



WHY STUDY THE GREAT BOOKS?

By Dr. Amy Fahey,
Teaching Fellow

“The liberal arts college,” John Senior once wrote, “begins in wonder and ends in wisdom.” In our current higher education system, as in much of American private and political life, we see precious little of either. But at Thomas More College, students and faculty spend four years peering closely at the great works of Western civilization in the expectation of discovering and recovering truth, beauty, and goodness.

But the purpose of what we do is increasingly being questioned, even by those once thought to be staunch supporters of Catholic liberal education. Why study the Great Books? Why attend a liberal arts college? Does it *really* matter if a college is serious about its Catholic

identity? The reasons such questions are being asked are too numerous and complex to be treated fully here, but I will briefly suggest a couple.

Legitimate economic pressures, combined with the lure of “free” or budget education, have led many to question the value of a liberal arts degree. Must one pay for wonder? Must one put a price tag on wisdom? Another reason is, ironically, the renaissance of a type of classical education in Catholic secondary schools and homeschooling programs. When poorly pursued, such programs can foster a false sense of premature intellectual sophistication, leading some to adopt a “been there, done that” mentality toward the Great Books.

And so, we find ourselves needing to define and defend what we do with greater clarity, precision, and force to

those who, until quite recently, needed little persuading. This is a good thing, I think, for we should never take for granted those goods which we have been given. In what follows, then, I hope to provide one professor’s *apologia* for a Thomas More College education.

The mission of Thomas More College is “to provide a solid education in the liberal arts, a Catholic education for students of all faiths, united in the quest for what is true, good, and beautiful. It pursues this mission by seeking wisdom and sharing it joyfully with the world.” This brief statement of purpose is helpful in expressing what it is we do and why. In reflecting on this mission statement, I have come to recognize three distinct but inseparable qualities of a Thomas More education: namely, that it is intelligible, integrated, and Incarnational.

First, what does it mean to say that our program of studies is *intelligible*?

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JOSEPH PEARCE APPOINTED VISITING CHAIR

**By Dr. Amy Fahey,
Teaching Fellow**

Thomas More College is pleased to welcome renowned author and speaker Joseph Pearce as the St. John Henry Newman Chair in Catholic Studies for the 2022–2023 academic year.

“It is truly an honor,” Mr. Pearce said of his appointment. “I can think of no other faithful Catholic college with which I’d rather be associated.” In his capacity as Visiting Chair, Joseph Pearce will be leading discussions on the craft of writing for both the Sophomore and Junior Writing Tutorials. He will also lead discussions of Lewis, Tolkien, and other writers for an upper-class tutorial entitled *Literature and the Moral Imagination*.

In addition, Mr. Pearce will be offering an eight-part public lecture series entitled “The History of Christendom.” Based on his forthcoming book, *The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful: History in Three Dimensions* (Ignatius), the lectures begin with the birth of Christ and move into the present day. “The talks,” noted Mr. Pearce, “will lead participants through the tapestry of the centuries, in which the goodness of the saints, the wickedness of the worldly, and the beauty of great art form the interwoven threads.”

“The College community is delighted to have Joseph Pearce with us for the academic year,” remarked Paul Jackson, Executive Vice President and Director of Institutional Advancement. “Joseph has been a longtime friend of the College. His expertise and knowledge of Shakespeare, Chesterton, Lewis, Tolkien, and so many others, coupled with his wit, good nature, and humor, will no doubt make this academic year enriching and enjoyable for students and faculty alike.”

The students, who have already had the opportunity to discuss poetry and autobiographical writing with Mr. Pearce, agree. “It is such a blessing to have Mr. Pearce teaching our class,” said

Margaret Six ’25. “His experience and wealth of knowledge are invaluable to us as writing students.” For Buddy Saunders ’25, “Mr. Pearce brings a Chestertonian spirit to our Writing Tutorial. His educational outlook is tempered with mirth—something I appreciate immensely.” Gabriella Braaten ’25 concurred: “Mr. Pearce exudes joy and a willingness to share his wisdom freely.”

In addition to serving as Director of Book Publishing at the Augustine Institute, Mr. Pearce is the editor of the *St. Austin Review*, series editor of the Ignatius Critical Editions, and senior contributor at The Imaginative Conservative. His most recent work is *Faith of Our Fathers: A History of True England* (Ignatius, 2022).

Joseph Pearce is the third scholar to be appointed Visiting Chair. In 2020, Dr. Robert Royal, Dante scholar and editor of *The Catholic Thing*, served as the inaugural recipient. Last year’s Visiting Chair was held by Dr. Michael Dominic Taylor, who received an Expanded Reason Award from the Ratzinger Foundation and the Francisco de Vitoria University (Madrid) for his book, *The*

Foundations of Nature: Metaphysics of Gift for an Integral Ecological Ethic (Cascade, 2020). Dr. Taylor now serves as Dean of Students and Teaching Fellow at the College.

