunity for learning about those principles, as well as for visiting with many good friends, both old and new.”

Celebrating 40 with the Founders

With the College’s 40th Anniversary year coming to an end, the alumni held one last celebration on June 30 with an on-campus dinner. The speakers for the evening were none other than three of the College’s founders: Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, Dr. John W. Neumayr, and Mr. Peter L. DeLuca. The three gentlemen graciously participated in a panel discussion whimsically entitled, “They Have to Answer for What They Started: Questions & Answers with the Founders.”

“As alumni we have most directly benefitted from the vision and work of the College’s founders,” says Director of Alumni Relations Mark Kretschmer ’99, “the evening provided us with a chance not only to thank and applaud these great men, but also to tap into their wisdom, and to learn from their thoughts and experience.”

With many alumni eager to express gratitude and to pose questions, the festive occasion can last late into the night.

A partial video and a full, downloadable audio recording of the event are available on the College’s website at thomasaquinas.edu/founders40.
What Are You Doing Here, Thomas Aquinas College?

Address from the 40th Anniversary All-School Celebration for Students and Faculty

Note: On the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, students, faculty, and staff gathered along with alumni and Regents for an all-school celebration of the College’s 40th Anniversary. Below is the text of the night’s keynote address by Hon. J. Leon Holmes, United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas and a tutor at the College from 1990 to 1992.

My family and I came here 22 years ago as new Catholics, having been received into the Church the year before. The two greatest influences on our vision of what Catholic life should be have been the Missionsaries of Charity and the Thomas Aquinas College community.

I did not have a liberal education; did not know Aristotle or St. Thomas; did not know Euclid, or any ancient or modern mathematics; did not know the ancient or modern astronomers; did not know Homer, Virgil, or Dante; did not know Latin. I could go on, but if I tried to state comprehensively the things I did not and do not know, the list would begin to look something like the actual infinite, and it would be irresponsible of me to provoke a mathematical dispute at Thomas Aquinas College while there are knives within reach.

We were here two years, and I tried to respond to the conversation and learn what I could. Whatever I could pick up, I have carried with me and tried to use as best I can in my work. Now, if the prosecutor says, “Your honor, this defendant is a bellicose bully of unprecedented bellicosity,” I can say, “Is that so or per accidens?”

The Question

I will have an opening question for us to address. Before we take up that opening question, however, we should pause and reflect on how remarkable it is that we are here celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Thomas Aquinas College.

Think back to the late 60s and early 70s, when the words set out to found this college, and imagine how slim their chances of success must have seemed. They wanted to start a Catholic college that would not be sponsored or operated by a diocese or a religious order. They wanted to found it in Southern California; require the students to take four years of mandatory classes, with no electives, no majors and no minors; they would require four years of reading mainly old books by men long since dead; the students would be required to follow a dress code; there would be no television in the student center; or the dormitories; the College would have no fraternities or sororities; and the College would have no formal intercollegiate athletic program.

The odds of success would have seemed slim to none. Yet here we are, in the midst of the beautiful campus, celebrating the 40th Anniversary of a college that has been nationally recognized as among the best. It is hard, especially for outsiders, to explain the success of the College to global warming or the El Niño effect.

But that is not the question we will take up tonight. Our question will be a simpler one.

Our opening question is taken from the 19th chapter of the Book of I Kings. You all know the story. Elijah defeats and slays the prophets of Baal, and by doing so ends a three-day drought. Jezabel sends word to Elijah, “so may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” It is the ancient mode of trash talk. But Elijah knows that Jezabel not only can talk the trash talk, she also can walk the trash walk, so he flees 40 days and nights to Horeb, the mount of God, where he hides in a cave. The word of the Lord comes to him and says, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” Then the wind, the earthquake, and the fire come, but the Lord is not in any of them. Finally, there is a still, small voice, and Elijah wraps his face and stands outside the cave. And behold, there comes a voice to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Let’s take that as our opening question, “What are you doing here, Thomas Aquinas College?”

First Answer

The immediate answer is obvious: We are reading and discussing great books, with a special emphasis on the works of St. Thomas. And, of course, that’s true. It is an impeccable description of what happens here: We read and discuss great books, with a special emphasis on St. Thomas.

But all you know what would happen if we made this the opening question in a class and someone proposed that as the initial answer. Someone else would ask, does that really answer the question? In the context from which our question is taken, it seems that the question is asking not so much for a description as an explanation. Elijah did not answer the question by describing what he was doing — hiding in a cave. Instead he answered by offering an explanation of what he was doing — he stated why he was hiding in a cave. Our first answer — we are reading and discussing great books, with an emphasis on St. Thomas — while true, is inadequate. It does not really answer the question.

So, let’s ask the question again and offer an answer that addresses the question of why. “What are you doing here, Thomas Aquinas College?”

