



Newsletter of the THOMAS MORE COLLEGE of LIBERAL ARTS

COMMUNITAS

Winter/Autumn 2020

LEARNING AND LIFE

SIAMO POCHI, MA BUONI—"WE'RE FEW, BUT WE'RE GOOD."

The following remarks were given by Dr. Robert Royal, the inaugural St. John Henry Newman Visiting Chair of Catholic Studies

It's good to be able to come together this evening in Convocation. In fact, it's good to be able to come together just now, in person, for anything at all. The recent obstacles we've faced in doing this usually ordinary thing, however, highlight just how natural and necessary it is for us to be present to one another, in many times and places and ways. We always need a good deal of solitude, especially digital solitude—both now and when things are more "normal." But there are also many important things we can only do well—teaching and learning prominently among them—when we are present, together, face-to-face, as we are this evening, in true community.

So this is a very special occasion. Still, I know a Convocation speaker's place and am not going to keep you long. I've heard that when Anglicans used to go to Confession they were told: Be brief, be blunt, and be gone. It's good advice that I intend to follow.

A Convocation, as President Fahey, a classicist, reminded me when he asked me to speak to you, means in Latin a "calling-together." People come together for many reasons, but we are here, at Convocation, because Thomas More, with its unparalleled devotion to the humanities, is not merely a place to pursue a college degree but an opportunity for each of us to recognize that we have a vocation.

A vocation is not only a call to the "religious life" as a priest, brother, or sister. For most of us, in fact, it's not, though we should all deeply consider whether we have that kind

of special calling. We desperately need knowledgeable, well-formed, dedicated religious for the sake of the Church to be sure, but also for the sake of the world—the world that is always lost and wandering, and currently in deep chaos, for lack of true knowledge and wisdom.

The great C.S. Lewis, just as World War II was breaking out in 1939, gave a sermon at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford—where John Henry Newman also was once vicar and where he gave many of his most memorable sermons. Lewis urged those present to pursue "an intimate knowledge of the past" because otherwise they would be helpless before "the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone." Is this any less true decades later? And Lewis had not seen Facebook, let alone Twitter.

But he had seen war, in fact, was a bit

Continued on page 12



DR. ROBERT ROYAL WITH BRIDGET RUFFING, '22 AND ELIZABETH PUNCER, '22

NEW ENDOWED CHAIR AT TMC 3

CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHT 4

MUSIC HEARD 6

A PRO-LIFE CONVERSATION 7

AUTHENTIC FATHERHOOD 8

THE SOCIETY PAGE 15



COMMUNITAS

A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

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COLLEGE RECEIVES FIRST ENDOWED CHAIR

Thomas More College of Liberal Arts

*Welcomes Dr. Robert Royal as the inaugural
St. John Henry Newman Visiting Chair of Catholic Studies.*

This past summer, Thomas More College was blessed to receive a perpetual endowment in support of a Visiting Chair of Catholic Studies and a Visiting Scholars Program. Working carefully with the administration, an anonymous donor came forward to provide a multi-million-dollar endowment to fund annual and semester appointments for writers, scholars, and teachers. The program, launched in August as the St. John Henry Newman Visiting Scholars Program, enables the College to attract individuals of international status, masters of all disciplines, as well as young promising scholars.

This fall, the College is pleased to appoint Dr. Robert Royal as the inaugural St. John Henry Newman Visiting Chair of Catholic Studies. One of the foremost Catholic public intellectuals

of our age, Dr. Royal is the author, editor, or translator of more than a dozen books, including his most recent bestselling work, *Columbus and the Crisis of the West*. He is also the founder of the Faith & Reason Institute (Washington, D.C.), the Editor of the online journal *The Catholic Thing*, and a commentator with Raymond Arroyo on EWTN's "The Papal Posse."

