



"READ CHESTERTON" & OTHER WISDOM FROM DALE AHLQUIST

By *Cassandra Taylor*,
Editor

Thomas More College was thrilled to welcome Dale Ahlquist back to campus this semester. In addition to serving as president of the Society of G.K. Chesterton, Mr. Ahlquist is the co-founder of the Chesterton Academy and the Chesterton Schools Network. He gave the Commencement address at the College in 2017, where he received an honorary doctorate.

We sat down with Mr. Ahlquist to hear his thoughts on the state of education today, the importance of a joyful learning environment, and of course, all things Chesterton.

How did you first become interested in Chesterton? How did that lead to you founding a Chestertonian

empire, including the Society of G.K. Chesterton, the Chesterton Academy, and the Chesterton Schools Network?

Like everybody else, I started reading Chesterton on my honeymoon. I had graduated from a highly-rated liberal arts college and was outraged when I realized that I had never been taught Chesterton, because here was a writer who far exceeded those I was assigned to read—who actually answered questions instead of just asking them! He was truly a complete thinker—there's nothing narrow about him—and I just couldn't get enough Chesterton. But this was a long time ago, when most of his books were out of print. The only way to find them—this was pre-Internet; even before the gas-powered Internet, which I also remember—was in used bookstores. You would go into one hoping that there

would be a Chesterton book there, and the owner would say, "Oh, we can't keep him on the shelf!" I think at that point only about six of his books were in print; you couldn't find any of the others, and every time I got a hold of something, I was just thrilled to find it.

I ended up doing a master's thesis on Chesterton, and I still thought I was the only one alive who was reading him, but it turns out there were at least a dozen others. There was a little conference being held in Milwaukee, so I attended it, and there were my people! They were all about thirty years older than me, so I represented the future to them. Those annual meetings in Milwaukee led to us starting the American Chesterton Society, and then we hosted the conference in the Twin Cities and created *Gilbert!* magazine. In 2000, right as we were starting the Society and shortly

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Editor
 Cassandra Taylor

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STANDING FOR LIFE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE'S CAPITAL

*By Peter Rao,
Class of 2024*

In June of 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Although this decision marked a major victory for the pro-life movement, many states—including New Hampshire—continue to protect abortion. Thus, it was fitting that Thomas More College took this opportunity to attend the March for Life in Concord. On January 14, 2023, a group of students who had returned early from their winter break attended the March, which was organized by NH Right to Life.

The day began with Mass at Christ the King Parish, after which everyone rallied at the State Capitol. Following an opening prayer and a brief address by Fr. Christian Tutor, a trustee of NH Right to Life, the March began. At the front of the procession, two men carried a small coffin, commemorating the death of the thousands upon thousands of babies killed by abortions every year. The procession halted at one point in front of the Equality Health Center, which, according to its website, is “New Hampshire’s longest-standing abortion provider.” The coffin was laid on the lawn before the abortion clinic and participants were invited to place a rose petal inside, as a further reminder of the loss of so many innocents.

As the March continued toward Christ the King Hall, Thomas More College students took the opportunity to contribute to the spirit of the March by breaking out into song. As the event came to an end, several other participants expressed their appreciation both for the singing and for the group’s interest in the pro-life movement as young people.

Indeed, there is a great deal of independent initiative among the College’s students to contribute to the pro-life movement in various ways. Over the past few semesters, several students have organized “Pro-life Saturdays,” where they gather to pray in front of an abortion clinic in Manchester, NH.

“I think for the most part we get more positive than negative feedback,” said Madeline Eastman ’24. “We go there and pray fifteen decades of the Rosary and then a Divine Mercy chaplet.” She continued to say that it was “nice to see that this gathering is student-run and maintained,” and she hopes that more opportunities will arise at the College for pro-life activism in the future.

Miss Eastman was also part of a small group of students who decided to make the trek down to Washington, DC on their own for the first post-*Roe* national March for Life. “It was really

beautiful. There were massive amounts of people, and we ran into a lot of friends unexpectedly. There were many colleges represented, lots of young people, religious orders and habits everywhere.” Miss Eastman concluded by saying that it was an amazing experience, and that she thought it was important for Americans to be in DC, exercising their right to peaceful protest—especially after *Roe*’s overturning.