The endowed Chair is made possible through the generosity of an anonymous donor. “The College is grateful to its benefactor for creating an endowment that allows us to support visiting scholars of various ranks and fields,” said President William Fahey. “For a generation, Joseph Pearce has represented in speech and writing what we call ‘the Catholic Literary Revival.’ Those champion figures, like Chesterton and Belloc, have been augmented through Joseph’s other works on Shakespeare, Wilde, Roy Campbell, Schumacher, and Solzhenitsyn. Would the current informed faithful even know about such men and their ideas without Joseph Pearce? Would they understand them with such sympathy? I am thrilled that our old friend will be spending a year sharing decades of experience and allowing us to join him on new literary adventures.”





Caritas conga

ACADEMIC LIFE AT TH

**By Walter J. Thompson,
Fellow and Dean**

Our approach to Catholic liberal education at Thomas More College is inspired by our patron, whom we regard as a model both of an educated man and an educator, and whom we strive to imitate in all we do.

Now, we do more at the College than study—we work, caring for the grounds, the buildings, and one another; we pray, we play, we feast, we sing. We do all these things, for all are good and are parts of a complete human life. But our peculiar purpose as a college is study. As a college, we are a community of teachers and students dedicated to the pursuit and communication of truth.

We are so dedicated because truth is a good—a great good—for human beings. Human beings are made to know the truth, and we are made better, we live better, when we learn it.

But there are many sorts of truth. Some truths are useful to know, because they serve a particular purpose you may happen to have. If that purpose is good, so too is the knowledge that serves it (and to that extent). Other truths are necessary to know, because they serve purposes that are not optional but mandatory, purposes that we all have—for example, we all desire to live well and so be happy; we all need to know what genuine happiness is and what is to be done to attain it. Still other truths are

worth knowing for their own sake, for the very good of knowing them, without regard to other purposes.

We do not, at this College, seek every sort of truth. We don't seek every truth it might be useful to know. We don't study medicine, for example, or statistics, or Chinese. Of those truths that are useful for purposes other than knowing them, we principally seek those that are useful for learning. We do seek those truths it is necessary for us all to know, if we are to live well as human beings and Catholics. And, above all, we seek those truths worth knowing for their own sake, the very knowledge of which is good.

For ours is a program in liberal education. A liberal education is not immediately ordered to any particular vocation. But it is ordered to our common vocation: living well—that is, reasonably and faithfully—in all the circumstances of life. Hence, a liberal education has more application to more of life than any narrowly vocational education. And it is, in fact, a better preparation for many vocations than any narrowly vocational education.

A liberal education is, quite literally, the education proper to a free person. Its opposite is a servile education, an education fit for a slave. A free person, unlike a slave, is one who exists for his own sake, for his own good, and not as a tool to be used by others for their good. A free person, moreover, is one who is able to direct himself to his good,

one who can move himself and does not require another to move him from without, by command or compulsion.

An education is liberal, then, when it is directed to the good of those being educated—to things good for them to learn and become—and not to making them useful for others' purposes. And an education is liberal when it makes those being educated able to govern themselves—to be responsible, for themselves and others. The proximate goal of a liberal education is the students' own growth in wisdom, to the stature of mature, responsible adults.

Since we are a Catholic college, the wisdom we seek is both that human wisdom at which we can arrive through the diligent and disciplined exercise of our natural powers, reflecting upon our own experience and that handed down to us in the great works of our Catholic intellectual tradition, and also that divine wisdom revealed by God Himself, which we receive in faith and strive with God's help to understand. For a Catholic college, "faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth," as Pope St. John Paul II has taught us in *Fides et Ratio*.

The various parts of the academic program at Thomas More College are ordered to the pursuit of this twofold wisdom—some by providing the tools for it, others by providing material for it, and others by pursuing it more directly.



audet veritati: THOMAS MORE COLLEGE

As we say in the College Catalogue, “The Program of Studies at Thomas More College is a rigorous training in the liberal arts, humane letters, and the disciplines of philosophy and theology. The entire program is designed to help our students to ‘put on the mind of Christ’ (Phil 2:5) by forming them in human and divine wisdom and by preparing them for a life of service to the world as eloquent witnesses to the True, the Beautiful, and the Good.”