Dr. Royal is currently teaching a semester-long tutorial to upperclassmen entitled *Apocalypse, Plagues, Utopias, and Dystopias*. "At this point in our culture," says Dr. Royal, "many things seem to be in chaos and we don't know which way to turn. The Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse, seems to tell us that these sorts of things are going to happen in the course of human life." In addition to reading the Apocalypse,

students have been working their way through More's *Utopia*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Robert Hugh Benson's *Lord of the World*, Camus' *The Plague*, Eliot's *The Wasteland*, and works by Hawthorne, Ralph Ellison, Walker Percy, and others.

In addition to teaching the tutorial, Dr. Royal will give public online lectures, lead faculty seminars, and work closely with students on research and writing projects.

Dr. Royal has been a vocal supporter of the Thomas More College program of studies and of our students. "It is so important in this moment," says Dr. Royal, "that we form young people who are going to be able to maintain their faith and defend it in public, who are actually going to be able to advance what is essential for our country to survive and flourish. In my opinion, Thomas More College is at the top of the institutions undertaking that mission in the United States."

"We are thrilled—grateful and thrilled!" President William Fahey says of the new endowment. "These endowed positions will invite wise teachers, distinguished writers, and the foremost Catholic minds of our age to enrich and enliven our collegiate life." The new program allows considerable freedom for the College to host visiting lecturers, authors, and artists, as well as seminar and workshop directors. "The donor envisioned broad needs—covering all aspects of Catholic culture," says Dr. Fahey. "We are delighted to have Dr. Robert Royal as the inaugural occupant of this Chair. His contributions to public discourse and his scholarly endeavors have proven him to be a much-needed Catholic voice for our times."



DR. ROBERT ROYAL

CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

The Federalist Papers



By Philip Lawler, Visiting Fellow

A beginning student of political philosophy quickly encounters some profound thinkers—Plato and Aristotle, Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas—who have pondered the eternal truths of creation and then offered some thoughts on the necessarily limited role that politics plays in the larger cosmic drama. Other theorists, like Hobbes and Locke and later Karl Marx, consciously sought to create an entirely new “scientific” understanding of politics, deliberately setting aside the thorny questions about moral laws and absolute truths that had preoccupied the ancients.

A few very important thinkers fall into a separate category: the men who were practical politicians before they were political theorists. Cicero and Edmund Burke were statesmen, first and foremost; their written works on politics reflect the wisdom that came from experience, rather than an ambition to concoct some grand new theory.

The authors of the *Federalist Papers*—Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay—fall squarely into the same category. They were intensely pragmatic writers, engaged not in an academic debate but in a political campaign. Their goal was not to present some grand new vision of the perfect

regime, but simply to ensure the ratification of the Constitution. However, like Cicero and Burke, they were brilliant students of the political world, whose insights had value far beyond the partisan controversies of their own day. And again like Cicero and Burke, they showed a keen appreciation for the weakness of human nature. They were inclined to draw lessons from history rather than from abstract theories.

Today some Catholic intellectuals criticize the American Founders for their failure to answer fundamental questions about the philosophical foundation on which the Constitution was built. It is true that “Publius,” the pseudonymous author of the *Federalist Papers*, does not provide a full explanation for the authority of natural law, nor does he explain how (if at all) the American Republic would help its citizens to grow in virtue. Those are not the questions to which their work is addressed. (Nor is it clear that the three authors who wrote as “Publius” could have reached agreement if they had addressed those questions.) In the *Federalist Papers*, the scope of the work is carefully limited—much like the form of government the authors endorse.

A strictly limited government, a republic with only a few defined powers, is not the sort of ideal regime that ancient political philosophers envisioned. Yet in sketching the properties of a

desirable government, Publius draws on examples from ancient Rome far more often than he cites the visions of Locke and Hobbes. And the overall approach of the essays—stressing practical ways to minimize the mischief that government could make—is at odds with the penchant of modern political theorists for using the State to perfect human nature.

Should the *Federalist Papers* be regarded, then, as a bid to recover the ancient tradition in political theory? No; the influence of modern thinkers—Locke in particular—is too strong to be ignored. But neither should the American Founders be classified as loyal subscribers to Locke’s novel approach to natural rights.