Thomas More College is proud of its students’ continuing desire to stand for all life, especially in our home state of New Hampshire.



CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHT

City of God

In honor of Dr. Patrick Powers

**By Dr. William Fahey,
Fellow and President**

In two recent books, Carl L. Trueman sets out to explain the emergence of a new form of individualism—one increasingly hostile to tradition and Christian culture. In his weighty *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (and its leaner version, *Strange New World*), Trueman traces the evolution of ideas that have reshaped our understanding of the “self” and community. Increasingly since the eighteenth century, the individual has been understood not as a person within and formed by community, but something autonomous, largely threatened by community, seeking to liberate itself from tradition, social influence, religion, and even nature. It is an individualism driven to subdue and reshape those formative conditions of human flourishing into subordinate powers whose very existence is justified only by their utility in promoting the individual’s ongoing self-discovery and liberation. This “expressive” individualism manifests itself most recently through identity politics and politicized sexuality. To oppose such expressions is increasingly defined as intolerable by the government and “unloving” by private society.

Such modern works such as Trueman’s are good to read. It is hopeful to see that not everyone remains silent before the naked emperor. It is also good to read, for a work such as Trueman’s drives home how dependent we are (for any self- or social- understanding) upon the careful study of the authors and artists who have created our civilization. For a scholar of individualism, however,

it is strange that Trueman does not wrestle seriously with the emergence of a healthy sense of the person under the influence of Christian revelation and culture, nor the deleterious effects of Protestantism. After all, we Christians say not “we” but “I” when expressing or reflecting upon our belief—even living and dying for it. So, what explains the divide between healthy and unhealthy beliefs, lifestyles, and conceptions of the human person?

Well, members of Western civilization are not lost in the cosmos. Our tradition has long considered the issue of the person and his relationship to culture and, most importantly, his relationship to God. Every great work has certain lines worth memorizing to give the mind a touchstone for recalling the essence of the ideas contained in it. One such work is St. Augustine’s *City of God*, a ponderous tome. Were I to select one passage that brings us to the center of the work, it would be: “Two cities were created by two loves: the earthly city by love of oneself, even to the point of contempt of God; the heavenly city by the love of God, even to the point of contempt for oneself” (13.28). In the first city, the citizen seeks the goods of the body, or the soul, or both—but they do so without any honor or service to God, and therefore, without justice to one another. In the City of God, where “there is nothing of mere human wisdom except piety” (14.28), there remains that natural virtue which directs us to consider the good of others under the light of justice.

Augustine explains that the earthly city is not coterminous with any particular state or culture, nor is the City of God coterminous with the members of the institutional Church in time. Only after the earthly city passes away

will the citizenship of the two become clear. Over the course of human history, the exercise of “the free choice of the will brought about a mixing of the two cities, and even, by their participation in iniquity, a blending” (15.22). They are *permixtum*. Hence, the difficulty of determining our true identity and that of our fellowmen; hence, the need for political life, restraint, and cautious deliberation.

We must live in the Earthly City and make noble use of all the temporal goods it can offer—such as peace. The particulars of custom, dress, language, even social and political life are permitted in all their variety, so long as they are not contrary to the design of God. As good citizens of both the Earthly and Heavenly Cities, Christians may pursue the contemplative life, the active life, or a mixture of the two. Everlasting reward can be found in all. Of highest importance is “what one holds through the love of truth and what one does through the office of charity.” Here and elsewhere, Augustine directs our attention to the centrality of love—the love of truth (belief and thought) paired with the duty of love (acts done in charity, works of mercy). Many will recall this expression from his *Confessions*: *pondus meum amor meus*, “My weight my love” (13.9). Expressed under the conceptual terms of modern science, we might translate this as “My love determines my gravity.” For Augustine, it is love that is the measure of all things. In the face of our current predicaments—such as the conundrum over how to distinguish between the wayward “expressive individual” and the dignified human person—it would be wise to sit calmly with St. Augustine and take the measure of affairs within our own City.

HTS



**By Dr. Michael R. Gonzalez,
Class of 2017**

It is tempting for Catholics to look for a political program in St. Augustine's magisterial *On the City of God against the Pagans*. The Doctor of Grace wrote this text in a disorienting time—one often compared with our own. Vandals (literal, not metaphorical) had sacked what even Christians were calling “the eternal city.” The institutions that seemed like lasting frameworks for human culture were now disclosed as vestiges of a dying order.