In the early years of the program, students receive a rigorous training in the liberal arts, the essential tools of learning and communication. They study both the mathematical arts of arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, and the language arts of grammar, logic, rhetoric, and poetics. At the same time, they hone their powers of observation and deepen their experience of the natural world through the study of natural history. They develop their powers to discern, appreciate, and even create beauty through the study of art, architecture, and music. They are introduced to the wealth of human experience and reflection upon it contained in the Great Books of Western civilization. And they are immersed in the sources of theology—what God has revealed about Himself and His will for us—contained in the books of Sacred Scripture.

In the later years of the program, while they continue to deepen their

experience of the human things through the reading of the Great Books, students pursue in a more systematic way the disciplines of natural philosophy and natural science, ethics, politics, and economics, metaphysics and natural theology. They engage in a more sustained study of literary forms and genres. And they pursue the science of sacred theology—the reasoned-out knowledge of the mysteries of the faith.

In these later years, students also have an opportunity to concentrate on particular areas of interest through elective tutorials in the various disciplines; through the Junior Project, a semester-long independent study of a Great Book culminating in an oral presentation and defense; and through the research, writing, and public defense of a Senior Thesis.

But beyond the pursuit of wisdom, the program at Thomas More College has a further aim. The good that we seek—the whole truth about ourselves, our world, and God—is a common good, a good that can be shared by all without loss to any. It is not the sort of scarce, private good that can only be had by some at the expense of others, a good over which we must fight. If we genuinely love the truth, we cannot desire it for ourselves alone. Truth can be loved by each only as the good of all. The only adequate response to the good of truth is a desire to see it communicated.

So the program at Thomas

More College is also ordered to the development in students of those virtues of mind and heart that enable them to become ambassadors of truth—persons who can bear persuasive witness to the truths they have learned in their words, their works, their lives.

The sort of education we are seeking to provide—liberal, not servile; humanistic, not technical; sapiential, not ideological; friendly, not competitive—is the sort of education that our patron, Thomas More, himself received, that he continued to pursue with his friends in what free time he could find apart from his other responsibilities, and that he strove to provide for his children. It is also the sort of education intrinsically ordered to forming a man like Thomas More, “a man for all seasons,” one who is able to be a good and faithful servant of his family, his friends, his fellow citizens, his fellow Christians, and especially his God, even in trying times.

The motto of the College, taken from St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, perfectly expresses its mission as a Catholic educational institution: *Caritas congaudet veritati*—“Charity rejoices in the truth.” At Thomas More College, we seek the truth in charity, out of love for the good of truth and out of love for one another as called to learn and live that truth.

Literary

TWO ALUMNI PU

*By Cassandra Taylor,
Editor*

Thomas More College students are well-acquainted with their creative sides—as anyone who has witnessed one of their Shakespearean skits can attest. Michael Yost '18 and Bridget Lawler '18 are harnessing those creative energies as members of the first wave of students in the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program at the University of St. Thomas in Houston. They each took some time to tell us about their experiences so far in the MFA program and how the undergraduate education they received at Thomas More College prepared them to take this next step in their academic careers.

How would you describe the experience of being among the first to take part in this MFA program? How has it differed from your time at Thomas More College?

Michael: I would describe the overall experience as surprisingly personal, given the fact that, summer residencies excluded, the program is entirely completed online. In that way, it was

rather like Thomas More College. As at Thomas More, the class is primarily based upon intelligent reading and discussion, in the seminar style. However, the fact that I don't live in community with my fellow graduate students does make quite a difference.

Bridget: It's been such a thrill to be in on the very beginning of the MFA program. For one thing, I think all of us, students and professors alike, are rejoicing at the opportunity to study the art of writing together in depth, and with a robust philosophical and theological background. There's a sense of excitement each time we come together, just because this is all *real*. We're delving into great material and getting wonderful challenges in our creative work, and it's a little bit like riding a bike for the first time—you can hardly believe that you're doing it, and yet at the same time it's the most natural thing to do. I've been amazed at the talent and imaginative power of my classmates. Their writing inspires me—and it spurs me on, too, because you want to write your best when you have a sense of the impressive things your readers can do themselves! The element

of competition is a good thing because it's tempered by real charity. I trust my classmates to be giving me feedback that's thoughtful and insightful, without holding back at all, but I also trust them to be kind, which is a relief! And I think because we all feel that we're at the start of a program that can do great things, we're all committed to putting in the hard work and doing all we can to make each other better writers.

The biggest departure from classes at the College has been in the writing workshops. Because at Thomas More the students are working mostly in the realm of ideas and moving through the curriculum, the classes are very different from the MFA's workshop structure. The workshops are generous in terms of the time devoted to each writer: each person in the class gets feedback from the entire class (and the professor) on his writing, with written feedback and an hour and a half devoted solely to his work twice a semester. The process is intensive and revelatory, and the focus on technique, rather than theory, is both a jolt and a gift.