In fact, the enduring influence of the *Federalist Papers* is testimony to the success of Publius in showing how a government can function without reliance on any overarching theory. Those who look to government for the vindication of their beliefs, or for the advance of human virtue, will be frustrated by this approach. But Publius leaves the American citizen free to see the Republic as a political vehicle which might be driven by any number of different political philosophies: those of Plato and Aristotle, or Augustine and Aquinas, or Locke—but, significantly, certainly not Hobbes.



ALEXANDER HAMILTON

By Helena Davis, Class of 2018

In the beginning of his *Politics* Aristotle asserts that “it is plain that the city is one of the things that are by nature and that a human being is by nature an animal meant for a city,” Aristotle is here asserting a fundamental truth: that man is, by nature, a political animal. Because it is in man’s being to be political, the way in which a group of men form a polity will be linked to the way in which they view human nature. An account of human nature and the organization of a polity are inseparable. Consequently, the study of the political organization of any country is incomplete without the study of the way in which those who organized that country’s government viewed man.

For this reason, a study of the *Federalist Papers* is integral to an understanding of the American Republic. In *Federalist* No. 1, James Madison echoes Aristotle’s sentiment concerning man’s relation to government, stating, “But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.” (*Federalist* No. 51) The Federalists were very cognizant of the fact that men are not angels but possess a deeply flawed nature. But they were also cognizant that there is a reason that angels do not govern men: they saw in man a certain nobility, dignity, and rationality, which they believed entitled him, despite his faults, to self-government.

The dilemmas facing the Federalists, then, were how to reconcile the self-destructive tendencies within human nature with what they perceived as man’s natural right to self-government and how to prevent the dissolution of the polity without taking away from man’s freedom.

The Federalists recognized that whatever government was formed in America must be constructed to guard man against his lesser nature. As firm believers in the right to self-government, they considered any form of monarchy or despotism out of the question. Yet they also rejected the idea of a democracy, such as that found in ancient Greece, as too likely to devolve into factions and the tyranny of majority rule: “such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention ... and have, in general, been as short in their lives, as they have been violent in their deaths.” (*Federalist* No. 10)

Instead, to check the passionate and reckless side of man’s nature without sacrificing the self-rule they held to be paramount, the Federalists chose the representative form of government found in a republic: a government which sought to preserve man’s right to liberty by taking safeguards against his capricious nature while at the same time allowing him to participate in the governance of his country. “A republic, by which [we] mean a government in which the scheme of representation takes place, opens a different prospect, and promises the cure for which we are seeking[I]t may well happen, that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good, than if pronounced by the people themselves.” (*Federalist* No. 10) A republic, they held, would achieve this public good by removing the immediacy found in a democracy. Instead of directly governing themselves, men would elect officials to govern them. Through a separation of powers, tyranny would be further avoided by not preventing one group of men from holding the entirety of the duties of government.

Through the formation of the republic the Federalists sought to create

in America a government which would, by virtue of the checks embedded in it, withstand the inevitable abuses of poor leaders and the capricious whims of the people. By giving America this form of government, they hoped to bring about a nation which would not only be able to prove to the world man’s ability for self-governance and freedom, but also preserve for its citizens these rights through the inevitable upheavals which face all polities.



HELENA DAVIS,
THESIS PRESENTATION

"MUSIC HEARD": THE POETRY OF JOHN SENIOR

By Dr. Amy Fahey, Teaching Fellow

We used to have a very pretty, preening little bantam rooster—appropriately named Napoleon—who would crow and bare his spurs menacingly at his own reflection in the window of our coop. I always reference Napoleon, and I always allude to John Senior, when I'm teaching Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*, which recounts the averted tragedy of the vain rooster Chanticleer. The complexity of dream theory, Macrobius' commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, the medieval notion of the four humours—all of these are trotted out by scholars as reasons why the pleasure of reading this tale is largely lost on undergraduates.

