Newsletter of the THOMAS MORE COLLEGE *of* LIBERAL ARTS

COMMUNITAS

Fall 2023

A Great and Living Tradition

From the Middle Ages to the Modern Liberal Arts

By Matthew Edholm, Visiting Fellow

"Largely forgotten" are among the most dangerous and frustrating words when studying the early Middle Ages. When someone says that a particular Roman writer was "largely forgotten," these words often belie a general and far-reaching assumption that the early medieval world suffered a catastrophic loss of classical learning and literature, only recovered later at the Renaissance. It is true that some writers were read with more frequency and vigor than others, but more often than not the reason any classical Latin text survived the vicissitudes of human history was because a medieval monk was interested in it enough to copy it. Through copying and teaching, some of the greatest monasteries of the early Middle Ages—such as St. Gallen in Switzerland, Fulda in Germany, and Corbie in France, to name just a few—were instrumental in the preservation of ancient Latin literature. In large part, we owe great thanks to Charlemagne (AD 747–814), who encouraged the dissemination of ancient Roman texts. Thanks are also due to the often anonymous monks and nuns in his empire who diligently copied them.

Tacitus's *Germania*, written around AD 98, to take one example of a "largely forgotten" work, survived in a single medieval manuscript. However, the story is not reducible to "largely forgotten" because the *Germania* was drawn on and quoted by a ninth-century writer, Rudolf of Fulda, who then in his turn was read and quoted by an eleventh-century historian, Adam of Bremen. Why were these writers interested in the *Germania*? Most likely it was because they lived in the very place Tacitus was describing. They had a native interest, so to speak, in an ancient Roman authority writing about their own ancestors, and for a reason as simple as that, the *Germania* survived to be studied by modern students. What this demonstrates though is that there is a tradition and reception history to the *Germania* that is more complex than the simple fact that not many other medieval readers were reading

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COMMUNITAS

A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

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College Welcomes Two New Visiting Fellows

By Cassandra Taylor, Publications Assistant

Thomas More College is pleased to announce that Meghan M. Schofield and Matthew B. Edholm have joined the faculty as Visiting Fellows for the 2023–2024 academic year.

Ms. Schofield is a PhD candidate at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. She was the Co-Director of Formation at the Language & Catechetical Institute in Gaming, Austria before returning to the US to teach and pursue her doctorate. Her publications include the ROOTED: Theology of the Body curriculum for middle school students, as well as "The Little Way of Gardening: Discovering Permaculture" (*Humanum* 2016).

"As I join the faculty of Thomas More College, I look forward to contributing to, as well as receiving from, the richness of its academic community," Ms. Schofield commented. "Having been an educator for nearly a decade, I find that conversation outside the classroom is just as valuable as inside it. At TMC, the human scale of the student body is conducive to a more holistic approach to the education of our students. Faculty involvement in campus events and liturgy provide a natural and integrated setting for us all to pursue the truth together. I find this to be a great strength of TMC, and it is one of the reasons I was drawn to the College."

Mr. Edholm is a PhD candidate at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He served as a Combat Engineer for the US Army before diving into an academic career with a focus on medieval studies and history. His publications include "Re-examining Hrabanus Maurus's letter on incest and magic" (*Early Medieval Europe* 31.2).

"My family and I are thrilled to be joining the TMC community," stated Mr. Edholm. "We first became aware of TMC while in St. Andrews, and we immediately thought of how wonderful it sounded. I am especially excited to contribute to a college that emphasizes language and literature in a traditional liberal arts curriculum, all while prioritizing the life of faith and fidelity to Rome."

Thomas More College is looking forward to welcoming the contributions of Ms. Schofield and Mr. Edholm to our common life this year. "There is a particular richness to seeking the intellectual life in a community setting," Ms. Schofield remarked in closing. "At TMC, we pursue the liberal arts, which truly are the 'freeing arts,' for they open a unique possibility in the exchange of ideas and ideals. The permission to pursue these lines of inquiry can unlock something powerful in the human spirit, and they have the ability to transform every aspect of living."

On Faculty (Summer) Reading

By Denis Kitzinger, PhD, Fellow

The academic summer can be a teacher's worst enemy. With the end of the spring semester, teachers cease teaching, and the question of what to read no longer affords an easy answer. During the semester, the curriculum and the syllabi direct our reading choices. But come June, when time seems abundantly available, one could read anything and everything. Just choose!

But we must, of course, put order into all things, above all ourselves, including summer reading. In addition to their individual reading, with their particular rationale, the faculty of Thomas More College also read together. This past summer, St. Thomas More's "Letter to Dorp" (part of our ongoing study of our patron's life and works) and the four Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council—*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Dei Verbum*, and *Gaudium et Spes* (Part I)—were on our "common" reading list.

Before I suggest some reasons why these texts were chosen and what one may learn about the College from this choice, I would like first to wonder about what it means for the Catholic teacher to choose a text for reading.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said that "[a] teacher who himself does not *learn* is not a teacher." Indeed, a teacher, we would all agree, must be a student also. And he must therefore be a reader, for "reading is the universal means of learning" (*Treasures in Clay*, 56).

We must, then, make a distinction between teaching and learning *and* maintain the order between them, the dependency of the former on the latter. Gilbert Highet, who wrote on the art of teaching, further elucidates this distinction: the art of teaching is not concerned with the identification of a good or bad subject. The art of teaching begins after a subject is chosen and works out "how the teaching can best be done" (*The Art of Teaching*, 7). The *art* of teaching does not tell the teacher what to learn, what to read. But he must learn so that he can teach.

Now, a Fellow of Thomas More College reads regularly and reads many things for different purposes. Some are for relaxation or entertainment—say, a Fr. Brown story—others for information, like the daily paper. Yet other readings are more concretely "academic," say, he studies a particular subject for the sake of producing an outward work, an article or a lecture. But the things a teacher *as teacher* needs to learn, needs to read, are bound up with his teaching—his subjects and his classes, and in them with the program of studies as a whole. This is his primary purpose for reading: he reads and learns so that he can teach his subject and his classes well.