How has the curriculum of the MFA built on what you learned as an undergraduate? What is the most valuable takeaway so far?

Michael: The curriculum has built on my undergraduate studies in two ways. First, the majority of what I read in the MFA program is in one of four genera: poetry, fiction, literary criticism, and philosophy. Anyone familiar with the curriculum at Thomas More will know how well it prepares the student to approach texts carefully and in a spirit of charitable critique.

Second, the purpose of poetry as I understand it is to serve as an aid to the pursuit of wisdom. In the older sense of the word, it is a deeply humanist exercise

BRIDGET LAWLER TEACHING AT TRINITY SCHOOL AT MEADOW VIEW (VA)



Beauty

J R S U E N E W M F A

to read and write poetry: it helps us to more deeply consider and understand our own experiences and the experiences of others, and at its best moments, its beauty and order show us the presence of beauty and order in ourselves and in the world about us. It helps us to achieve and preserve *eudaimonia*, in a small way at least. Since the education at Thomas More is for the sake of happiness and wisdom, I see this specific portion of my education as a shoot growing up from the root of the liberal education I received at the College.

Bridget: Thomas More College gave me a rigorous training in the first principles of philosophy. That's been a huge benefit throughout my studies. But what's most striking to me is the foundation I received from the College's *Way of Beauty* sequence. I've been prepared to delve deeply into the artistic training that the MFA offers because my time at Thomas More gave me a well-rounded understanding of what beauty is. If you want to create beauty, it really does help to understand the source of beauty, and the way to distinguish between false glamour and true art. I think that Thomas More's program taught me those principles so well. I'm grateful for it every class.

What was your favorite course at Thomas More College, and how has it contributed to your further development as a creative writer?

Michael: This is a tricky question. The virtue of the College's integrated curriculum is that the individual courses are far from isolated from each other. In their variety, they managed to produce themselves in my memory as a kind of unity. Each course lent itself to conversation with the other. In addition, the courses that I enjoyed most



MICHAEL YOST SERVING AS THE COLLEGE'S SENIOR ADMISSIONS OFFICER

as a student now stand alongside the lessons learned in courses whose value I did not as clearly perceive. My favorite courses were not always those that were devoted to writing and literature. I deeply appreciated the *Ethics*, *Nature and Motion*, and *Metaphysics* courses. Aristotle's definitions have, I think, a certain poetry to them, and they often give the reader an intuitive as well as rational grasp of what a thing is. For example, his definition of motion as "the activation of potency as such" has such a beautiful tension and vividness in the midst of its abstraction. But I think I most enjoyed Dr. Powers's tutorial on Shakespeare, the tutorials on war and *Nostra Aetate* with President Fahey, and—perhaps above all—*Poetics* with Dr. Connell during our Rome semester, when I was first introduced to the works of Richard Wilbur, whose poetry is some of the best that has ever been written.

Bridget: I can't choose a favorite. Within the first ten seconds of reflection, I'd come up with three or four. But some of the most influential for me were the freshman year Scripture courses, the junior year Writing Tutorial, and a tutorial on St. Thomas on the

Incarnation. The Scripture courses and the Incarnation course both gave me such a strong sense of the literary beauty of Revelation: the story of God's making Himself known to us truly is the most beautiful one, and it became more and more clear to me that this story is written into every detail of nature, as it's written into our hearts. The courses were theology courses, but they always confirmed my desire to be a storyteller first and foremost. And the Writing Tutorial challenged me technically in a way I'd never been challenged before. I had to learn to use my writing in many different ways, and that meant learning to appreciate language itself more deeply. I developed a real awe over the literary tradition I hope to be a part of, and I tasted the joy of careful formal writing for the first time.

My senior thesis also prepared me well for this MFA. I spent a lot of time studying beauty from a theological perspective, and I seem to be picking up right where I left off with those questions now. It's an unexpected pleasure to be renewing my inquiry into the subject of beauty and the proper role of art after a break of several years.

GETTING “MORE”

Thomas More College students take advantage of summer vacation to continue to grow in knowledge, maturity, and experience. We asked four members of our community how they took what they learned in the classroom and applied it over break—and how the knowledge they gained will continue to serve them during the academic year.

