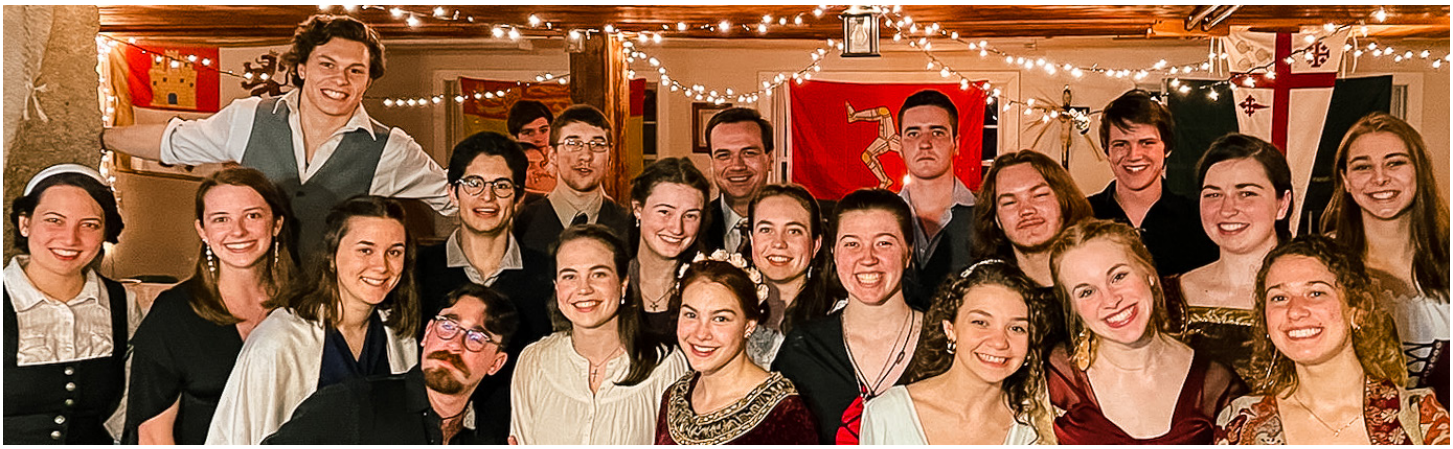
Newsletter of the THOMAS MORE COLLEGE *of* LIBERAL ARTS

COMMUNITAS

Spring 2022

Received and Loved and Made Our Own

The Cultural Life at Thomas More College



By Dr. Denis Kitzinger, Fellow and Dean of Students & Dr. Sara Kitzinger, Teaching Fellow and Director of Collegiate Life

The cultural life at Thomas More College is unlike any other undergraduate experience. Many people over the years have commented on our "unique" spirit of festivity: the community is so "vibrant"; we "know how to celebrate"; the students are "full of joy"; you are "so spirited." We have heard this from visiting and prospective students, from students who transferred in from other places; from current as well as former faculty; from spontaneous visitors and old family friends.

To describe the cultural life at TMC, to give some sense of its quality, requires reflection on something that many of us take to be "the normal thing to *do*," perhaps just the kind of thing you do *not* think about. But we do not do the things we do blindly as if we thoughtlessly embraced a ready-made inheritance. We have given it thought and continue to give it thought.

And this is appropriate. Offering a Catholic humanistic education in the liberal arts and the disciplines of philosophy and theology—in our times especially—requires that we make judgments about how we spend our time. We must answer the question Fr. Schall asked his students: "*What* do you do when all else is done?"—a question really not about what you do *in fact*, but what things or activities are *worth* doing, and then doing those and not others. It invites us to consider—to think carefully about—why we love them, whether we ought to love them, whether they make us happy. For what we love or value is what we will do, especially when we are free from necessities.

In many regards, our education prepares the student to do just that: to know and to love the things worthy to be loved. At Thomas More College, faculty and students pursue wisdom, human and divine. Together we engage in the intellectual pursuit to know and understand the true order in and of and among things. We see their true meaning and import, their goodness

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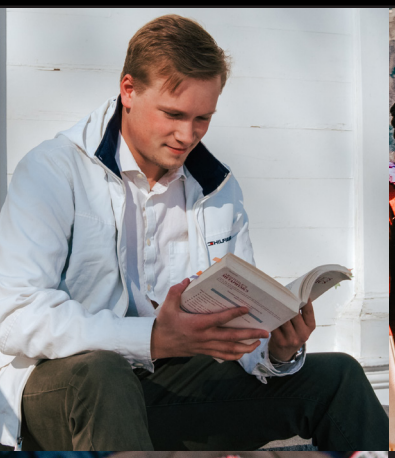

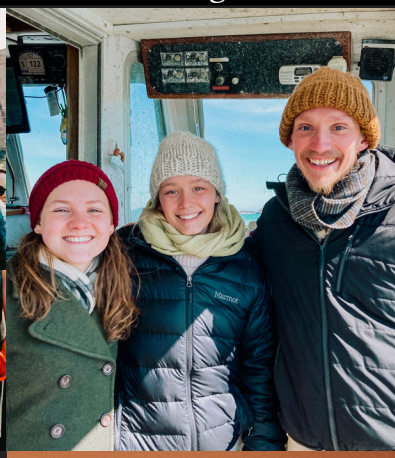
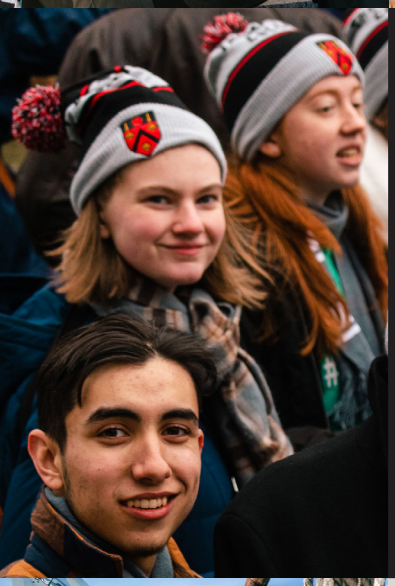