All the classes taken together, the entire integrated curriculum at Thomas More College—indeed, all teaching and all education—has one aim: the students' intellectual good, their acquisition of *wisdom*. As Archbishop Sheen, again, put it, "in the last analysis, the purpose of all education is the *knowledge and love of truth*" (*Treasures in Clay*, 56). And "what does man desire more deeply than truth," St. Augustine asks (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 26, 5).

At the College, this truth is not only a partial truth, but what Benedict XVI called the truth "capable of explaining life's meaning," the "whole truth about God and man." "Wisdom" signifies the possession of this good of *truth*. It is the intellectual virtue that *knows* truth. Well does our College Catalogue stress the College's commitment to truth and the student's wisdom:

> …mindful that the teacher's task is like that of the doctor who aids the body's own motion toward health, rather than the sculptor who imposes his idea upon the clay, we

> seek always to make the student's progress toward truth our immediate goal in the classroom and beyond.

This commitment to and desire for the student's good is what Benedict XVI called intellectual charity, which "calls the educator to recognize that the profound responsibility to lead the young to truth is nothing less than an act of love" ("Meeting with Catholic Educators"). The teacher can truly be said to love the student because he seeks out what is a great good *for the student* and shares it with them.

The Council Fathers were thoroughly aware of the dignity of an education in wisdom, and they further highlighted its practical importance and timeliness. In *Gaudium et Spes* §15, they explain:

> The intellectual nature of the human person is perfected by wisdom and needs to be, for wisdom gently attracts the mind of man to a quest and a love for what is true and good. Steeped in wisdom man passes through visible realities to those which are unseen. Our era needs such wisdom more than bygone ages if the discoveries made by man are to be further humanized. For the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser men are forthcoming.

Wisdom is needed because the knowledge of unseen realities or truths alone illuminates the paths to the right order of human life. Only the order man creates by the light of truth will be good.

How different is an education motivated by intellectual charity from any ideological perversion of education. There it is not the student's intellectual good of coming to know truth and wisdom that the teacher serves; there the student is recruited for a cause, instrumentalized for someone's purpose.

St. Thomas More passionately condemns another kind of corruption in his 1515 letter to Maarten van Dorp, a Louvain humanist turned theologian, helping the teacher to understand more clearly his own vocation. In his letter, our patron defends his friend Erasmus against Dorp's belligerent criticism. He calls Dorp to account, saying harshly, "Now it is your time to listen" (*Essential Works*, 395).

It is a good question to consider whether the letter is an example of fraternal charity. But I want to draw attention to More's criticism of a certain practice of theology. In no uncertain terms, More rebukes those theologians who busy themselves with "petty [theological] problems" (400). Even worse, those theologians pretend that "those problems are even more useful than a knowledge of scripture to the flock for whom Christ died" (403).

What should they rather do? Theologians should study scripture and the Fathers of the Church with a view to "sustaining the faith or encouraging virtue" (400). They are to pursue, master, and clarify theological truths *for the sake of the faithful*. Thus they, the theologians and the truths they learn and share, would be serving their salvation. Speaking of Erasmus, by contrast, More writes that he "has both studied and taught" grammar in universities "along with much else of considerably more use to all Christians" (395).

As More reprimands theologians for vain intellectual play, he echoes the standard of teaching we have considered above. The intellectual worker in the vineyard of truth achieves the common good of knowledge so that he may share it with his students for their good. This element of More's letter was reiterated centuries later by Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges in his famous work, *The Intellectual Life*:

> Every truth is life, direction, a way leading to the end of man. And therefore Jesus Christ made this unique assertion: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Work always then with the idea of some utilization, as the Gospel speaks. Listen to the murmur of the human race all about you; pick out certain individuals or certain groups whose needs you know, come and find out what may bring them out of their night and ennoble them; what in any measure may save them. The only holy truths are redeeming truths; and was it not in view of our work as of everything else that the Apostles said: "this is the will of God, your sanctification?" (13).

Here, Sertillanges adds another dimension to the teacher's discernment about what to read. Listening to our students' "murmur," their conversations and questions in and out of the seminar room, signaled both a real desire and a genuine need to know and understand what the Second Vatican Council taught. Thus prompted, the faculty took up the study of these documents to better understand what they say and mean, and thus to be of service to our students. It was, firstly, a teacher's response.

There certainly are additional good reasons for our faculty to read the conciliar documents, or other documents of this kind. The truly *Catholic* college, as John Paul II taught in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, "has a relationship to the Church that is essential to its institutional identity" (§27). Both Catholic vocation and identity are tied to an active intellectual life with the Church: knowing her history and magisterial teaching; learning, above all, from her Doctors and Fathers, as well as her saints.

In a similar vein, the ongoing study of St. Thomas More's writings is a common work that corresponds to our mission as a Catholic College *and* nourishes us in our "distinctive identity" (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, II a. 2 §5). It, or one may say, *he*, specifies what we as *this* Catholic college are and have to offer to the Church, to young men and women in the United States, and to our students here and now.

Together, then, our summer reading nourishes us in our work of educating students in wisdom *and* reflects our specific Catholic identity with a unique charism, as *this* Catholic college: *Thomas More* College.