Ordering the Soul, Ordering the City by Jonathan Wright '23

This summer, the College gave me the opportunity to attend the 2022 Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) Honors Conference. In early July, I joined forty-four other undergraduates in a pilgrimage to the historic city of Philadelphia, PA. Nestled in the colonial center of that city, we undertook to discuss the very roots of the moral and social order that had baptized the American Project there some 234 years before. In this endeavor, we drank deeply of the full Western tradition, considering texts from Plato, Augustine, and Dante before examining modern voices such as Russell Kirk and Michael Oakeshott. We also attended many lectures by prominent thinkers, who introduced us to various contemporary perspectives on the subject. Above all, we took advantage of many tutorials on professional morality and courteousness, aimed at conforming us to the exacting standards of Christian virtue and gentility without which our Republic was never meant to survive.



Indeed, the most fundamental lesson I learned from the conference was that a healthy polity must always begin with a healthy conscience. That is the key concept the Western tradition repeatedly proves. That is the key concept the American founders held most dear. But my colleagues and I were not merely satisfied by knowing this; we were one and all inspired to act, to develop integrity in our own lives and careers, and therefore aid the recovery of the American conscience. Thus, I was blessed not only to gain a unique perspective of our country's rich past, but also to steal a glimpse into its bright future.



Working, Learning, and Serving by Matthew Amatruda '24

After returning from the Rome semester, I immediately continued my employment working for a landscape masonry and tree company. I continued to grow my skill set within the trade while consequentially enriching my body and soul through the merits of arduous manual labor. I think that some form of physical activity is essential to one pursuing the academics of the liberal arts in order to maintain a well-balanced strength of body and mind.

Along with this work, I took an active role in my town's local politics, serving as an elected Alternate on the Board of Assessment Appeals. The function of this board is to hear and decide on appeals brought to the town by taxpayers over their current property value assessments. It is a service to the taxpayers that can facilitate concrete financial gains come tax season. Along

with serving the community, my involvement in local politics has also taught me the critical lesson that anyone interested in enacting political change must learn: change is brought about by action, and change starts small. If you don't like certain policies that government officials are implementing, then action within your local sphere is required to fix the situation. Whether it is a seemingly inconsequential tax assessment or the basic freedoms and liberties that make this country great, it starts on the local level. I hope to continue my service in politics in order to conserve the traditional values of our country in the face of societal upheaval.

OUT OF SUMMER

The True, the Good, and the Beautiful by Rose Dussault '23

Moving to a farm on an island in Lake Michigan to live and work in Catholic community for the summer was an experience like none I'd had before. Life on the farm was simple but good; it was a true experience of living out St. Benedict's motto, "*Ora et labora*." We rose early in the morning to pray *Lauds* and *Lectio* before having breakfast and beginning work for the day. The work often consisted in long hours spent weeding in the garden, broken up with other odd jobs like harvesting, watering, and any other tasks that needed to get done. Oftentimes we prayed the Rosary and the Chaplet while working, each of us taking turns leading the decades.

Our labor was not without reward, either. We harvested and ate many of our own fruits and vegetables: asparagus, strawberries, green beans, and so much more. The farm manager made a fresh yogurt for us every week, and I would bake sourdough bread on the weekends. Each night, we took turns making dinner and would all help with cleanup afterward. The evenings were usually quiet, but sometimes we would all go swimming in the lake after work or play a game together. The doors and windows of the farmhouse were always open. We drank copious amounts of tea. Life was good.

I hope to take away from this experience an appreciation for the true, the good, and the beautiful to be found in simplicity, and the habit of frequent prayer throughout my day.



Stewarding Nature by Patrick Nagle '25

Last year, we were blessed to have Anton Kaska, Guildmaster of the Saint Hubertus Outdoorsman Guild, instruct us on different aspects of wildlife conservation. Under his careful guidance, our class gained the experience necessary for obtaining a fur trapping license: he took us on excursions and showed us how to track animals, deal with inopportune weather, and what type of traps to use. This summer, looking to expand upon what Mr. Kaska had taught us, I reached out to see if I could shadow him before getting my own trapping license. He agreed, and I was blessed with the chance to see my mentor in action. We met by a culvert that some beavers had dammed up, which would have eventually caused infrastructure damage if left unchecked. Mr. Kaska and his son worked like clockwork, checking for tracks and setting traps with lightning efficiency. After two days of shadowing Mr. Kaska, I took the field test administered by the NH Trapping Association.

Amplified by my time in the Outdoorsman Guild, I passed the written exam and earned my Wildlife Control Operator license and fur trapping license.

I recall checking traps at 1:00 AM and remembering President Fahey's *Natural History* course. In the serene darkness of the woods, I would meditate upon Genesis and man's role as a steward of nature. Grateful for Mr. Kaska's mentorship in acquiring these licenses, I am looking forward to this school year and discovering more about what that stewardship might look like—and hopefully, the trapping that I can squeeze in on weekends and between classes!

