



THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2007

VOLUME 35, ISSUE 4

“Be the Manifestation of His Light and Truth”

His Excellency Archbishop Malcom Ranjith Addresses the Class of 2007

On Saturday, May 12, 2007, seventy-four young men and women graduated from Thomas Aquinas College and were awarded a bachelor's degree in liberal arts. Presiding over the day's events was His Excellency the Most Reverend Albert Malcolm Ranjith, Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Born in Sri Lanka, Archbishop Ranjith was ordained to the priesthood in 1975, and for more than 25 years, served the Church in his native land, eventually becoming the first bishop of a newly-formed diocese in Ratnapura in 1995. In 2001, Archbishop Ranjith was called to Rome to serve in the Congregation for Evangelization and, in 2004, he was named apostolic nuncio to Indonesia and East Timor. He was appointed to the Congregation for Divine Worship by Pope Benedict XVI in 2005. His Eminence Francis Cardinal Arinze, the College's Commencement Speaker in 2004, kindly spared Archbishop Ranjith from the important work of the Congregation in order to give the Commencement Address this year. His remarks are printed below.

Mr. President, members of the Board of Governors, members of the academic staff and the administrative staff, dear graduates of this most noble institution, dear parents, friends, and my dear brothers and sisters, I thank you, first of all, for the kind invitation extended to me to participate in this important ceremony today, and I thank the Board of Governors of this institution for having decided to confer on me the Medallion of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Thank you very much for your kindness.

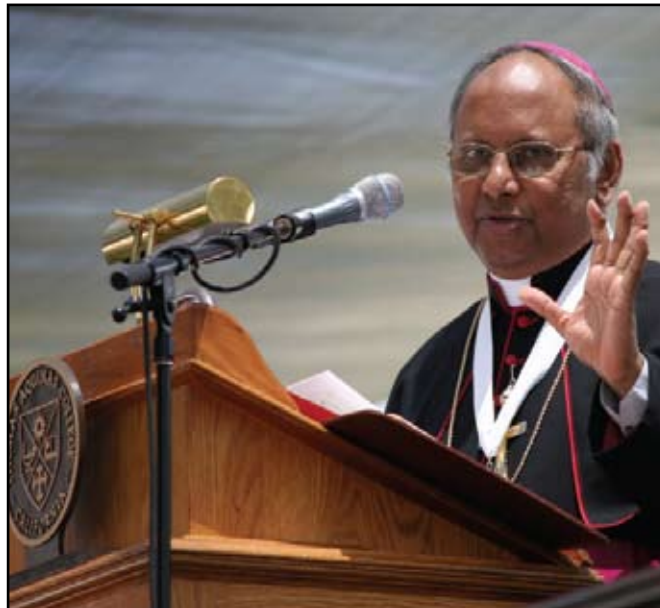
The Basis of Human Dignity

Statistics show that there are more than six billion people on earth. Yet, none of them is equal to the other. That is the wonder of creation. Even twin brothers or sisters who may appear similar, are different in their character traits. They may not think and act the same way. That is how life is: difference is part of life.

Difference is also beauty. If we walk in a nice garden (and here you have such a beautiful one), we see flowers, but they are not of the same color or beauty. There are flowers of different colors and hues, each one so unique, and that makes any garden look so beautiful.

That is the way we humans are made, and that, too, adds to that unique dignity which the Creator confers on you and me, a dignity that is unfathomably precious. The book of Genesis states that He created us “in His own image and likeness.” (Gen 1: 27) What is more, we know that He redeemed us by His own precious blood. Besides, He has a unique project for each one of us, even if it looks so tiny in the great mosaic of His eternal plan of salvation; we may be a small pebble stone in that great mosaic, but we have a place that is important.

As the Psalmist said, “What is man that you are mindful of him, or of the son of man that you care for him? You have made him a little less



than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor.” (Psalm 8) This dignity is not something that human society gives us or the United Nations confers on us. It is something that is already within us, given by God. The United Nations did proclaim the Charter on Human Rights and Human Dignity, but that charter is only a recognition of what we intrinsically are and not something the United Nations conferred on us. Thus, no one can take away from us this dignity which is inborn within us, which is God-given. No political or economic force can take it away from us.

A Unique Place in God's Plan

For every one of us, therefore, there is one, single, unique vocation. It is something planned for us from eternity, not due to our own worthiness, but given to us freely on God's part, as a gift. As the Lord said to Jeremiah the prophet, “Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you. Before you came to birth, I consecrated you. I appointed you as prophet to the nations.” (Jer 1:5) Even before he was formed, God knew that he was important for that mission.

When Jeremiah was called, the young Jeremiah said, “Lord, I do not know how to speak; I am a young man.” But the Lord said, “Do not worry; I will give you the words.” (Jer 1: 1-9) Similarly, when Moses fled from Egypt out of fear and did not want to go back, the Lord wanted him to return in order to deliver Israel from Pharaoh. Moses protested saying, “Who am I to bring Israel out of Egypt?” (Ex 3: 11) Thus, often enough God's plan for us is something for which we do not feel competent by ourselves. But, He calls us. It is a gift, often a surprise in our lives.

A question people frequently ask is, “Why me, and not the other one?” That is always the situation in our lives. But we should never forget what Jesus said about this, “You did not choose me. No, I chose you. I commissioned you.” (Jn 15: 16) The plan He has for each one of us, our Christian vocation, is a sign of His love and appreciation of us. It is a sign of trust.

My dear students be therefore happy, for you have a unique place in God's plan. God

loves you, and He has chosen you for whatever is your portion in His plan. What would happen in your lives if you allow Him to guide you, would thus never be an accident or one of pure chance, but what He would accomplish. That, too, is a sign of His love. It is this love and trust that makes you experience how much He values you.

Besides, His plan for you is something that is also mysterious. You do not see it now. But if you allow Him, He would make things happen in your life. When you walk away from this ceremony today, you will still not know what your future will be. It will be full of possibilities. But, you can be sure that what He will finally realize in you will be something great—if you only allow Him.

Maybe, when you are older, when you are in your 50s or 60s, each time you look back, you would see that inter-connecting string that runs through your life—the way He was preparing you for what comes later. You will look back and say, “Well, I was prepared by the Lord for this in that fashion, at times even in ways that surprised me.” You will understand it better and better as life moves on. That is the way a servant of God would understand and value his or her life.

Obedience is the Key

What, then, is it that is required of you and me? We are required to be obedient and faithful to Him, and to say, like Mary, “I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done unto me as you will.” (Lk 1: 38) If we obey Him, it is possible for God to achieve great things in our lives. If we turn our lives to Him, then He will achieve what He has planned for us, and we will become miraculous manifestations of His love for humanity.

Jesus was always conscious of that call to obedience to the Father in His mission. In that episode of His being lost in the temple, answering the anxious question of His parents, “Why have you done this to us?” (Lk 1: 48), Jesus replied, “Did you not know that I have to be attending to my father's work?” (Lk 1: 49) He was, thus, forthright in claiming that His mission was to fulfill the will of God faithfully. Obedience to the Father was what mattered most for Jesus. You, too, ought to feel that way. Through obedience, you will become open to God's action in your life.

In fact, St. Paul calls Jesus' salvific death his greatest act of obedience: He obeyed even until death, death on the Cross. That is how He became the Savior of the world. Now, this is what is expected from us: full and total obedience to the Father in Jesus, His Son. This obedience is like a process of “tuning in,” like tuning in to a radio or television station. You may have a radio with you, but if you do not tune in, you cannot hear the music. If you do not “tune in” your life to God, He

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Mr. James Barrett, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Governors, presents to Archbishop Ranjith the St. Thomas Aquinas Medallion, the College's highest honor, in recognition of his faithful service to Christ and His Church.

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From the Desk of the President

Standing by Christ's Side



Dr. Dillon,
2007 President's Dinner

It is my privilege to be able to congratulate you, the Class of 2007, on behalf of the entire faculty and staff, for having formally completed your studies at Thomas Aquinas College. Your accomplishment is noteworthy. After

four years of serious work in Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Euclid, Galileo, Newton, and Einstein, among so many other difficult but important authors, we say that you are now ready to make a beginning, to have a commencement. Nevertheless, this is a time to pause and reflect on how far you have come since you entered our halls in August of 2003.