Second Answer

Let’s propose this answer: “We are preparing young people to go out and be an influence for good in the Church and in the world.” That is an answer that addresses the question of why. “Why do we read and discuss great books, with a special emphasis on St. Thomas?” “To prepare young people to go out and be an influence for good to the Church and the world.” It is also an answer that can be supported by a great deal of evidence. In class, if we were answering the opening question that I have asked here, and if we were discussing this as the proposed answer “We are preparing young people to go out and be an influence for good in the Church and the world” — we would need to support that answer with evidence.

And I think it is fitting, in celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the College, that we take note of some of the evidence that the alumni of the College have had and are having an influence for good in the Church and the world.

“Here we are, in the midst of the beautiful campus, celebrating the 40th Anniversary of a college that has been nationally recognized as among the best. It is hard, especially for outsiders, to explain the success of the College. Scientists are divided on whether to attribute the success of the College to global warming or the El Niño effect.”

The starting point, certainly, is the number of alumni who have answered a call to the priesthood or to religious life. I think you all know that at least 52 young men who are alumni of the College have been ordained to the priesthood. That is an astonishing number when you consider the size of this college and the fact that the Church during these past 40 years has experienced a crisis due to the dearth of vocations to the priesthood. I know of no statistics by which we could compare the College’s record of producing vocations to the priesthood to that of other Catholic colleges and universities, but I would be surprised if during that time any college or university in the world has produced a comparable number of priests for the Church.

In the next few months, that number will rise at least to 53. Next June, Br. Joseph Bolin, who graduated from the College in 2001, will be ordained a priest for the Diocese of Vienna, Austria.

These numbers, $2 going on 53, do not include the alumni of the College who have become religious brothers or sisters. I have not seen that number in the literature about the College, but counting from the alumni directory, it appears to be around 40. If my count is correct, this tiny college has produced more than 90 vocations to the priesthood or religious life in the first 40 years of its existence. It is a remarkable number.

But numbers do not tell the whole story. I know a number of these priests, monks, and nuns, and they really are terrific. They are holy men and women who are strong in the Faith and filled with love. I am going to mention two, and I pick these two because they have ministered in Little Rock, where Susan and I have had the chance to see them work and to get to know them as persons.

One of them is Rev. Robert Novokowsky, F.S.S.P. (‘93), who served as pastor of the Latin Mass community in Little Rock for two years. Fr. Novokowsky was a student here when I was a tutor, but the Lord smiled upon him and I never had him in class. His preaching is substantive, meaningful, thoughtful, no doubt due in part to the education he received here. But Fr. Novokowsky is more than a good preacher; he is an excellent pastor. He brought healing, where there had been division, between the Latin Mass community and the larger Church. His ministry extended beyond the Latin Mass community. He became the spiritual director for the Lay Missionaries of Charity, none of whom were members of his congregation; and he worked actively with 40 Days for Life, praying and working with persons not of his flock. We know and are friends with many priests. Fr. Novokowsky is among the best.

The other person I want to mention is Sr. Marcella of the Missionaries of Charity, Class of 1986. I think she was known here as Maggie Isaacson. For several years, until recently, Sr. Marcella was a regional superior for the Missionaries of Charity, with responsibility for all of the M.C.’s in the central part of the United States, from the upper Midwest to the deep South, including a house in Little Rock. Sr. Marcella exemplifies what a nun should be — holy, devout, self-sacrificing, ever faithful to her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, dedicated service to the poorest of the poor. And she is a very wise person, filled with the kind of practical wisdom needed to shepherd a scattered flock of nuns, most of whom are from India, serving in the slums of major cities in the United States, facing problems that we cannot begin to describe today. Sr. Marcella is an immeasurable asset to the Missionaries of Charity. I will not be surprised if, some day, she is elected to be Superior General of the order.

Fr. Novokowsky and Sr. Marcella will be embarrassed when they learn that I have praised them as I have in this pub-

Thomas Aquinas College President Michael F. McLean and Vice President for Development Paul J. O’Reilly share a laugh during Judge Holmes’ address.
In making the case that alumni of the College have had and are having an influence for good in the Church and the world, we have begun with the alumni who have become priests, religious brothers, and religious sisters. But that is only part of the story. This is a place of learning, of learning for its own sake, dedicated to a great teacher, the Angelic Doctor. It is no surprise that a good number of alumni have become scholars and teachers in philosophy, in theology, in universities, in colleges, in secondary schools, and elsewhere, throughout the world. I do not have a count. I know that it is a significant number. I can only mention a few.

Two Americans have received the Pontifical Academy Award, every four years by the Pontifical Academies of Theology and St. Thomas Aquinas for excellence in a doctoral dissertation. Both of them were graduates of Thomas Aquinas College — Dr. Pia de Solenni, Class of 1993, and Dr. John Mortensen, Class of 1997.

I should mention here Dr. Michael Waldstein, Class of 1977, who is one of the preeminent Catholic theologians in the world. He is now a professor at Ave Maria University. He was for several years president of the International Theological Institute in Gaming, Austria, and I came to know Dr. Waldstein when my son, Jeremy, studied at ITI after graduating from Thomas Aquinas College. Dr. Waldstein is an outstanding theologian and teacher, and he is a tremendous influence for good in the Church.