Was this Christianity's fault? Did the task of laying new foundations befit Christianity? Augustine's pastoral objective was to answer these questions. Yet, if we reduce the *City of God* to this context, we miss its loftier purpose and the reason for its perennial relevance.

What is it in this text that seems so promising to Christians? Some readers find a reassurance that we will have lasting peace and true Christian order only in the Heavenly Jerusalem. This is reassuring because it chastens hopes for political success in this life: “Whoever hopes for so great a good as is promised to David in this world and on this earth shows all the understanding of a fool” (17.13). Faith cultivates high standards but low expectations. Admittedly, Protestants have often capitalized on this reading, but Catholics also have looked to Augustine as a source of moderation.

Other readers of the *City of God* identify an Augustinian injunction to make society reflect an “ordered obedience, in faith, to the eternal law” (19.14). These readers may share Eusebius's effervescent adoration

of Constantinian politics: when the political ruler is an icon of God in His Heaven, then we could conclude with Browning that “All's right with the world!”

So, which is it? Does Augustine separate the Two Cities or integrate politics and religion? The truth is that Augustine never tells us. Perhaps this reticence explains how Christians often find in the *City of God* whatever they think they need for responding to “the times.” However, it may also be that Augustine would have rejected the demands we place on his text. If you wonder, “But what is the Catholic regime and where is it found in the *City of God*?”, you may be asking the wrong questions.

Augustine has no objection to a Catholic confessional state, as seen when he praises Emperor Theodosius for promoting the faith (5.26). Yet, he also dismissively asks, “What difference does it make whose governance a man who is about to die lives under, so long as those rulers do not compel him to impiety and sin?” (5.17). God grants earthly kingdoms to the good and to the evil so that Christians don't think of them as “something great” (4.33). Along similar lines, when Augustine mentions Constantine, he does so only to show that demons don't get all the say in politics.

But doesn't Augustine state that there can be no true virtue in a city without true piety (5.19)? And doesn't he explicitly subordinate the order of temporal goods to the order of spiritual goods (19.13)? Yes, he does. But Augustine never treats the establishment

of a Catholic political order as the essential priority of “a spiritual people.”

Augustine leaves the attentive reader with the impression that Catholics can (and should) enliven any halfway-decent regime with Christian virtue. This seems to be what he means when he encourages Christians to use temporal peace for spiritual ends. The important thing isn't establishing Catholic rule; it is for Catholics to exhibit the love of truth and the duty of charity in their daily lives.

In a sermon given while writing the *City of God*, Augustine asks, “In Peter himself the flesh was temporary, and aren't you willing for the stones of Rome to be temporary?” This reminder of the limits of political life doesn't mean Catholics should build nothing while on Earth. Augustine himself established schools, churches, and monasteries that facilitated the leavening influence of Christianity. One builds up the City of God not by taking over a regime, but by converting souls through the common enterprise of pursuing and—as that later Augustinian, St. Thomas More, attested—rejoicing in the truth.

Augustine's *City of God* remains alluring because of our hearts' longing for solid foundations amidst decay. But this text offers to educate this longing. It directs us to sober goals (and even soberer expectations) that reflect the more-than-political hopes of robust Christian life: “Glorious things are said of thee, O City of God!” (Ps 86:3 DRA).

IMAGE: *Philippe de Champaigne, Saint Augustine, c. 1645, oil on canvas, 31 × 24 1/2 in., LACMA, Los Angeles, CA, www.lacma.org.*

DISCOVERING L

In a Catholic liberal arts education, students are called to learn from and love the works of man—especially those made for the glory of God. the Christian West. Four members of the Class of 2025 reflect on what life in



“Italians do things a certain way.” These words were repeated to me many times upon my arrival in Rome. Living here, I see the truth of this statement more each day. Whether it is a cappuccino and cornetto for breakfast, the cheerful and essential “ciao” at every meeting or parting, or even the witch’s brooms of the street cleaners, everything the Romans do is according to a very specific, though unspoken, code.