An Ancient Campaign

Reflections on St. Andrews

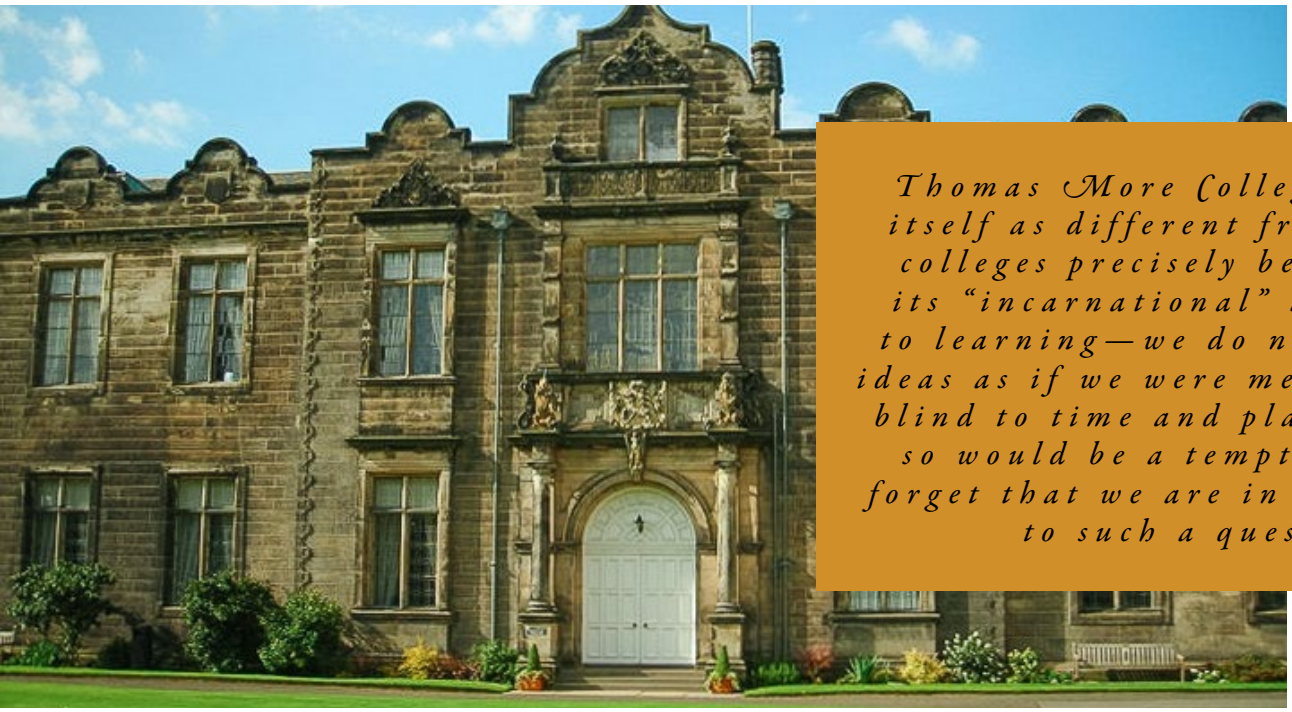
By Sara Kitzinger, PhD, Teaching Fellow and Director of Collegiate Life

I went off to the "auld gray toon" entirely on trust. Minds older and superior to mine had gone abroad to study at Scotland's ancient university and had advised me to do the same. There were useful reasons to acquiesce to a PhD study abroad, and I was inclined. But, it wasn't simply that I had found a sympathetic and encouraging Cambridge-man as a dissertation advisor, nor was it simply that a devoted friend had arranged historical lodgings for me, nor was it simply a nice way to give into that ever-beckoning call to "go abroad"—for I had been through Germany and down to Rome before. No, this was altogether different. It was a sort of "shipping up," an enrollment in an ancient campaign. I had the blessing of a fruitful intellectual formation previously in the States, but I did not understand its ancestry at the time and would not until St. Andrews reworked my imagination along ancient lines.

Sometime between 732 and 761, a Northumbrian bishop brought to the land of the Picts a considerable treasure: an arm bone and several finger bones of St. Andrew the Apostle. Of course, the Picts had been previously converted by the Irish St. Rule (or Regulus) near the end of the sixth century. The Pictish kings—now joined by Scottish kings and Irish pilgrims—conferred privileges to their new patron, and by the year 908 made for a new bishopric established upon St. Andrew's bones. In this devotional way, the town of St. Andrews became what Canterbury had been to England: the magnificence of the Christian life had now a seat in Scotland.

The remote, weather-beaten town of St. Andrews required a great cathedral to facilitate both the saint's nobility as well as the assembly of pilgrims. The priory was erected in 1160. The first prior brought his Augustinian monks from the north of England, and his successor, Bishop Arnold, commenced the building of the largest church north of York. The cathedral church of St. Andrew was "a tremendous structure in the Anglo-Norman style, with massive piers and round-headed windows and doors" (Kirk, *St. Andrews*, 51). A living record of the development of Western style, the series of cathedral windows told the story of the gradual movement from Romanesque to Gothic style, the round Roman arch yielding to the heavenward, ogival arch.

It might shock the reader to learn that this glorious cathedral now lay almost entirely as a wreck upon Scottish rock. If its windows tell of the great development from the Roman imagination to the Gothic, its destruction in 1559 tells of the power of the Reformed imagination. In fact, in that year a Protestant mob, incited by a sermon given by the zealous Calvinist reformer John Knox, attacked the interior of the cathedral



Thomas More College knows itself as different from other colleges precisely because of its "incarnational" approach to learning—we do not engage ideas as if we were mere spirits, blind to time and place. To do so would be a temptation to forget that we are in fact heirs to such a quest.

and it lay ruined, later to be plundered and its stone repurposed by covetous townspeople. Its skeleton stands facing the sea still.

But this is only to speak of one part of ancient life in "the new Canterbury." Before doubt and iconoclasm swung its axe, the Culdees and the Augustinians had long nurtured learning in St. Andrews. By 1412, the sitting bishop saw fit to dignify the existing schools and issued a charter of incorporation, thereby creating the University of St. Andrews. With the archbishop as chancellor and a rector in holy orders, the new university had faculties of Arts, Theology, and Canon Law. It was to be a seat of orthodoxy. The school of Paris was to be the model: students were to learn logic, rhetoric, physics, metaphysics, and Aristotle's ethics. Inquiries were made to the archbishop to institute humane studies—Latin, Greek, Hebrew—but this effort was thwarted by scholastic infighting and was ultimately interrupted by the Reformation.

