



Newsletter of the THOMAS MORE COLLEGE of LIBERAL ARTS

COMMUNITAS

Spring-Summer 2025

"ALL THE TREASURES OF KINGS"

THOMAS MORE'S EDUCATIONAL VISION

By Walter J. Thompson, Senior Fellow

None of us currently at the College chose St. Thomas More as our patron. We received him. We have the founders to thank for putting our work under his inspiration and protection. At the time of our founding, More had not yet been declared patron of statesmen and politicians. So the founders were looking to his example not principally as a public servant, but as a scholar and saint.

Their choice was providential. For though Thomas More was, in the words of his friend Erasmus, "a man for all times and for all men" ("Letter to Guillaume Budé"), his example is one especially needed by us, in these times. Had there been more like him at his time, our modern world would be a very different place. And so could it be if there were more like him now, in our time. Thomas More was and remains a model of an educated Christian, and he was and remains a champion of the education that is our birthright as Christians. We can do no better than to imitate him as we can, in our very different circumstances.

More was fortunate to receive the best education available at his time, a genuinely liberal education. He counted among his teachers and friends many who contributed to the recovery of liberal learning throughout Europe.

His early instruction was in the liberal arts and humane letters at St. Anthony's School, at Archbishop Morton's court at

Lambeth Palace, and at Oxford. He was later trained in the law at the London Inns of Chancery. He continued to study and write throughout his life, despite his many domestic and civic duties.

From his youth he received a rigorous education in the language arts of



the *Trivium*—grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. At the same time, he was immersed in the reading of humane letters—poetry, philosophy, history, and oratory, both Latin and Greek. Such a humanistic education, More claimed, while in no way necessary for salvation,

still "does prepare the soul for virtue" ("Letter to the University of Oxford"). His early education made More a philologist in the literal sense—a lover of the word in all its forms: from an aptly chosen term, to a well-turned phrase, a striking image, a compelling argument, a convincing appeal. It also made him a philanthropist—a lover of humanity and the humanities.

Unlike that of some of his contemporaries, More's humanism was neither proud nor worldly. He distinguished, but refused to oppose, reason and faith, secular and sacred learning, temporal and eternal goods. And while he valued the latter more, he did not disparage the former. He knew that the purpose of education is to equip us to live well as human beings,

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COMMUNITAS

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GETTING TO KNOW ST. THOMAS MORE

By Paul Jackson, Executive Vice President

When I first started working at Thomas More College in 2013, much of what I thought about St. Thomas More had been impressed upon me by my experience and the delight I took at the time in the 1966 movie *A Man for All Seasons*. Then, many scenes from the movie stood out to me as impressive. In one memorable bit of dialogue, a young man named Richard Rich is imploring More for an appointment at court, and More is trying to persuade Richard to be a teacher. More says to Richard, “A man should go where he won’t be tempted. Why not be a teacher? You would be a fine teacher, perhaps a great one.” Richard responds, “If I was, who should know it?” To which More replies, “You; your pupils; your friends; God. Not a bad public, that.”

The movie was and remains immensely popular, and I would not begrudge anyone who continued to enjoy it. But what I discovered once I started working at Thomas More College is that if you want to get to know the real St. Thomas More, there is no better means than by reading the letters he wrote—particularly the ones written to his daughter, Margaret Roper. If you read More’s letters, a solid figure begins

His reception and openness to the interior wealth of the humanistic tradition and Catholic philosophical and theological inheritance made it possible for Thomas More to write and think so clearly in a time that was deeply troubled—and ultimately, gave him the wisdom and courage to stand against the world.

to appear, a man of great love, strength, and humility. As you read the letters, the “movie More” decreases and St. Thomas More increases.

In his letter to Margaret dated April 17, 1534, More is writing from the Tower of London. The content of the letter describes the events of April 13, four days earlier, on which More had refused the required Oath of Succession. He was then delivered to the Abbot of Westminster to be kept as a prisoner.

In this letter, it is clear that More was determined to follow his conscience—and that he was at peace to let others follow theirs. This is the major theme of the movie version of More as well. But as one reads this letter, something surfaces that is not emphasized in the film, but which was obviously of paramount importance to More.

At one point, Thomas More relates an exchange with the Lord Westminster: “Then said my Lord of Westminster to me that howsoever the matter seemed unto mine own mind, I had cause to fear that mine own mind was erroneous when I see the great council of the realm determine of my mind the contrary, and that therefore I ought to change my conscience. To that I answered that if there were no more but myself upon my side and the whole Parliament upon the other, I would be sore afraid to lean to mine own mind only against so many.” More explains to Westminster that his undisclosed reasons for refusing the Oath were not just a product of his own mind and

conscience: “But on the other side, if it so be that in some things for which I refuse the oath, I have (as I think I have) upon my part as great a council and a greater too, I am not then bounden to change my conscience, and confirm it



MR. JACKSON SPEAKING AT TRADITIO, WHERE THE COLLEGE DISCUSSES THE WRITINGS OF ST. THOMAS MORE.

to the council of one realm, against the general council of Christendom” (“Letter to Margaret Roper”).

Thomas More thought *within a tradition*, a tradition that he inherited, and which informed and formed his mind, heart, and conscience. He lived with the Gospel writers and produced the meditation *The Sadness of Christ*; he prayed with Ecclesiasticus and wrote *The Four Last Things*; he imitated Plato and constructed his own dialogues. His reception and openness to the interior wealth of the humanistic tradition and Catholic philosophical and theological inheritance made it possible for Thomas More to write and think so clearly in a time that was deeply troubled—and ultimately, gave him the wisdom and courage to stand against the world.