This is also time for gratitude to all those who have made possible your immersion in Catholic liberal education. Thanks are due to your parents, of course, to whom you owe gratitude beyond measure; to your tutors, who have made many personal sacrifices in order to educate you well; to the College's benefactors, without whom the College simply would not exist; and to God Himself, upon whom you depend for everything and whose provident care has led you here.

Give Back to Him

Now that you have completed a formative phase of your lives and must determine what you are to do henceforth, one thing is absolutely clear: You are not the authors of your own existence or the sources of the goods you possess. You owe your entire lives to the goodness of God, and whatever else you do, you must reflect on this and order your lives to giving back to Him, as small as that may be in comparison to what He has done for you.

Of course, one of God's great gifts to you is your Catholic faith and now, with your education here, something of an advanced understanding of that faith. Remember that each of us has the Faith first through the grace of God, but also because it was passed on from the Apostles to generation after generation of Christians down through the centuries, often at the cost of the blood of martyrs. Now it is your turn to step up; it is your turn to help pass on the Faith. This must be done prayerfully and with charity and humility, but it must be done.

Be Agents in Effecting Good

I cannot help but think of that wonderful passage in St. Thomas' treatise *On the Teacher*, which you read in sophomore year, where St. Thomas considers two opposed and extreme views about the bringing into being of natural forms, the acquisition of virtues, and the acquiring of scientific knowledge. Without my rehearsing the details of his argument, let me remind you that St. Thomas observes that both extreme positions lack a reasonable basis. "For the first opinion," he says, "excludes proximate causes, attributing solely to first causes all effects which happen in lower natures, and this derogates from the order of the universe, which is made up of the order and connection of causes, since the first cause by preeminence of its goodness gives other beings not only their existence but also their existence as causes. The second position, too, falls into practically the same difficulty." What is wonderful here—what St. Thomas is saying by implication—is that out of God's sheer goodness, He shares His causality. He allows us, in fact, to take part in His providence, to be agents in effecting good.

Now as you ponder making your way into the larger world and being agents of good, I have for you good news and bad news. The good news is

that what you have learned here will, if you nurture it, continue to grow in your souls and blossom beautifully. You have undertaken your education under the light of the Faith, and your class quote, taken from St. Anselm, reflects that: "For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand."

Let me urge you not to stop your seeking of understanding. Don't presume that because you have spent four years here, you now have things all figured out or that your judgments and opinions are likely to be better than those of others because, after all, you have had a genuine Catholic liberal education. Imitate, instead, our patron, who was inquiring for his whole life and who was willing to learn from any source, since the truth is independent of the minds that discover it. His willingness to abandon himself to the truth, submit himself to the Faith, and not be dazzled by his own brilliance is a model for us, whose intellectual gifts pale by comparison. Like St. Thomas, nourish your Catholic faith and continue humbly seeking understanding. Do not squander your intellectual gifts, nor "hide your light under a bushel," as Our Lord says. You offer great hope for our Church and for our country. Time and again I hear this from admirers of the College and admirers of you. You must, in turn, take seriously your responsibility to grow in your knowledge and love of God and to evangelize; in this way those hopes can be realized—but the good news is that you are prepared to bring faith and reason to a needy world.

You know that if you truly endeavor to live your faith and to uphold truth and goodness, you are standing by Christ's side. And as St. Paul tells us, that is the winning side.

Proceed with Courage

Now the bad news: This world, by and large, will not be receptive to your efforts, and you will be ridiculed and scorned by many. It seems to me that with each passing year Christianity is more and more despised by a post-modern world that seems intent on cutting itself away from its moorings and drifting aimlessly into dangerous waters. A world intoxicated with pleasure will laugh at calls for restraint and sober action. A world awash in relativism and cynicism will not heed reason. A world bound to the material will not rise up to the spiritual. The cure for so many of the world's ills can be found in the moral teachings of our Faith, even leaving aside our transcendent destiny. However, what is the solution is seen as a problem in a world that is willfully turning itself upside-down and rejecting both nature and God.

Yet there remains some good news, and that is that you are not alone. If we look at the gospel for this coming Saturday—not the one that will be read in our Baccalaureate Mass, which will be a special Mass of the Holy Spirit, but the one read in churches throughout the world on the day of your commencement—we see the following words of Our Lord to His disciples: "If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you, 'No slave is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. And they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me."

That's the entire gospel on your commencement day. So take heart. You know that if you truly endeavor to live your faith and to uphold truth and goodness, you are standing by Christ's side. And as St. Paul tells us, that is the winning side. There is, in reality, no other alternative. So you must proceed with courage and make efforts to help spread the Faith and to help bring others, as you can, to the knowledge of God.

Remain in Christ

Now, how are you to do this? How are you to be sustained in upholding faith, truth, and goodness in a world increasingly hostile to rationality and moral rectitude, let alone to any subordination to the divine?

The gospel for the Mass of today, this very day on which you have formally completed your studies at the College, provides the answer. This is the gospel where Christ calls Himself the vine and us the branches. We have been pruned by His word, says Our Lord, and we must remain in Him. Listen again to His words: "Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing." What a wonderful assurance: If we remain in Christ, we shall indeed bear much fruit. But we should especially remember these words, "without me you can do nothing."

Lives of Love, Patience, Humility and Obedience

We on the faculty of the College have, on the side of nature, attempted to help develop well your intellectual habits and your dispositions to moral virtue. Pray continually that God will give you the grace to help you in your quest to know and love Him better, to do His will, and to bring Christ to a world so desperately in need of Him.

Each year at this dinner I exhort the graduating seniors, and now you, to reflect on St. Thomas' prayer for after Communion, in which he petitions that the Holy Eucharist perfect him in charity and patience, in humility and obedience. It is my hope that these four virtues will especially be the marks of graduates of Thomas Aquinas College and that your lives will be characterized by an intense love of God and selfless concern for the good of your neighbor, *patience* with the failings of others as Christ is patient with ours, *humility* in all your activities, recognizing that your excellences are not of your own making but are gifts from God, and *obedience* to God's will, the true test of humility, so well-demonstrated to us by Our Lord Himself.

Please keep your *alma mater* in your prayers—that we always stay true to the teaching Church and to the will of God, who is the source and end of all that is, including this college. May Our Lady of Perpetual Help watch over you, may your future be resplendent with good things, and may the friendships you have forged here continue to grow, especially your friendship with Christ.

God bless you all!



Senior Erin Wolfe from Saskatchewan, Canada, presented Dr. Dillon with a rendering of the Senior Class Gift at the President's Dinner prior to Commencement. Their gift was a contribution to the College's fund for a new visitor entrance to the campus, to be represented by the large bronze lettering of the College's name in the property's original arched gateway.

Faith is our Sure and Necessary Guide

Class Speaker, David Grothoff

Your Excellency, Reverend Fathers, President Dillon, members of the Board of Governors, faculty and staff, parents, loved ones, and my brothers and sisters of the Class of 2007:

The Need for a Teacher

When we arrived at Thomas Aquinas College as freshmen, our wonder was first aroused by reading the Platonic dialogues, in which Socrates, often to our amusement, dismantled his opponents' arguments, all the while claiming to know nothing. We, the readers, became ourselves convinced that what we thought we knew was not knowledge but opinion. He points out a difficulty in the pursuit of wisdom: how can one who doesn't already know something know how to find what he is looking for or recognize it when he finds it? This difficulty points to the need for a teacher, someone who already has the knowledge we seek, or has it in a clearer way than we do, who can, if we humbly submit to his guidance, help us order our thought and safely navigate the streams leading to wisdom.

We read Aristotle, who, with remarkable piety, considers carefully even the seemingly most absurd positions of the Pre-Socratics, and learns from them. Furthermore, he modestly accepts the limitations of his own reason, and follows a natural course of learning, even when he recognizes that the human mode is not the most perfect.

How futile, in comparison, were the attempts of those modern philosophers who made themselves the first principles and primary objects of their knowledge. Without realizing it, they, too, were indebted to others, if for no other reason than they could not have formulated their doctrine so clearly had it not been in reaction to their teachers.

Practically every author of the whole curriculum leads us to see that we are not the primary authors of truth. Even those who would disagree with that claim ultimately testify to it by the fruitlessness of their efforts. We progress toward fulfilling our natural yearning to know by receiving truth from outside of ourselves, both from nature directly and intermediately through teachers.