COMMUNITAS

A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

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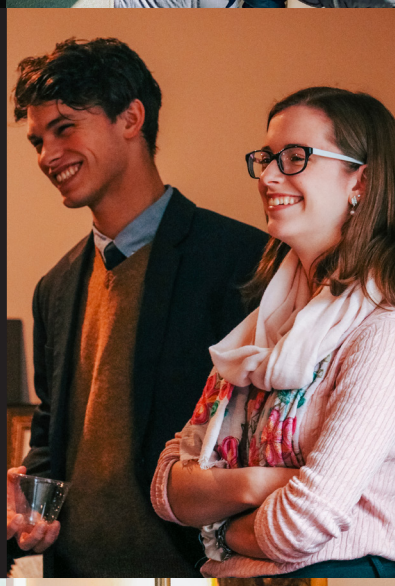
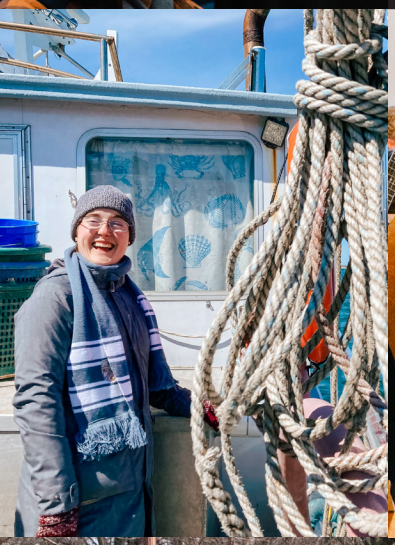
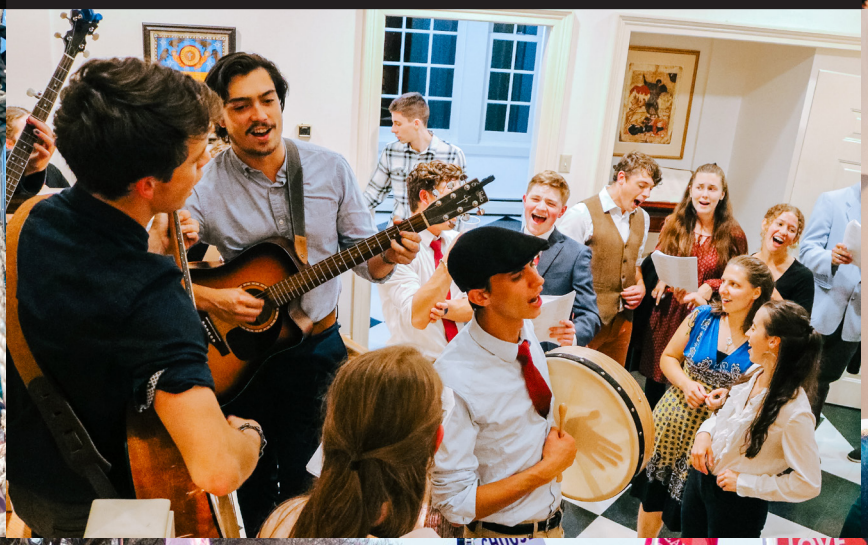
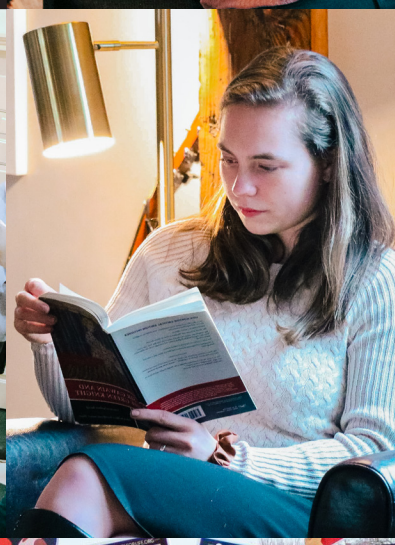
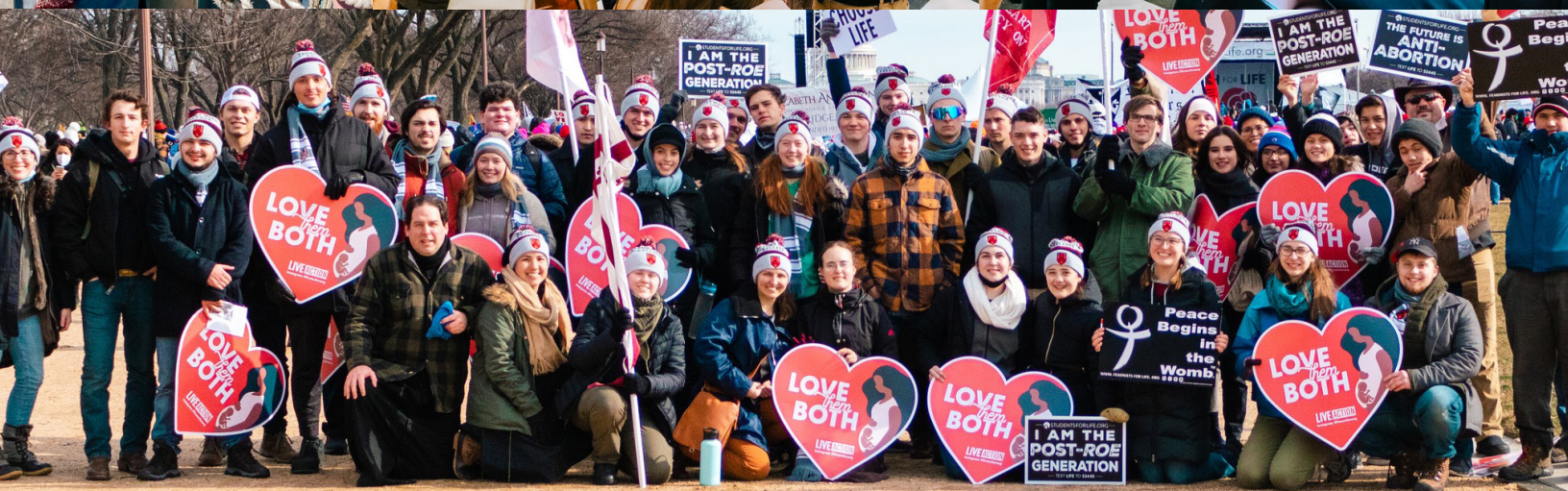
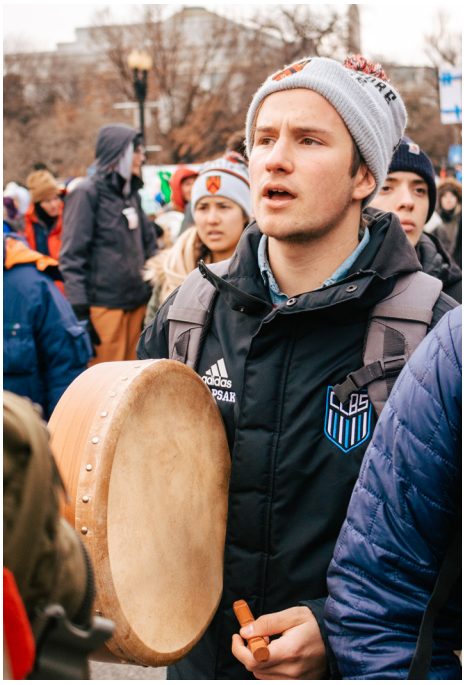
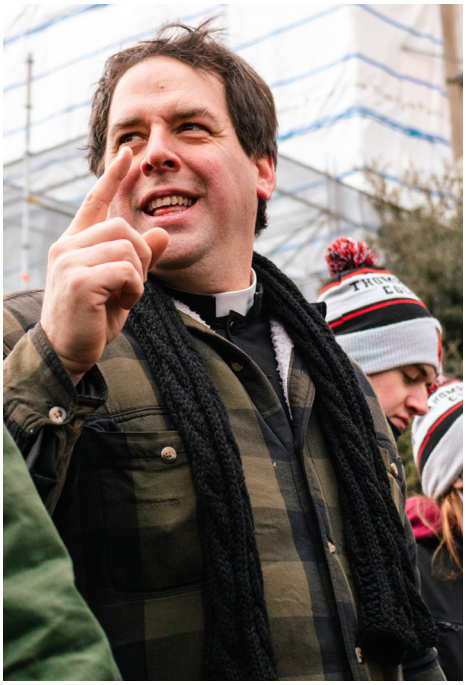






A Voice for Change:

TMC Takes March for Life by Song





By Cassandra Taylor, Editor

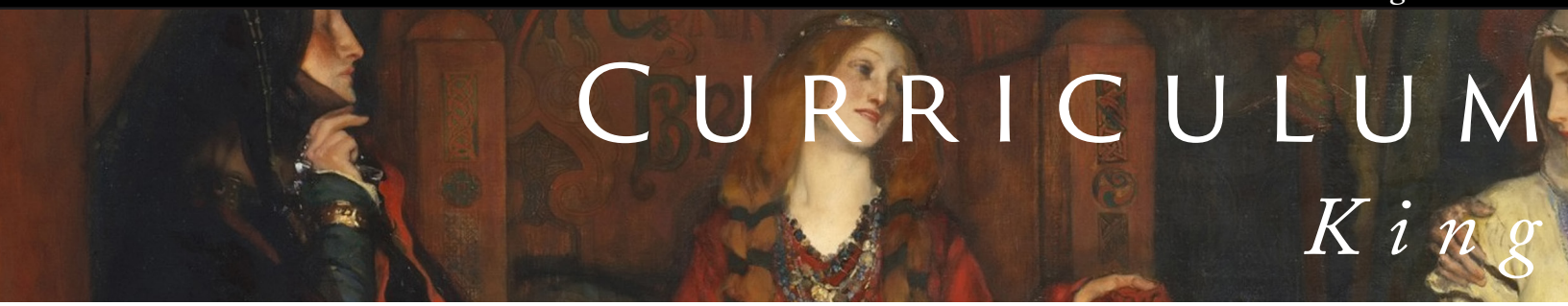
On January 21, 2022, as thousands of people gathered in our nation's capital for the March for Life, a voice stood out in the crowd: that of Thomas More College students singing in unison.

Rallying behind the standards of the Holy Name of Jesus, the Sacred Heart, and St. George, the TMC contingent lifted up their voices in song. Seamus Othot '23 and Austin Hastings '25 led a sung Rosary as the group walked down Constitution Avenue, with Alexander Tapsak '25 keeping the beat on a bodhrán. The music brought joy to all around: Danielle Summers '24 remarked that, for her, "The highlights of the trip were the many comments and compliments given to the Thomas More students concerning their great joy in singing. As this is also one of my favorite aspects of life at Thomas More, it was good to see it make a difference for other people as well. I thought my fellow students did an excellent job in expressing their joy that is so necessary in times of trial and suffering." On reaching the Supreme Court, the group sang the National Anthem and then paused to pray a Divine Mercy Chaplet, which was led by longtime friend of the College Fr. Matthew Schultz.

While the students maintained a hopeful disposition throughout, the gravity of the situation was not lost on them. Indeed, many see support of the pro-life movement as an essential part of their—and the College's—Catholic identity. Molly Hugo '25 stated, "Young people are the future pro-life generation, and the College works to strengthen and teach the young people that come here to study. Therefore, it is important for the College to support the March so that the future of the country may be a pro-life and truly pro-woman future." Mr. Hastings remarked, "It is important for Thomas More students to continue attending this event because this March is how the people of America show their disapproval of the continued genocide of unborn children." For Mr. Othot, "The College's support of this event is, I believe, essential to its status as a faithful Catholic school."