It is a wonderful pleasure for me now, after so many years of working at the College, to sit with Thomas More, to read his thoughts and encounter his mind and heart. I would encourage anyone to sit with his letters and read them through. They are a gateway to the interior life of “a man for all seasons.”



By Joseph Rudolph, PhD, Class of 2011

Back in the fall of 2007, I read St. Thomas More's *Utopia* for *Humanities V: Renaissance and Reformation*. I was, to say the least, confused. *Utopia* is both difficult—as the writings of Renaissance humanists often are—and hard—beyond the literal level, the text is famously challenging to interpret. In our first class on *Utopia*, Dr. Peter Sampo, Thomas More College founder and then President Emeritus, told us how a scholar friend of his had once remarked, “Every time I read *Utopia*, I change my mind.” I do not remember whether this comment was a source of solace or discouragement for me.

More narrates *Utopia* as himself and sets its story against the background of real events in his life. He divides the work into two books, in which he recounts a series of conversations he had during a visit to Antwerp amidst a hiatus in diplomatic negotiations between More—representing Henry VIII of England—and representatives of Charles

V, Prince of Castile, who was soon to become king of Spain, and later, Holy Roman Emperor.

In the first book, More describes meeting his (real-life) friend Peter Giles and the mysterious (fictitious) Raphael Hythloday, a learned sailor who had traveled to the New World with Amerigo Vespucci and spent considerable time in a place called Utopia. The first book concludes with More and Giles asking Hythloday to tell them more about Utopia. In the second book, More recounts Hythloday's discourse on its institutions, laws, and customs. Hythloday paints a startling picture of a peaceful and efficient society that has abolished private property and so done away with the ill-effects of greed. More ends the work abruptly with little more than a brief statement that he agrees with some of Hythloday's ideas, disagrees with others, and that he does not expect England to change any time soon.

Utopia will not yield easy conclusions; rather, it prompts its reader to ask questions. These range from practical

concerns of the time—what should be done about the ill effects of the large-scale production and exportation of English wool—to fundamental, perennial questions—to what extent a just society might be founded on natural principles without divine revelation, and what the best form of political society might be. The latter question is an especially hard one in a time of change, crisis, and upheaval, such as the early sixteenth century was in Europe. Against the tumult of his own time, More challenges us to consider Hythloday's account of the enigmatic Utopians.

As far as I remember, Dr. Sampo never mentioned his friend's name, and I think he may have been speaking about himself. Intentionally or not, the mention of this anonymous friend partook in a game similar to the game of *Utopia* itself: Like the trompe l'oeil ceilings of Sant'Ignazio and Il Gesù in Rome, and like the framing of the story of *Utopia*, Dr. Sampo's anecdote blurred the boundaries between real and imaginary, fact and fiction, so that we



RE-READING *Utopia*

cannot quite be sure where one begins and the other ends.

But this sort of play has a purpose. Like the fictitious Hythloday, Dr. Sampo's anonymous friend—real or not—dislodged the question at hand from any known authority. If Dr. Sampo had related that he himself—or some named scholar-friend—often changed his mind, or if More had presented his own ideas for a “utopian” commonwealth, then readers or students would have to agree or disagree with someone authoritative. As any teacher knows, such a move to dislodge a question from authoritative pronouncements is not an abdication of authority or an acknowledgement that magisterial pronouncements are inherently bad or unnecessary. The game that More plays (and that good teachers like Dr. Sampo play) is born out of a humble acknowledgment either that one does not have all the answers, or that some truths are best approached like

Dickinson's, which must be told “slant.”

Do the institutions of the Utopians, ultimately, provide a good blueprint for political society? Reading *Utopia* this time around, I say no. Utopia, founded on the idea of maximizing pleasure and minimizing suffering, does not, on the whole, foster true human flourishing. And while More does not answer this question outright for his readers, his life shows us what sorts of institutions he did see as worth the work of a man's life: In the King's service, More worked zealously for England; as a father, More took great solicitude for the education and spiritual formation of his children; finally, he would give his life for the sake of fidelity to the Church herself. It is telling that Hythloday, More's interlocutor by whom we are told of the wonders of Utopia, is a foil for More. Early in the first book, More suggests that Hythloday put himself (and his wisdom) in the service of a

prince. Hythloday declines, thinking such service to be demeaning and unhelpful servitude. More, on the other hand, zealously served Church, king, and family, even to his death. When More abruptly concludes his account of Hythloday's discourse on Utopia, we have not only a tease for the reader and an invitation to pondering, but an acknowledgement that the real work of the Christian is not in island fantasies or abstract discourses, but in real institutions in this world—Church, family, and state—to which we are called by Love.

JOSEPH RUDOLPH, PHD '11 is the Upper School Dean of Faculty at Jackson Hole Classical Academy in Jackson, WY.

ABOVE AND PAGE 8–9: Ambrosius Holbein, from More's *Utopia* (detail/edited), 1518, page 12. Courtesy Folger Shakespeare Library.

FAITH, STATESMANSHIP

An Interview with

By Brendan McDonald, Class of 2025

The Hon. Maureen Mooney '97, a trustee and alumna of Thomas More College, currently serves as a New Hampshire state representative. She has been involved in politics for the last twenty-five years, including six terms as an elected state representative, and has also worked in school administration.

She sat down with us to share thoughts about her life since graduating, as well as her perspective on faith, politics, and how the two intersect.