In that mad fever to purify religion, learning seemed to be out of favor in St. Andrews, as even Protestant school men smelled of episcopacy and privilege. The academic men were threatened by local violence, witchcraft, and Puritanical zeal. However, a king was to make all the difference. King James VI of Scotland was crowned King of England upon the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. A shrewd Protestant theologian himself, James graced the University with his patronage. The University soon became a center for the study of Reformed theology, and under this unlikely guide were humane studies finally instituted, if in reduced form.

King James had intended St. Andrews to be Scotland's Oxford. Accordingly, the University was entitled to a copy of every printed book from its publisher. The library boasted, then and now, medieval manuscripts, rare books printed before 1501, and modern collections. Such an assemblage of the thought of Europe and the British Isles promised to reinvigorate study and in Queen Anne's declaration a century after, make for an "encouragement of learning." Though this standard of excellence was neglected during the spiritual and political impoverishment of the eighteenth century, the nobility of liberal learning never lost its magnetism.

Denis and Sara Kitzinger as graduate students in St. Andrews

St. John Henry Newman remarked that the murky tangle of Reformed theology, "enlightened" liberalism, and Catholic history must inevitably be sorted. Our rational nature, our need for order and coherent principle could not be hushed in the halls of learning. "This state of things," he argued, "could not last, if men were to read and think... They cannot go for ever standing on one leg, or sitting without a chair, or walking with their feet tied, or like Tityrus's stags, grazing in the air" (Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 104–5).

The grandson of an earl agreed. Mr. James Hope-Scott was Newman's confidant and Oxford fellow. In 1841, he joined Newman in his crusade for authentic Christian doctrine and scholarship known as the Oxford Movement. Several years after his conversion to Catholicism, Hope-Scott purchased a large parcel of land in St. Andrews near the sea's edge so that a Catholic church could again be built and sacraments offered to students and townspeople. It is amusing to consider King James's intentions for St. Andrews to follow Oxford—for in the revival of Catholicism it surely did. In 1885, the new church was dedicated to St. James, the patron saint of Hope-Scott. This same sturdy, but modest-sized, gray-stoned St. James Catholic Church was my anchor during my St. Andrews days. The Catholic chaplaincy house across the street, known as Canmore, was my second home.

St. Andrews as a place is Catholic—perhaps not by positive creed or law, but by its otherworldly bearing. Curiously, time has worked so much on the spirit and body of the place that when one is immersed in the life of university and town, time recedes in an anomalous way. It appears to me that this quality of perpetuity is encouraged by its humane order and scale. Russell Kirk noted, "St. Andrews stands unique in Britain as a noble medieval foundation set in the heart of a charming countryside—the tidy farms of the East Neuk, with their canonical haystacks and pantiled byres, being a mere fifteen or twenty minutes' walk from St. Salvator's tower..." (Kirk, *St. Andrews*, 177). There is a harmony between the purpose of the town and its physical aspect. All the activities of the day in St. Andrews are on a scale that

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Recusancy A

A Pilgrimage to O

Over the summer, Thomas More College partnered with the Institute for Human Ecology at the Catholic University of America to offer "Recusancy and Revival: The Persecution and Rebirth of Catholicism in Our Lady's Dowry." College President and Fellow William Fahey and his wife, Teaching Fellow Amy Fahey, led a group of graduate students to Oxford, London, and surrounding sites in order to discover England's Catholic roots, meet her saints and martyrs, and deepen in the Faith. Four alumni of the College share about their experience.

When I was looking at the paintings in the late medieval and early Renaissance sections of the National Gallery in London, I kept thinking, "How did they do this?" Of course, for many years I had disbelieved the centuries-old prejudice that medievals were barbaric, backward, unsophisticated, and ignorant, but when looking at the paintings from those eras, I was unable to contain my astonishment. The crispness of the lines, the richness of the color, the sophistication of the facial expressions, and the clear faith of the artists was simply overwhelming. I remarked to myself on the way out of the museum, "You really haven't seen Christian art until you've seen things like this." Of course, despite knowing intellectually that medievals were not backwards and ignorant, upon looking at art displaying this level of brilliance, I think that even the most enthusiastic Medievalist can reverently ponder how, before modern precision technology was developed, man could make such things.

While looking at the thirteenth-century stained-glass windows of Canterbury Cathedral, I found myself repeatedly thinking of the word "childlike." In one window, there is a dual-pane depiction of two men struggling to bring a violently resisting, mentally insane man to the tomb of St. Thomas à Becket for deliverance and the subsequent astonishment of one of the abbey's monks at the man's healing. When looking at these windows, one cannot help but smile at the faith displayed by both the men depicted in the scene, but also by the artists who made the windows. In windows of this sort, viewers can see both real belief in the miraculous operations of God, but also the lightness and joviality of spirit that medievals had in dealing with the fantastic, eccentric, and sometimes even grotesque realities of life. It is that frank, sincere, and earnest belief in the supernatural in conjunction with a full embrace of the sometimes crazy—and funny—experiences of life that makes these windows inspiring to our faith, humorous to our spirits, and childlike in their expression.

–Jack Monbouquette '20

I found this pilgrimage to be an excellent occasion for stimulating intellectual discussion (albeit in a relaxed and pleasantly enjoyable setting) with young Catholic graduate students pursuing a life in political, professional, and academic spheres. It was a privilege to meet so many intelligent, well-mannered, and well-rounded individuals. Catholic colleges and universities, whether big or small, are doing well if they have produced students like these. I was truly inspired by the people in our pilgrimage group, which rendered the pilgrimage itself more meaningful.