But Senior understood the real reason: most young people do not

know roosters. They simply haven't spent time observing them—or leaves, or stars, or human faces, or countless other beautiful, amusing, and infinitely interesting things. Our modern mechanized existence has anesthetized us to an authentic encounter with reality. In the process, Senior warns us, we have impoverished our imagination, perverted our reason, and enfeebled our capacity for wonder.

Senior's slim volume of poetry, *Pale Horse, Easy Rider*, stands as a noble attempt to clarify and restore our vision, to allow us to glimpse once again—albeit through the lens of verse—what an unmediated encounter with reality might look like: "Oh, for camps without the counselors, / trails without the guides, / birds without binoculars / and uninstructed brides!"

Robert Frost once famously likened verse without form to playing tennis with the net down. Senior doesn't adopt the metaphor of poetry as game, but rather compares the pattern and order of his verse to a kind of indispensable cultural beauty: "Verse without rhyme," he says, "is like churches without bells or girls without dresses—you can have them, but why?"

Why, indeed? In these poems, Senior offers us just such a traditional and "formal" poetic, one which employs rhyming couplets of iambic tetrameter and pentameter, as well as the "common" or "ballad" meter so preferred by Emily Dickinson and children's poets like Robert Louis Stevenson, with occasional

terse Skeltonics ("Laud / By gawd" or "Mark! / don't bark!") for humorously jarring effect.

Many of these poems are about the challenges of growing old, especially while in the constant presence of Youth. In the title poem, Senior gives us the cold, sterile reality of modern sickness and death, where men are "tubed and needled" and the television drones on "like an analgesic rain / on the pavements of migraine." Anyone who has watched an elderly relative in a hospital or nursing home being plied with his daily dose of Ensure can appreciate the Juvenalian thrust of the following lines:

As we greet the evening tray,
These last words for us to say
(*dies irae, dies illa*):
"Oh, not chocolate, vanilla."

But in confronting his own decline and impending death, Senior doesn't indulge in self-pity or bitterness. Love prevails, even as the body fails, the culture decays, and the liturgy collapses. We witness Senior learning to practice detachment from the things he loves so intensely:

Two ways to make contemptible
the world: the first is not to look;
the second, and more sensible,
to read it like a book,

to learn the grammar and the word,
loving not the less but more,
contemning it as music heard
supercedes the score.

For Senior, a proper *contempus mundi* involves not a retreat from the sensible world, but a saturation through and beyond the ordered beauty of that world. It is, I think, akin to what Flannery

Continued on page 11

A PRO-LIFE CONVERSION AN INTERVIEW WITH ASHTON WEED, CLASS OF 2017

Ashton Weed arrived at Thomas More College in 2013 from Yreka, a small former mining town in northern California. After graduating in 2017, she served for a time as a log scaler and grader back home. "I determined the net and gross value of lumber before it was processed. I was outdoors all day with my spray paint gun, my axe, my steel-toed boots, and my cattle dog." She returned to New Hampshire in 2019, and is currently an Admissions Counselor at Thomas More College, where she is often seen arriving in her pick-up truck with her friendly blue heeler, Aristotle. The following is taken from an interview she conducted with Dr. Amy Fahey.



ASHTON WEED, '17

When I arrived at Thomas More, I didn't know how to pray the rosary, I didn't know what Adoration was—I didn't even know that Latin was a language. I had been raised nominally Catholic and had gone to Church every Sunday throughout high school. I never once heard a priest say that abortion was wrong. So it was a shock to me to discover that the Catholic Church was pro-life. Suddenly I was with all of these young people—all of these really nice, kind, friendly people—who were praying at abortion clinics.

I had gone to public school, and my sexual education started in the seventh grade. They overfamiliarize you with the sexual act, telling you it's fine to do whatever, whenever, and with whomever. They erase all the consequences for you. It's reiterated again and again, "It's okay, it's going on in the culture at large." It's almost impossible to think differently. They indicate where you can have an abortion, who to talk to so your parents won't know. It's really insidious, and intended both to undermine your parents and shame you into accepting the pro-abortion position.