You are an alumna of Thomas More College. What attracted you to the College, and why did you choose to attend?

First of all, the College is very faith-based in the Catholic tradition, and that was very appealing to me. I came from a devout Catholic all-girls high school in Connecticut, run by a traditional order of nuns. I had faith going into high school, but it really grew there through the example of the sisters, and I wanted to find a faith-based college. Thomas More fit that criterion very well. I was impressed with the student body, the professors—and then the majors that it offered. I always had an attraction to politics and public service. At that time, Thomas More College had a major in political science run by its founder and first president, Dr. Peter Sampo. And so, I came here to study that.

You mentioned the faith aspect and the political science major, but what else did you find unique about the College?

Thomas More College certainly emphasizes the classics and also traveling abroad—especially during the Rome semester. You know, being a student is very different than being an alum. When you're a student, you think

time lasts forever: You'll always have an opportunity to pick up *Moby Dick* and read it from start to finish. You'll always have an opportunity to spend three months abroad studying art and architecture in Rome. But then you realize very quickly that those were just once-in-a-lifetime moments. And so, it was great to be able to complete the curriculum and have the Rome campus



THE HON. MAUREEN MOONEY '97

experience, because there may not be another opportunity to be able to do those things.

You majored in political science and were always interested in politics, but when did you decide to become a politician?

Running for office is always a matter of timing. All the stars have to align to be able to run, and so it all came together. I won in 2002 for State Representative in New Hampshire, and I served until 2008. Then I was highly involved in school administration, but I ran again in 2020 and am still in the New Hampshire House of Representatives today. So it's all

a matter of timing, and in those terms the opportunity was there. That was a big motivation to run.

Could you describe some of your duties as a State Representative?

Prior to this interview, I was recapping my week to someone, and I wrote it all out and couldn't even believe all of the things that you can fit in a week—and how varied it all is! But I'll give you a summary of the main points.

Certainly, there's introducing bills and voting on bills to become law—or not to become law—for the whole state of New Hampshire. Then, of course, there's constituent service. Merrimack is a town of about 28,000 people, and that's pretty large. People have all sorts of issues with regard to navigating state departments, wanting to see bills become law, not wanting to see bills become law, wanting me to sponsor bills for them, wanting me to attend events. Also, committee work is substantial. I'm currently on the House Finance Committee.

Then, of course, there's educating. Not every legislator does this, but I'm very big on educating those who are interested in what's going on in the government—keeping people up to date on bills that are being introduced, bills that are being voted on, making an effort to tell people how the government works or addressing questions that are arising in the community. The state budget is also a huge process. A \$15 billion budget that the whole state government relies on is a big deal to everyone. But very few people really know how it gets introduced and how it gets worked on. So, for example, I recorded a show on Merrimack TV to educate people on how the budget is adopted.

Very few politicians seem to have an interest in their constituencies actually knowing what's happening in their own towns.

SHIP, AND EDUCATION

Maureen Mooney '97

I hear that a lot, and I've heard people say, "Well, Maureen, I'm not from your district, but I follow your Facebook page, and I do this because, gee, I vote for my state representatives, and I never hear from them again unless its election time. But you at least periodically keep us up to date." So, I think that's a huge part of being a state representative.

Some Catholics fear that getting into politics is a secular trap. Considering St. Thomas More's life, how would you respond to that?

Well, I think I can see why people shy away from the political arena. It's not getting any easier; in fact, I would say it's getting far more difficult. When you go to recruit people—or you ask them, "Hey, have you ever thought of running for office?"—I can't tell you how many times I've been met with, "Oh, not while my children are young, not while I'm running a business..." They don't want to get involved for various reasons, and nowadays, it's very different than it was. For the politicians we admired, things would stop at 5:00 PM, but now, with the Internet and social media, it goes around the clock. I remember one situation where I was getting calls throughout the night from all over the country. How would they have known about it, if it weren't for the Internet?

But getting involved is a necessity. You have to be elected to make a difference and have a seat at the table—to be able to push that voting button and vote on issues up or down, to participate, to amend bills in committee, to speak, to deliberate, so I hope people don't shy away from it.

It is not easy, especially when your views are quite unpopular. There are times I'm amazed that I get elected, but you have to know how to campaign, you have to know how to present yourself—all to be able to make a difference. Otherwise, what's the alternative? The

other side will be in office. The other side will make the difference. You can't let that happen.

Maybe the opposite critique would be that faith has no place in the government when we live in a pluralist society. So, how would you say faith affects your understanding of what it means to be a politician?



REP. MOONEY IN COMMITTEE

First of all, you have to have a certain moral base and a certain virtue base. You have to know what's right and answer to a higher power. That's important going in. If you don't have that, I can't imagine what your philosophy or direction would be on legislation. You have to have direction, and faith in God provides that moral compass.

When did you become a trustee of Thomas More College, and why?

I became a trustee in 2007, so I'm going on eighteen years. It's amazing how fast time goes. I was also the Secretary of the Board for a great majority of that time.

I care very deeply for the mission of the College and want to see it excel. Over eighteen years, I've seen the College make significant strides in leadership, fundraising, student recruitment, and investments. I'm really impressed with the progress it has made, and I see it having a very bright future ahead. It's been fantastic to have a front-row seat to see all of that. Everything I wanted to see as a board member has pretty much come to fruition.

Besides politics, you've worked a lot in school administration and education. How did you get into that?