Faith Is the Gateway to Certain Knowledge

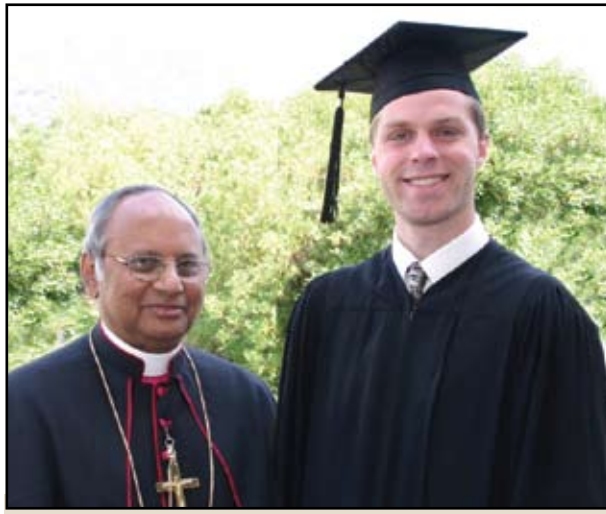
Our thirst for wisdom, however, cannot be satisfied with mere knowledge of natural things; we desire to know first causes in themselves. When we see how limited we are in understanding the first cause, we see also how necessary it is that we humble ourselves and submit to God's Revelation, as passed on through Tradition and interpreted by the God-given authority of the Apostles and their successors. Faith is the gateway to certain knowledge about the highest things, knowledge which is most ennobling and most desirable in itself. But faith cannot spring up from our own nature; it must be received humbly as a free gift from God.

Even concerning those things which men can know naturally, we must realize our limitations and accept Faith as a sure and necessary guide. From the disagreements of philosophers, we see how difficult and murky are the paths of the human mind



Bailey Fator of Redding, California, sang the National Anthem.

darkened by original sin. In fact, these difficulties have driven many to skepticism, giving up on the whole project of intellectual activity. If we submit humbly to Faith as a sure judge, however, it corrects errors into which we are prone to fall, and it allows us to partake of the knowledge of the One who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Thus we can proceed more confidently.



David Grothoff of Jefferson City, Missouri, was elected by his classmates to speak on their behalf at Commencement. Mr. Grothoff came to the College with a B.S. in mechanical engineering already in hand and is now working as an engineer for a large home development company in Southern California. He intends in the not-too-distant-future to pursue a doctoral program at the University of Notre Dame in the philosophy of science, focusing especially on medieval thought. He is pictured above with the 2007 Commencement Speaker, His Excellency the Most Reverend Albert Malcolm Ranjith.

Furthermore, because Faith allows us to have a science concerning our final end and supreme happiness, we can more clearly see the proper role of the lower sciences as handmaidens to Sacred Theology. The Christian studies all things, even the lowest, because knowledge is good in itself; but he studies them even more so because they aid in understanding God, the Author of nature and ultimate fulfillment of man's desires.

St. Thomas Aquinas, a Master

Neither have God and His Church left us without human guides in whom we can trust. Socrates raised the question of how we, the learners, are qualified to select good teachers. Holy Mother Church has supplied her children with teachers who hold principles from the Faith and have successfully applied those principles to make progress in wisdom. Thus, we recognize the authority of the Doctors of the Church, pre-eminently St. Thomas, who, though not infallible, is a master to whom we can safely entrust ourselves. With these supports given us, we become more confident, and are not afraid to look for truth wherever it may be found, without ever losing sight of the fact that not all truths have the same certainty and not all teachers are equal.

This is the manner in which we have proceeded over the past four years: receptive to nature as we find it, we submit ourselves to the difficult and slow human mode of learning; humbling ourselves, we seek help and guidance from the great authors, from our tutors, and from our classmates; under the light of Faith, we seek to satisfy our wonder. It is fitting, then, that we chose as our class quote the declaration of St. Anselm: "I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand."

Gratitude

We do well, at the end of our studies here, to reflect on the contributions we have received in our intellectual formation, and give thanks to those here who have contributed them. First of all to God, who made us like Himself so that we can know and love Him, and Who enlightens us with revelation; to the Apostolic teachers of the Faith, represented here today by His Excellency Archbishop Ranjith; the tutors, who through their experience and intelligence were immediate principles of our learning; the chaplains, who nourished us with the sacraments and spiritual guidance (and we remember especially Fr. Borden, whose contribution to the College is only now, in his absence, being fully realized and appreciated); the benefactors and staff of the College, whose generosity and hard work make it possible for us to spend leisure time contemplating the highest things; and in an eminent and fundamental way,

our parents, who not only gave us life, but also were our first educators in the order of nature and in the order of faith.

Our Two-Fold Duty

Having received so much, we have now a two-fold duty: as Pope Leo XIII says in his encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*, "Whoever has received from the divine bounty a large share of temporal blessings, whether they be external and material, or gifts of the mind, has received them for the purpose of using them for the perfecting of his own nature, and, at the same time, that he may employ them, as the steward of God's providence, for the benefit of others."

First, having received gifts of the mind, we have a duty to use them to perfect ourselves. Let us remember that the education here is a good beginning, but still just a beginning. We are about to be admitted to the community of those who know, but only to the degree of bachelor of arts. We will not all formally devote ourselves to the intellectual life after we leave here. But, following the Pope's exhortation, let us never stop progressing, using the foundations we have received here to perfect ourselves; let us never stop wondering and asking questions; let us never stop deepening our understanding of nature and our love of wisdom and beauty; and, above all, let us never stop being nourished at the fount of Holy Mother Church's doctrine and sacraments. The liberal arts and all natural knowledge are never used more

excellently than when employed to understand God's revelation. Even if some of us should seldom study the great books again, we should all at least use what we have learned here to grow continually in our understanding and appreciation for Holy Scripture.

Second, the Pope reminds us that we, as stewards of God's providence, are to use our intellectual goods for the benefit of others. Contemplation is indeed a noble activity of man. Because it is desirable in itself, and not for some further end, contemplative

activity is higher than practical. Nevertheless, St. Thomas points out that contemplation reaches its highest perfection in teaching. "Even as it is better to enlighten than merely to shine," says the Angelic Doctor, "so is it better to give to others the fruits of one's contemplation than merely to contemplate."

Knowledge, Humility, and Charity

If humility is necessary to make progress in an individual's intellectual life, how much more so is humility necessary to teach others. For we must remember from where the truth is derived. The truth is not your possession nor mine, but is by nature a common good. And, again, it must be remembered how little it is that we know, and how much we can learn from those we encounter. Neither can we ignore or look down upon those whom we can help intellectually or spiritually; the goal is a friendship where truth is held in common.

In our time here, we have attempted to defer to one another and form intellectual friendships in our pursuit of wisdom. As friendship is also a perfection of the intellectual life, let us maintain the friendships we have made. As the Apostle writes to the Corinthians, "Knowledge breeds self-conceit, but charity edifies." Knowledge, if appropriated to oneself, tends to pride; but knowledge received in humility, and with the same humility shared with others, tends to the building up of the Body of Christ.

As we leave here, on our Commencement Day, in the spirit of the Resurrected Christ, we repeat honestly and humbly the declaration of St. Francis of Assisi toward the end of his earthly life: "We have accomplished very little, brothers; let us begin again, anew."

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, pray for us.



Senior Benjamin Almeida from Steubenville, Ohio, led the Pledge of Allegiance at Commencement.

“God will do Great Things in You”

Baccalaureate Mass Homily of His Excellency Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith

Beloved brethren in the Lord and beloved students: Once I was traveling in a train from Lyons to Paris, and the seat next to me was empty. All of a sudden, a lady came and sat next to me. Of course, I was dressed in my clergy collar, with a crucifix on the lapel of the coat, and I was reading a book. This lady turned to me and asked, “Do you believe in Jesus?” I was surprised—amused even—that she asked me this question. So I said, “Of course, don’t you see, I am a priest.” “Yes, father,” she said, “but still, for all, do you believe in Jesus?” I was even further amused and—I must be very sincere—even a little bit offended.