–Michael Swiatek '23

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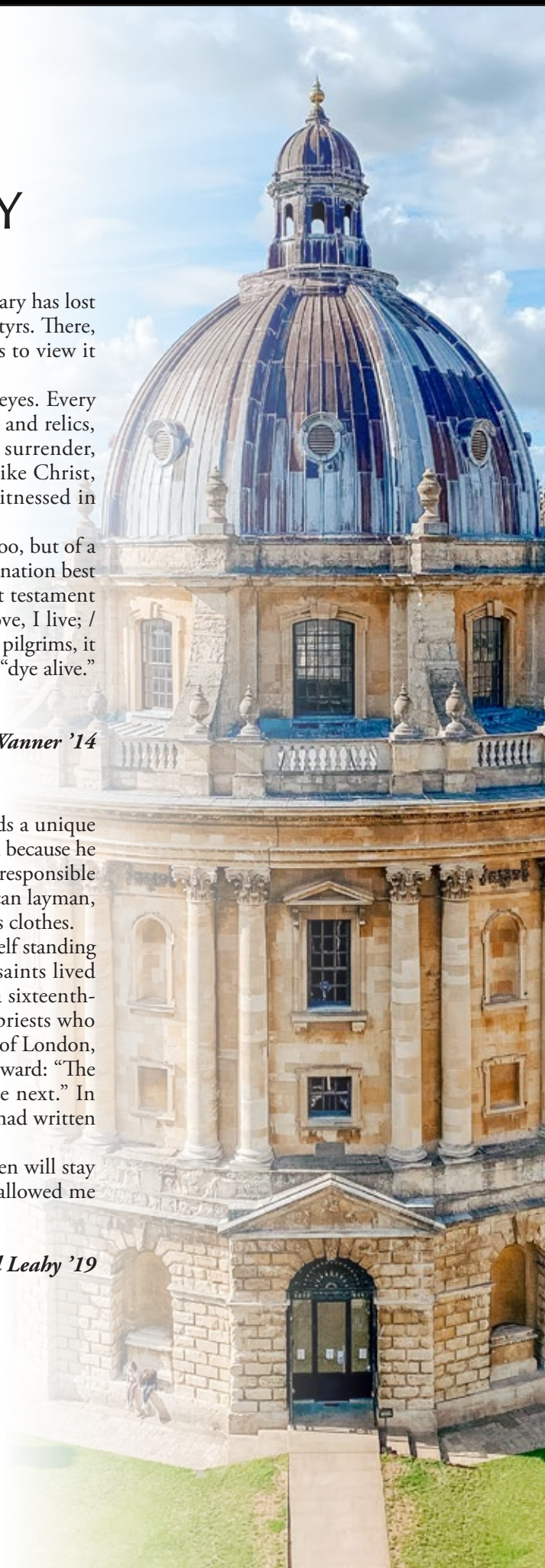


England is, now more than ever, Our Lady's Dowry, for as much as Mary has lost London's crown jewels, her best rubies are lodged in the veins of her martyrs. There, under skin and grave, is the life of the land. Our matchless blessing was to view it from the outside with the awe-lit eyes of foreigners.

There is, of course, a certain strangeness that looms in the pilgrim's eyes. Every holy sight is a "commerce of contrary powers," a crossroad where ruins and relics, saints and scoundrels converge. Yet, just as Christ's victory seemed a surrender, a certain triumph underlies every site where the Church lies captive: like Christ, England's faith was born to be reborn. How thankful I am to have witnessed in Becket and More the earliest daffodils of that Second Spring.

Perhaps the ultimate irony is that these English martyrs were pilgrims too, but of a higher sort. Accounted as foreigners in their homeland, they served their nation best when they extinguished their attachment to it. Their lives find the surest testament in the words of Robert Southwell: "Not where I breathe, but where I love, I live; / not where I love, but where I am, I die." As much as ours was a journey of pilgrims, it was one to pilgrims—I only hope to relish the memories well enough to "dye alive." Thank you for a voyage not of one, but of many lifetimes.

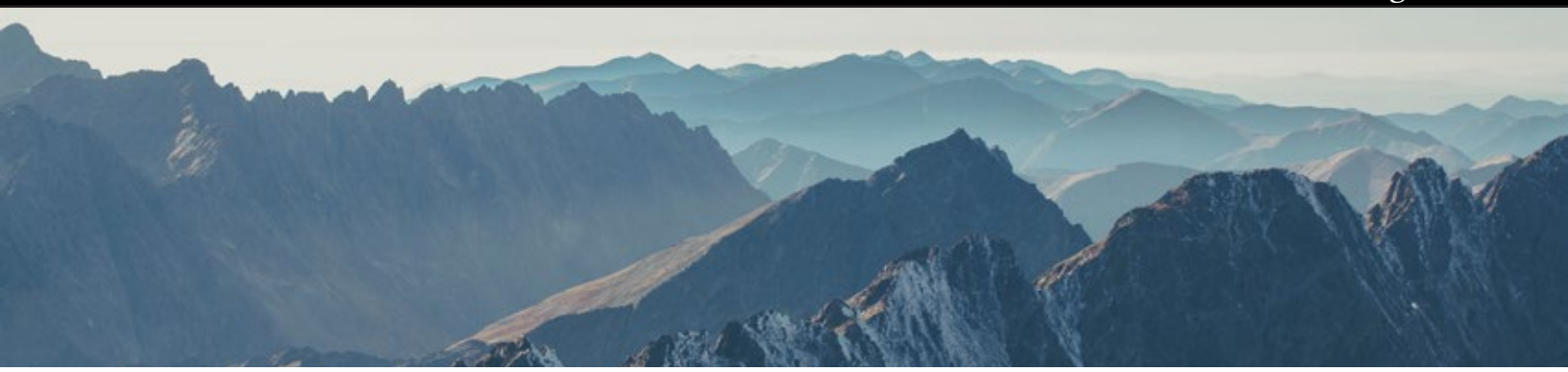
–Jonathan Wanner '14

Innumerable stories reveal that an experience with a living saint affords a unique opportunity for grace. The jailer of Edmund Campion entered the Church because he overheard Campion offer assistance and forgiveness to the priest-hunter responsible for the saint's capture; a spectator at Campion's execution, then an Anglican layman, died a Catholic martyr because one drop of the saint's blood fell upon his clothes.