Indeed, the students appreciated that the College gave them the opportunity to attend, as various obstacles had to be overcome to make the trip possible. Taking advantage of this opportunity were several students who were marching for the first time. Vallerie Armstrong '25 was one of those first-time attendees: "It was a very fruitful experience for me. It was cold, but we were all cold together, united in our sufferings for the unborn. We marched for life, and we stood together against the greatest evil of our nation." For Marie Vyleta '25, "I've never done anything really politically active before, but I enjoyed the opportunity to stand up for the unborn." The prayerful nature of the event also made an impression on her: "There was an overwhelming Catholic presence that I found very welcoming. It certainly was very much a spiritual as well as a political experience."

With the College's ongoing support of the March for Life, the students are already looking forward to next year's event. And as classes graduate and the banners pass from one student to the next, one thing remains the same: Thomas More College is committed to living out the truth of the Catholic faith with joy and—whenever possible—with song.



Curriculum

King

By Dr. Amy Fahey, Teaching Fellow

The "Great Books" are so called in part because they repay one's attentive reading for weeks, months, and hopefully years. Over these years (centuries, often), volumes are written about them; great men ponder and disagree over their meaning.

Perhaps no other of Shakespeare's plays has suffered more at the hands of misreading than *Lear*. The great Samuel Johnson considered Cordelia's death inappropriately shocking and promoted Nahum Tate's revision in which Cordelia lives. Coleridge thought that the opening scene, in which Lear proposes a love test among his daughters to divide his kingdom, was a "gross improbability" more fitting for a fairy tale. "Let the first scene of this play have been lost," he says, "and all the rest of the tragedy would retain its interest undiminished, and be perfectly intelligible."

Yet how much is established in that opening scene! "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall," says Kent to Gloucester, walking onstage in mid-conversation. This deceptively casual statement speaks volumes, especially in light of what transpires. It hints at the King's capricious mental state; it prepares us for Gloucester's own misplaced "affection" for his treacherous bastard son Edmund over the loving and true Edgar, and more.

When discussing *King Lear*, we should never stray far from the playwright's dramatic intentions. Shakespeare demands not only the engagement of our reason and intellect, but the total surrender of all our senses to the vision of suffering that unfolds before us. And so we must *see* the pre-drawn map of the division of the kingdom that Lear presents to his daughters, clearly reserving "a third more opulent" for the favored Cordelia. We must see Cornwall leaning over the bound Gloucester to gouge out his eyes—"out, out, vile jelly!" We must see Lear on the storm-wracked heath: "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!" And we must see "Poor Tom" walk his blind father to the brink of an imaginary precipice. Most importantly, we must bear witness to the exquisitely painful *pietà* of the closing scene: the dead body of Cordelia draped across the arms of her broken father.

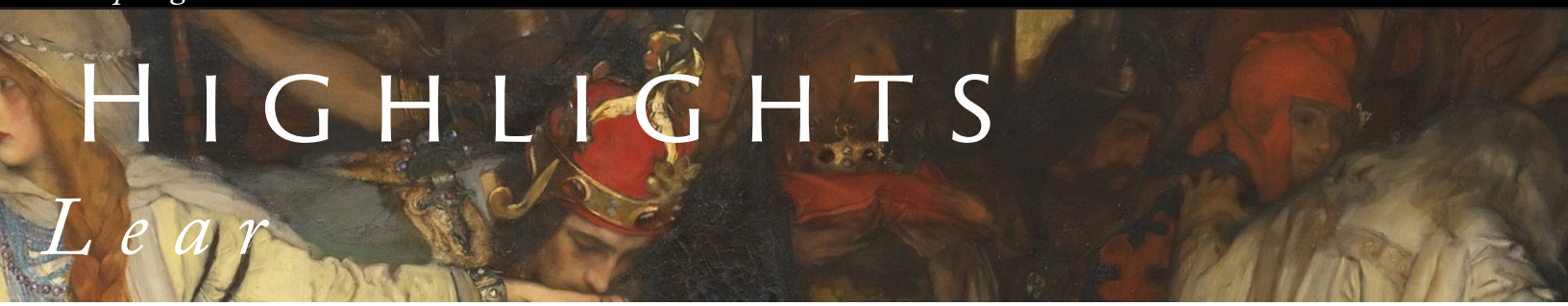
We also need to hear *King Lear*. Not a syllable should be lost. If Johnson thought that this play presented scenes too *visually* shocking, I would suggest that *Lear* is the most *aurally* assaulting of Shakespeare's plays, bringing language itself to the breaking point. When Cordelia speaks of flattery as "that glib and oily art," we hear in the very sounds of those epithets the base treachery of Goneril and Regan. By the time we get to the death of Cordelia—worlds away from the tidy iambs of the sonnets—the sound of Lear's pain sears the reader: "Never, never, never, never, never!"

The jarring trochees make this line almost unbearable to the human ear; combined with the vision of the grief-stricken Lear, they nearly overwhelm the senses. So when, just moments later, Edgar attempts to revive the dead Lear, we protest with Kent: "O let him pass! He hates him / That would upon the rack of this tough world / stretch him out longer." These overly stressed, enjambed lines are meant to strain the iambic meter almost beyond what it is capable of doing in English. These lines not only recapitulate in sound the drawn-out suffering of Lear, but also mimic the slow, torturous martyrdom of an Edmund Campion or a Nicholas Owen, whose entrails burst as they stretched themselves out for the Truth in "this tough world."

In *King Lear*, then, Shakespeare demands nothing less of us than that we begin to "see feelingly." He takes us, indifferent or inured to violence, to the very "Promised End or image of that horror," the embodiment of the depth of human suffering. And he does so with all the resources of language and gesture.

Harry Jaffa once noted that the sufferings of Lear "are the most terrible in all of Shakespeare, and probably . . . in the whole of world literature." Why does Shakespeare put us through such horror? Why does he stretch our minds and all of our senses out to the very verge of human suffering? Is it merely to remind us that, as Gloucester says, we are to the gods as flies to wanton boys: "They kill us for their sport"?

If my students learn anything in their reading of this masterpiece, it is that such nihilist readings of Lear "reverb hollowness." They are simply not borne out by the words and actions of the play. While the suffering of Lear remains in some sense mysterious, the very scenes Shakespeare presents allow us "men of stones" to be transformed by "the art of known and feeling sorrows." Shakespeare moves us all to what Edgar calls "good pity," and in that compassion we imitate Cordelia, who, through her own *imitatio Christi*, "redeems Nature from the general curse." It is a painful, hard-won transformation to be sure, but peering closely at *King Lear* is meant to help us all to "see feelingly."



Highlights

Lear

By Bridget Lawler, Class of 2018

Act three, scene five: At the point of greatest confusion in a tumultuous play, the reader stumbles into a moment of calm as Edgar drops his disguise as a beggar to tell us, "Who alone suffers suffers most i' th' mind, / Leaving free things and happy shows behind[.]"

Edgar's commentary comes as most welcome, not only because it provides a sane and measured voice to balance the wild action of the scenes surrounding it, but also because it illuminates the pain that we have so far witnessed. Lear's suffering takes on meaning under Edgar's words. Lear, indeed, has suffered most because he suffers *alone*. That solitude is of his own making: he has sought to claim his daughters' love, demanding a measure and articulation of what ought to be a free gift, a thing better left both unmeasured and unspoken. In grasping for proofs of love, he has pushed away the love held out to him. Now, he finds himself abandoned to that which he most fears: he is unloved and powerless, cast off by his own daughters and left to suffer. There are many who might suffer with him, if he would accept their fellowship, but he has yet to recognize his friends. How has Lear come to such a pass? What moved him to make his original, fatal demand?

The answer that comes to my mind has its source in a verse from Psalm 115. The verse first struck me while I was a student at Thomas More, chanting vespers alongside my dearest friends. The full gravity and even terror of Psalm 115 weighed on me, then as now: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see . . . Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them" (Ps 115:4–8 RSV-CE). The words are frightening in their truth. And I'm convinced that there is no better illustration of them than *King Lear*.