During our time here in Rome, we are challenged to learn these codes. By learning life according to a different approach, I have come to appreciate the thinking behind this way of doing things. Life in a community, especially in a city such as Rome, develops over many centuries, with some habits being very newly formed, some reaching beyond the memory of their source. Together they form a way of life that is distinctly Roman, but also deeply human, touched by the lives of generations. Living here has given me an understanding of the nature of culture: it is formed by men according to the universal laws of humanity, yet it is always shaped by the place where these men are, and by their attitudes toward that place and each other. The culture of Rome is established by the human hands that live there and that have lived there, and it is fundamentally flavored by the eternity of the city in which it resides.

—Marie Vyleta '25

I do not believe it is possible to have a fruitful sojourn in Rome if one does not follow these two directives: be a pilgrim, and be a child. With a childlike pilgrim spirit, the traveler in the Eternal City has an opportunity to grow in virtue and wisdom; without this disposition, he is nothing but a drifter, floundering about in a milieu of history and culture with no ultimate goal.

Rome is wonderfully impractical. It is densely packed with the sort of beautiful things of which the thoroughly practical will never see the point. Those who have lost the receptivity of children are dead to the spirit that, over the ages, brought about the creation of these beautiful things. A childlike spirit recognizes, simply, that something beautiful is good, and is filled with wonder. Whether it has some practical purpose is wholly irrelevant. The purpose of wonderful things is to be wonderful.

Rome, moreover, is something not so much to be seen as to be imbibed. Its churches, monuments, and edifices are glorious unto themselves, but they cannot fully be appreciated apart from their particular place in the whole scheme of human existence. This is why the spirit of pilgrimage is invaluable in Rome: it gives the pilgrim spiritual perspective on everything, and thus helps him direct his experiences toward the eternal goods. The childlike pilgrim’s experience of what is called “culture” is both receptive and reflective; he learns from those that have come before him because he understands that they have wisdom to share as fellow pilgrims on this journey of life.

—Liam Beecher '25



A CITTÀ ETERNA

To that end, Thomas More College students spend a term in one of the world's great cities—the seat of the universal Church and the heart of the Eternal City has taught them about Christian culture and being Catholic.

They say that young people need to “get out and see the world” and “broaden their worldview.” I always shrugged that kind of stuff off as typical rambling old-folk talk, probably because I didn’t know what it meant; but now I think I do know what it means, so I guess I owe it to the old folks to try to explain it through my own ramblings.

All of life seems to be a pilgrimage; but isn’t pilgrimage about walking around and basically being homeless? Yes, in some sense; but in the most real sense, no. The most real pilgrimage is the spiritual pilgrimage that we are all called to make, all the way from our disobedient Israelite beginnings to our (hopefully) Christ-like perfection in the end. That is the Christian life—a journey back to our creator, God.

So what has getting out and seeing the world done for me? Well, there’s something so real about physically going to new places and visiting different churches and towns that one hasn’t seen before. The physical movement makes the spiritual movement so tactual, so concrete, so alive. We’re not all called to make physical pilgrimages, but we are all called to make spiritual ones. In the end, the physical pilgrimage is so important because it reminds one of the spiritual journey. It has tremendously oriented me toward my end, in any case.

—Alexander Tapsak '25



For an American, stepping into Rome is like walking into a living museum. The people here go about their lives, apparently oblivious to the enormous cultural weight of their city. They walk past ancient ruins, relics of the greatest saints, the most famous works of art, and they seem to take it all for granted. The residents of this city do not think of Rome as a museum, but their home. Generations upon generations of Romans have built and rebuilt Rome, ever-changing and yet the same.

The churches in Rome are living pieces of history. Many of the oldest churches have been built from the spoils of some even more ancient Roman structure. The columns in many early churches were taken from temples and repurposed. At the same time, new additions are common. Often there is a mixture of styles and eras in their artwork and decoration. Early Roman mosaics are often found side-by-side with baroque frescoes and modern statues. These churches are not dusty old ruins of the forgotten past, but living, breathing places of worship.

The depth of the culture in Rome speaks to the richness of the Catholic faith. Experiencing the living Church in the heart of Christendom fills me with a sense of awe and reverence. The Faith is ingrained in the whole of the city, forming it over the centuries and allowing it to blossom. I hope that it will remain this way: constant and eternal, but more importantly, living.