She left me, and I saw her as she went a few paces forward. Seeing a gentleman reading a newspaper, she spoke to him. He was not pleased at all, and I saw him cover his face with the newspaper he was reading. She went to another person, and I saw that person staring at her. On she went, and I saw her talking to different people. After some time, I saw her coming back. So, I said, “Please, come and sit here; I want to talk to you.” I asked her “What are you doing?” She said, “You know, Father, I am a Catholic, but for some time I had been feeling bored in my faith. So, I went to the parish priest and asked him, ‘How can I get back the joy of my faith?’ And he told me, ‘Get into a train once a week and start talking to the people about what you know about Jesus.’ And so I began, and here I am. I’m doing it almost every day, because I find that as I share what I know about Jesus, I begin to grow in my faith, and I begin to understand it better. I enjoy my faith now.”

Her words reminded me of a phrase that I found in the encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II of fond memories, entitled *Redemptoris Missio*, which was about the missionary mandate of the Church. It went like this: “Faith is strengthened when it is shared.” Yes, faith indeed becomes stronger when you and I share it with others. There lies the secret of our deepest identity and sense of joy.

The Missionary Sense

My dear brothers and sisters and dear students: If you ever experience a sense of loss or tastelessness in your faith in Jesus, it is almost certainly a result of a loss of the missionary sense, the enthusiasm and joy that normally should accompany it. The loss of missionary sense, in turn, is symptomatic of a deep misunderstanding or confusion regarding this infinite treasure—our faith—and the inherent call to proclaim it, a treasure which has been entrusted to us individually as disciples of Christ and collectively as members of the Church. Distractions and elements of a transitory nature often tempt us and tend to kill the call to freedom, nobility, and transcendence directed to us by Christ Himself, who invites us to join Him in creating the new heavens and the new earth. The result is a loss of clarity on the intimate connection that exists between what we celebrate and what we live, most especially in the most Holy Eucharist.

Now, if we ever find that our faith is dull, then it is due to confusion in our minds concerning what our faith truly means for us. Therefore, we have to eradicate that confusion first. We have to understand what the meaning of our faith is and why it is so important for our lives. We also have to look at the strongly outgoing and missionary nature of that faith.

When we talk about faith and mission it is clear that in the first place the Church understands itself as the instrument, specially chosen by God, for the salvation of the world. Thus, anyone who by virtue of baptism has been incorporated into the Church becomes, *ipso facto*, a missionary—someone who participates in the salvific mission of Jesus—because the Church is a continuation of Jesus in history.

Jesus Is the Missionary of God

In the Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, Christ then continues to live through the centuries and continues to bring to fulfillment His



mission. Since we are members of His body, since we are part of His life-giving body, we ourselves share in that mission. Therefore, we have got to evangelize; we have to share the sense of joy inherent in our faith. We have to carry on, to become the instrument and the voice of Jesus in modern-day times, because we know that Jesus Himself is the Missionary of God. He was sent by God. He always stated so.

In the Gospel of St. John, there are several chapters where Jesus speaks about His being sent by the Father; He is the Missionary. St. John announced the purpose of His being sent: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that everyone who believed in Him would not perish but would have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16) Jesus became the Incarnation of this love of God manifested to the full when, laying down His life for us, He wished that all mankind might be saved and receive the good news of salvation. Therefore, Jesus’ death on the Cross is the final and the climaxing moment of the expression, the manifestation, of the love of God for man. In and from that Cross reverberates the announcement of that joy-giving love.

The Church is the Continuation of the Life of Christ

This death and resurrection of Jesus has got to be lived by each and every one of us down the centuries making that love of God become tangible to humanity. This is our mission. This is the continuation of the life of Christ in the world. He founded His Church on the apostles and entrusted to the Church the mission of announcing this good news to everyone, calling them to repentance, to faith in Him, and to a life that is noble. That mission would liberate the whole of creation, the cosmos, and man from the shackles of sin and death, and create them anew, making them become the new heavens and the new earth.

In any page you read from the Scriptures, especially in the writings of St. Paul, you will find this cosmic extension of Jesus’ mission, that Jesus came on earth not only to save mankind, but, through mankind, also what God created, because at the beginning, in the Book of Genesis, it was said that God created everything, and rejoiced in them saying “It is good.” (Gen 1:25) It is man’s sinfulness that tarnished the splendor of that creation, broke it, and made it become a slave of a dichotomy visible in us. Jesus came on earth to bring back that original purity of creation, to restore that purity, the divine purity, into creation and into man, to bring back that wholeness. We Christians, as part of His body, must live that call to purify our life and the life of the world from sin and from its inherent brokenness. This is the essence of our vocation as Christians.



The Church Exists to Evangelize

So, the Church, in its very essence, is missionary. Pope Paul VI stated that “The Church exists to evangelize” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*), that is to say, in order to teach and to preach. If the Church exists to evangelize, then if it does not evangelize, it does not exist. It is so crystal clear. Consequently, if I am a Christian and I do not evangelize, I am not a Christian either. I am not part of the Church, because the Church exists to evangelize. Therefore, by the very meaning of its existence, the Church has to evangelize and seek to liberate humanity in Christ. This is a very noble calling. Yet, we often underestimate it thinking of it in rather worldly terms. There lies the cause of the lethargy and sense of pessimism that often tends to overtake us.

Jesus told us not only to evangelize but also to do so by loving the way He loved us. On the one hand, before He ascended to the Father, He called the disciples together and gave them the missionary mandate: “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Gospel to all creation.” (Mk 16:15) But He also showed the way when at the Last Supper He washed the feet of His disciples telling them, “Love one another as I have loved you. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.” (Jn 13:34-35) The Church, then, has to be the manifestation of the love of God and the expression of true love to humanity as the most effective way to evangelize. All of us must become the living-out of the commandment of love. Thus, our mission to evangelize would take the form of and would be motivated by love.

We Must Love the Way He Loved

He is not speaking here of just a simple, human love but of something much more noble. We ought to love one another following His own example, the way He loved us. How did Jesus love us? Indeed He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and raised the dead. But was that all? No. Bringing that love to its utmost limit, He died on the Cross, laying down His life, in order to free us from sin. That was the apex of His love. It is that way that He wanted us to love our brothers and sisters, loving them so much that we, too, yearn like Him for their salvation. Yes, love them as He did, yearning to save them and ready to even lay down our life, for that is our vocation. Every single brother and sister we meet, we ought to then try and bring to salvation in Jesus.

Jesus showed us this, the ultimate limits of this love. The tragedies that often happen in the lives of human beings as well as of entire nations are caused not because there is no love, but because we don’t know how to love. Very often, the love that we express towards others is motivated by considerations of selfishness; it is not self-donating in the manner of Jesus, bringing mankind to God, reconciling each person with Him, and giving joyfully everything we have and are, for this is love in its finest expression. It is Mission.

“Men Have Forgotten God”

The world yearns for God and suffers because it has gone away from Him. Some years ago, the Russian poet Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970, wrote a beautiful article in a magazine called *The National Review*. He wrote like this:

When I started going to school in Rostov-on-Don [a city in Russia], other children, pushed on by members of the Komsomol [that, is the Communist Youth

Continued on next page

League], taunted me for accompanying my mother to the last remaining church in town and tore the cross from around my neck.

A few years later, I heard a number of older people offer this explanation for the great disaster that had befallen Russia: ‘Men have forgotten God; that is why all this has happened.’ The older people used to say, ‘Why is all this catastrophe in Russia, so many people killed and murdered?’ And they would say, ‘It is because men have forgotten God.’

Since then I have spent well nigh 50 years working on the history of the Russian Revolution. In the process I have collected hundreds of personal testimonies, read hundreds of books, and contributed eight volumes of my own. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause for the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat, ‘Men have forgotten God.’

What is more, if I were called upon to identify the principal trait of the entire 20th century, I would be unable to find anything more precise than to reflect once again on how we have lost touch with our Creator. The failings of human consciousness, deprived of its divine dimension, have been a determining factor in all the major crimes of this century.

This was written by a Russian poet. He lived in a country where atheism was the official state ideology. Yet he is so categorical in stating that, “All the major crimes in this century” have been caused by people who say there is no God. This is truly a sad situation. But it also means that there is a need for the search for something more noble in human life—the search for infinity in the midst of so much of finiteness, for true freedom in the midst of so much of slavery, for truth in the midst of so much of falsehood, intellectual self-aggrandizement and relativism, for gentleness and humility in the midst of so much of pride and arrogance, and for communion with God and one’s own brother and sister in the midst of so much of individualism and selfishness.