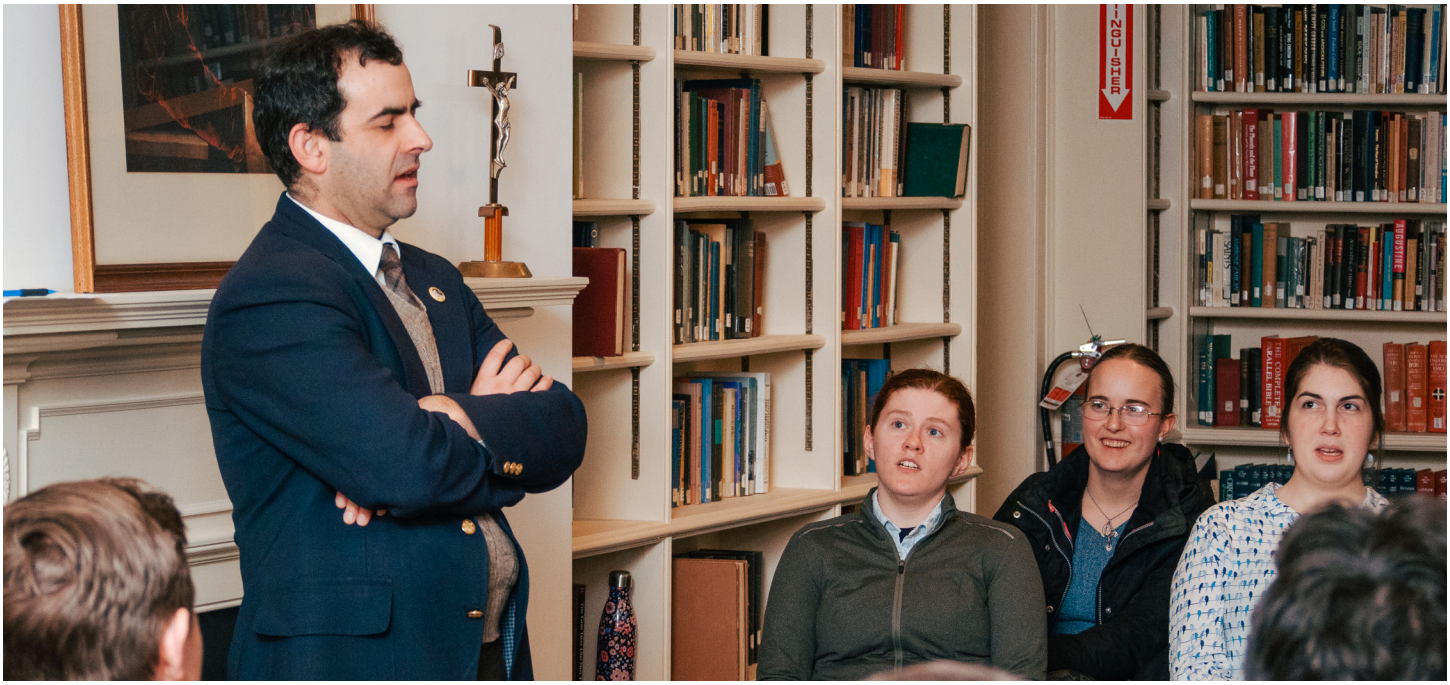
For the weaker characters in *Lear*, the gods are heartless antagonists. Lear rails against the deities who "stir these daughters' hearts against their father." And in one of the bleakest speeches of the play, Gloucester tells his son, "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods; / They kill us for their sport." The gods are cruel, unseeing, and immoveable—like Lear at the beginning of the play. Just as Lear and Gloucester fail to see the true nature of their children but punish the virtuous without hesitation or mercy, so their gods send tribulations with no regard for reason or justice. Under the tyranny of these gods, both men have learned to live in fear and to snatch at any consolation. Lear commands love, Gloucester dreads betrayal. Both regard their innocent children with unwarranted suspicion, yet cling desperately to their wicked children's protestations of love. Greedy, heedless, and changeable, these blind makers take on the image of their blind gods.

In order to be purified from their false images of reality, both men must suffer. Each is stripped of everything, made utterly helpless, shown to be "a poor, bare, forked animal[.]" And through this suffering, they learn compassion. Lear is perhaps first actually loveable when, cast out in the night and the storm, he learns to look on the suffering of those around him—"Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart / That's sorry yet for thee." And when Lear and Gloucester, one mad and one blinded, meet and pity each other, they show the fullness of their humanity, despite what they have lost. Lear offers Gloucester his own eyes to weep with, but Gloucester no longer needs eyes, as he has learned to "see . . . feelingly." Thus purged by their common trial, the men are finally ready to meet their wiser children.

In Lear's reunion with Cordelia, we see how his ennoblement in turn changes the character of the gods themselves. Humbled and hopeful, he tells Cordelia of how they will spend their days in prison happy and at peace, declaring, "Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, / The gods themselves throw incense." As Lear has learned compassion and mercy through his suffering, so his gods have learned to look upon the sacrifice of love with favor. His reconciliation with Cordelia redeems the gods.

The play does not end on a level of mere human triumph. In fact, on human terms, the story concludes in terrible defeat. Both Lear and Cordelia are dead, and Edgar takes up the power of the state with sober recognition of its weight. But it could not be otherwise. There is a transcendence to the tragedy that could not exist were Cordelia not sacrificed. When Lear holds his daughter in his arms and laments, "My poor fool is hanged: no, no, no life?" it seems we are meant to hear an echo of St. Paul's, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Cor 1:25 RSV-CE). This is not to force a Christian symbolism upon *Lear*. Rather, it is to recognize that in *Lear*'s portrayal of suffering, pagan man, we experience the general longing of Creation for a Redeemer God, who does not loom above us in the unseeing heavens but comes to share our suffering.

Handing Down Tradition



By Bridget Ruffing, Class of 2022

When he is not teaching Latin to the Freshmen, working on his doctoral dissertation, or spending time with his family at their New England home, Fred Fraser, a Fellow of the College, can be found directing the Saint John Ogilvie Folk Music Guild. This Guild has had an enthusiastic and loyal following of Thomas More students since its inception. Mr. Fraser assumed leadership of the Folk Music Guild in the fall of 2013. In this role, he encourages students to master a range of traditional folk songs and cultivate patience, discipline, and an appreciation for the folk music tradition, which has roots in Scottish and English culture and has produced its own living offshoot in America.

The Saint John Ogilvie Folk Music Guild is such a fixture in the Thomas More College community that, in the fall of 2018, Phil and Leila Lawler—long-time friends of the College—established the Ogilvie Scholarship. Each year, the College awards this scholarship to an incoming freshman who demonstrates sufficient talent and willingness to contribute to Thomas More's folk music tradition. To apply for this scholarship, the student must state in a one-to-two-page essay how he or she is qualified to receive this award. Mr. Fraser joins forces with the admissions team to review the essays, and the winner receives an annual stipend of $1,000 for each of his or her four years at the College. So far, the recipients of this scholarship have been Benjamin Wassell '23, Elias Wassell '24, and Alexander Tapsak '25. The granting of this award is conditional upon the recipient's willingness to lead or contribute to folk music sessions on campus.

Mr. Fraser was kind enough to take time out of his busy schedule to answer some questions about his work with the Folk Music Guild.

What are your views on the importance of keeping the folk tradition alive?

The folk song tradition contains many expressions of strong attitudes of soul (whether toward work or a difficult situation) and of a deep (totally healthy and normal) need for others. These internal dispositions are what people, centuries before, have learned and achieved through experience and suffering. In song, we imitate their dispositions. Although we are undergoing experiences of our own now, they differ from those of our ancestors only by time and circumstance. I encourage students to seek advancement in the Guild, since this is a way for them to make the Guild material more their own. The songs—once memorized—may go with a student after graduation, and they are serviceable at home, at work, or during leisure hours. The songs and the reason for singing them are deserving of one's time and thought. To become an apprentice, one must demonstrate that one has devoted time to becoming a scholar of both the music and of what the music represents.

Does being a member of the Folk Music Guild help form one into a better student? In what ways?

My most straightforward answer is that I hope so. Music does have a formative role in a person's life, good

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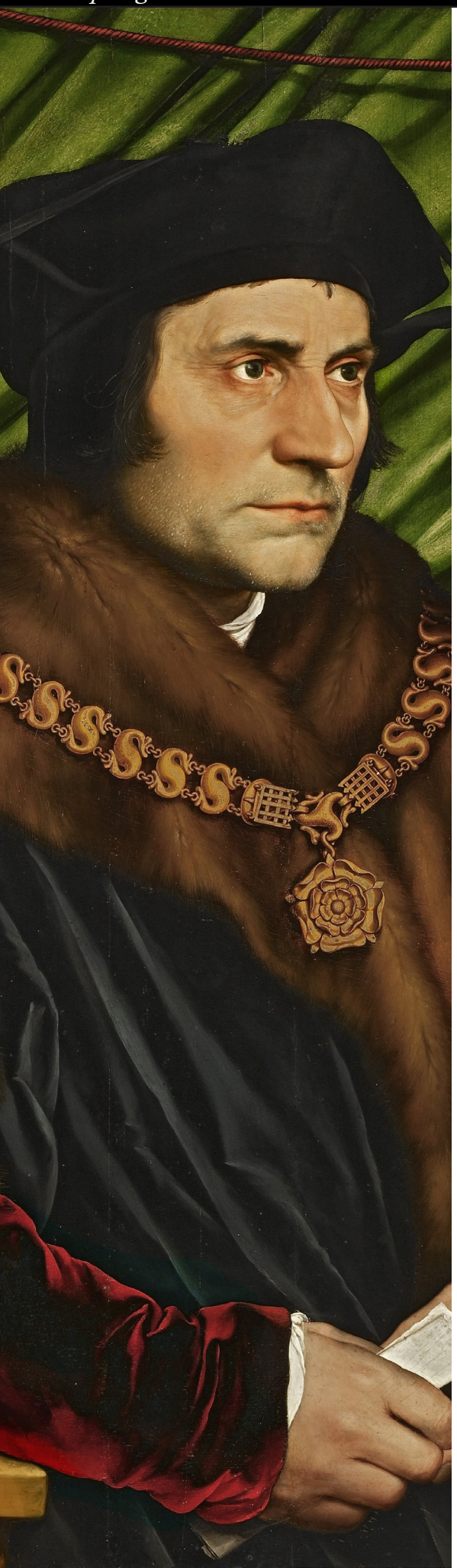

Why We Say EXPERIENCE MORE

By Dr. William Fahey,
President

The world abounds in slogans, so many that we often fail to listen. Yet, we should listen. We should always be attentive to the possibility of encountering truth, even in little expressions. Often a slogan can reveal something of principle, something essential. "Slogan" is a rare loan word derived from Scots Gaelic. It comes from the two words *sluagh* (an army) and *ghairm* (a mighty shout). Over the past few years, Thomas More College has adopted the expression "Experience More" as a kind of slogan. Is this just a mirthful punning for the age of Age of Tweets and sound bites? Or is it . . . more?