The graduate student on the England pilgrimage, in a way, found himself standing a few feet from a saint on more than one occasion. The places where saints lived and suffered brought us before the heroes of English Catholicism. At a sixteenth-century English estate, we saw the dark and cramped hiding places of priests who were evading arrest for the crime of saying the Mass. In a cell at the tower of London, we saw carved into the wall a word of encouragement from St. Philip Howard: "The greater the affliction for Christ in this life, the greater the glory in the next." In another cell—the cell of St. Thomas More—we said a prayer he himself had written within those walls while, cold and alone, he awaited execution.

The memory of my experience with England's greatest men and women will stay with me in the years to come, and I am grateful for those whose efforts allowed me to spend two weeks with the saints.

–Daniel Leahy '19



Revival and Re-evangelization

The Education that Forms New Disciples

By Meghan Schofield, Visiting Fellow

We had been hiking steadily upward all day. Though it was summer, there was snow on the Tatra Mountains. As we laid out our food and coffee on a blanket, my friend pointed off into the distance with a pair of binoculars: "Do you see that small brown hut on the side of the mountain?" I had some trouble finding just where he was indicating—we were surrounded by snowy peaks as far as the eye could see in this borderland between Slovakia and Poland. After finding the spot, he explained, "That particular mountain was one where John Paul II would take ski trips with young people... and that hut would likely be one at which they stayed."

Apart from the initial excitement of seeing such a place, I began to think about the Polish saint and the importance he placed on taking to the mountains when forming the youth. I wondered: what was it about this place that made it especially well disposed to reigniting the faith and intellectual curiosity of John Paul II's students? Many reasons came to mind as my own group chatted away, took pictures, and felt in our bones the vigor of a long day's journey. Most reasons were self-evident, as the joy and beauty of it all was astonishing. I was reminded of John Paul II's poignant reflection, "A Meditation on Givenness" (written in 1994, published in 2006). He writes, "Our humanity would be in peril were we to shut ourselves up only in our own selves and reject the broad horizon that opens out to the eyes of our soul as the years go by." Man's quest for truth, his quest to find himself and the answers to his essential questions, John Paul II

> *The New Evangelization proposes manifold ways to carry out its task. One such way, dear to the hearts of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, is Catholic higher education.*

reminds us, is only possible by going beyond oneself into the world of real things.

"God gave the world to man for him to find God in it and so also to find himself," John Paul II continues. All of creation speaks of the glory of God, and in that revelation of God, man is revealed to himself. By being immersed in creation, man can come to understand himself and his place in the world more clearly. This way of looking at the world implies a profound trust in the goodness of reality and its ability to testify to the truth. Here, first principles are encountered, and basic truths about creation are less able to be ignored. In our exploration of the world, and especially in our interpersonal relationships, we see operating a trace of the Trinity, the mark of communion. Self and other are not essentially competitive but communion-al, leading to our fruitfulness and flourishing. Man was not made to be shut up in a solitary existence, but—according to the trinitarian analogue—to live his constitutive relationships to God, self, others, and the world in all their fullness.

John Paul II understood this, not just theologically, but also practically. His "program of formation" in the mountains was not an abstract exercise. It was done in an encounter with the world and with companions for the journey. He understood the importance of the beauty and goodness of creation, and the transformation that can happen when man develops affection for reality—for what is true, good, and beautiful. Such an affection, it seems, is the essential precondition for one's intellectual formation and development, as it both

guides and grounds one's intellectual journey. All too often, academic exercises remain just that—abstract exercises, unmoored from the world of real things. In the encounter with the creation in its concreteness, one can begin to discern its ultimate foundations and fundamental principles, and that there is an order that precedes us which doesn't inhibit our freedom of thought, but enlivens it, precisely because "it is good." This is also an important foundation for what John Paul II coined the "New Evangelization." To evangelize anew, we must begin by reigniting affection for reality—or as he put it, seeing the goodness of the given.

Though John Paul II did not write an extensive treatise on what he meant by the New Evangelization, it is clear that what he is proposing by this phrase isn't "new" in its essential goal of spreading the Gospel; rather, it is "new in its ardor, methods and expression" ("Address to CELAM"). He sees the need for evangelization both for those who haven't heard the Good News before, as well as for those who have lost a sense of the faith, or who have yet to encounter a genuine proclamation of the Savior. John Paul II noted that the increasing secularization of the world today has precipitated a crisis of faith for many, and for them, revival and new ways of evangelization are critical. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI re-echoed these sentiments when he founded the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization (now merged into the Dicastery for Evangelization). Revival and re-evangelization today, Benedict reiterates in *Ubicumque et Semper*, must remain faithful to the eternal message of Christianity and find fresh ways to testify to Christ.

The New Evangelization proposes quite a task; and yet, both pontiffs realized that large-scale cultural revival only comes about by way of the person. When the person encounters what is true, good, and beautiful, and sees how the inner dynamism of each points to Christ, that is when transformation and conversion can happen. Rather than being a singular program with a monochrome formula, the New Evangelization proposes manifold ways to carry out its task. One such way, dear to the hearts of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, is Catholic higher education. They saw in the patrimony of the Western tradition (taken up by the Church) a fundamental affection for reality and the pursuit of truth. Institutes of higher education are meant to be places where first principles can be discussed and the architecture of being pondered. Perceiving the world of real things, and the goodness of what is given, one has the courage to ask the ultimate questions about life, about our origin and end, and about the most pressing question of all: why is there something rather than nothing? Indeed, it is not a task to be accomplished in isolation, but in the company of others. It is a great paradox that the transformation of the individual can only happen by opening oneself to the whole. The lesson in the Tatra Mountains reminds us of that.