There Is No Limit to What You Can Do

Dear young people: You are going out today. This is supposed to be the day of your “commencement.” At first I thought this “commencement” meant the beginning of your studies; later on, I was told that it was not so, but rather the beginning of your life outside. What a wonderful day. I think you’ll remember this day very much, not because I preached to you, but because God is going to work a miracle inside you, because He is calling you to His mission outside. You have been secure in this beautiful set-up here, like the apostles on Mount Tabor. But now, you are going out to the world, and that is where the challenge lies. But that should not terrify you. As Christians, remember, there is no limit to what you can do, if you place yourself, ready for the mission in the hands of Jesus. He will do great things in you.

There is so much of arrogance, indifference, confusion, such a sense of loss in the world outside. You have this beautiful treasure. Your faith and the joyful conviction that Jesus has need of you and a place for you. I am told you have been taught in the classics and in theology. You have studied St. Thomas Aquinas, of course, because the College is consecrated to him. You have

also studied St. Augustine; you have studied the old classics, the Latin classics. You understand the yearning of the human spirit for truth and beauty, and freedom. Over there where you will be, humanity is calling upon the Church, that is you and me, disciples of Christ, for answers.

The Church is not just the bishops, the priests, or the sisters. No. The Church is you—every one of you. As members of the Body of Christ, as those baptized in His name, you are called to participate in that great mission outside, to announce that God loves the world, that He wants to save it, and He wants to bring back mankind and the world to their pristine glory with which He created them.

The Scriptures say, “Man and woman He created them...He created them in His own image and likeness.” (Gen 1:27) What a great consideration! Do you imagine the greatness of the treasure you have inside yourselves, that you have been created in God’s own image and likeness? And then, not only that: He invites you to join Him in His mission. He wants you to be part of that great story of love. He sends you out today into the world to speak about it. Even through the smallest things you do, He wants you to be the expression of His love all around, aiming at your best always.

I would say, dear students, the sky is the limit to what you can achieve outside. Yes, you will surely do well in life, after being formed in such an eminent institution; be well employed and happy at your success. But that is not enough. You have to do even greater things. It is a personal call. Pope John Paul II says, “Every disciple is personally called by name; no disciple can withhold making a response.” (*Christifideles Laici* 33) As St. Paul said, “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.” (1 Cor 9:16)

Place Your Talents in His Service

Beloved brothers and sisters, the reading today (Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30) speaks to us about the call to creativity, accountability, and responsibility as important orientations in our relationship with God and commitment to His mission. The difference in the number of talents received by each servant, as you heard in the Gospel, is all for the benefit of the Lord and of His mission. As the Gospel indicates, these talents are not of their own making, but given to them by God. The servants receive the talents from the Lord Himself.

Using one’s God-given intelligence, you are to place these talents in His service. For the talents do not belong to you, but they belong to Him who gave them to you. *He* gave them to you. Multiply them. One day, be able to tell Him, “Lord, you gave me five talents, here are five more”—or ten more and, maybe, even a greater number if you are willing to risk more for Him. But remember, He gives them to you; He will also help you to multiply them, if you use them for His glory.

He Will Be With You

It is not a journey that you go all alone, He will be with you, He will accompany you always. Remember, if you are faithful to Him, He will guide you to make you bear much fruit. Great things He will do through you, and the talents will

keep on increasing, and you will be able to lay them at His feet, making Him entrust you with greater gifts.

At the same time the Gospel posits that one could also take the attitude of the lazy one who preferred to hide them. That is the sense of freedom which the Lord accords His servants. He does not impose. The reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:3-8) shows us the context in which such



talents become opportunities. We ought to use not only these but also the other talents that we are able to gain for Him in the service of His great mission, that of redeeming humanity and creation from their brokenness in sin through the manifestation of the love of God. It is one great opportunity that is offered to us, His servants.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us pray for these young people today. You parents, be grateful to God that He has given you such beautiful treasures in these youngsters. It is a pity that today people do not appreciate the gift of children. Every time a child is born, and the cry of that child is heard, when it comes out of the mother’s womb, it is a cry of *hope*, not of despair or of pessimism. Hence, it is a sin to refuse God’s mercy saying, “Children are a burden for us. We will have to make many sacrifices for them.” Such considerations are basically selfish, and as Pope John Paul II termed, “manifestations of a culture of death.”

Once I was walking along Rue du Bac in Paris, and I saw a car coming along with an elderly couple in it. The car stopped right next to me because I was waiting to cross the road. I saw this old couple, husband and wife, and then behind them, two dogs. The couple looked so sad and lonely. I could understand that there is loneliness around because humanity refuses life and embraces the culture of death. Maybe we would prefer to have some animals to pet and caress, but not children. Yet, what a great treasure children are. As the Bible says, they are a blessing indeed.

Let Us Pray for These Young People

Among these your children, these young people who are now leaving this college and going out into the world, I am sure there will be many great citizens of the world—doctors, lawyers, accountants, architects, sisters, nuns, priests, bishops, cardinals, and maybe even a Pope. How do we know? Best of all, there can be another Thomas Aquinas, too. How do we know what God can achieve in these young people? They can all become potential miracles of God’s greatness, if you help them.

You parents, you took that wise decision of sending them to this great institution because it offers a wholesome Catholic education—not just science and knowledge, but faith, commitment, courage, heroism, readiness to risk in order to grow, readiness to hold onto the hands of Jesus in order to walk with Him and become useful to Him in this life. Be happy about your choice. Help them. Pray for them. Accompany them lovingly.

All of us today at this Mass will pray for you, dear young people, that one day—one day—God will speak to you those beautiful words, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Come and enter into my Father’s glory.” (Mt 25:21) What beautiful words they would be, like music to our ears. Therefore, let us pray today, in a very special way plead with

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Then-Deacon John Mellein, O.P., a graduate of the College’s Class of 1999, served as deacon for Archbishop Ranjith at the Baccalaureate Mass. His sister, Maria, was among those who graduated from the College later in the morning. Deacon Mellein was ordained to the priesthood in San Francisco the following month. (See story, page 5.)

will not be allowed to realize what He wants to realize in you.

If I were to explain through another example, it is like the lotus flowers that bloom in our part of the world. Outside of the cities there are these swampy areas, and if you take a walk in the early hours of the morning, you see these small flower buds opening out little by little when they see the sun. If you go around 10:30 or 11:00 a.m., you see that they have opened up fully, and the whole marsh is one full carpet of flowers. It becomes so beautiful. The lesson is that our lives, if they are turned towards the light of the Lord, will blossom and become so beautiful, beautiful beyond description.

If we turn our life to God and allow Him to do what He wants, our lives will shine brightly. It is also like the sunlight reflected on a mirror: if you wish to turn the sunlight in any direction, the mirror will help you to reflect the light where you wish to. Just so, if the mirror of your life is turned to God, His brightness will fall on you, and you will be able to reflect it to others. Thus, you will become a cause of strength and blessing on your brothers and sisters, too.

Genuine Catholic Education

Education today, if it is to be wholesome, has to help young people to come closer to God, to feel challenged, strengthened, and called by Him, and to be able to respond generously to Him. In other words, it must facilitate a young man or woman to “tune in” to God’s wavelength so that he or she may achieve what has been planned for him or her.

Jesus told us, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them.” (Lk 18: 16) That is the invitation addressed to the Catholic school and to Catholic teachers. The most important consideration is to let the Eternal Truth shine on these young people. Jesus did claim that He was “the way, the truth and the life,” (Jn 14: 6) and He did assure us that “the Truth will make us free.” (Jn 8: 32) It is to reflect that truth, which brings true freedom, that a good Catholic education should assist young people.

The Second Vatican Council’s document on education says this: “Beautiful, therefore, and truly solemn is the vocation of all those who assist parents in fulfilling their task, and who represent human society as well by undertaking the role of school teacher.” (*Gravissimum Educationis* n.5) It is a beautiful vocation to be a teacher, but what is most important is that the school teacher empower himself so that he works with the young people who come to him or her, and helps them, along with the parents, to discover their supernatural vocation and to respond generously to that. It is a most noble task. Teaching is thus a vocation, not merely a profession.