"Experience More," in truth, is punning brevity, but a brevity containing truth. The "More" is an allusion to *the* More—Sir Thomas More, our saintly patron. It is also the "more" that young people yearn for in a world numbed by low expectations. Young men and women still thirst to develop the virtue of magnanimity—for God does not desire shabby lives. They seek great experiences that will prepare them for discovering and pursuing their vocations. The word "experience" is offered and should be understood as expressing several marks of a Thomas More education worth considering—if not experiencing.

Again, first and foremost, the College is calling upon a prospective student to consider the education here as personal, not merely institutional. Gently, we are saying that the person towards whom this College looks and whom we seek to experience through our collegiate life is Sir Thomas More—layman, wit, scholar, man of action, saint, and in all seasons an imitator of Christ. The faculty constantly wrestle with More as an object not merely of admiration, but imitation, and in many simple ways we regularly ask the students to do so as well: Especially of note are our *Traditio* days, when we consider one of More's works as a single community. From the freshman up to the senior and along with every teacher, we read and discuss for one day each semester our spiritual and intellectual patron. There is so much to take in every time we gaze at the famous Holbein portrait or the chapel icon of our saint. More cannot be comprehended with thought alone: he must be experienced through enacting aspects of his life in devotion, study, and community.

Second, the slogan points to a specific and unique aspect of the program of studies and formation: Experience itself. Direct experience. Of course, as a College in the "Great Books" tradition, we study the masterworks of Western civilization rather than dreary old textbooks (or even terribly engaging textbooks) whenever possible. But there is something deeper. We expect these studies not simply to penetrate the intellect, but the heart. We expect action, action that integrates the learning of the classroom with experiences outside of the class, and vice versa. This is what I call the "rather than just" principle. A great Catholic education is about much more than just sitting in a classroom. Let's take three examples.

Natural History (part of the Math & Science sequence) is a subject taught at a variety of colleges and universities. Most have the students read textbooks; some have the students read classic works of science—Aristotle, Darwin, etc. At TMC, before reading Aristotle on the *History of Animals*

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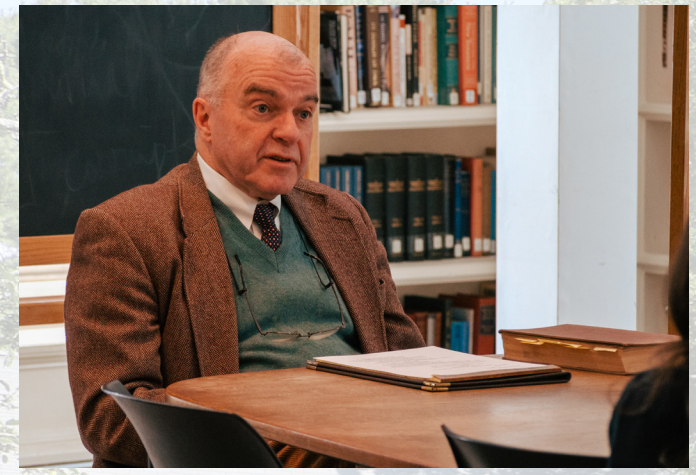
Discover Ou

Liberal education aims at the production of a certain kind of human being, a man or woman whose soul is characterized by a love for what is noble and whose speech and action are compelling witnesses to the value of a life spent in pursuit of the good. At Thomas More College, even those parts of the curriculum which are devoted to specialized learning have a crucial role to play in integral human formation. The College's tutorial system provides an opportunity for individual students to shape a portion of their course of studies. The small size of the tutorials provides for careful training in thinking, writing, and speaking, so that students might further hone the abilities they have gained from the common curriculum. Read on to discover more about the tutorials offered this semester!



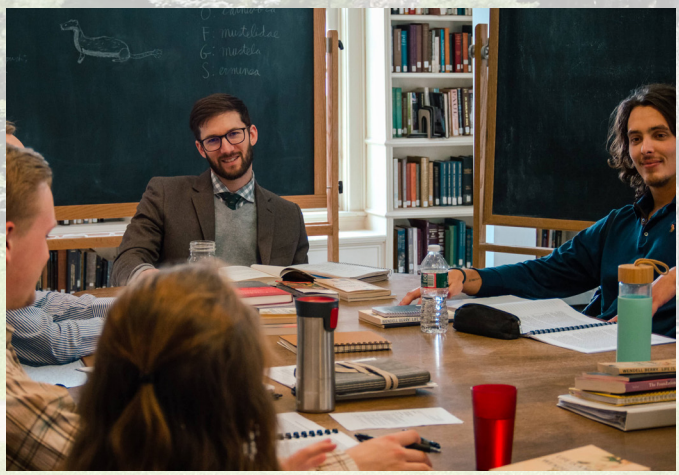
The Twentieth Century with Phil Lawler

When the Dean asked me about tutorial topics I might like to tackle, preferably in the field of the social sciences, I remarked that nearly everyone my age wants to teach a course on the 1960s, a decade that left a deep impression on my generation. I said this mostly as a joke: a comment on the self-absorption that is so common among Baby Boomers. But as I thought it over further, I realized that a course on a broader topic—the whole twentieth century—might have more value.

At Thomas More College, we try to help students understand how their world and their way of thinking has been shaped by influences from the past. In many classes we study the distant past, carefully examining ideas that have stood the test of time. But I thought that a careful look at the more recent past would give young people an opportunity to investigate more proximate influences on their lives. Then, to be candid, I realized that I had another motive for suggesting this course. Too often, I find myself caught up in political debates that I thought had been settled a generation ago. At a minimum, a study of the twentieth century might inoculate students against the influence of ideas that were—or should have been—discredited and discarded.

The twentieth century obviously furnishes a very large field, with more material than we could possibly cover in a semester. My plan is not to concentrate on the historical data (the dates, the battles, the elections), but primarily on the trends that shaped our way of thinking and the debates that, rightly or wrongly, are still unresolved. Anticipating that different students will want to pursue different interests, the last few weeks of the tutorial will be devoted to students' presentations, giving them a chance to choose and explore their favorite topics.

'Life's a Miracle': Ecology, Wonder, and the Battle for the Meaning of Creation with Dr. Michael Dominic Taylor

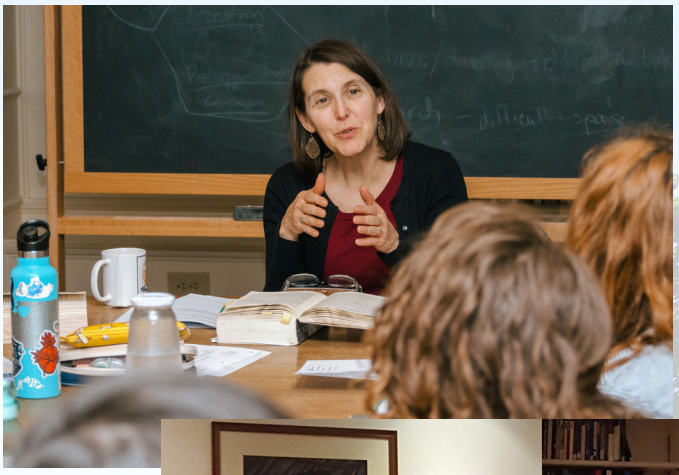


"Life's a Miracle" is an ecology course in the broadest sense; it is the study of our *oikos*, our "household," on many different, yet interconnected levels. The title, taken from *King Lear*, speaks to the fundamental human need to look at life, our own and that around us, as a miracle and a gift. This awareness brings about the necessary attitudes for both learning and prayer: humility, receptivity, and gratitude. Gloucester's method of "giving up on life" is not the only one. In his materialism and agnosticism, modern man has found another, far more pervasive and deadening: to perceive reality as asking no questions and containing no mysteries beyond the reach of human reason. By understanding the genesis and prevalence of these ideas, we can better steel ourselves against them and give reason for our hope.