I went to Thomas More, and then I earned my law degree. Shortly thereafter, I became involved in elected politics. But while I was in elected politics, I started to work with those who were interested in trying new things in higher education. I thought the opportunity was really exciting, so I got involved in the American College of History and Legal Studies. Then I became the Dean of the Founders Academy, which named its school library after me. So, I've often said that school administration chose me for a career. I didn't necessarily go out seeking it! It's not often you could say that a career chooses you, as opposed to you choosing a career, but that's exactly what happened for me in two instances of school administration positions.

Both schools were a tremendous amount of work because both were brand new. To have lightning strike twice, to be on the ground floor of two institutions, is remarkable. But I knew going in that these were new schools; they needed to gain reputations and build upon their missions. And it was going to be basically double the work than being at an established institution. Those were very long days—but very fruitful days in terms of what we accomplished, especially for the students.

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WHAT DOES ST. THOMAS

Student Reflections

The legacy of a man is often reflective of his character in life, and it may be said that those things owed to his legacy are owed also to him. For this reason, I owe St. Thomas More for my conversion to the Catholic Church; it is in great part due to the College, which bears his name, that I returned to the Faith. When I first laid eyes upon the College as a participant in the Great Books Summer Programs, I was agnostic; by the time I finished the program, I was a deist; and by the time I arrived as a student, I had become Catholic. While this story is one that I believe is worth telling—and a great testament to the power of prayer—it is also too long for my space here, and therefore I will focus on Thomas More's influence on me since I became a student.

Over my time at Thomas More College, I have heard much about St. Thomas More. One thing that struck me most was his ability to live well in every one of his roles: as a father, as a Christian, and as a servant of the Crown. Thomas More was able to live out each of these roles because he had ordered his life well. Through learning about this, I have been encouraged to attempt to better order my own life, that I too may one day be a father, a statesman, and a saint.

—Luke Stanger, Class of 2027



Thomas More is an unusual saint. I remember President Fahey mentioning this at our annual Thomas More Banquet, which commemorates our patron. This description of him has stuck with me ever since, in part because I wanted to further understand what Dr. Fahey had meant.

Since Thomas More College specializes in the liberal arts, I assumed that Thomas More was unusual in his wholehearted pursuit of such a unique education. Naturally, I wanted to imitate him. After studying for three years, I certainly experienced the joys (and the pains) of a rigorous education—but I was left wanting more. And I think this *more* is what Thomas More embraced—and why he is an unusual saint.

This *more* is something outside of us—the call of Christ to be more like Him. Thomas More became *more* by being *less*—less concerned with his own ambitions, imitating the most well-known saints without being anything other than the *usual*. He was a layman, a husband, a father—not the celibate, miracle worker, or mystic that we expect saints to be. Even when trouble was on the horizon in his political career, Thomas More never stopped dedicating himself to the everyday concerns of his family. Hence, Thomas More is an unusual saint because he lived as a *usual man*.

This humble lessening of himself allowed Thomas More to grow in Christ, especially in uniting himself to Christ's Passion during his martyrdom. His Christlike death gave him the honor of being canonized by the Church—and the smaller, but not insignificant, honor of being named patron of our College.

—Kathrin Habs, Class of 2026

AS MORE MEAN TO ME? on Our Patron Saint



Before I came to Thomas More College, I knew nothing about its patron. Little by little throughout freshman year, I gleaned delightful bits of knowledge about him, whether I was looking at his portrait in the Library or avidly gobbling up Erasmus's account of his domestic life. The stubble on Thomas More's face exhibits his unconcern for his reputation in the eyes of the world, while his marriage to the elder sister of the girl he loved speaks volumes to his respect and care for her honor and happiness. This marriage completely overturns the framework of our modern society, for we are taught to follow our emotions and do whatever pleases us. Thomas More, on the other hand, did not let his passions rule him; instead, he allowed his sense of duty and regard for others to wield the reins of his heart. He knew that if he married the younger sister, the elder one would be slighted before men, and so he chose to honor her rather than gratify his desires. Going back to his unshaven jawline, we see his disdain for vanity. He had no time to care for his appearance because of his hard work. In both his domestic life and his own person, Thomas More saw not with the eyes of men, but with the eyes of God. He saw through the things that are weighty in the world to what truly matters in Heaven.

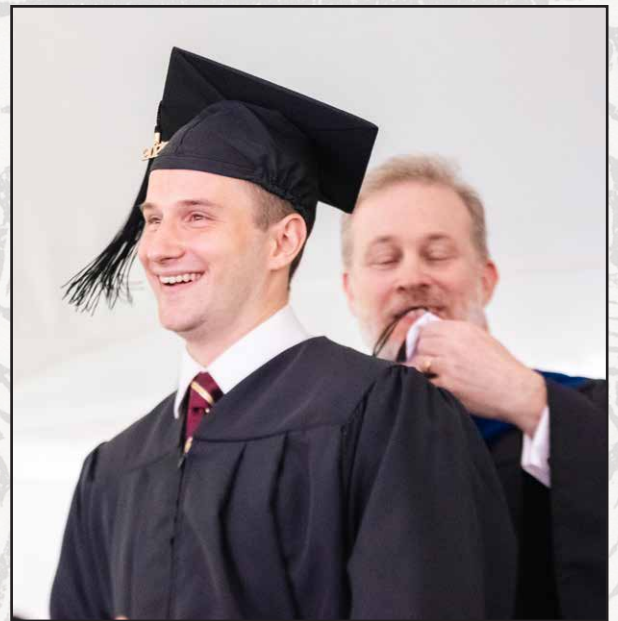
—Avalyn Hicks, Class of 2028

As I have grown in understanding as a student of philosophy, I have come to see that the entire meaning of our mortal lives is, insofar as it is mortal, death. On the whole, one's entire life is a long, complicated, and beautiful journey to death. Death is the most complete, the most final, thing imaginable. It is the end to which the beginning and all the middle has been ordered.