WITH GOLD MIXED INTO HIS SOUL

The College Dean of Students Returns to Teaching



*By Dr. William Fahey,
President*

In his *Republic*, Plato describes an exchange between Glaucon and Socrates over the types of men needed to rule and guard the ideal city. The envisioned community must have men who are moved by reason more than fear or pleasure. These men will be shown to have good memories and firm convictions that set them above the allurements of the world—and those convictions will center around justice. In his portrait of the community and its guardians, Socrates says that a certain kind of story or allegorical expression will be needed to describe such men. They will be described as men for whom a god has mixed gold into their souls at birth. These noble guardians will govern and guide the community well.

Such a man has been the Dean of Students, Dr. Denis Kitzinger.

And so, it was with great gratitude that the College bid farewell (as Dean of Students) to Dr. Kitzinger this summer. Dr. Kitzinger came to the College in 2007 to assist in the creation of new student life programs. After a period of time, he departed for doctoral studies. With his wife Dr. Sara Kitzinger (née Liston), he studied the requisite years in the “auld grey toon” of St. Andrews and then returned to Thomas More College in 2011. In 2014, when Walter J. Thompson took up the mantle of Dean of the College, Denis Kitzinger came forward as the Dean of Students.

Since 2014, Denis and Sara rejuvenated the student life and culture of Thomas More College. The visible and well-known events of our distinctive culture (such as the Tea and Shoot, Oktoberfest, and a more general orientation toward Catholic leisure and festivity) are surpassed only by the less visible, but more critical norms of life. Driven by his penetrating consideration of culture and community, Dr. Kitzinger has overseen the joyful work of building a specific Christian culture within the daily life of the College under the aegis of the hard and noble work of the laws, rules, and regulations of the College.

Too often in American society, we only think of the law as that which restrains and limits. Dr. Kitzinger was guided by a deeper sense of the law—that of Cicero and St. Thomas Aquinas. The law—in our situation, the norms known as *The Rules for Collegiate Life*—has been offered to our students as good ordinances, shaped by reason and Catholic faith, made for the care of the community. Under his authorship and direction, *The Rules for Collegiate Life* became an extension of the office of teaching, not merely a set of infractions to police young people.

In his *Regula*, St. Benedict describes those men who govern the monastery with the Abbot. It is unlikely that St. Benedict read Plato’s *Republic*—though he may have been familiar with Cicero’s version. In any case, there is an echo in his description of the distinctive men who helped guide the community to pursue virtue and answer God’s call to holiness. These were to be men not chosen by rank, class, or age, but rather found worthy for their serious pursuit of virtue and learning. After nearly a decade of service to the College community, Dr. Kitzinger now returns to dedicate more fully his hours to family, scholarship, and the overall life of those who love Holy Wisdom. The College is greatly enriched because of his service and deeply indebted to him and the entire Kitzinger family.



FOUR YEARS OF FOLK MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS

*By Peter Rao,
Class of 2024*

Music and song are undeniable cultural fixtures at Thomas More College. Whether it's casual guitar-strumming, choir rehearsal, or a meeting of the Saint Philip Neri Sacred Music Guild or the Saint John Ogilvie Folk Music Guild, it is practically impossible to go through a whole day on campus without experiencing some form of music.

Mrs. Leila Lawler, along with her husband, Visiting Fellow Phil Lawler—both longtime friends of the College—recognized this element of life at Thomas More. After their daughter Bridget Lawler '18 graduated from the College, Mrs. Lawler conceived the idea of the scholarship. Mr. Lawler explained, "One of the things that my wife and I noticed about the College was that there was always someone playing music on campus. We appreciated that and wanted to give it a boost." So, in the fall of 2018, Mr. and Mrs. Lawler established a fund—now known as the Ogilvie Scholarship—to promote the performance and growth of musical culture on campus.

The Ogilvie Scholarship, named after the Folk Music Guild, is awarded to an incoming freshman who demonstrates an interest in, experience with, and ability to lead music. Scholarship applicants write a brief essay describing their musical talents and past experience leading others in song, which they submit alongside their college application. The essays are reviewed by the Admissions team in cooperation with Mr. Fred Fraser, Teaching Fellow and Guildmaster.

This year, the school finds itself in the unique position of having an Ogilvie Scholarship recipient in each class for the first time. These recipients are Benjamin Wassell '23, Elias Wassell '24, Alexander Tapsak '25, and Sarah Carter '26. Mr. Elias Wassell and Miss Carter were kind enough to share a few thoughts on their relationship with



LEILA AND PHIL LAWLER

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WHY STUDY THE

Continued

Quite simply, it means that the Truth exists and can be known. In this sense, intelligibility is a quality not only of the works we teach, but of the way in which these works are read, taught, and discussed. We presuppose that the great works have something to teach us, and that the role of the teacher is to *educate*—literally, *to lead forth* (educere)—in two senses: to draw the students toward the truth, and to elicit the truth from the work itself.