Jesus Himself should be the example of those who take up teaching or those who run Catholic schools and colleges. He turned, within a brief period of time, a rag-tag band of illiterate, confused, and ambitious men into committed apostles. They were ambitious; they were doubtful; there was one who was very close to Him and yet denied Him three times and, worse still, one who even betrayed him. But within a short period of time, because Jesus was so powerful and His light shone on them so much, He turned them into apostles who were ready to proclaim and fulfill the mission that was entrusted to them, and even to lay down their lives for Him. That is what the school and the teacher should empower their students to do.

I know Mr. Dillon has always said that Thomas Aquinas College has to be like another Christ who forms the best in these students. And I think the College does this, so I can only compliment it.

I congratulate Thomas Aquinas College for the great service it renders to these young people especially helping them to discern truth through faith and reason as its handmaid.

Catholic Education Suffers from Modern Trends

The danger facing education today is that of visualizing itself as a servant of a given economic or socio-political system with goals which are purely earthly, just placing the accent only on some shades of the externals. Education, however, is not an appendix of an economic or socio-political system. Its aim is not that of producing a man or a woman who will serve a given political or economic system blindly. Hitler, for example, sought to orient the schools and universities in Germany during his time towards an idolization of himself and the system he introduced. This is not education. So it was also in the countries that were hidden behind the Iron Curtain.

Now, there is a new ideology today which tends to dominate humanity—secularization—which in its extreme form is atheistic and materialistic. This ideology in some of its milder forms at times seems to have adherents even among good Catholics. It seeks to marginalize faith and the Church from public life. Even good Catholics adhere to this ideology that the Church should stay away from public life. They posit a strict separation between the Church and the state, and between faith and life.

To make matters worse, there is an economic free-for-all without any spiritual or moral content, which in matters personal places accent on the freedom of the individual so much so that the individual sees all binding structures of religion, morality, and discipline as impediments to his freedom. He seeks to free himself from these either through an attitude of indifferentism or by relegating these strictly to the realm of the private and personal. In matters social, this ideology seeks to suffocate or kill religious and moral values through a philosophy of strict separation of the spiritual and the secular.

Then there is the substitution of religion in its communitarian expression with mass scale social gatherings or distractions, especially those that demean the sense of the sacred in human life. By this I mean the use of Sundays and holy days for mass-scale cultural events, sports events, or other distractions. Nowadays, for example, I know where I live in Italy, more people go to the stadium to watch football than do for Sunday Mass. More people go to the supermarket on Sundays than to church.

As Pope John Paul II stated, “Unfortunately, when Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely part of a weekend, it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that they can no longer see the heavens.” (*Dies Domini* 4) What beautiful words! Even the day which should have been a day of rest and quiet has now become, for many, yet another noisy affair. This is the type of society that is being advocated—man becoming its slave—doing exactly what it wants.

All of this is a result of a utilitarian outlook on human life which affects education too. Education becomes a process by which only the personnel that are needed for the progress of the market economy are formed. Schools and universities are more oriented to the empirical and rational sciences which concern the intellect, rather than to the ethical, moral, and disciplinary aspects of formation.

Catholic Education Is Ordered to the Transcendent

In the life and formation of Jesus, however, the focus of attention is different. For even Jesus had His own formation. Yet He is not considered the object of education, but is very much its subject. He is always conscious of his ontological relationship with the Father: “I and the Father are one,” (Jn 10: 30) He stated. He is, in fact, from God and has been sent by Him so that He may fulfill God’s

will. He was aware of the nature of His mission and prepared Himself for it consciously. Thus, He is not so much the object of education as much as its subject.

This understanding is something very important for us so that we do not consider ourselves as just objects at the receiving end listening to lectures, being drilled to accept uncritically everything that is taught. On the contrary, education should stimulate us to start thinking about ourselves, our noble vocation, our higher relationship to God, and to feel stimulated to achieve great things in Him, not just ordinary immanentist goals. Like Jesus, we should recognize the nobility of our vocation and its divine origins.

An education that does not take into consideration the transcendental nature of our vocation and the need to orient our life towards the noble aspirations which go along with it cannot be Catholic education. Says the letter to the Ephesians, “And you, parents, provoke not your children to wrath, but nurture them in the discipline and the admonishment of the Lord.” (Eph 6: 4)

The Scriptures recount to us how before his death Tobit advised Tobias, his son, on the way he should bring up his children: “Bring up your children to do what is right. Teach them that they must give to the poor and must always remember to praise God with all sincerity.” (Tob 14: 9)

St. John Chrysostom, a 4th-Century Father of the Church, in his sermon on the Letter to the Ephesians, spoke about the example of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who, after the Lord had removed the shame of her barrenness, conceived and bore him. He stated, “Imitate Hannah’s example. Look at what she did. She brought Samuel up at once to the temple. Who amongst you would not rather that his son should become a Samuel than that he should be king of the whole



world ten thousand times over? She offered him up to God, and then she left him.” (*Homilies on Ephesians* XXI, 4) Let everything else, therefore, be secondary for us, when compared to the need to take provident care of our children, raising them up and orienting them in the first place to know, love, and serve God.

Thus, the best education we can give a child is to place him or her in the closest possible mode of relationship with God, because God’s light will then fall on them and help them to see, understand, and respond to truth in the most noble way. The best in their characters will then shine out naturally.

Some of us still recall with great awe and reverence teachers who not only taught us but allowed that which was happening in the intimacy of our hearts at the behest of God’s mysterious hand to realize itself. They did not stop or impede that. That is what the famous educator Maria

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“Thou Art a Priest Forever”

Three from the Class of 1999 Ordained to the Priesthood

Among the many good fruits with which Thomas Aquinas College has been blessed over the years is the relatively large number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life among its alumni. This past spring, three graduates from one class were ordained to the priesthood, bringing the total number of Thomas Aquinas College priests to 47. At the same time, there are 35 young men in seminaries around the country and abroad, and 20 fully professed nuns and brothers in a variety of religious orders.

Our three new priests all met at Thomas Aquinas College as members of the Class of 1999. Two of them spent four years together at the College, and both discerned vocations to the Order of Preachers. Fittingly, on June 2, 2007, they were also ordained to the priesthood together, with a number of alumni and faculty of the College in attendance.

Rev. John Thomas Mellein, O.P. ('99)

The son of the College's administrative facilities manager, Mr. Thomas Mellein, Father John Thomas Mellein came to the College in 1995 having been raised with his nine brothers and sisters in the nearby city of Ventura, California. At the College, he was introduced to the Dominican Order and was drawn to it by their community life, their devotion to the choral office, their attention to preaching, and their emphasis on the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, which he was eager to continue studying.



Thus, the summer after his graduation from the College, he entered the Western Province of the Order of Preachers. He took his solemn vows on May 28, 2005, and was ordained to the diaconate at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on January 7, 2006, in Washington, D.C. This past June, a year and a half later, he was ordained to the priesthood by the Most Reverend Allan Vigneron at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco.

Fr. Mellein's formation has included a wide variety of studies and ministries that have taken him to the San Francisco Bay Area, Alaska, Utah, Oregon, Washington, D. C., and Peru. He says of his preparation, "I find that ministry, study, and prayer mutually enrich each other in our life. Study informs our ministry, and ministry gives direction to study. The whole is supported and in turn deepens our life of prayer." Fr. Mellein's first assignment is Parochial Vicar at Holy Family Cathedral in Anchorage, Alaska, where he served for a time during his formation.

Rev. Michael Hurley, O.P. ('99)

Fr. Mellein's classmate Fr. Michael Hurley is the first of five siblings. Born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, he attended St. Peter's parish in Pacifica and graduated from Alma Height Christian Academy there.

While attending Thomas Aquinas College, he discerned a call from Our Lord to enter the Dominican Order with the help of Fr. Bart de la Torre, one of the College's chaplains at the time. Attracted to the Order for its

intellectual character and its emphasis on preaching, Fr. Hurley, like his classmate, Fr. Mellein, entered the Western Province of the Dominicans in the summer of 1999, just after his graduation from the College.

His formation since then has included a number of years of study in philosophy and theology. In addition, during the summer of 2003, he studied Spanish while living in Oaxaca, Mexico, with the Dominican friars located there.

Fr. Hurley was ordained to the diaconate at the Dominican Order's Holy Rosary Parish in Antioch, California, by the Most Reverend Allen Vigneron on January 21, 2006. On the first weekend of this past June, he was ordained to the priesthood at St. Dominic's Church, also by Bishop Vigneron. Fr. Hurley's first assignment is Parochial Vicar at this San Francisco parish named for the Order's saintly founder.