But as I have grown in understanding as a student of God, I have come to see that the entire transcendent meaning of our mortal lives is, because of Christ, eternal life. During the Easter season, we proclaim, "Christ is Risen!" "O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor 15:55 DRA). Christ has destroyed death by taking it unto Himself. And so, as my journey comes to a close here at Thomas More College, as I prepare for a kind of death, I rejoice. For I realize more and more that every small death, every end—indeed, every suffering—is an opportunity to prepare for that final death in which we hope for the glorious resurrection.

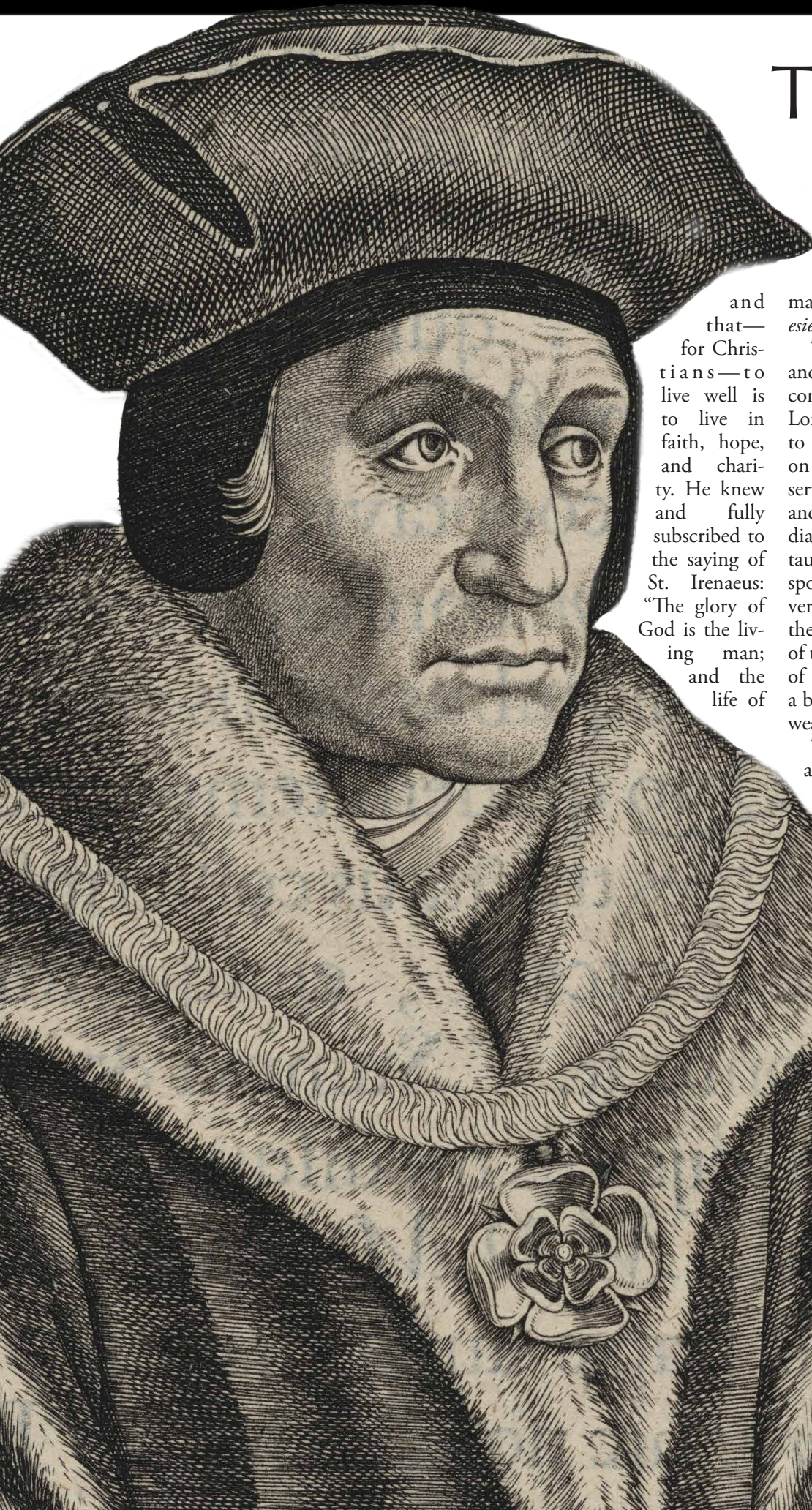
St. Thomas More was a man who understood these things. His life was full of death and suffering. He was ripped away from his childhood pursuits to study law. He was ripped away from his beloved wife when she died. He was ultimately ripped away from the world he loved when he said, "I die the king's good servant, but God's first."

Above everything else, St. Thomas More has taught me, not through his words but through his actions, the value of suffering. He has shown me what a Christian has in the midst of what everyone must undergo: endurance, peace, but above all, joy. He lived a full life, because he knew the value of death. St. Thomas More, pray for us.