This course also takes inspiration from Thomas Aquinas's warning to those who, misunderstanding creation, misconstrue the nature of God Himself, the Creator (*SCG* II.3.1). Recognizing that "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth" (Prov. 3:19 RSV-CE), we approach the science of ecology—studying local flora and fauna as well as the lobster and cod fishing industries—with an eye for the *telos* of Creation and man's fundamental role in it. Contemplating Creation through Aquinas's metaphysics, we discover the entire cosmos as marked by the generosity of the Trinity, revealing that fulfillment is to be found in the gift of oneself.

UR TUTORIALS

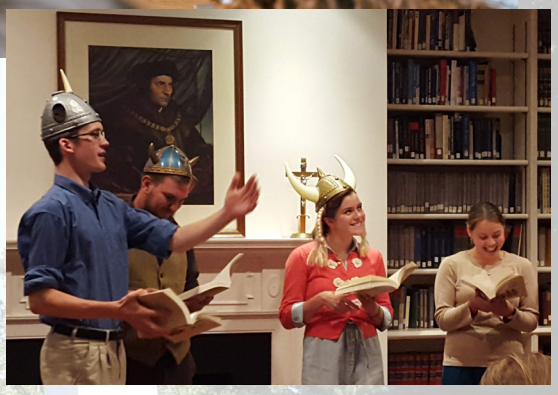
***Northern European Literature* with Dr. Amy Fahey**



"Do you seek to know more, and what?" So asks the seeress in the haunting verses of the *Voluspa*. The students of the Northern Literature tutorial read of the doom of the Norse people, who were best described by Tolkien as relying solely on "self and indomitable will" (the Old Norse term is *godlauss*—literally, Godless). The course seeks to examine the heathen literature of the pre-Christian north and its formative influence on subsequent Catholic literary giants like J.R.R. Tolkien and Sigrid Undset.

After reading Norse mythology, we next turn to the sagas, including the magisterial *Njal's Saga*, in which the consummate Viking hero, Gunnar—who anticipates but does not live to see the conversion of Iceland to Christianity—admits, "What I don't know is why killing bothers me more than other men." Reading the pre-Christian literature that so deeply influenced Undset, Tolkien, Lewis, and others gives our students a knowledge and appreciation of the way in which these writers identified and transformed the inchoate spiritual longings of the heathens into such masterful fiction.

But the Northern Literature tutorial is not all doom and gloom: far from it! Students may give presentations on everything from Viking longships to the Runic alphabet; they might be seen reciting Skaldic verse clad in helmet and tunic; they might enjoy class to the accompaniment of smoked salmon and lingonberry jam. But by engaging in such a sustained study of the pagan and Christian writings of the Scandinavian north, our students are able to see how the strengths of the Northern character—their hospitality, boldness, loyalty, and resolve in the face of insurmountable hardship—are aimless without Christ.



Northern Lit Through the Years: 2022 (above) and the class of 2018 (below)

***Latin Doctors: Medieval Philosophical Theology* with Dr. Patrick Powers**

Philosophy, scripture, and theology are three of four preeminent intellectual and spiritual sources constituting the TMC curriculum. Among the magisterial thinkers whose works of reflection are our guides to the wisdom of these sources, not only Aristotle and St. Paul but surely St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas stand out. In our preoccupation with probing the riches of the *Confessions* and the *Summa Theologica*, we tend to overlook that these works belong to a rich tradition of philosophical theology stretching over seven hundred years, from the Latin Church Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries to the Latin Doctors of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. The College's tutorials, offered as electives for Juniors and Seniors, fill this gap in the form of *Greek Church Fathers*, which has been offered bi-annually since 2014, and the newly minted *Latin Doctors: Medieval Philosophical Theology*, which is being offered for the first time in spring 2022.

Latin Doctors opens with a focus on the emergence of Scholastic thought in the dialogic and meditational works of St. Anselm of Canterbury—namely, *Cur Deus Homo* and the *Proslogion*. Then, we listen to St. Albertus Magnus's commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *Mystical Theology*. Next, we encounter St. Albert's student St. Thomas Aquinas in his use of multiple literary forms—among others, allegory, commentary, meditation, sermons, and summa—to fulfill the Dominican charism of preaching and defending the Word of God. The course concludes with St. Bonaventure's "Mind's Road to God," allowing for a comparison and contrast of the two Mendicant Orders that brought the wisdom of the Benedictine Rule from the Monastery into the City.

Handing Down Tradition

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music in a good way, and bad music in a bad way. One of the goals of the Guild is to help students develop musical tastes that coincide with the educational mission of the College. Many of the Guild songs express noble sentiments that resonate with themes taught in the humanities courses, such as love of another person, love of home, and love of work. These noble affections characterize songs such as "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms," "Long Long Ago," "Sewanee River," and the "Mingulay Boat Song." These same feelings are also rooted in literature in books such as *The Odyssey*, *The Georgics*, and *Brideshead Revisited*, to name a few.

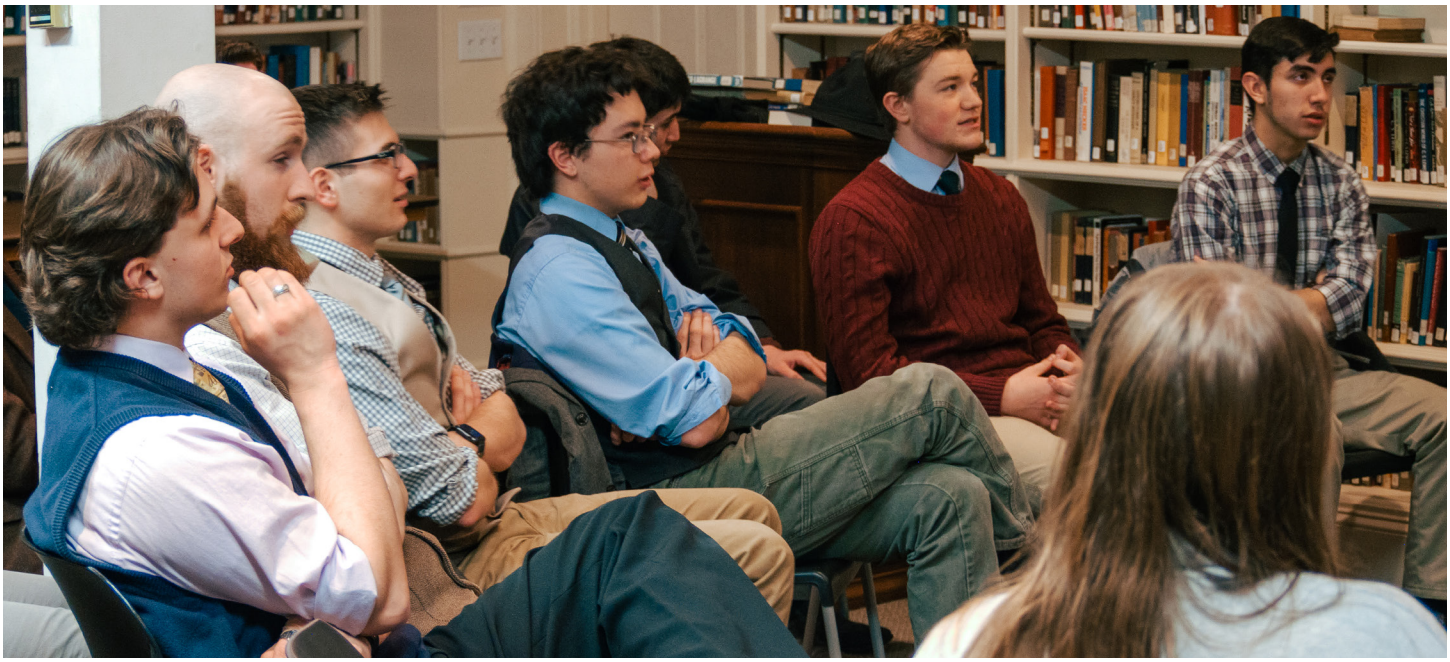
Why is it beneficial for someone to participate in and rise in the ranks of the Folk Music Guild?