Far too many Great Books programs adopt an exclusively seminar-style methodology, in which the teacher is simply a fellow questioner of the “Big Ideas” the texts may or may not elicit. In such a setting, the conversation can devolve quickly into an open-ended exploration, where all ideas are entertained and all opinions and interpretations legitimized. Many liberal arts programs tout the good of these seminar discussions as the exercising and honing of “critical thinking” skills in their students. While such skills require the students to entertain various notions about man, they do not, as Newman notes in his *Grammar of Assent*, necessarily lead to an apprehension of or an assent to truths about man.

Likewise, a strict lecture format, in which students are largely given the answers to questions through recycled lecture notes, prevents the students from exercising their wills and intellects, from peering closely at the works studied in order to apprehend the truth. In other words, it simply dispenses information. But as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI reminds us in his critique of both of these pitfalls, “education would be most impoverished if it were limited to providing notions and information and neglected the important question about the truth, especially that truth which can be a guide in life.” Because we presuppose the intelligibility of

Truth, our students and faculty do not limit their scope to the apprehension of notions or the acquisition of information. Similarly, the College prescribes no single method of teaching, believing that teaching is an art.

Second, our program of studies is *integrated*, a word derived from the Latin *integrare*, “to make whole.” Again, this integration has multiple implications: the texts we read in the humanities sequence speak to the works we are reading in philosophy and theology, so that students are taking part in one ongoing conversation. It is a conversation that happens not only on the campus of Thomas More College, but one which links us to those giants who came before us. This integration prevents a kind of intellectual pride all too common among modern progressive man, who is apt to consider himself so much wiser than his forebears.

This integration also informs all that we do both within and without the classroom; it means that the liberal arts are not wholly separate from the fine arts, from manual labor, from worship and communal life. When our Freshmen take *Natural History*, they develop wonder at the splendor and intelligibility of Creation, whether they’re dissecting a beaver with a seasoned trapper, drawing in a field journal, or studying the phases of the moon. When our students learn a folk song, write an icon, or make their first dovetail joint, they are participating in a broader Christian tradition stretching back to the Benedictines, St. Paul, and Our Lord Himself. In other words, this integration does not divide what is contemplative from what is practical, or what is beautiful from what is useful. Rather, our students are seeking to integrate the order and pattern present in both Creation and the human mind.

Finally, and most importantly, the Catholic Great Books program at

Thomas More College is *Incarnational*, literally “in the flesh.” Many Great Books programs fall into the trap of leaping over the concrete, sensible world in their desire for abstract or theoretical knowledge, or even for transcendent truth. Yet, in this desire for intellectual knowledge, we neglect that direct contact with a reality that Christ, the Word made Flesh, came to redeem. “Christ plays in ten thousand places,” the great Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins tells us.

Possessing all of the right ideas about reality will avail us nothing if we do not exercise these truths in all spheres of our daily lives. If we only form minds, then are we capable of truly encountering Christ? This is why students at Thomas More College not only study the Good Life—they attempt to live it, by finding Christ in those “ten thousand places.” For “first and foremost,” Benedict XVI reminds us, “every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth.” And as the great Father of the Church St. Ambrose says, “When we speak about wisdom, we are speaking about Christ. . . . When we speak about truth and life and redemption, we are speaking about Christ.”

Smallness is essential to achieving these ends of intelligibility, integration, and Incarnation. What Russell Kirk warned of a couple of generations ago when he spoke of “the inhumane scale of Behemoth University” has only accelerated and worsened in the ensuing decades. Kirk speaks of the modern university as a place where students encounter “collectivism rather than community,” and where they are “lodged in barren dormitories . . . in which a great many students never become acquainted with a genuine professor.”

But because of the small size of our College, I witness this intelligible,

G R E A T B O O K S ?

from page 1

integrated, and Incarnational pursuit of wisdom daily in the thoughts, words, and actions of our students. I see the fruits of it in the influence our graduates are having at the parish and secondary school levels, in legislative chambers and halls of commerce. But most importantly, I see it in the beautiful marriages, families, and religious vocations that are the gifts of a Thomas More education to the rising generation. And if it hasn't quite made me perfectly wise, it at least has made me hopeful. And so, I echo to my students and to all young people the promise St. Thomas More once placed in his children, when

he wrote to them in 1517 to say, "I harbor the hope (knowing that you are persistent) that shortly you will surpass even your teacher, if not in discourse at least in not abandoning the suit."