So when I began as a freshman, it was startling to go from being in the majority opinion to being in the

minority position. I was never militantly pro-choice, but I definitely wasn't pro-life. I was one of those people who was "personally" pro-life, but didn't think I had any kind of say into what someone else did with their life. I never had thought of the spiritual implications of abortion. It had always been scientifically expressed: "You don't have any obligation because it's just a growth."

When I learned that the Catholic Church was pro-life, I accepted it. Originally, it was an act of obedience: either you're in the boat, or you're out of the boat. But I knew that I needed to understand and embrace this position. I spent the entire summer between my freshman and sophomore year trying to figure it out. I watched all the videos—I watched the babies being dismembered. I quickly saw that Planned Parenthood and all the people providing these services don't actually care about the women they're treating, they're not actually providing medical care. They're murdering human beings.

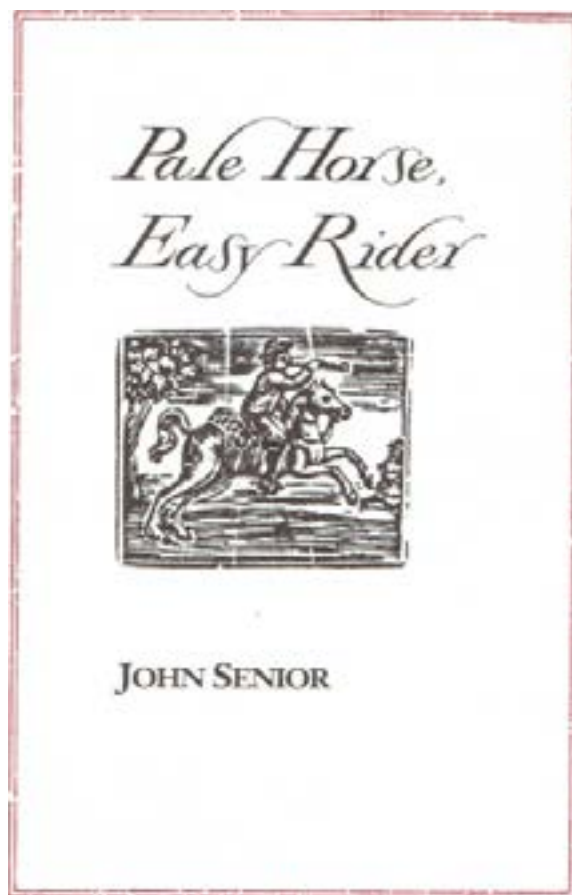
It taught me a lot about how important formation is at an early age.

My whole education at Thomas More—really understanding the proper ends of man, the proper ends of things themselves, logical fallacies—helped me to break down arguments.

All of my friends back home would say, "Yeah, abortion doesn't seem like the greatest idea, but what if you're raped? What about incest?" It was a slippery slope. Having this kind of education, you can't claim these things. Either it's always a child that has inherent dignity and a right to life, or it's not.

So you start to break down the arguments, emotional arguments as opposed to the reality of the situation. Ours is such an emotionally-charged culture: emotions are the Bible of the Modern Age. If something doesn't make you feel good, then it's wrong. Part of the intellectual formation I received at Thomas More College involved the understanding that there are objective realities, there are things that are true. You can't always change your behavior to match what you feel: sometimes your feelings are going to contradict what you need to do. It seems so simple, but it's actually really quite difficult for many people, myself included. It still makes me really uncomfortable to go to the March for Life, but I have a duty to my community, to the women being affected, to the children who are being murdered—I have a duty as a Christian, a personal responsibility for

Continued on page 14



AUTHENTIC FATHERHOOD: ALUMNI FATHERS FULFILL THEIR VOCATION

In his humble role as guardian and protector of the home, as teacher, and as provider for his household, St. Joseph gives us a perfect model for fatherhood. As St. John Paul the Great reminds us in *Redemptoris Custos*, the fatherhood of St. Joseph is not simply “an ‘apparent’ or merely ‘substitute’ fatherhood. Rather, it is one that fully shares in an authentic human fatherhood and the mission of a father in the family.” And as Pope Leo XIII notes in *Quamquam Pluries*, “Fathers of families find in Joseph the best personification of paternal solicitude and vigilance, spouses a perfect example of love, of peace, and of conjugal fidelity.”