I will mention two more college professors:

First, Dr. Jean Rioux, Class of 1982, chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Benedictine College in Kansas. I met Dr. Rioux when I took my daughter, Hannah, to visit Benedictine. She later attended there and Dr. Rioux was her academic advisor. She says that the students at Benedictine universally regard him as “amazing.”

The other professor I want to mention is Dr. Joseph Almeida, Class of 1981, professor of classics at Franciscan University of Steubenville. Two of my children attended Steubenville, and I have visited there many times. I know from my own personal experience and observation that Dr. Almeida is a great teacher.

I could mention many more alumni who have become excellent scholars and teachers, including several in this room, but I need to move on. If I have not mentioned someone to whom you think I should mention, blame it on Dr. McLean, who gave me a strict time limit.

But before I leave the world of education, I need to mention one person who is not a college professor and does not have a Ph.D. When the Lord Himself descends from heaven, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God; when the course of this old world is ended and time is no more, it may be that the graduate of this college who will have touched the most lives and had the greatest influence for good is Laura Bergquist. You all know Laura and know what she has done, so I do not need to tell you. You know that she has written the best book ever on providing a classical education in a home school; and you know that her school, Mother of Divine Grace, has brought a Catholic, classical education into thousands of homes, improving the lives of thousands of children.

We could talk about the alumni of the College who have gone into medicine, law, business, journalism, and other professions, but I don’t think we need to do that to make the case that alumni of the College have had and are having an influence for good in the Church and the world. I do want to say a word, however, about what I think may be the greatest influence for good wrought by alumni of Thomas Aquinas College. And that is in the family. Commenting on the number of young men and women who come to the College and find someone to marry, Peter DeLuca once said to me, “We intended to start a school, and now we have founded a family.”

I have many friends who are alumni of this college. I have been in a good many of their homes, including several who are in this room. What a great group of families they are! We live in a time when so many families are broken, so many are dysfunctional institutions. And when I visit one of these families, I have even a real family. I am not naive. I know that there is some level of dysfunction in every family — mine, yours, everyone’s — and I know that having a degree from Thomas Aquinas College guarantees no immunity from sin and affliction. That being said, I have not seen a finer group of families than the families of the alumni of this college. By and large they are an outstanding group, loving husbands and wives and excellent fathers and mothers, with children sparkling with intelligence and a zest for life.

The Thomas Aquinas Choir sang at the Mass of Thanksgiving offered before the All-School 40th Anniversary celebration.

The most important, most enduring influence for good emerging from this college is not something that will make the headlines or be recorded in history books; instead, it is in the families of alumni as they make their homes, raise their children, serve in the Church and work in the community, almost hidden, having an influence like leaven in a loaf.

I do not know whether any of those boys will attend Thomas Aquinas College, but I can tell you that their lives are being influenced for good by the fact that their parents studied here. The Church in Wyoming is being influenced for good by the fact that Andrew and Shandra studied here. And the community in Wyoming is being influenced for good by the fact that Andrew and Shandra founded so many Catholic school groups. It is an influence we see every day.

My purpose is not to single out the Emrichs, even though I count them among my dearest and most beloved friends. My purpose is to paint a picture of one family of alumni, and the influence they are having, so that we can with our imaginations begin to imagine the influence of Thomas Aquinas College spread through the world quietly, unobtrusively, one family at a time.

In the shortest of His parables, the Lord compared the kingdom of God to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal until all was leavened. I am trying to say that the most important, most enduring influence for good emerging from this college is not something that will make the headlines or be recorded in history books; instead, it is in the families of alumni as they make their homes, raise their children, serve in the Church and work in the community, almost hidden, having an influence like leaven in a loaf. I have not seen a finer group of families than the families of the alumni of this college. By and large they are an outstanding group, loving husbands and wives and excellent fathers and mothers, with children sparkling with intelligence and a zest for life.

I looked in the 2010-2011 alumni directory and counted the places where alumni live. I often say that if I were good at math I would not have become a lawyer, so take my math with a grain of salt. I counted 50 states, 5 provinces of Canada, and somewhere around 20 foreign countries, plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, as places where alumni of this college live.

So, have I answered my opening question, “What are you doing here, Thomas Aquinas College?” I think we have made the case that alumni go forth from Thomas Aquinas College and become an influence for good in the Church and the world. We have shown that alumni of this college have answered calls to the priesthood and religious life in remarkable numbers and they serve the Church in such a manner that the College can be proud of them. We have shown that alumni of the College have become scholars and teachers and have touched the lives of young people from kindergarten through graduate school. We have noted that a great many families have arisen from this campus and that they are really solid, good, faithful families who are raising and educating beautiful children and serving the Lord in the Church and the community.