—Alexander Tapsak, Class of 2025

THOMAS



and that—
for Christians—to live well is to live in faith, hope, and charity. He knew and fully subscribed to the saying of St. Irenaeus: “The glory of God is the living man; and the life of

man is the vision of God” (*Against Heresies*, IV, 20).

Though drawn to the monastic life, and even to its rigorously ascetic and contemplative form as found in the London Charterhouse, More resolved to marry and, like his father, to embark on a public career as a lawyer and civil servant. His legal training at New Inn and Lincoln’s Inn further sharpened his dialectical and rhetorical skills. It also taught him equity, the reasonable response to particular cases and controversies in all their variety. His study of the common law taught him the value of tradition and custom, as an expression of the practical wisdom of a people and a bulwark against the exploitation of the weak by the strong.

Through his education, both liberal and professional, More became not only *sapiens* (or *prudens*)—wise, theoretically and practically—

but also *eloquens*—skilled in bearing persuasive witness to the truths he had learned. Through his education, and the example of his teachers, he also came to know something better than the goods promised by a shining public career. Though his talents and training led him to ever

MORE'S EDUCATIONAL VISION

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more prosperous and powerful positions in the world, he remained profoundly detached from the goods of fortune—wealth, honor, influence—never placing his end in them, but seeing them as instruments with which to serve the good of his family, his realm, his Church.

The same education that More received, he provided for his children (and his wards)—including his daughters, a rarity at that time. He considered his household a school and called his children scholars. “Your zeal for knowledge,” he told them, “binds me to you almost more closely than the ties of blood” (“Letter to His Children”). As tutors, he hired well-qualified young men, who would go on to illustrious careers as educators; but he also participated directly in his children’s education—writing to them in Latin, providing them models to imitate, requiring that they respond in kind. He allowed them to share in his conversations with learned friends, submitted their work for comment to illustrious scholars, and even allowed them to publicly display their learning—his daughter Meg once engaged in a philosophical disputation before the king!

Because it was a Christian household, More’s was also a school of prayer, of mutual service, and of joyful festivity. More exhorted his children “to put virtue in the first place among goods, learning in the second; and in their studies to esteem most whatever may teach them piety towards God, charity to all, and modesty and Christian humility in themselves” (“Letter to William Gonell”).

In addition to attending to the education of his children, More championed liberal and humanistic learning throughout England (and throughout Europe). In the face of objections to the introduction of Greek into the curriculum at Oxford, he challenged the Masters of his *alma mater* “to see to it not only that all the liberal arts may be free from derision and contempt but that they shall be held

in dignity and honor” (“Letter to the University of Oxford”).

More was a critic of a certain sort of academic theology: a desiccated scholasticism that had become unmoored from the living sources of theological reflection, occupying itself with the setting and solving of conundrums, products of mere ingenuity, “that contribute nothing to erudition and detract a good deal from piety” (“Letter to Martin Dorp”). For More, theology was not merely an academic exercise, but a study in service of the ever-deeper understanding

*...I prefer learning joined
with virtue to all the
treasures of kings...*

—St. Thomas More, “Letter to William Gonell”

by the faithful of the meaning of things believed. Such a theology must remain rooted in the contemplation of the deposit of faith, contained in Scripture and Tradition, expounded by “the old holy doctors” (*Dialogue of Comfort*, XX), East and West, and authoritatively interpreted by the magisterium of the Church.

While More saw theological wisdom as the end of studies, he recognized that it could be neither the beginning nor the whole. Humanistic learning is needed to provide both a speculative preparation for and a practical complement to theology. “There are some,” he remarked, “who through knowledge of things natural construct a ladder by which to rise to the contemplation of things supernatural; they build a path to theology through philosophy and the liberal arts” (“Letter to the University of Oxford”). Likewise, if the Gospel is to be intelligibly and effectively preached to all, theologians “must first study the laws of human na-

ture and conduct.... And from whom could they acquire such skill better than from the poets, orators, and historians?” (“Letter to the University of Oxford”). More considered a true “man of letters” to be one “whose area of study extends across every variety of literature,” and a Christian man of letters to be one with “a general command of sound literature, which means sacred letters especially but not at the expense of the rest” (“Letter to Martin Dorp”).

Though More did not himself become an academic, he never left his studies behind; he remained a scholar throughout his life, continuing to study and write. He pursued studies in Greek after leaving Oxford; he lectured on St. Augustine’s *City of God* while training as a lawyer; he remained an amateur naturalist—with his own menagerie—astronomer, and musician; he cultivated friendships with all the great humanist scholars of his time, Erasmus foremost among them. Even when pressed by the many demands of his domestic and public life, he would steal time—largely from eating and sleeping—for study and writing.

His earliest writings are translations, into or out of Latin, in prose or verse, and his own imitations and adaptations of classical models. Many of his mature works are dialogues. They are not dogmatic treatises, but dialectical explorations, examining a question from several sides, putting cases pro and con, considering and testing alternatives. In such works, More foregoes a definitive resolution of the question, leaving final judgment to the reader. He presents reasons to think this way or that, but he refuses to tell his reader what to think. He recognized that coming to know—being persuaded—is a personal act, for which each must be responsible. No one else can do it for you.

Asked by his friend, Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall, to turn his rhetorical gifts to the

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FAITH, STATESMANSHIP, AND EDUCATION

Continued from page 7

You're a member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Could you describe that and how you became a member?