—Margaret Six '25



Requiesca DR. PATRICK

*By Paul Jackson,
Executive Vice President*

It is with deep sadness that the Thomas More College community has said goodbye to a longtime friend and teacher. On Saturday, December 17, 2022, Dr. Patrick Powers, Teaching Fellow of Thomas More College, passed away.

Dr. Powers was educated at Assumption College, the University of Notre Dame, and the Université de Fribourg (Switzerland). He received his PhD in Government and Political Philosophy from Notre Dame.

During his distinguished teaching and administrative career at Assumption College, the University of Notre Dame, Magdalen College, and Thomas More College, Dr. Powers received fellowships and grants from the Bradley and Earhart Foundations, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and donors supporting the Fides et Ratio Seminars. An experienced professor of philosophy, theology, political thought, literature, and the Great Books generally, his academic interests were truly Catholic. These ranged from the thought of Aristotle on the soul in the *De Anima*, to the Greek Church Fathers and St. Augustine with a focus on their accounts of the Trinity, to the rise of Christendom in the medieval period from St. Benedict to St. Bonaventure. In a literary vein, he mentored students on the great epics of ancient and medieval times, as well as on the dramas of Shakespeare.

As Executive Director of the Fides et Ratio Seminars, he co-mentored a series of summer seminars on the Catholic intellectual tradition for college, university, seminary, secondary, and primary school faculty and administrators from across the United States and overseas.

Dr. Powers's heart, soul, and life were dedicated to teaching. He commented to me on more than one occasion that as a young man working and living in Washington, DC, he had to choose either a life dedicated to politics and action or the life of a teacher, pursuing wisdom. The multiple generations of students that he taught and mentored for the last fifty years are grateful for his decision.

I can remember asking Dr. Powers once, many years ago, "What do you think makes a great teacher?" In response, I anticipated a long discourse, explanation, or at least a discussion. He replied, "A new teacher teaches more than he knows, a good teacher teaches what he knows, and a great teacher, teaches what his students need to know." And this was the secret of his craft; he did not worry about prestige or concern himself with what others thought of him. He concerned himself with the one needful thing for a teacher: his students' learning.

Patrick Powers

Patrick Powers firmly believed that nothing happens without reason and significance. I share that view and take some comfort that this friend and teacher passed away on December 17, when the Church moves into that period of the most fervent anticipation of encountering Christ. It is especially noble that he should pass away on the day of the first great Antiphon: *O Sapientia*. "O Wisdom, that proceeds from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end mightily, and disposing all things sweetly! Come and teach us the way of prudence."

A teacher, a philosopher, a Catholic man always striving to live rightly in conformity to God's will, Patrick Powers has made that day richer and more memorable. He has given it to us as a day to remember a Catholic life lived well.

—Dr. William Fabey,
Fellow and President

Patrick and I both taught at the University of Notre Dame in the early 1990s. I dimly recall passing him in the halls of the Arts and Letters building back then, but our paths never really crossed until he arrived at Thomas More College in the fall of 2009. Since that time, our paths never ceased to cross; or rather, we never ceased to walk the same path.

Patrick was, at root, a teacher. A teacher is one who makes his purpose the learning of others, one who is devoted to handing on to others the fruits of his study—*contemplata aliis tradere*, as the motto of the Dominicans has it. From his first day at the College to his last, Patrick never ceased to challenge himself, his fellow teachers, and his students, to consider everything in relation to their learning.

He will be sorely missed by all here. May God grant him eternal rest with the saints.

—Walter J. Thompson,
Fellow and Dean

I cannot recall a conversation with Patrick that did not end with his expression of hope that we would have some opportunity later to continue the exchange, to delve deeper into our ideas. There was always something else to discuss, some new conversation to be enjoyed, some other thoughts he wanted to explore. This appetite for thoughtful conversation was relentless, and it fueled the energy that made him such an important part of the intellectual life at Thomas More.

—Phil Lawler,
Visiting Fellow and Program Director,
Center for the Restoration of Christian Culture





THOMAS MORE COLLEGE
 CENTER FOR THE RESTORATION
of CHRISTIAN CULTURE

After two academic years in which public events were restricted, the Center for the Restoration of Christian Culture has rebounded this year with a regular schedule of public events, while enhancing the online presence that we developed during the COVID lockdown.