Meghan Schofield in the Tatra Mountains, second from left

But what is most distinctive of *Catholic* higher education, perhaps, is that ultimately truth is not a concept but a Person—and in that Person, we finally find ourselves. As John Paul II was so fond of quoting, "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear" (*Gaudium et Spes*, §22). The pursuit of truth, then, doesn't remain an abstraction, but becomes an encounter with the living God.

In the increasingly secularized world of today, the importance of Catholic higher education and pursuing the liberal arts is both more puzzling and more needful. It is puzzling in that the Christian today can be tempted to think, "Shouldn't one sink one's energy into more pragmatic pursuits, such as political activism, as opposed to abstract contemplation? Where do ideas and endlessly talking about them get us in the end?" And yet, in a culture that is increasingly more polarized, self-referential, and aimless, is it not more needful than ever that such a course of study exists? Often discourse today can get bogged down in superficial arguments and *ad hominem* attacks. Having the imagination and ability to go deeper, to get at the principles and frameworks implicit in the issue, can provide a way forward. In a liberal arts education, logic, true discourse, and making space to ask the foundational and ultimate questions are precisely the antidote to the situation today. And He who is truth will meet the person there, and as that person is transformed in communion with others, they then go *ad Gentes*, so to speak, to carry with them afresh the Gospel of Jesus Christ with conviction and joy.

A Great and Living Tradition

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it. It still had its own place, albeit a small one, in the medieval tradition of engagement with classical literature. Rudolf and Adam played their part participating in and handing on that tradition. When certain texts have not survived to our own day, often it can be chalked up to the vagaries of chance, and certainly not to any deliberate effort to erase pagan learning on the part of Christians.

Ultimately though—so the story goes—the treasures of the ancient world were only "rediscovered" at the Italian Renaissance. Pulitzer Prizes have been given out honoring this narrative of a "Dark Age" illuminated by the beginnings of "Modernity." It does not help the matter that many of the major players of the Renaissance deliberately fed into this portrayal as a way to put distance between themselves and the medieval past, which they saw as degraded and backward. Similarly, today many people use "medieval" as an epithet signifying cruel, barbaric, or unenlightened—a narrative we must reject utterly and outright. The difficulty with it is the same as with any generalization or overreliance on the categories we use to understand the past: the lack of nuance allows the narrative more often to fit into the agenda of the proponent, rather than to serve an honest and good-faith attempt to understand the past.

This is a perspective and portrait of history that favors rupture and catastrophe over continuity and wisdom. An overreliance on dividing time into manageable periods is a symptom of this preference, which in turn only serves to exacerbate the problem. If we prefer the categories of Ancient, Late Antique, Early Medieval, High/Late Medieval, Renaissance, Early Modern, and Modern, one consequence is that we will have then trained our minds to look for points of rupture to the neglect of unifying continuities which run right through them all. Even though we still use these categories to allow for more precision with chronology, the hard boundaries between any two periods cannot be pressed too far. How we think about time and the past often shapes and prejudices our disposition to it. It also can prove revealing in what we value in the past, just as styling the Middle Ages a "dark age" is to take an exceptionally dim and disapproving view of the period that invented mechanical clocks, Gothic cathedrals, eyeglasses, universities, and the printing press.

A good case study typifying the preference for rupture is the Roman statesman-turned-monk Cassiodorus (AD 490–583), who founded the monastery known as Vivarium, "the place of life," in southern Italy in AD 544. Cassiodorus and his monks often busied themselves by copying and circulating Latin manuscripts, translating Greek ones, and teaching Latin grammar and rhetoric. This project has given rise to a narrative that they were, in the wake of the "Fall of Rome" and on the brink of the "Dark Ages," saving texts from cultural oblivion—a sort of Late Antique Monuments Men. Framing it this way places Cassiodorus at a junction and point of rupture from his past. But crucially, this is not how Cassiodorus would have viewed himself or his Vivarium; instead, he would have seen himself as one point on the larger trajectory of the development of ancient learning. He was a living participant in that tradition, not some kind of museum curator preserving dead specimens for study.

This tradition is that which he inherited from Ancient Greece and Rome—their philosophy, their literature, and their languages—and which had been assimilated by the early Church Fathers. Rather than saving it from destruction (as if it were stagnant and separable from its human reception), Cassiodorus and his monks were participating in it at one particular point in time, modifying it, tweaking it as their historical moment demanded, and then passing it on to the next generation. The cultural and literary engagement is the continuity that runs underneath and concurrently with human history in any of the conceptual time periods we use to frame and understand the past. This was a living tradition and heritage that shaped the history and culture of medieval Europe precisely because it was alive and well—despite any of the disasters that had beset humani-

ty. Succeeding generations of monks, nuns, students, writers, poets, philosophers, and theologians all played their part in this living tradition.

The transmission of this tradition reaches back to the ancient schoolmasters of Greece and Rome (about whom St. Augustine complained fiercely in his *Confessions*), and after the rise of Christianity, it became inseparable from the way in which it had been assimilated by the Church Fathers. In the world of the early Church, the schoolmasters eventually no longer only taught and handed on the wisdom of the pagan world, but the revelation of the Christian religion along with it. This was a new stage in the ongoing historical and cultural development of ancient learning. The classical inheritance, as refashioned by Christianity, became what would be handed on to each new generation throughout the Middle Ages. Monasteries, their scriptoria, monastic schools, cathedral schools, and eventually the late medieval universities were all historical and intellectual developments in the living tradition of the liberal arts as it progressed through time.