Rev. Matthew McNeely, F.S.S.P. ('99)

Born in British Columbia, Canada, Fr. Matthew McNeely is the second of twelve children. Though he grew up in Ottawa, his family eventually settled in Lincoln, Nebraska.

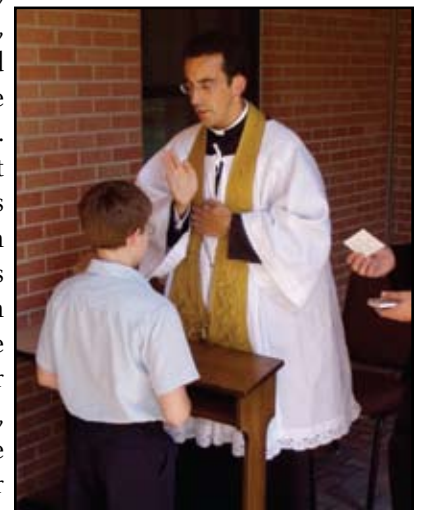
Upon graduating high school, Fr. McNeely came to Thomas Aquinas College. After completing his second year at the College, the strong desire to follow in his father's footsteps and become a doctor took hold of him. So, he left the College and for the next three years took up pre-med studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

His plans for a medical career were interrupted, however, when the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter opened its North American seminary dedicated to Our

Lady of Guadalupe in Denton, Nebraska, in 2000. Not long after, Fr. McNeely was drawn to discern a vocation at the new seminary. On May 12, 2007, he was ordained to the priesthood by the Most Reverend Fabian Bruskewitz, Bishop of Lincoln, with his fellow Thomas Aquinas College alumnus, the Rev. John Berg ('93), now the Superior General of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, assisting.

During his years as a seminarian, Fr. McNeely assisted several times at Sacred Heart summer camp at St. Stephen the First Martyr parish in Sacramento, California, which is served by priests of the Fraternity. Fr. McNeely's first assignment is at this parish where he is

serving both as Parochial Vicar and an instructor in the parish's 7th-12th grade academy. He will be working under another Thomas Aquinas College alumnus, Rev. Robert Novokowsky, F.S.S.P. ('93), the director of St. Stephen Academy and pastor of the parish.



“Let us ask for the gift of perseverance for all priests: may they stay faithful to prayer, celebrate Holy Mass with ever-renewed devotion, live listening to the Word of God, and day after day assimilate the same sentiments and attitudes as those of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.”

**Pope Benedict XVI
World Day of Prayer for Vocations
Sunday, April 29, 2007**

Homily, continued from page 5

the Lord—that these young people be protected, strengthened in their resolve to serve Him and to be part of His great mission, to understand the greatness for which they are called.

I just want to conclude by recounting to you another little incident. When I was a parish priest, I went to see a friend of mine, a bit of a senior priest. While I was talking to him, the bell rang, and he went outside, and I heard him converse. I overheard because there were no walls really, only partial separations. I heard someone say, "Father, I want to become a priest." Then I heard the priest say, "What?! Are you mad? Don't you see that I am suffering? Get out! Get out!" When he came back, all red, I said to him, "Father, I could not help it, but I overheard what you said. Father, don't you understand that yours and mine is a great vocation, the greatest of them all? Then why this pessimism?"

Some years ago, I was addressing a group of seminarians of the Legionaries of Christ, and afterwards we had dinner together. Seated with me, there was a young man who had earlier been a dentist. He was practicing, but gave it up. I asked him, "How did you get your vocation?" He said, "I don't know. I cannot explain." And then he said, "I went looking for a community, and the father in charge told me, 'Well, take your time; not now; grow a little older and come.' And then another one said, 'You have a good profession. Continue doing God's work in that profession. What is the use of coming here to become a priest?'

They were so discouraging. But then I heard about this particular religious family, and I called their Father Superior, and he said to me over the phone, 'Gee, what an idea! Come immediately.' When I heard that I told myself, 'That is where I am going because there is hope, there is joy, there is purpose.'"

Go on the Mission of Christ

Dearest young people, the sky is the limit. With Jesus, you can achieve great things. The mission is there, outside. Your brothers and sisters are waiting to hear from you, not only words of science and philosophy and theology, but they are waiting to see in you another Christ, to see the fullness of your faith. Go and live that faith, and God will let you do great things. Be His courageous and heroic missionaries. Heroism will make you live and live well.

You know what? I am sure Dr. Dillon, in his report, would like to say one day—of course, I do not know whether he will be in the land of the living, or whether I will be in the land of the living at that time—but he will be surely happy to say, "One of our students has become Saint So-and-So or Saint So-and-So." Wouldn't that be a most exhilarating experience? I am sure you, Dr. Dillon, would be the happiest. You see, he says yes.

So, go on the mission of Christ. Be courageous. He will do great things in you. And may He always be your light and your salvation.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Class of 2007 and Senior Theses



The Case for Contingency:
A Consideration of Aristotle's and
St. Thomas Aquinas's Defense of
Indeterminacy in Nature
PAUL AUGUSTO ALARCÓN
Lake Forest, California



How and When to
Bite the Hand That Feeds You
PATRICK RAE ALLEN
Calgary, Alberta, Canada



Tragedy: The Manifestation
of Man's Fallen Condition
BENJAMIN ANDREW ALMEIDA
Steubenville, Ohio

Pursuing Good: An Investigation
into Absolute and Universal
Precepts of Natural Law
PHILIP JAMES BARRETT
Montreal, Québec, Canada



What Does X Mean?
A Discussion of the Symbols
in Descartes' Geometry
JOHN HUNNEWELL BOYER
Hanford, California



Through a Poet's Eyes:
John Milton and
Eternal Providence
**STEPHANIE KRISTIN
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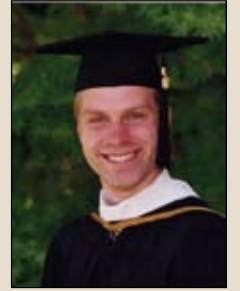
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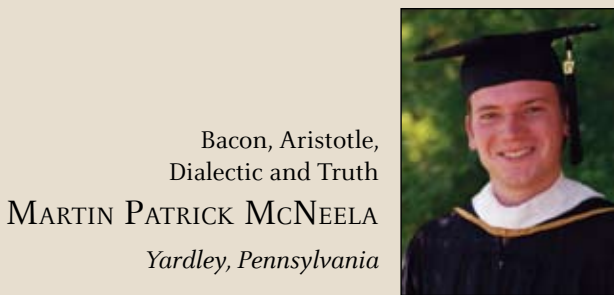
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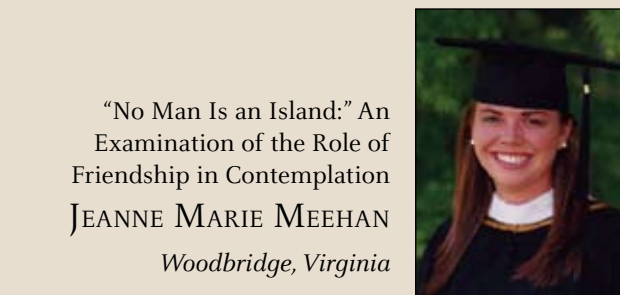
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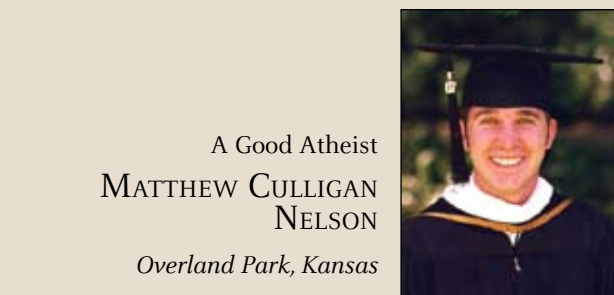
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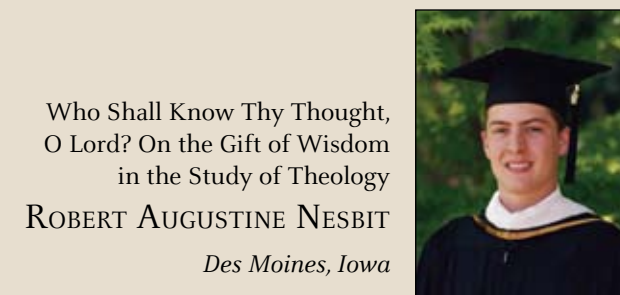
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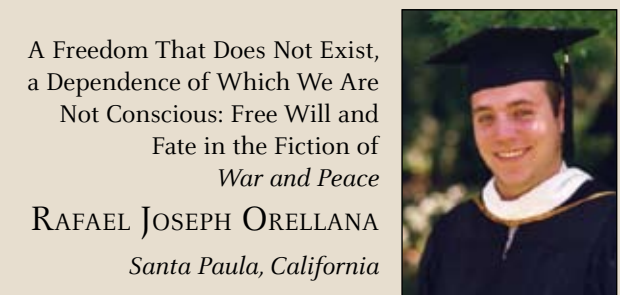
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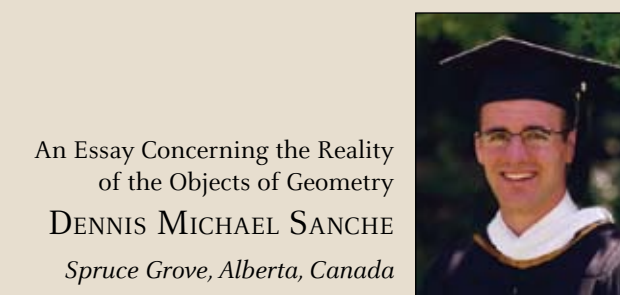
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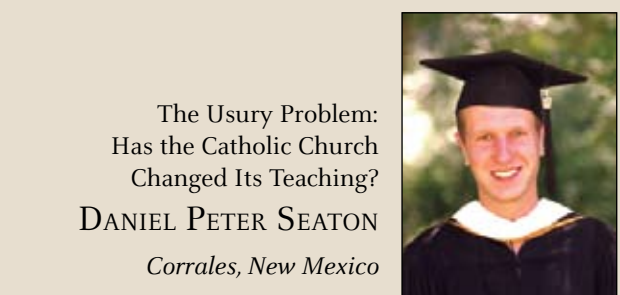
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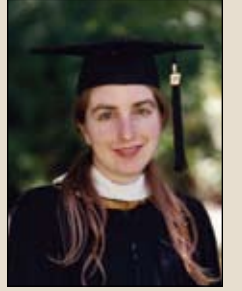
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Nourishes the Faith
**AMELIA CLAIRE GABRIELLE
ZIEGERT**
Wichita, Kansas