The highlight of this year's schedule has been "The History of Christendom," a series of eight lectures given by Joseph Pearce, the College's current St. John Henry Newman Visiting Chair in Catholic Studies. Working his way through Church history one era at a time, the series covers everything from the life of Christ through the twentieth-century "wars of irreligion." An engaging speaker as well as a noted author, Pearce has drawn enthusiastic listeners for the talks held at Mercy Hall, and a still larger audience for the online recordings. The series is based on his forthcoming book, *The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful: History in Three Dimensions* (Ignatius).

The Center was also fortunate enough to host Robert Reilly, the author of *America on Trial* (Ignatius), who stepped into a lively current controversy with his December lecture, "Was America's Founding Fatally Flawed by the Provenance of its Ideas?" And making a foray across the state border, the Center teamed up with the monks of Saint Benedict Abbey in Still River, MA for a lecture I gave on Chesterton's magnificent poem *Lepanto*.

In February, the Center took a different sort of initiative, hosting an on-campus screening of *The Liberator*, a feature-length film on the life of Daniel O'Connell (who brought emancipation to the Catholics of Ireland). William McCann—who produced, directed, and starred in the award-winning movie—gave our undergraduates some insight into the challenges and opportunities involved in creating an independent film.

Meanwhile, I continued my "Book of the Month" podcasts, interviewing authors such as:

- Samuel Gregg, the Acton Institute scholar whose work, *The Next American Economy* (Encounter), takes on the critics of free market capitalism;
- Stella Morabito, the former CIA analyst whose study of leftist propaganda led her to write *The Weaponization of Loneliness* (Bombardier); and
- Daniel Mahoney, whose portraits of philosophical political leaders, *The Statesman as Thinker* (Encounter), was named the Conservative Book of the Year.

Also on the Center's podcast, the death of Pope Benedict XVI prompted me to record an episode exploring a question that has bothered many Catholics: what was the real reason for his resignation? And my wife, Leila Marie Lawler—the author of the hot-selling *Summa Domestica* (Sophia Institute Press)—continued her own podcasts for the Center, inviting listeners to join her "Home Truths Good Cheer Society" and offering useful thoughts on such topics as choosing children's books and movies, marriage prep, and raising teenagers.

All of these programs and more can be found on the Center's website. Please pay us a visit: RestorationChristianCulture.org.

Until then, God bless,

Phil Lawler
 Senior Fellow and Program Director

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spring.*



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"READ CHESTERTON

Continued

after I became Catholic, I was invited to do a show on EWTN. That's when the interest in Chesterton really started to explode, because of the exposure that we had.

The Chesterton Academy came a few years later, in 2008. Chesterton is the complete thinker that we want our students to be, so he was the perfect patron for our operation. The Chesterton Network started to take off right before COVID—we went from one school to about ten schools in the first ten years, and then in the last five years we probably added thirty schools. Next year, there's going to be sixty.

Why do you think the demand for this kind of classical education is increasing right now?

COVID exposed what bad shape our schools were in. Parents were watching what their kids were learning on the screen—and not just with public education, but private education too. They started realizing that most Catholic schools are just aping the public schools, there's nothing distinctive about them. We had something that was really

sensitive to what parents wanted, and we showed them how they could start their own school—it can be done! People were so thrilled to discover that they could do it themselves, and the Network is becoming such a force because they're all like-minded people.

The "Six Hallmarks" of a Chesterton Academy are what unites the Network. One of those is "a joyful learning environment," which is something we also have here at Thomas More College. Why do you think a joyful environment specifically is so important for actual learning to take place?

One of the keys is a line of Chesterton's that we use to talk about the Chesterton schools, but it certainly would apply to Thomas More: "The one thing that is never taught by any chance in the atmosphere of public schools is this: that there is a whole truth of things, and that in knowing it and speaking it we are happy" ("The Boy," *All Things Considered*). That's what you're studying: the whole truth, through literature, philosophy, and the humanities. But

you're also teaching them how to express what they have learned, because it's "in knowing it and speaking it we are happy." People are happy when they can express themselves, and if they're expressing something good and true and beautiful, that makes them even happier!

What would you say to Juniors and Seniors at a Chesterton school who are thinking about going to a Great Books college?