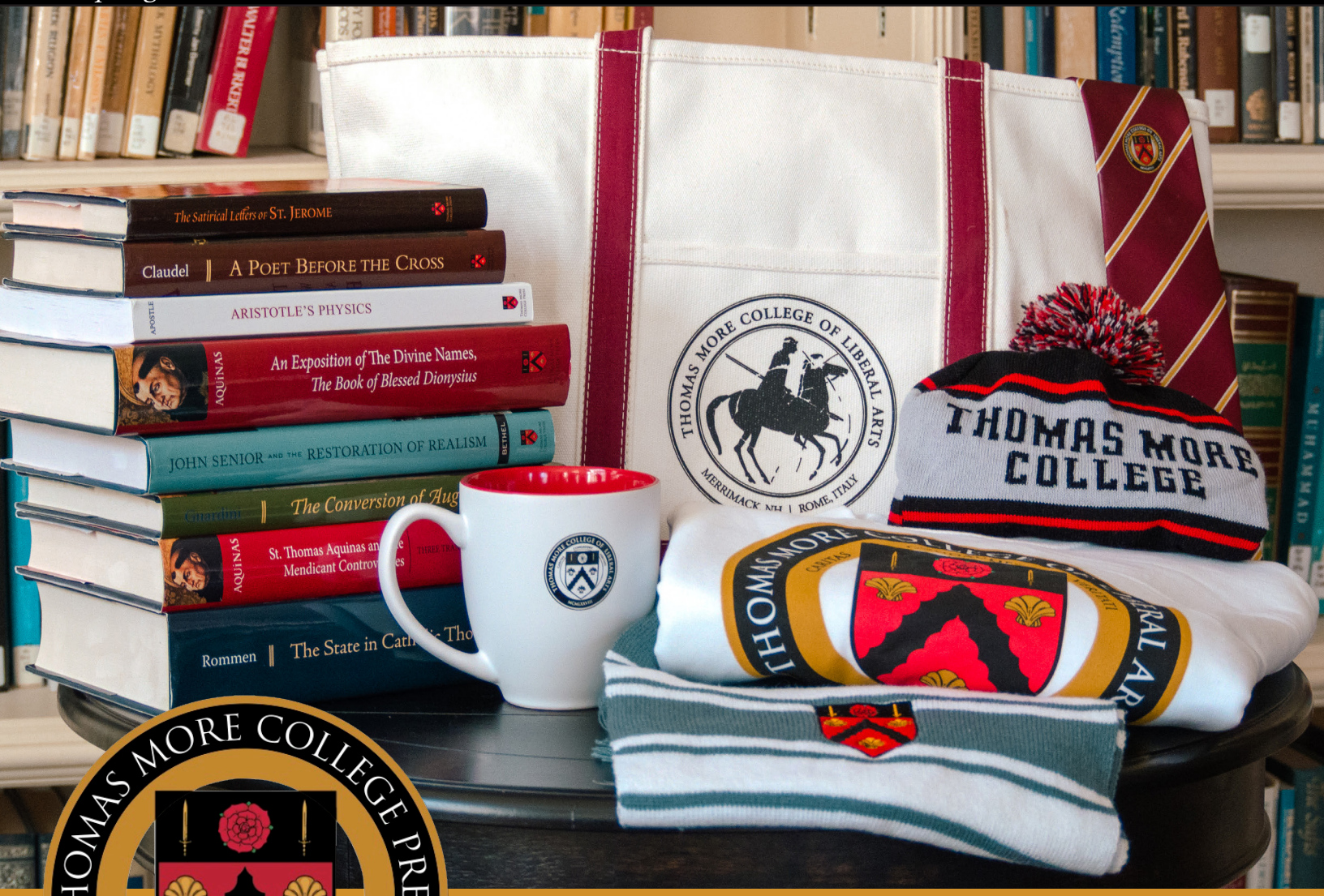
I remind the Guild members of the antiquity of the art of singing in common. To support my point, I read to them the following passage from Polybius in which the historian describes the role of music in Arcadia (one of the regions whence Greek civilization arose):

"We should not think that the ancient Cretans and Lacedaemonians to no purpose introduced the flute and the measured tread, instead of the bugle into war, or that the early Arcadians to no purpose filled their whole public life with music, to such an extent that not only boys but even young men up to the age of thirty had to study it constantly, although otherwise their lives were most austere. For everybody knows that only in Arcadia, first, the boys from earliest childhood are trained to sing in measure the hymns and paeans in which the people of each place, by tradition, hymn their local heroes and gods . . . And through their whole lives, in social gatherings they entertain themselves not with hired performers but by themselves, calling for song from each in turn. And though they are not ashamed to deny acquaintance with other studies, song they can neither deny knowing, since all are compelled to learn it, nor, since they admit that they know it, can they excuse themselves; for among them this is thought shameful. Besides this, the young men practice marching tunes with the flute and in formation, and perfect themselves in dances, and each year perform in the theaters for their fellow citizens, all at the public expense . . . (the ancients) also accustomed both men and women alike to frequent festivals, and sacrifices, and dances of men and women, and used every possible device to mollify, by such customs, the extreme hardness of the natural character. The Cynaetheans neglected these institutions, though in special need of them, as their country and climate is the most rugged in Arcadia; and by devoting themselves to their mutual frictions and animosities, finally became so savage that in no city of Greece were greater and more constant crimes committed" (Book IV, chapter 20).

When Polybius says that the ancient Greeks used festivals, sacrifices, and dances to mollify the natural character, he is referring to what we today call the "humanizing" effect of good literature and education. As a college, Thomas More College pursues this goal, too, and the Folk Music Guild contributes to this part of the mission.

For more information on scholarships, visit www.thomasmorecollege.edu/apply/scholarships/





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The Cultura

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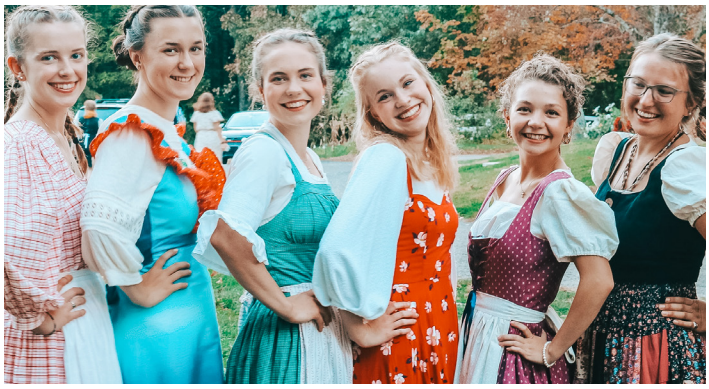

and beauty. Our cultural life—our festivity—is the natural and appropriate extension of these noble goals of our liberal education. That means, the time together outside of duties—the time that is "free"—takes its cues from the very purpose or common good of our College. Here, living and learning is *an integral experience*—the classroom, the chapel, and the community life are all part of one whole (mind, spirit, and heart). Those truths studied and spoken of aren't filed away in notebooks. They are made flesh in our common life. They are lived.

And yet, in the final analysis, the integrity of our common life does not fully explain our spirit of festivity and cultural life. Certainly, integrity assures that the true, the good, and the beautiful—received in faith, beheld with the mind, and cherished with the heart—are the pillars of all we do. But culture may be said to be the act of making real, that is, realizing *in the concrete and particular, in time and place*, the truths beheld with the mind. Indeed, the "TMC difference" is due to a *living tradition*, a tradition we—the very people here—have received, experienced, and reflected upon, *and* made our own, to preserve and communicate them lest they become museum pieces. In other words, we are people who love things that have been loved for a long time—like banquets and feasts, poetry and song and games and pig roasts. Homer had his Odysseus pronounce to his host Alcinous, "… surely indeed it is a good thing to listen to a singer such as this one before us, who is like the gods in his singing; for I think there is no occasion accomplished that is more pleasant than when festivity holds sway among all the populace, and the feasters up and down the houses are sitting in order and listening to the singer, and beside them the tables are loaded with bread and meats, and from the mixing bowl the wine steward draws the wine and carries it about and fills the cups. This seems to my own mind to be the best of occasions."

So, how—concretely—do we mark time "after all else is done"? It will not come as a surprise that living the liturgical year is primary. Following Mother Church in her long, beautiful procession throughout the year defines our weeks and informs our days. Since Christ is our joy, surely we ought to mark the time by His victory. At Thomas More, we take seriously our inheritance from the past. We are inheritors of Christian culture and the customs of the civilized West. This means we mark the year in festive and communal ways that link us with the traditions of Christendom and transcend the narrowness of our age. We publicly mark our feast days grandly—with ritual, ceremony, civility. Such an occasion always involves food. But not only for its usefulness—food presents us with something excitingly useless. We dine.