I will finish with the words of Dr. Jean Rioux, to visit Benedictine. She later attended there and Dr. Rioux was her academic advisor. She says that the students at Benedictine universally regard him as “amazing.”
Aquinas College is preparing young people to grow up and be an influence for good in the Church and the world — could be a statement you will find. You will not find a statement that we want to found a college for the purpose of generating vocations to the priesthood and religious life. You will not find a statement that we want to found a college that will produce teachers who will influence students from kindergarten to graduate school. You will not find a statement that we want to found a college that will be a Catholic matchmaking service. You will not find a statement that we want to graduate students who make good parents. When I was here, I participated in a number of faculty meetings. I do not recall one in which we discussed how to generate vocations, teachers, or parents. I do not recall one in which we discussed how to make sure that our alumni had an influence for good. I doubt that in 40 years the faculty has ever had a discussion of how to generate vocations, teachers, good parents, or the like.

The influence of the alumni for good — the vocations, the scholars and teachers, the many good parents, and the like — is in some measure an effect of what Thomas Aquinas College is doing; but it is not an explanation of what Thomas Aquinas College is doing.

Fourth Answer

So, let’s return to our opening question, “What are you doing here, Thomas Aquinas College?” Let’s propose the following answer: “We are helping students attain truth, in some measure, in a community of love.”

Why do we read great books? Because we want to attain truth and we think these books can help us do that. Why do we have a special emphasis on St. Thomas? Because we believe that he is a reliable guide, and by following him we may come to the truth.

In this formulation we have said that Thomas Aquinas College is helping students attain truth in some measure in recognition of what the presidents of the College and others have said many times, that the education offered here is a striving, a beginning, and not a consummation. The College aims to offer, to claim to offer, and I would say does offer students a good beginning in coming to know the truth.

We have said that Thomas Aquinas College is helping students attain truth because, ultimately, attaining truth is something that each person must do for himself; it is not something that a teacher can do for a student.

Though attaining truth is something that each student must do for himself, it is not something that a student does by himself. The design of the program is not only for the tutors to help students but also, and perhaps more importantly, for the students to help each other attain truth. That is the purpose of the discussion method that is one of the hallmarks of the program here — for students to help each other come to the truth. And students helping one another attain truth is expected to continue outside the class, in the dining hall and in the dormitories, as the conversations continue. The aim of the College is for everyone here to seek truth and for everyone here to help others attain it. And that is an act of love: helping someone attain the truth. So it is built into the academic program of Thomas Aquinas College that this be a community of love.

Although this is a college, which means that the life of the community is focused on learning, the intention that this be a community of love is not limited to students and tutors helping one another learn. At the heart of this campus is a beautiful chapel, shaped in a cruciform; and at the heart of the Chapel is a crucifix, a symbol of the Cross of Christ. Every classroom on this campus has a crucifix, a symbol of the Cross of Christ. Every class at Thomas Aquinas College begins with the students and the tutor making the Sign of the Cross. That cross displays for us the love of God. “For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” That cross challenges us to imitate God’s love. “Take up your cross daily and follow me.”

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

If you have not seen the article about Leslie Hidley in the Fall 2011 College Newsletter, I commend it to you. She was a student here in the 1980s, a mother of four children, several years older than most undergraduates, and, in her word, a pagan. She was sitting in the Commons one day when Ron McArthur came and sat nearby. He said to Mrs. Hidley, “I want you to know how much you are loved here.” Mrs. Hidley was bowled over, she said, not only because he said it, but because it was true. Her experience is not unique. I have resisted the temptation to turn this speech into a reminiscence about my time here, but I will say this: My family and I have experienced Christ’s love here.

Now I am going to make a claim: I am going to assert as true a proposition that will be the linchpin of my remarks tonight. If I were giving a lecture, this claim likely would be the focus of the Q&A. Here it is: The two great needs of the human soul are truth and love. I believe that. I am not going to try to defend that proposition now, but I do believe it. If that proposition is true, then we can expand our answer to the opening statement: “What are you doing here, Thomas Aquinas College?”

“We are helping students attain truth, in some measure, in a community of love and, by doing so, we are providing, or trying to provide, in some measure, the two great needs of the human soul.”

If this is true, then we can return to our earlier argument that the alumni of this college have had and are having an influence for good in the Church and the world, and we can give an account as to why that would occur without the College directly aiming at it as a goal. The account we will give is in two parts.

First, speaking on a natural level, if it is true that the two great needs of the human soul are truth and love, and if it is true that students here acquire truth in some measure and experience Christian love in some measure, then one would expect to see some signs so indicating in the lives of the alumni.

Think of it in terms of parents who provide their children with nourishment and other basic needs. The goal of the parents is for their children to be healthy. If their children are healthy, that health will manifest itself in activities at which the parents do not directly aim. A healthy boy may play baseball or catch frogs, as a healthy girl may pursue Irish dancing or roller skating. The parents’ aim is to have a healthy child; the effect of accomplishing that goal will be activities that are not, of themselves, the parents’ goal. Likewise, a physician aims at helping his patients become healthy, and, when he is successful, the health of his patients will be manifest in activities that are not, themselves, his direct aim. And so, to some extent, we can explain the beneficial influence of alumni of this college as a natural effect of what the College does, even though the College does not directly aim at producing men who will have such an influence. That is the first part.