A lot of our students are ready to specialize, to go out and study a trade, or nursing, or engineering. But there are some where we're just lighting the spark, and they want to go deeper into the liberal arts, great literature, and classical learning. There are only a few schools which offer that, and I think Thomas More is a perfect fit for a Chesterton Academy graduate who wants to pursue it. With the Great Books, there will always be something you can draw water from—they'll never go dry. And if they've read them once, that's great, they have a head start—go on and read them again!



" & OTHER WISDOM

from page 1

How would you describe the impact that institutions like the Chesterton Academy and Thomas More College are having on Catholic culture?

The only way we can change things is at a grassroots level—there are no top-down solutions. But if people start bringing what they've learned and the skills they've acquired to wherever they are, it will have an impact. For instance, at our school, we write our own plays! And that just has a great ripple effect—everyone is a part of the creative act. And not only in the creative aspects or by going into the trades, but just by making new Catholic families. This is where a lot of people meet their spouses, and they're going to have a great formation with which to start them.

Chesterton said that Thomas More "is more important at this moment than at any moment since his death, even perhaps the great moment of his dying; but he is not quite so important as he will be in about a hundred years' time" ("A Turning Point in History"). Could you speak a little more to that?

Chesterton said that Thomas More is more important now than he was in his own lifetime—which is huge to think about, when you consider how important he was during his life! Thomas More not only defended the Faith against the state, but he also defended the family. Chesterton knew in the 1930s that the family was going to be under attack, as well as the Faith—and of course, it shows how prophetic Chesterton was.

What parallels do you see between these two men?

They were both amazingly broad in the subject matters that they could write about. They both seemed to write about everything! Whether it was politics, or philosophy, or literature, or theology, they had a complete hold on whatever subject they touched.



What do you think is Chesterton's single most important work?

The danger of answering that question is that people will think, "Well, then that's the only one I'm going to read." And that would be so unfortunate! However, the book that seems to be the trunk of the tree is *Orthodoxy*—but if that's the only one you're going to read, then you do have to read it over and over again because, like any classic, it will keep bearing fruit.

What are you working on now?

The work of the Chesterton Society continues! The schools have been taking up so much of our time and attention, but we are still pushing the importance of Chesterton as a writer and as a major literary figure, and we're hoping to get his cause for sainthood opened. My own projects are publishing *Gilbert!* magazine and working on two new books. One is an alternative autobiography of G.K. Chesterton; the other will address the oft-repeated criticism that Chesterton was anti-Semitic.

So, what is the process of writing an alternative autobiography?

Chesterton wrote an autobiography that was mostly about other people, but in his thousands of essays written for the newspapers, he drops a paragraph here, a paragraph there, about himself. There's enough that I've been able to stitch together what will be the alternative autobiography of Chesterton.

What advice would you give to our Seniors who are heading out into the world?

The number-one piece of advice I'd give them is the same advice I gave to the graduating Seniors the year of my Commencement address at Thomas More College: read Chesterton.

These comments have been edited for length and clarity.

THE LEGACY OF ISABEL

"THE CATHOLIC"

*By Dr. Michael Dominic Taylor,
Teaching Fellow and Dean of Students*

Through the generosity of Don Francisco Javier Martínez Fernández, Archbishop Emeritus of Granada, Spain, the College has come into possession of an exact replica of the Last Testament of Queen Isabel "the Catholic" of Spain (1451–1504 AD). This remarkable document draws back the curtain on a life, and an entire civilization, in which the political and administrative were seamlessly interwoven with and crucially dependent on the monarch's personal witness of faith. Isabel understood her reign as a responsibility entrusted to her by God, for which she would have to answer shortly after she put her hand to this document.

When Isabel was born in the small village of Madrigal de las Altas Torres, she was just one potential heir to the weak and fractured kingdom of Castilla. Her predecessor, half brother Henry IV ("The Impotent"), seemed ambivalent toward the 700-year struggle to complete the *Reconquista*. But after her marriage with Fernando of Aragon and coronation as queen, she became the dynamizing force for its termination, bringing the long war to an end with the conquest of Granada. Solicitous for the political unity of their kingdoms, which had been separate since the eleventh century, Fernando and Isabel assumed the motto "*Tanto Monta*" ("They amount to the same"), echoing Alexander the Great's solution to the Gordian Knot: "It amounts to the same, cutting as untying." In just over fifty years, the empire of their grandson—the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V—would be twice the size of Alexander's.