I've been a member since 2010. You have to be invited by a member of the Order, after being nominated. The

It is an order of papal knighthood; the men in the Order are knights, the women are dames. It was started around the year 1099 and stemmed from the Crusades. Obviously, it's changed over time because we're not fighting crusades, and we're not getting on horses and leaving our families to go into battle. So,

to the modern day, and I think that is absolutely astonishing. We all say the St. Michael prayer every day—that came from him. My hope was that the next pope would take the name Leo XIV—and he did! Imagine my double surprise when Cardinal Prevost came out onto the loggia as the 267th pope: He took



nomination goes through various levels: Your pastor recommends you, your bishop recommends you, the Vatican recommends you, and then it goes back to the sponsor, and finally the sponsor can invite you. So, you have no knowledge of all the background work that's being done—and, frankly, very little knowledge about the Order itself until you are invited.

a lot of things have changed since 1099! Nevertheless, it's still recognized as a papal honor of distinction for upholding Catholicism and supporting the Holy Land. My rank is Dame Grand Cross of the Holy Sepulchre.

Women were allowed into the Order under Pope Leo XIII, who incidentally happens to be one of my favorite popes. His influence trickles down

the name Leo XIV, and he's American! God has amazingly blessed us again!

These remarks have been edited for length and clarity.

ABOVE: The Class of 1997 during their Rome semester. Maureen Mooney is in the front row, second from the left.

THOMAS MORE'S EDUCATIONAL VISION

Continued from page 11

defense of the Church, More also produced a number of polemical works—confutations, refutations, defenses of the ancient Faith against the attacks of modern heretics. His very last works, written while he awaited condemnation in the Tower, are spiritual meditations designed to prepare himself and his readers to face the last things with courage and hope.

Throughout his writings, More remained simple, steadfast, and uncompromising in faith, but subtle, supple, even playful, in thought.

Given his greatness—before which we should be humbled—what is most astonishing about More is his humility, a humility rooted in his surpassing love of God and neighbor, and his knowledge of himself and his calling as a Christian. He knew that the light of learning is given not merely to shine, but to illuminate, that strength of character is given not merely to be admired, but to be spent in building up the common weal.

This is the man whom we have the honor to call our patron, the great man whose name we bear.

The sort of education we are seeking to provide—liberal, humanistic, sapi-

entia—is the sort of education More himself received, that he continued to pursue with his friends in what free time he could find apart from his other responsibilities, and that he strove to impart to his children. It is also the sort of education intrinsically ordered to forming a man like Thomas More, one who is able to be a good and faithful servant to his family, his friends, his fellow citizens, his fellow Christians, and especially his God, even in trying times. If, “because of the witness which he bore, even at the price of his life, to the primacy of truth over power,” Thomas More “is venerated as an imperishable example of moral integrity,” this is in no small part due to the education he received and championed (John Paul II, “*E Sancti Thomae Mori*”).

But it is less important for us to recognize and celebrate what More was than to remember who he is. For he lives still, in the company of our Lord and all His saints, in that heavenly homeland to which we are all on the way. We have Thomas More not only as a teacher to study and a model to emulate, but also as our patron—our protector, advocate, and friend.

He would not remain aloof and remote from us in his superiority. Erasmus said of More, “He was a man born and made for friendship” (“Letter to Ulrich von Hutten”). No one more gladly accepted, cherished, and labored on behalf of his friends. If we would share his mind and heart, if we would devote ourselves as he did to the cultivation of virtue and learning, if we would use our natural and acquired gifts to promote the common good of this College, of our nation, of the Church, then we can count on his friendship, his protection, his advocacy for us.

We should always remember that he is ready to intercede for us, to beseech God on behalf of this community, dedicated, as he was, to the pursuit of truth in charity.

COVER: David Clayton, icon of St. Thomas More written for the College's chapel.

PAGE 10: Willem de Passe and Magdalena de Passe, Sir Thomas More (detail, edited), 1620, engraving. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Alumni Reunion

October 24–26, 2025

Thomas More College alumni and their families will gather on campus in October for a weekend of fellowship and festivity. **Register today**, and don't forget to spread the word among your classmates!

FREEDOM AND FESTIVITY

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

“Then back to the palace all the people went, still singing, to feast and to hear the story of the knight’s adventures with Una” (Hodges, *Saint George and the Dragon*, 28). At our college, February 7 is the cause of much feasting, singing, and recounting of adventures. For on that day in 1478, our spiritual founder and patron, St. Thomas More, was born on Milk Street, in the city of London.

After a leisurely day of reading and discussion of a sampling of Thomas More’s writings, our community gathers in the evening for the palatial Thomas More Banquet. With jests and jollity in mind, clad in Renaissance dress of all walks of life, the College of Thomas More assembles to celebrate his adventures in wisdom, friendship, and sanctification. This evening is more than a costume party with good food. Costumes and good food there are, but the gathering is hardly an escape from the exertions of the day.

As Josef Pieper noted, “Leisure...is not the inevitable result of spare time, a holiday, a weekend.... It is, in the first place, an attitude of mind, a condition of soul” (*Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, 46). The festive celebration is an affirmation of God’s order and beneficence. This is true in the largest sense as the book of Genesis tells of God’s work, “and behold, it was very good” (1:31 RSV-CE). Human festivity affirms this goodness and in turn “affirm[s] the basic meaningfulness of the universe” (*Leisure*, 49). Taken in a more particular or narrow sense, our festive celebration honoring St. Thomas More testifies to the meaningfulness in our common work as a Catholic community of learners.