The second part concerns the dimension of the College that transcends nature. We can glean from Scripture that the Holy Spirit has a special connection to truth and love. Catholics learn as children to recite the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed by the prophet Isaiah: “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.” St. Paul gives another list in the Letter to the Galatians: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” If we put Isaiah and Galatians together we get this: The Holy Spirit is a spirit of knowledge; and His first fruit is love. In the Gospel of John, Jesus promises, “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.” After the Spirit had come, St. Paul wrote, “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

At the beginning of every class at Thomas Aquinas College, we pray, “Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love” and “O God, Who didst instruct us in the arts of wisdom and virtue and by confessing what they already know and by praising their work as I have. Perhaps we can remove some of that embarrassment by confessing what they already know and would be eager for me to say: Whatever good they do and whatever merit they have are gifts of the Holy Spirit. The same is true of the other alumni whom I have mentioned. Whatever good they do and
The Tim Buley Swing Band plays for the College's students.

Discover the Beauty of Truth

"We're aiming for the truth in all we study here, and developing the skills to apply that truth. This formation is an excellent preparation for life."

Aileen McCarthy (14) Gallup, NM

Happy birthday, Thomas Aquinas College. And many more.

Thomas Aquinas College
Great Books in the Light of Faith

www.thomasaquinas.edu

Who would have thought, in 1972, that 40 years later the Soviet Union would be long since dead and Thomas Aquinas College would be alive and well?

— as we acknowledge by our prayer at the beginning of each class. Thomas Aquinas College does not aim at generating vocations to the priesthood and religious life, producing scholars and teachers, or teaching its students how to be good parents, but it accomplishes those effects nevertheless. We may take that fact as a sign that the Holy Spirit is, indeed, at work here.

Before we close, let’s go back to the passage of Scripture from which we took our opening question. You will recall that after Elijah slew the prophets of Baal, Jezreel sent him a message, promising to do to him as he had done to them. Elijah fled to Mount Horeb and hid in a cave. The Lord asked him twice, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” When we spoke of this passage earlier, we noted the Lord’s question but not Elijah’s answer nor God’s response. Let’s do that now.

Elijah answered, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with a sword; and I, even I, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”

Basically, Elijah is saying to the Lord, “Everyone has abandoned You except me. I am the only one left who is faithful to You and who stands up for righteousness, and now they’re going to kill me.” (We see from this passage that Elijah was a conservative.) God’s reply, paraphrased, was, “Don’t worry, Elijah. I’ve got this covered. You are mistaken about being the only one left. I have a faithful remnant of 7,000 [which I take to be a symbolic number meaning more than enough]. One of the persons in that faithful remnant is Elisha, who will complete your work.”

I cannot say whether the founders felt like Elijah in the late 1960s and early 1970s when they conceived of this college and gave it birth. They may have. Half of the world was oppressed by a ruthless, atheistic tyranny. (Who would have thought, in 1972, that 40 years later the Soviet Union would be long since dead and Thomas Aquinas College would be alive and well?) While the Soviet empire dominated half the globe, the free world seemed to be sliding into the abyss of relativism. The Church appeared to be in disarray. It seemed that the light of truth had been darkened and the love of God grown cold.

“Again and again,” Pope Benedict has said, “the cause of God has seemed to be in its death throes.” So it seemed to Elijah and so it may have seemed 40 years ago. But God had not abandoned His church. He was raising up, in Poland, a bishop who would become a great pope and a great teacher. In 1978 Cardinal Karol Wojtyła became Pope John Paul II. Pope John Paul would lead the Church for more than a quarter of a century. During that same time God raised to public prominence an Albanian nun who worked in the slums of Calcutta — Mother Teresa. The keynote of John Paul’s papacy was the splendor of truth. Mother Teresa’s name became synonymous with Christian love.

These two great saints led the way in renewing God’s church. It may have seemed like a dark time in the late ’60s and early ’70s, but it was the darkness before the dawn of renewal. God had a plan for renewing His church, a plan to restore truth and love to their rightful place in the hearts of His people. The public representatives of this plan would be those two great saints, Pope John Paul and Mother Teresa, but they would not be alone. I could name a number of persons, organizations, and institutions that I believe are part of that plan, but I will mention only one: Thomas Aquinas College.

We give thanks to the many persons whose work and sacrifice created this college and contributed to its success — the founders, the faculty and staff, the Board members, and the donors. But, above all, we give thanks to God, who brought this college into existence and sustained it these 40 years as a part of His plan for renewal of the Church through a rededication to truth and love.

Happy birthday, Thomas Aquinas College. And many more.
When longtime friend and member of the College’s Board of Governors Fred Ruepp first asked him to consider becoming a knight of Malta, Michael McLean spent time thinking and praying about whether he had a calling to do so. After all, as a tutor, and now in a special way as president of Thomas Aquinas College, his life was already dedicated to Catholic liberal education. Would it be wise to take on more?