In the middle of the Thomas More campus stands a lone, ancient apple tree, which an arborist once told President Fahey is likely the oldest apple tree in New Hampshire, if not in New England. Somewhere in the hoary mists of time, students christened this venerable tree "Ambrose." Faculty children and student siblings have long played in the shade of Ambrose; students have long studied and prayed beneath his crabbed limbs;

once, during a reenactment of the York Mystery Plays, Zacchaeus (played memorably by alumnus Vince Deardurff '15) even fell from Ambrose in his zeal to take Our Lord home with him.

It pleases me that this tree—which to my mind figures forth everything that is good and praiseworthy about our College—is named for the saint who said, "he who reads much and understands much receives his full. He who is full refreshes others." And I, like so many others, remain grateful that Thomas More College exists for a generation of young people eager to slake the thirst of a parched and pining world.



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FOUR YEARS OF FOLK MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS

Continued from page 11



BENJAMIN WASSELL '23, ELIAS WASSELL '24,
SARAH CARTER '26, AND ALEXANDER TAPSAK '25

music and how that plays into their life as a student.

For his entire upbringing, a crucial part of Mr. Wassell's education was learning and singing folk music. Mr. Wassell grew up listening to and singing songs such as "Minstrel Boy," "Star of the County Down," and other such classic folk songs. He explained that the method used by Mr. Fraser in the Folk Music Guild to teach songs is very similar to the method his mother employed when teaching his family. Because of this, for Mr. Wassell, "The Folk Music Guild is enjoyable, feels very familiar, and is a refreshing reminder of home. I feel extraordinarily blessed," he continued, "to be at a school that values my passions as much as my family, who first introduced me to the joy of the oral tradition of folk music."

Miss Carter has maintained a relationship with music throughout her life, even from a very young age. When she was just four years old, Miss Carter started studying classical music. She spent several years learning to fiddle and play the mandolin; additionally, she has performed Scottish country

dancing at various cultural events. Growing up, her family would have folk music jam sessions at home on a regular basis. When asked about folk music at Thomas More College, Miss Carter stated, "I think that folk music is really important for the community. Folk music is great for building good culture, and good culture is necessary for building a solid Christian community. I'm excited to have an opportunity to contribute more fully to the College in this regard."

When asked his thoughts on the subject, Mr. Fraser stated, "I am honored to support the folk music culture on campus and specifically those young people who have an interest in this wholesome entertainment." His comment reflects, in part, the goal of the Ogilvie Scholarship. Good music is crucial to a healthy, wholesome community. Thomas More College recognizes this and continually seeks to support those interested in making music a consistent part of campus life.

COLLEGE COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

This year, we have four new (but familiar) faces on staff!



DR. MICHAEL TAYLOR
*Teaching Fellow
& Dean of Students*



MICHAEL YOST '18
Senior Admissions Officer



LYDIA SMITH '22
Resident Director



TORREY CULBERTSON '22
Admissions Officer

THE SOCIETY PAGE



Left to right, top to bottom:

BIRTHS: Elanor Marie Dougherty, daughter of Daniel Dougherty '17 and Cecilia (née Yellico) '18; Edith Therese Torsell, daughter of Patrick Torsell and Elizabeth (née Zuranski) '16; Rosario Victor "Rio" Martin, son of John Martin '11 and Katie (née Lloyd) '11; Lily Florence Marie O'Connor, daughter of Aidan O'Connor '20 and Maria (née Simpson) '20; Basil Dominic Vincent Cassella, son of Dominic V. Cassella '18 and Carley (née Novotny) '15; Vianney Ann Ellis, daughter of Joseph '09 and Kathleen Ellis; Frances Rose Roundtree, daughter of Paul Roundtree and Nicole (née Martin) '15; Julian Gerald Domina, son of Oliver Domina '14 and Catherine (née Mazzarella) '14; Matthew Joseph Goss, son of George '05 and Kathleen Goss; Finneas Campion Mitchell, son of Clarke and Catherine Mitchell

WEDDINGS: Matthew Amatruda '24 and Taylor (née Sbat) '21; Benjamin Beverage and Cana (née Teague) '22; Salvador Bollack and Brianna (née Hughes) '22; Ian McRae and Abigail (née Anderson) '19

AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS: Abigail McRae (née Anderson) '19 graduated from the University of St. Andrews with an MA in Intellectual History and walked the Camino de Santiago, praying for the students, faculty, and staff of Thomas More College.

To share your alumni news and pictures in the next *Communitas*, visit:
www.thomasmorecollege.edu/alumni/communitas-submissions



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