Yet how, in today’s world, can a man pattern his fatherhood after this Holy Patron of the Family? The question seems more urgent than ever for, as Thomas More College President William Fahey notes, “I cannot think of a single major problem in our world that is not caused or exacerbated by the failure of men to live their lives as fathers.” He continues: “Nor can I imagine a single problem that will not yield in the face of men living truly as fathers.”

We reached out to two alumni of Thomas More College, who take seriously their role as fathers, to share their insights on the challenges facing fathers today, and to discuss the ways in which their formation at the College has helped them to meet and overcome those challenges.

Ryan McKenna is a member of the executive leadership team of a residential mortgage lender. He also serves as General Counsel for an affiliated insurance agency. After graduating from Thomas More, he obtained his J.D. and M.B.A. from the University of New Hampshire. He and his wife, Emily, and their five children recently moved back to his home state of New Hampshire, where Emily raises and educates the children. The McKenna family enjoys the outdoors in the mountains and



JOHN MARTIN '11, CATHERINE (NÉE LLOYD) '11, WITH THEIR CHILDREN

(LEFT TO RIGHT) ROMAN, VIENNA, THOMAS, AND GEORGIA
rivers of New Hampshire, eats at least two meals together as a family every day, heats their house with wood, and is steadily working through a list of homesteading projects. To stay active, Ryan also trains jujitsu and lift weights during the week.

John Martin practices chiropractic care in Pennsylvania, where he lives with his wife Katie (née Lloyd) and four children. He divides his time between office work, factory work to reduce injuries, and occasional house calls. He enjoys gardening, brewing, reading,

leading book studies, and singing sacred polyphony for his FSSP parish. “I am frequently amazed at the life we have,” he says, “and never thought I would be in this position ten years after graduating from Thomas More College.”

How do you view your role as a Catholic father in today’s world?

Ryan McKenna: A father’s duty is to provide and protect spiritually and physically, and to be willing to suffer to fulfill this state in life. I’d stress that the

duty to provide and protect spiritually is of a higher order and less understood today, when many think of religious exercise and formation as primarily the woman’s domain. This idea has proven to be harmful for the children’s adult religious life.

The reality is that modern institutions and technologies are hostile toward transcendent realities. Consequently, today’s world is rigged to entrap the time, talent, and focus of fathers away from their primary responsibilities and towards self-gratification in various forms: money-wise, ego-wise, sex-wise, comfort-wise, etc. So it’s my job as a father to stand in doorway and say, “Over my dead body . . .” to the barrage of external forces and distractions that try to invade my home and make us infatuated worldlings (think zombies with iPhones).

Simply put, a father’s role is to keep our transcendent long-term destination and obligations to God’s law always in mind for the family, and to ensure that our priorities are in order. The first degree of relationship with God occurs only in the absence of serious sin, and progresses only in the presence of virtue, and so a father should ensure that a family’s core emphasis is pursuing the spiritual life together.

John Martin: I think the role of a Catholic father is fairly straightforward: provide for your family, first spiritually by meriting graces for them, raising the children in the faith, protect them spiritually, and second by providing for and protecting them materially. Today’s world presents specific challenges. Secular humanism has become increasingly aggressive and could in fact turn into communism at any second.

There is the constant risk of exposure to perverse things through technology. Bishops are shutting down their own churches.