The rule of Isabel and Fernando was marked by two unrivaled achievements, both in 1492: the conclusion of the Reconquest and the discovery of

America. The emirate of Granada was the last Moorish holdout in Spain. Continuous raids, the enslavement of Christians, and the growing threat of the Ottoman Empire in the East—which shocked Europe by destroying Otranto in 1480, giving 813 martyrs to the Church and selling the rest of its citizens into slavery—convinced Isabel and Fernando that the Reconquest must be



completed. In *The Spirit of Spain*, Harold Raley describes the taking of Granada as "a reconquest of what the enemy had seized but which the Spanish had never surrendered" (49).

The fall of Granada enabled the Catholic Monarchs to finally authorize the journey that would lead to the discovery of the Americas, a voyage that was initiated in Santa Fe, on the outskirts of the former Moorish stronghold. A year earlier, the military camp from which the siege of Granada had been conducted had burned down; Isabel not only had it rebuilt in stone to signify her resolve, but had four chapels constructed above the gates of the camp

that can still be seen today. It was there that the "Capitulations of Santa Fe" were signed, funding Columbus's voyage and giving him authority in their name.

Although Columbus's achievements were marked by controversy, Isabel's intentions regarding her new subjects were made clear through her actions and in the codicil of her Testament. Therein, she states that her "principal intention" was their conversion "to our holy Catholic faith." She would also "instruct and order" that her successors "not consent or cause the Indians...to receive any injury to their persons or their goods" and that they "be well and fairly treated." Having no doubt that native peoples were children of God—a doctrine confirmed decades earlier by Pope Eugene IV's 1435 bull *Sicut Dudum*—Isabel defended them through royal decree as subjects of the crown, sending missionaries for their spiritual benefit. Spanish nobility intermarried with native nobility (the descendants of Montezuma hold noble titles to this day) and a new civilization was born. Our Lady of Guadalupe presented herself as an image of this synthesis in 1531, sparking the conversion of over 9 million Mexicans in seven years' time. Thus, for Raley, the Reconquest represented Spain's unyielding will to be Catholic, and the Americas were its greatest invention (34).

Isabel was an indomitable force, causing opposing armies to lose hope when they saw her urging her soldiers on. It is a fitting testament that, in chess, the queen first became the most powerful piece on the board in Spain during Isabel's reign. And yet, she also endured great sufferings throughout her life, never forgetting that she would answer to God for the power with which He had entrusted her. A Third Order Franciscan, she was buried in the habit of *il Poverello*. Today, she is a Servant of God.

THE SOCIETY PAGE



Left to right, top to bottom:

WEDDINGS: Jacob Dominic Loera and Zoë (née Becher) '21; Clark Ingram '19 and Elizabeth (née Puncer) '22; Judson Bonneville '23 and Regina (née Schneider) '22; Joshua Lo and Jacquelyn (née Crousser) '22

BIRTHS: Theodore Campion Hughes, son of Salvador Bollack and Brianna (née Hughes) '22; Edmund Campion Ivor O'Connor, son of Ethan O'Connor '17 and Eileen (née Lloyd) '18; Adelaide Rose Davis, daughter of Michael Warren Davis and Helena (née Fahey) '18; Valentine Jude Fagan, son of Ryan Fagan '19 and Brigitte (née Nelson) '19; Margaret Elise Van de Voorde, daughter of Jude Van de Voorde and Emma (née Skidd) '20; Dorothy Beatrice Peregrina Yost; daughter of Michael Yost '18 and Mary Grace (née Greer) '17; Ambrose Augustine Gonzalez, son of Michael Gonzalez '17 and Marlene (née Schuler) '17

AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS: Michael Gonzalez '17 graduated from Baylor University with a PhD in Political Science. He will be a Postdoctoral Research Associate with the Department of Political Science at Princeton University for the 2023–24 academic year, a position sponsored by the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions; Sean Pueschel '85 is retiring after thirty years of service in North Carolina public schools. However, he won't stay away from school very long, since he will be filling in as a substitute teacher; John Martin '11 and three friends founded Dumb Ox Distillery in New Tripoli, PA. Find out more about their Loyola 1751 Rum at dumbboxdistillery.com.

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