**Patroness of the Class of 2007:
Our Lady of Perpetual Help.**

Class Quotation:
"For I do not seek to understand
so that I may believe;
but I believe so that I may understand."
- St Anselm

Commencement Address *Continued from page 6*

Montessori affirmed, "We teachers can only help the work that is going on, as servants wait upon a master." (*The Absorbent Mind Ch. 1*) Each teacher before a student is like someone approaching something sacred saying, "Something is happening in this young person; let me help as much as I can."



Truth is a Gift

What I am pinpointing here is that there is a deeply divine dimension to Catholic education which must be understood. That is the only way in which a proper Catholic education can be given to young people.

I was edified to listen to the presentation just now by the Senior Class Speaker, as he talked about that divine aspect of theology, of knowledge, and of truth. As Jesus stood in front of Pilate, there was a very intriguing question asked. Pilate asked Him, "What is truth?" Jesus never answered. He did not answer because truth is not so much something

that is defined as it is given. It is a gift of God. It is a person. It is God Himself, Truth eternal. And Pilate failed to recognize Jesus, the very incarnation of Truth.

Truth. We only have to seek Jesus, and if we genuinely seek Him, and if we open our hearts to Him, He will reveal Himself and His plan for us which will help us free ourselves from slavery to untruth. Otherwise, we are like the five blind men who were taken to a big elephant and told to define what it looked like. One went and touched the trunk and said, "An elephant is like a tree." Another touched the tail and said, "An elephant is a creeper." But that, everyone knew, was not the truth. We cannot go looking for truth if we are blind to God's light. The eye of faith is that which leads us to that personal expression of truth, which is the understanding of God. That is why it is important that we allow the Lord to shine on us and let His light guide us.

This is very important, and I congratulate Thomas Aquinas College for the great service it renders to these young people, especially helping them to discern truth through faith and reason as its handmaid. I was edified to hear yesterday, when I was with a group of these graduates at breakfast, how they presented their lives and their dreams of the future.

Dream in the Lord

Dream. It's a good thing to dream. But dream in the Lord. Dream for Him. Dream with Him. Hold His hand, walk in the search for truth, and

He will lead you to the truth which He himself is. That is what we all wish for you, dear young people, today. Take with you this great optimism of life which comes from your faith. Never give up. Be courageous.

I wish to conclude my reflection by thanking all of you, dear members of the staff and my dear students. I wish you God's blessings in the years to

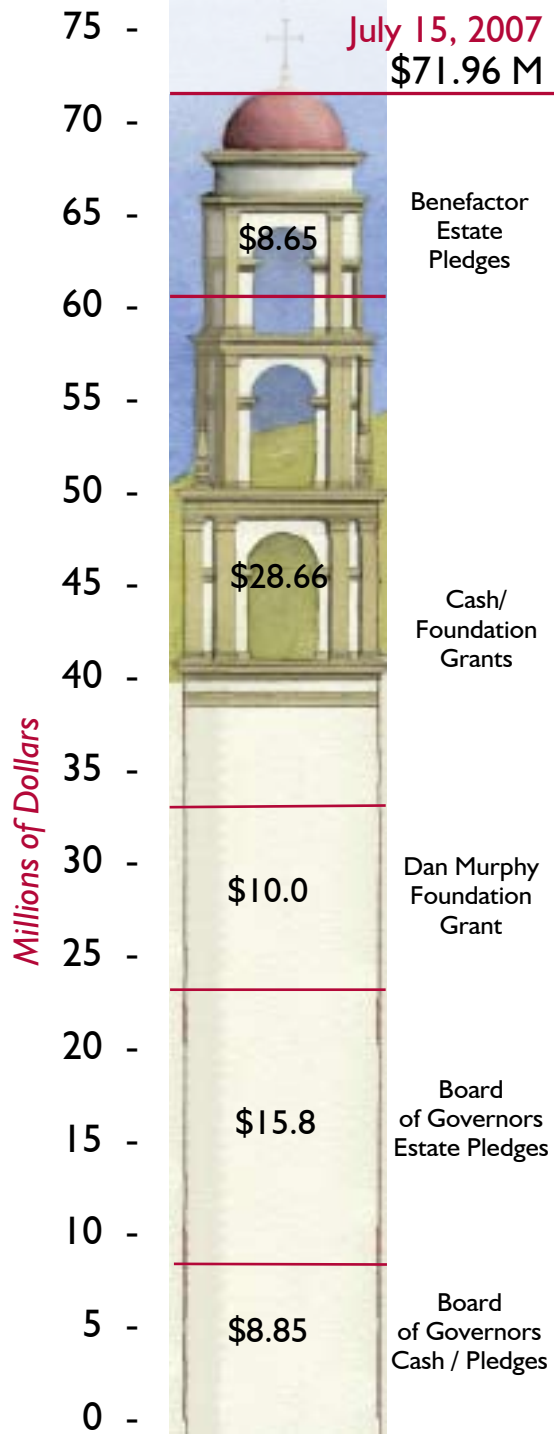


come. As St. Paul states, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor 2: 9)

God loves each and every one of you, my dear students. That is why He created you so differently and gave you so many different talents. That is why He has a special plan for you. If you allow him, you will shine and be yourselves the manifestation of His light and truth. Let Him then be always the cause of your brightness and grandeur.

Thank you.

Campaign Update



Commencement 2007



Calendar of Events

Freshman Orientation	August 16
Convocation Day	August 20
Lecture: Brian Kelly, Tutor	August 24
Dramatic Presentation of the <i>Iliad</i> , by Eldon Quick	September 14
Lecture: Randall Smith on the Old Law	September 28
Alumni Day	October 6
Columbus Day, No Classes	October 8
Lecture: Yuval Levin on Early Modern Philosophy and Natural Science	October 12
Feast of All Saints, No Classes	November 1
Lecture: Eva Brann on the <i>Eumenides</i>	November 9
Advent Concert	November 30

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