Being a Catholic father today means doing some inconvenient things: homeschooling if there are no good Catholic schools—which, sadly, is the situation for most of America—perhaps driving far to get to a good parish, and being constantly vigilant about corrupting exposures from the culture for children that are too young to deal with them.

I think the most important part of my role now, however, is to try to recover and pass on to my kids the Church’s mystical tradition and to teach them how to pray. Being a Catholic in today’s world will require increasingly heroic virtue, and if teachers like Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange are right, there is no heroic virtue without infused contemplation. So I need to learn how to pray and pursue sanctity; otherwise, I can’t pass it on to my kids.

How did your time at Thomas More College help prepare you for fatherhood?

Ryan McKenna: As a Thomas More College graduate, I was steeped in the approach best captured by the Greek word *paideia*, indicative of a transformative education of the whole person rather than technical training for a specific career path. The curriculum placed me within the context of a great tradition which enhanced my understanding of the human experience, exposed me to the drama of humanity and ideas in history, and enkindled in my rather empty teenage head a life of the mind that I try to keep lit. It also provided a foundation of critical thinking skills which has enabled me to increase my knowledge in areas like my faith and profession.



RYAN '11 AND EMILY MCKENNA (EXPECTING SON LIAM) WITH THEIR CHILDREN (LEFT TO RIGHT) CILLIAN, ADDY, SEAMUS, AND CALEB.

Continued on page 10

AUTHENTIC FATHERHOOD

Continued from page 9

One of the ways the TMC curriculum helped prepare me for fatherhood was by enabling me to perceive the reductionist views of various ages and so better avoid being deceived by bad ideas in my own age and circumstances. So you're less likely to end up gravely deceived in life.

I am grateful for having received Thomas More College's rigorous classical education from a Catholic perspective as a foundation on which to build. I do think of it as a career foundation that, in most professions, will involve later technical career training, whether on-site or in graduate school. But I definitely feel that I got "More" with my education.

John Martin: I really owe everything I have now to Thomas More College and to my parents. My parents gave me the faith and sacrificed a great deal to homeschool me. Thomas More College topped everything off. I met my wife there. I wouldn't have discovered tradition in the Church without TMC. The College showed me what Catholic community looks like. It taught me how to study, which was extremely beneficial for having to study the sciences and medicine in my further schooling.

Learning how to study and think is extremely important today, when both in the Church and in the world we have to make challenging decisions at a time when pretty much no one is thinking or studying very carefully. We are living in a time where none of the systems are working. Basic American civics and the rule of law are falling apart. If we consider the numbers of practicing Catholics alone, the Church is falling apart and emptying out. It's going to take some serious imagination and minds well-versed in the western tradition to see the way forward. And where are the people who can do that?

Do you have any advice for young men at Thomas More College who hope to be husbands and fathers someday?

Ryan McKenna: Get into the habit of praying the rosary every day now, so you can do it later with your family, and start the perfection quest now while in college so God can do more with you later. I'll try to summarize it crudely into steps: 1. Identify and destroy predominant and grave faults, 2. Stop intentional minor vices, 3. Work to perfect each virtue by grace, and 4. Allow God to passively purge your imperfections by whatever methods, in whatever manner, and in whatever timeframe He wishes.

On a material level, keep in the back of your mind that you will need to make some kind of a living to fulfill your obligations to your wife and family. For while you are immersing

"A father should ensure that a family's core emphasis is pursuing the spiritual life together."

—Ryan McKenna

yourself in Great Books, hoping to grow in wisdom and virtue, your future economic competitors are sailing on in their technical training and working to get ahead of you in the world. If you are a freshman or a sophomore, take some time to bury your head in books and enjoy the *communitas*. But if you are a junior or senior, you should start periodically gazing up from your books and begin making provisions for a future in which you may begin with a deficit of technical career training, but a surplus of transcendent ideas.

I'd also consider that the economy is benchmarked at a two income household and so to raise your own kids you'll need to outperform beta by a factor of two or live off of half of an economic ration. For these reasons, I recommend considering your affinities for well-paid professions like law, medicine, finance, and business, and mapping a course to

one by outlining the requirements and timelines, such as earning the credits you'll need or studying for the tests required for admission and scholarships, and identifying a mentor.