Some History

The origin of the lay religious order was an 11th century hospital for sick and ailing pilgrims in Jerusalem, located near the Church of St. John the Baptist, the patron of the Order. As time went on, and Crusaders grateful for the care they had received donated generously to the Order and became members themselves, it began to combine its original work of caring for the sick and the poor with that of the knights — defending the Faith. Following the defeat of the Crusaders by the Muslim emperor some years later, the Order relocated to Rhodes, an island off of Greece in the Aegean Sea. There it flourished and developed a reputation for excellence in caring for the sick and the mentally ill. Early in the 17th century, however, while the Order was still providing physical assistance, the Order of Malta issued its Fourth Rule, which states that “the Order is of the Holy Cross, that is, that its members shall not be soldiers, nor shall they have anything to do with war.”

Famous for his encyclopedic knowledge in a vast array of subjects, tutor Michael J. Paietta (’83) had a zeal for learning matched only by his passion for teaching. “Mike had a tremendous wit and a remarkable memory,” recalls Dr. Paul O’Reilly, fellow tutor and the College’s vice president for development. “We all wanted him on our Trivial Pursuit team. And those who had him thought of our patron, St. Thomas, and was particularly focused in recent months on defending religious freedom from attack in a corporal work of mercy by caring for the sick, operating numerous hospitals and clinics in locations around the globe, its members have long since laid down their swords. They strive instead to witness to the truths of the Faith by the example of their lives and by an articulate account of the teachings of the Church in the public square.

A Twofold Mission

Learning of the Order’s twofold mission, Dr. McLean was very much drawn to it, and decided to embark on an 18-month period of discernment as a provisional member. During those months, he served on the Western Association’s Defense of the Faith Committee, headed by Nancy Iredale, a friend and member of the College’s President’s Council. While especially concerned with issues related to the sanctity of life and the preservation of marriage, the Committee has been particularly focused in recent months on defending religious freedom from attack by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ mandate that employers provide free coverage for contraceptive services — including abortifacients and sterilization.

In addition to his work on this committee, Dr. McLean and his wife, Lynda, participated in the Order’s annual pilgrimage to Lourdes, the site of St. Bernadette’s visions of Our Lady. There they worked with the knights and dames of the Order in caring for approximately 50 malades in search of healing for both body and soul. Says Dr. McLean, “I was edified by the joy and good humor of our malades, and grateful for the opportunity to care for them alongside the tireless knights and dames with whom we traveled. It was a week full of good works, memories of which Lynda and I will long cherish.”

Investiture

On June 23, Dr. McLean was invested in the Order of Malta during a Mass in honor of St. John the Baptist at St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco. Vowing to “witness to and defend the Catholic faith, and do works of charity, as the Order requires,” he received a medal (“decoration”) and a robe embroidered with the Maltese cross, both emblems of this ancient military Order.

Reflecting on his new membership, Dr. McLean remarks, “I have been fortunate in my life to be called to a spiritual work of mercy — ‘instructiong the ignorant,’ as it were. Now, through the Order of Malta, I can not only further that work, but engage in a corporeal work of mercy by caring for the sick as my other duties allow. This is indeed a great privilege.”

In Memoriam

Michael J. Paietta (’83), 1953 – 2012

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After attending the University of California, Los Angeles, and serving a number of years in the U.S. Navy, Mr. Paietta enrolled at Thomas Aquinas College as a 25-year-old freshman in 1979. “Mike was gifted in many ways,” recalls the College’s founding president, Dr. Ronald P. McArthur. “He was convinced that there was truth to be found. He was willing to discuss in class. He was interested. He got other people interested. He was one of those first students at the College who, I am convinced, made this school go.”

Mr. Paietta graduated from the College in 1983 and went on to do his graduate work at the University of Notre Dame. He then returned to Thomas Aquinas College, serving as a member of the teaching faculty from 1989 until his death this past semester. A sense of loss among his “extended family” was palpable on campus following his sudden hospitalization and death. “Mike was noteworthy for his love of literature, music, and baseball,” observed his onetime teacher and colleague of many years, President Michael F. McLean. “Above all, though, he was devoted to understanding the thought of our patron, St. Thomas, and was particularly sure that discussions with our founders, Ron McArthur, Jack Neumayr, and Mark Bergquist, would help him in that pursuit.”

In June 20, Dr. McLean was invested in the Order of Malta during a Mass in honor of St. John the Baptist at St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco. Vowing to “witness to and defend the Catholic faith, and do works of charity, as the Order requires,” he received a medal (“decoration”) and a robe embroidered with the Maltese cross, both emblems of this ancient military Order.

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Each year in May, knights and dames of the Order of Malta make a pilgrimage from all over the world to Lourdes, bringing with them malades in search of healing in its miraculous spring waters. In the photo above, members of the “white” team from the Los Angeles area are pictured in front of the basilica of Our Lady of Lourdes. Dr. McLean is second from the right in the third row.