L Life at TMC

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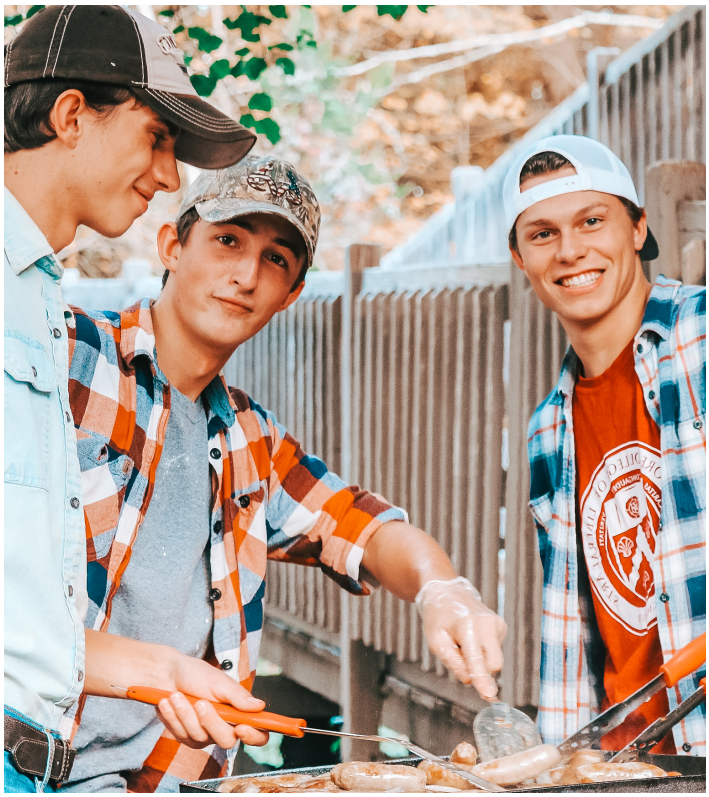
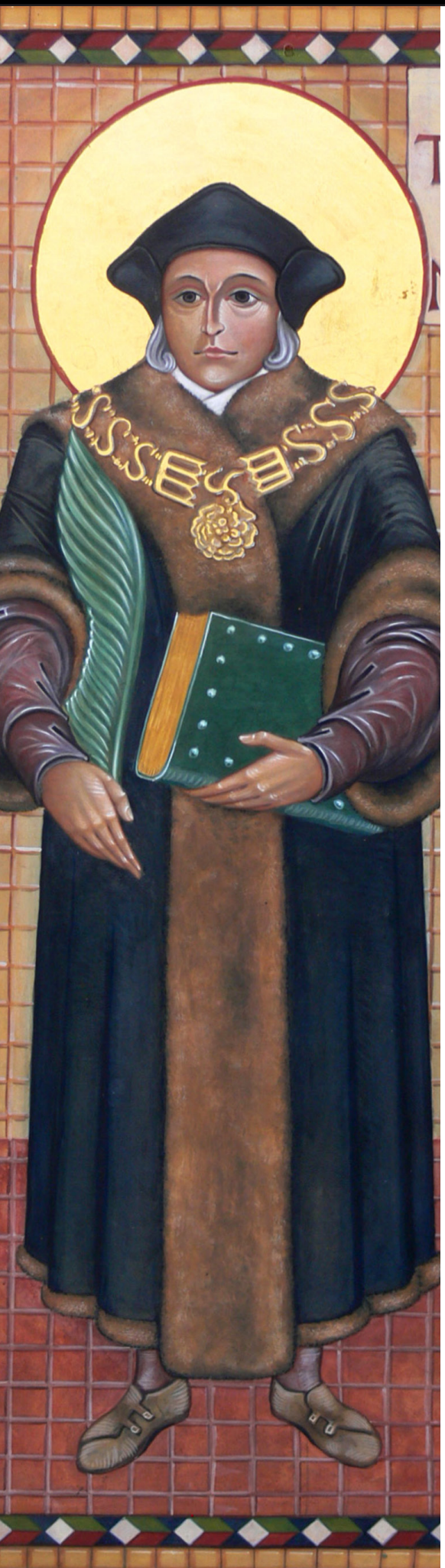


The tables are laid, the candles are lit, wine is poured, and we dine. All of us. There may be a recitation, a madrigal or two may be sung, a ballad recalled, jests shouted, a table of underclassmen may sing a taunting chant to the Seniors. But, invariably, a faculty member stands to address the hall with a toast that calls on this body of friends to reflect on the solemn greatness of the day, be it the profundity of Our Lady's *fiat*, the pious and learned life of our patron St. Thomas More, or the final perseverance of St. Isaac Jogues and his weather-beaten brothers. He finishes with the chivalrous call for the ladies and gentlemen to charge their glasses and be upstanding…

But what about time not so extraordinary? We fill our "free" time with pastimes fitting freemen. When we say farewell to the New Hampshire summer in late September, you will find us beneath the large green maples enjoying an English tea on the lawn. An archery competition between the best archers of all four classes entertains and delights as we tip our hats in our indebtedness to British culture. When the gale blows strong and another snow has fallen in late February, the community gathers around the low light and stately fireplace of the Scholars Lounge. There they hear choice poetry recited by two members of each class in hopes of being laurelled as school victor. Throughout all seasons, students gather inside and out to sing and drum old favorite folk tunes or pass along new ones. Saturday evenings allow for swing dance, pool and chess tournaments, film viewing, and casual or elegant socials.

We rejoice in these good things and in one another, in our *communitas*, with gratitude for all God has blessed us with. It is a small taste of the good life, life rich in things we choose for themselves, not because they are necessary. These things are part of the experience here, and as part of the experience here they further shape our affections in accord with the truth. It is an experience truly common to all due to the size of our community of learners, which permits a genuine sharing in these good things by all. In this common life, the College could not be more blessed. For there is one final source that molds the character of our cultural life, sometimes even without our knowing: our patron, St. Thomas More, the man for all seasons, the man made for friendship, who always longed to be merry together, in heaven, even with his enemies. For in St. Thomas More lived a passion for truth tempered with charity realized in joy. With St. Thomas More we are at the heart of the Church, to her he always looked as his teacher; and with St. Thomas More we are close to our Lord, in Whom he wanted all to finally rejoice. With St. Thomas More, we see all things *sub specie aeternitatis*, and are brought closer to *Him* who is the source of all our joy.



Experience More

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and *Parts of Animals*, students work hands on with a trapper out in the field; they learn the movement patterns and overall life cycle of New England mammals. Before looking at Theophrastus *On Plants* or Linnaeus on binomial identification, they spend several weeks studying the ferns of southern New Hampshire and trying to create their own system of classification. Before reading Galileo's *Sidereal Messenger*, they spend weeks mastering winter constellations and drawing from direct observation the stars, planets, and phases of the moon. "Experience More" calls upon them to see their education as not something that sits in a book or a room or only in the mind, but as something that shapes their whole person, something bodily as well as intellectual. St. Thomas More, it is worth noting, had his children taught observational astronomy by the Royal Astronomer of England, and his garden was designed as a teaching garden as well as a place of delight.

A second example: the College's Guild program calls the students to experience something of the way civilization is built by working in a variety of arts mentioned by medieval authors as central to learning and humane life. Some will focus on sacred arts (variously over time: iconography, religious painting, and most especially sacred music). Others learn woodworking. Others, outdoor skills or homesteading arts. Yet others learn that foundational craft of community life: folk music. The College grounds its vision of the Guild program in the guilds that characterized medieval Europe. In view of the time required for full mastery of a craft, it is unlikely that students will become a "master craftsman" in their brief college years. Yet they may discover a professional vocation or just a future avocation, or they may merely fulfill Aristotle's vision of a well-educated citizen. In his *Politics*, Aristotle noted that "if a student attends to the liberal arts too closely, as if to attain perfection, an evil effect will follow." By which he meant a person's health and mental capabilities would become deformed. In his ideal community, Aristotle hoped all liberal arts students would experience a certain amount of "useful" or "mechanical" art for the sake of balance and practicality.

A third example: the education at Thomas More College is marked by a spirit of pilgrimage. In pilgrimage, we discover a foretaste of that peerless end of a true Catholic formation: the arduous journey that culminates in the arrival at the heavenly city. The College Coat of Arms bears three shells—the symbol of the *peregrinus*, the earthly traveler searching for holiness while still on earth. In the Middle Ages, man was described as a *homo viator*: a wanderer, a pilgrim, since his final citizenship was in Heaven. A central part of the Thomas More education is the experience of extended pilgrimage to Rome, the center of our Faith and culture, and from Rome often to other sites: Monte Cassino, Assisi, Santiago de Compostela, Krakow. The movement and action of the pilgrim itself symbolizes something unique in Christian and Western culture: the idea of Man as one who thinks and acts, who does not withdraw into a theoretical life but moves into a fruitful life; the idea of the human as most fully alive when he does not shun beauty, nor limit it to a concept, but when he desires to see it abundantly and knows that he sees it best by making it manifest. All the goods of his intellectual vision compel him towards a noble creativity. His world is not just to be turned over in the pages of his mind, but felt, shaped, and shared, made tangible for others to experience.

Experience More.

The Society Page










Left to right, top to bottom:

Births: Finian James Sanderson, son of Alec ’14 and Michi Sanderson; Damien Michael Six, son of Dominic Six ’18 and Isabella (née Darakjy) ’18; Maximos Thomas Naccash, son of Zachary Naccash ’18 and Marguerite (née Deardurff) ’18; Lucia Therese Moorman, daughter of Elijah Moorman ’21 and Eva Marie (née Solak) ’21

Weddings: Charles ’18 and Elizabeth Easterday

Awards & Achievements: Declan McArdle ’21 received his private pilot license; Joseph Dionne ’20 was commissioned into the U.S. Army as a Second Lieutenant; Zachary Naccash ’18 is graduating from the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius with an MA in Theology; Esther Jermann ’20 is graduating from the Catholic University of America with an MA in Medieval and Byzantine Studies; Dominic Cassella ’18 is graduating from the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius with an MA in Theology.

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

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