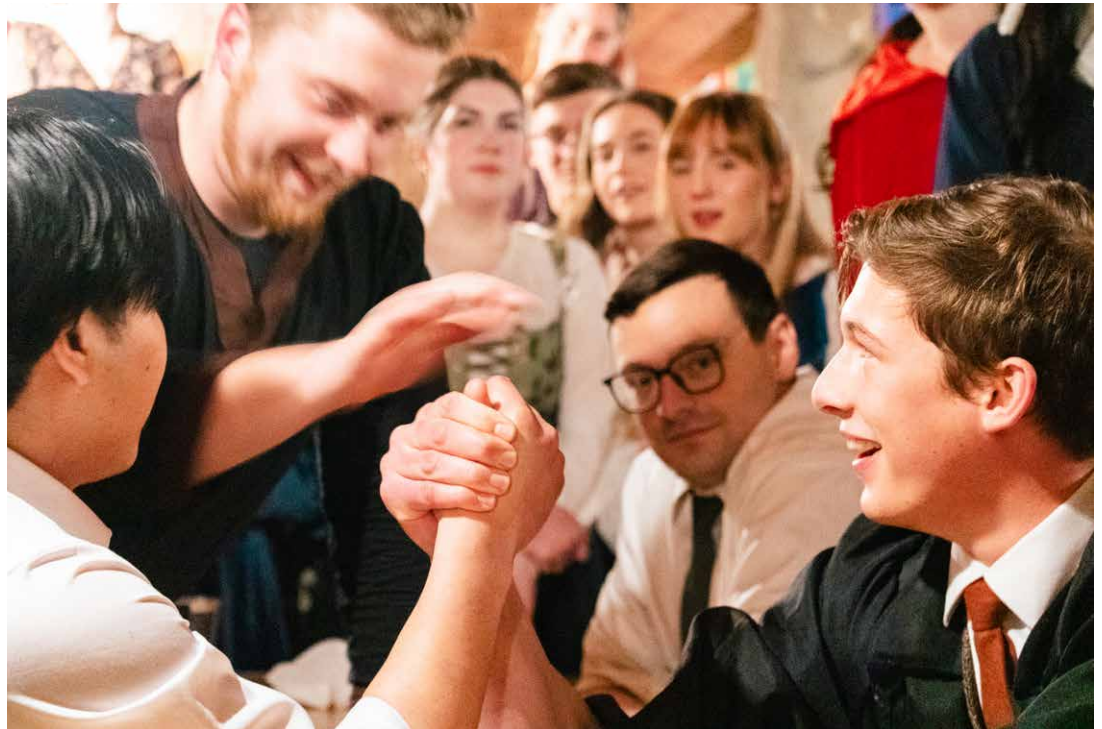
These last thoughts sound decidedly solemn. Of course, given the weightiness

of the pursuit of wisdom and virtue under the patronage of a martyr for the Faith, such seriousness seems appropriate. Perhaps this act of feasting and jesting is out of place. Perhaps the work of the free, rational soul is so serious that it cannot be associated with “leisure” or “play.”

For such a puzzle, we might follow the lead of St. Thomas More himself. In a letter dated July 1519, Erasmus describes the character and habits of his friend Thomas More. He remarks, “There is nothing that occurs in human life, from which [More] does not seek to extract

von Hutten”). No, Erasmus seems to be describing a free man at “play.”

The late Fr. James Schall noted, “for Aristotle the most interesting and fascinating thing about play was precisely that it was ‘unnecessary.’ More than anything else, this freedom is what made play noble, what made it like contemplation” (*On the Unseriousness of Human Affairs*, 2). In this light, the liberal man, the free man, will undoubtedly be at play, enjoying an “end-in-itself,” liberal pursuit. The Thomas More Banquet is such a pursuit!



STUDENTS COMPETE IN ARM WRESTLING AT THE 2025 ST. THOMAS MORE BANQUET.

some pleasure, although the matter may be serious in itself” (“Letter to Ulrich von Hutten”). Surely this is not to imply that More reduced grave matters to a mere cause for amusement, as some “sworn trifler of a lifetime” (Hawthorne’s descriptive phrase of the slavishly “merry,” the party of Merrymount [see “The May-Pole of Merry Mount”]). Such would be a boyish refusal of the great mysteries of life for cheap entertainment, hardly expressive of one who “had drunk deep of good letters” and is filled with the virtue of Divine hope (“Letter to Ulrich

Moreover, this festivity, this play we make, “enlarges the world” to the point of violating the bounds of time for all of us present (Kalpakgian, *The Mysteries of Life*, 94). Truly, the distinction between past, present, and future blurs. Amidst the flickering candlelight and laughter, time stands still. Our noble cause, the nobility of our patron, our love of the truth in Christ bind us all in friendship, and—for a moment—we experience “something that will constitute the happiness of paradise” (Pope Benedict XVI, Sunday Address, March 16, 2006).



THOMAS MORE COLLEGE
of LIBERAL ARTS
Six Manchester Street
Merrimack, NH 03054

A photograph of students studying in a library. In the foreground, a man with a beard is smiling while looking at a book. Behind him, a woman is also smiling and looking at a book. They are sitting at a long table with other books and papers. Bookshelves are visible in the background.

Early Action

Application Option & Scholarship

Beginning with the Class of 2030 (entering in Fall 2026), students who apply under Early Action and are accepted will:

- **Secure their place early** in the freshman class!
- **Receive a renewable \$5,000 Early Action Scholarship**—an exclusive opportunity available only for Early Action applicants.
- **Receive admissions and financial aid decisions sooner**, allowing students and families to move forward confidently with financial planning and next steps.