A Gentleman and a Scholar ... and a Knight

President McLean Invested in the Order of Malta

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

Dolores DiPaolo
December 14, 2010
Legacy Society Member

Mary B. Schaefer
February 12, 2012
Friend and Benefactor

Joseph Brown
February 29, 2012
Legacy Society Member

William R. Harrod
March 7, 2012
Father of Scott (’78) and Timothy (’80)

Michael J. Paietta (’83)
March 25, 2012
Tutor

Kathleen Skrinar
April 1, 2012
Mother of Suzanne Milton (’81)

Donald Gauchier
April 12, 2012
Father of Denise (’00)

John R. Morris (’03)
May 26, 2012

Mary Kathleen Lear Gates
June 2, 2012
Mother of Nora (Bulcher ’04), mother-in-law of Peter Bulcher (’05) and tutor John Baer
Because the future needs the wisdom of the past...

Help shape the future with a legacy gift today.

Please contact
Tom Susanka, Director of Gift Planning
tsusanka@thomasaquinas.edu
805–421–5928

Thomas Aquinas College
Great Books in the Light of Faith

www.thomasaquinas.edu
The Way of Health and Hope and Love
Why We Study Dostoevsky

By Dr. Brian T. Kelly (’88)

Note: The following remarks are adapted from Dean Brian T. Kelly’s report to the Board of Governors at its February meeting. They are part of an ongoing series of talks in which Dr. Kelly explains why the College includes certain authors and disciplines in its curriculum. The complete series is available at thomasaquinas.edu/whywestudy.

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) was orphaned as a teenager, served in the military, and flirted with utopian socialism. Because of this last entanglement he was arrested and condemned to death. Clemency was granted, but he still served hard time in Siberia, where he drew closer to his Orthodox faith. He traveled extensively, gambled his way into deep and troublesome debt, and developed epilepsy. He edited political and literary journals and somehow also found time to publish critically successful and popular novels, including Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, and Notes from the Underground. By the time he completed The Brothers Karamazov, his final work, he was recognized as one of Russia’s premier writers. He died shortly after completing this novel.

The Brothers Karamazov is a towering epic, close to 800 pages long and brimming with passionate, vibrant prose. It is full of philosophy, theology, poetry,тургид emotion, and violent melodrama. It even turns into a bit of a murder mystery.

The histrionics revolve around the highly dysfunctional Karamazov family, including Fyodor Pavlovich and his three, or possibly four, sons. Fyodor’s cook, Smerdyakov, the son of a homeless retarded girl, appears also to be Fyodor’s son. Norman Rockwell would not be interested in doing a family portrait, though Jerry Springer would happily book them for his show. Dmitri, the oldest, is passionate and irresponsible. Ivan is abstract and rational. Alyosha, the youngest, is gentle and kind and very much in love with Christ. He thinks he has a vocation to the local monastery, but Fr. Zossima, his saintly spiritual director, sends him back into the world.

I will not summarize the whole novel. I am too afraid of ruining the story for you. It is great. Instead I will discuss what I take to be the two great and warring ideas lying at the heart of the tale. The first great idea is that, as sons of God, all men form a community. This could be called the idea of universal Christian brotherhood or, more simply, the Christian ideal. The second great, though not quite as great, idea is that God is either dead or irrelevant and therefore there are no moral rules. I think it is fair to call this idea Nietzschean nihilism even though it predates Nietzsche’s articulation of the will to power.

The story revolves around Alyosha, who believes in the first idea. Alyosha loves everyone, and everyone is drawn to him. He has learned from Fr. Zossima that “each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone.” This is an odd saying and it sounds vaguely false, but it dominates much of the book and is, therefore, worth examining closely. What does it mean and is it really the Christian ideal?

In his reckless youth Zossima challenged an innocent man to duel over a woman. The night before the duel he became angry with his manservant, Afanasy, and struck him in the face. All night he tossed and turned and couldn’t comprehend why. In the morning he rises from his bed as though thunderstruck. It is not the coming duel that is tormenting him, but the fact that he has struck his servant. He says, “this is what a man can be brought to, a man beating his fellow man! What a crime! It was as if a sharp needle went through my soul. This question then pierced my mind for the first time in my life. ‘Mother, heart of my heart, truly each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone.’

It is hard here to know exactly what he means when he says that each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone. But it is clear that it turns on the realization that God has made all of creation to praise and serve Him, and that all men are created in the image and likeness of God. It is in some way a realization that as a Christian everyone is my neighbor. Fr. Zossima says later, “There is only one salvation for you: take yourself up, and make yourself responsible for all the sins of men…” Remember especially that you cannot be the judge of anyone.” Here it is evident that he aims at imitating Christ’s willingness to suffer for all, but with the clear recognition that he can in no way supplant Christ so as to be the judge of others.

But even if this is an attempt at the Christian ideal, what if it is not true? If he really isn’t guilty before all and for all, then this is a false imitation of Christ. Isn’t it obvious that the Christian is not guilty for the sin that his neighbor commits? Christ certainly spoke of good and bad servants as though they each were responsible for their own actions. Isn’t it a lie to suggest that the good servant is guilty for the bad servant?