How does all this relate to Thomas More College? Eventually, at our own historical moment, Thomas More College now stands as one of the inheritors and transmitters of that living tradition, which was born in Greece and Rome, developed further in North Africa, Italy, and the Middle East; copied, preserved, and cherished in the monasteries of what would become France, Germany, and England; and later bequeathed to the medieval universities. That tradition now rests primarily on the Catholic institutions dedicated to its preservation, dissemination, and ongoing development and refinement; it is a tradition that has never been stagnant, nor destroyed; stale water breeds disease, but a living, running river is crisp and clear and sweet. Thomas More College, in virtue of *being* a liberal arts college, has accepted its role in this living tradition, this running water, and all the attendant challenges that come along with it.

Part of these challenges are certain pitfalls that any Catholic liberal arts college must navigate and avoid. If, on the one hand, a danger lies in overly general and negative assumptions about the medieval engagement with and reception of ancient literature, as well as with the development of the study of the liberal arts, the other extreme is the temptation to exaggerate the role played by any one particular people or place in the historical progress of the tradition. The development and preservation of Latin learning has often been framed as one conducted under the shadow of imminent catastrophe, but this in fact does great disservice to the history of that tradition by framing the subsequent period—the very period which dutifully and faithfully continued its reception and refinement—as one of decline and decay. Rather than formulating the role of the liberal arts as somehow "saving civilization" at a particular moment in time by one cultural group, it would be more accurate—and more Catholic—to frame that tradition as one which instills itself in the fates and fortunes of the human race in exile and pilgrimage *in hac lacrimarum valle*. It is like blood running through the whole vein of human history, undergirding all the triumphs and defeats humanity and the Church have faced along the way. In this manner, the liberal arts tradition transcends the particularities of time and place.

An essential mark of true participation in the tradition is its applicability to the challenges of one's present moment in time. Just as Cassiodorus sought to address and fill the needs that he saw around him through the copying and studying of ancient texts, so too the contemporary liberal arts college looks to apply its own heritage to the challenges of our times. The role of the Catholic liberal arts college cannot simply be backward looking to the texts; rather, it must also accept all the developments—medieval and modern alike—in the very tradition in which it participates. This is a great benefit of the Thomas More College curriculum: it does not neglect the twentieth century any more than the sixth.

Another temptation to avoid is that of thinking of the liberal arts as primarily and only concerned with the texts themselves, divorced not only from the historical context that produced them, but also from the various historical moments that refined and developed them. Ultimately this can be crippling to the education of a student (especially if they intend to go on to graduate school), as well as to our own understanding of a text. One can no more exclude the historical circumstances that surround a text from the study of that text itself,

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An Ancient Campaign

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would easily pass for the distant past. All the inhabitants walk to shop, pub, and library. Cars there are but few in number and rarely moved. Locals, students, and foreign boarders are all visible on the walking paths and down the wynds. There, nature unifies folks: the might of the sea and the gale reminds all of their limitations, dictates the possibilities of one's day, and universally prompts a unanimous response from the entire town: a cup of tea. Curiously, supernature also unifies folks, but it begs a question: for, in St. Andrews, all roads lead to the ruined cathedral—literally and figuratively.

In St. Andrews, the ancient is present because its very physical structure speaks an old, indebted language. As I reflect, I cannot help but notice that study in such a place casts a person into the past, writes one into a chronicle of an arduous and honorable lineage. A person cannot but see that he has sailed out on an ancient campaign. The nobility of the Christian life of learning is made apparent; your place as an heir unavoidable. It is ironic, is it not? The particularity of place can work to build the universality of a shared intellectual life.

The great intellectual campaign of the West was built upon Scottish stone, in Parisian school rooms, by Roman roads. Yet, it is a spiritual reality that can transcend place. Thomas More College knows itself as different from other colleges precisely because of its "incarnational" approach to learning—we do not engage ideas as if we were mere spirits, blind to time and place. To do so would be a temptation to forget that we are in fact heirs to such a quest. It would be a temptation away from humility, and thus also from gratitude, and from ourselves. "The stones cry out to us as we pass, and tell us the story of our land, the chronicle of popes and kings, the history of the Old Church and of the New…here have been civilization, religion and learning…" (Wentworth Thompson, "The Essay on St Andrews").

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any more than one can exclude the historical circumstances surrounding the Incarnation from the study of the life of Our Lord. Just as "the Word was made flesh" (Jn 1:14) at a specific time, in a particular place, with certain, identifiable people and powers around Him—all of which shed light on Him—so too the liberal arts tradition is inextricably linked to the vagaries of human life and the history it has passed through to be handed down to us. As students make their way through the curriculum at Thomas More College, they read and study along the same historical lines which the liberal arts themselves progressed, ever with an eye on tracing the historical developments undergirding the literature. Students begin in Ancient Greece, advance to the study of Rome, then into the Middle Ages, all the way up to our own day.

Scribes and copyists of the early medieval period endeavored to pass along the wisdom and learning of the ancient world materially through manuscripts, as they themselves had received it. Additionally, medieval thinkers and writers engaged not only with the classical past through the texts, but also faced their own trials and triumphs, and made their own contributions to the living tradition of the liberal arts. Genuine engagement with and participation in this tradition looks both backward to the texts and forward toward the trials currently besetting our world. It is primarily through this two-fold engagement that Thomas More College, along with other institutions like it, plays its part in and makes its own contributions to the great and living tradition of the liberal arts. In this way, we admire and imitate our early medieval forebears to the glory of God.

Cover: *Francesco Pesellino and Workshop,* Seven Liberal Arts *(detail), 1422–57, tempera on panel. Courtesy the Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL. Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.101.*

Page 12–13: *Workshop of the Bedford Master,* Pentecost *(detail), about 1440–1450, tempera colors, gold leaf, gold paint, and ink. Courtesy the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA. Ms. Ludwig IX 6, fol. 128, 83.ML.102.128.*

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