Fr. Zossima sheds a little light on the claim later in the story when he says, “If the wickedness of people arouses indignation and insouciant alarm in you… fear that feeling most of all, go at once and seek torments for yourself, as if you yourself were guilty of their wickedness.”

Here the “as if” makes it clearer that he is recommending a practical approach and not teaching a moral truth. It’s like the advice “the customer is always right,” or “work as if everything depends on you and pray as though everything depends on God.” It is not strictly true that the customer is always right or that everything depends on you, but the advice can be helpful all the same. So when Fr. Zossima says, “each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone,” he is teaching an attitude of openness to the sinner and to accepting suffering on the sinner’s behalf, a common theme among the doctors and fathers.

Fr. Zossima insists that in a certain way we do share the sinner’s guilt. He says, “understand that you, too, are guilty, for you might have sinned to the wicked even like the only sinless One, but you did not. If you had sinned, your light would have lighted the way for others, and the one who did wickedness would perhaps not have done so in your light.”

This is an important realization, that no man sins in a vacuum. When your brother sins in your sight you may very well have contributed to his sinful action by failing to give him the appropriate example when you didn’t imitate Christ, “the only sinless One.”

You may be scratching your head at this point. This sounds good, but how does it fit with what is most touted about The Brothers Karamazov? Of all of the parts of this massive book, it is the chapter called “The Grand Inquisitor” that is the most famous and most frequently read.

In the preceding chapter Ivan recounts a litany of cruel and senseless sufferings inflicted by human beings, mostly on children. Dwelling on these Ivan declares that there is no God, or if there is he does not know to know Him. In “The Grand Inquisitor” Ivan tells a story he has written in which Christ returns to earth to find that his brave attempt to rescue mankind by dying on the Cross has failed. His solution was too much out of tune with the reality of the human condition. Mankind is too frail to accept Christ’s unreasonable offer of sanctifying grace.

In his rejection of God, Ivan can see no rational basis for morality. This is the second idea that we called earlier a version of Nietzschean nihilism. Ivan and his philosophy stand in total opposition to Fr. Zossima and Alyosha. As if to make this perfectly clear, Ivan admits, “I never could understand how it’s possible to love one’s neighbors. In my opinion it is precisely one’s neighbors that one cannot possibly love.”

The Brothers Karamazov is widely recognized as a great philosophical novel. It raises the enduring questions about God, suffering, and the human condition. It does not gloss over man’s wickedness and it gives the heathen full and fair opportunity to rage. And it presents the two great options, which we will discuss later.

The Thomas Aquinas College Choir presented Mozart’s The Magic Flute at its Spring Concert on April 20.

• One Friday night each semester, the student body and teaching faculty gather for the All-College Seminar — simultaneous meetings of small groups (about 20 students, drawn from all classes, and two tutors) to discuss a pre-selected reading. The spring semester’s seminar took place on February 10 and focused on St. Thomas Aquinas’ discussion of lying in the Summa Theologica.

• To mark the College’s celebration of its patron’s feast day on March 7, Rev. Lawrence Dewan, O.P., a professor of theology at Dominican College, delivered a lecture entitled, “Faith and Reason: Creation and Metaphysics.”

• Dr. Bainard Cowan, a member of the Department of English at the University of Dallas, lectured on March 30 on the subject, “The Novel as Literary Form.”

• The Thomas Aquinas College Choir presented Mozart’s The Magic Flute at its Spring Concert on April 20.

• Mother Mary Asumpta Long, O.P., foundress and prioress of the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, served as Thomas Aquinas College’s 2012 Commencement Speaker on May 12.
1. Thomas Quackenbush ('14) stares in disbelief at his blood-stained hands while playing the title role in this spring’s production of Macbeth. 2-4. Images from July’s Summer Seminar Weekends: Student singers perform in St. Thomas Plaza; guests talk over lunch in the Dumb Ox Café; attendees discuss the United States’ founding principles during a seminar. 5. Jack Thomas tosses his text onto the pyre at the seniors’ annual thesis draft-burning party. 6. At the end of the academic year, senior Sean O’Neal and his classmates tout their accomplishments — and announce to underclassmen precisely how many classes, seminars, papers, and examinations they must still endure — in St. Joseph Commons. 7. After completing their last final exam, seniors race down to the campus ponds for a celebratory swim.

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

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<th>Weekdays</th>
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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

Faculty Retreat ................................................................. August 13
Freshman Orientation ...................................................... August 16
Convocation ................................................................. August 20
Opening Lecture: On Liberal Education
Dr. Michael Letteney, Thomas Aquinas College ............... August 24
All-College Picnic ........................................................... August 25
Lecture: Rev. Robert Spitzer, S.J., Magis Center of Reason and Faith September 14
Don Rags ................................................................... October 16–18
Lecture: Dr. Jeremy Holmes (’99)
Academic Dean, Wyoming Catholic College ..................... November 16
Thanksgiving Recess ....................................................... November 22–25

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