Still, don't underleverage the tremendous education you have received towards either the mundane or the spiritual obstacles you may encounter in life. Your education has uniquely prepared you for both, and in my opinion this is the real treasure of an education of the whole person.

John Martin: You need to provide for your family materially. A lot of TMC guys become naturally interested in academia, especially seeing the excellent example of our faculty. But I don't think everyone is called to that. Consider the trades: plumbing, welding, electric, HVAC. Further schooling after TMC for the trades is inexpensive and short and you can make good money quickly to feed the babies. You could own a service business and you can't be outsourced. If you decide you don't like it, you can make good money to fund further schooling. Learn how to network and hustle. Law and business are always good options too. I'm not sure I would recommend medicine right now: tons of debt, consolidation into big companies, reduced insurance reimbursement and so forth, make it a tough field right now.

Since you need to provide for your family spiritually, prioritize your spiritual life. The holier you are, the more grace you can merit for them. Study the church's mystical tradition. Read Fr. Lagrange, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales. Learn how to do mental prayer. Mental prayer and the rosary are your most primary tools.

Marriage and family are the best. There's a lot to look forward to. It is fun and rewarding. But be prepared to accept sacrifice and inconvenience and take care of your wife and kids. Fatherhood involves endless opportunities for the Old Man to die, as St. Paul says.

MUSIC HEARD

Continued from page 6

O'Connor once said of all fiction: not an escape from reality, but a "plunge into reality."

"You young people don't know how beautiful you are," Senior once told a student: "But I do." "At the Pearson College Waltz" is a poem that reveals the anguished hope Senior places in the young people he teaches: "the dumb *magister* stands in awe" while he witnesses the dance: "as love arising from the darkened world / upfalls like an intelligible tear."

One of Senior's most beautiful poems is a tribute to his own teacher, the legendary Mark Van Doren of Columbia University. "That age is freshest which is first / with persons and the nation, / sons of Mark among the best (and worst) / minds of their generation." Senior well knew that the education he received from his wise teacher was equally capable of producing minds like his and like that of his fellow Columbian, decadent beat poet Allan Ginsberg. Still, with

his "Noble Voice" (the allusion is to Van Doren's enduring volume of essays on great poetry) Van Doren had the capacity to see "everything (including us) as good."

Senior's poetic tribute to Van Doren is entitled "The World's Last Lover." But of course, he wasn't, and Senior's legacy of love arguably transcends that of his own *magister*. The "sons of Senior"—those who read, sang, danced, stargazed, and found Christ under his guidance in the Integrated Humanities Program at Kansas University—are many, numbering among them lawyers, teachers, headmasters, politicians, priests, brothers, and bishops (and two Trustees of Thomas More College). He may have thought reality was endangered and receding, but I suspect he was only partly right. His poetic legacy, at least, suggests otherwise.

"This collection is not private," Senior tells us of his slender volume, "but perhaps it has no public." In an

influential essay entitled "Can Poetry Matter?" Dana Gioia implicitly addresses Senior's concern, expressing the hope that poetry could reclaim its needful place in American public life. "I don't think this is impossible," he tells us. "All it would require is that poets and poetry teachers take more responsibility for bringing their art to the public." I'll attempt to do my part by urging you to take and read a copy of *Pale Horse, Easy Rider*, whose verses will go a long way toward rehabilitating your vision of reality.

And so I say with Chaucer—the poet with whom, I suspect, Senior is most conversing throughout this volume—"go litel boke." May you find your way into the hands of a new generation of readers who will hear—and heed—your music.

Note: *Pale Horse, Easy Rider* is available for purchase at: Press.ThomasMoreCollege.edu



FOR THOSE WHO STILL SEEK THE TRUE, THE GOOD, AND THE BEAUTIFUL THROUGH THE PRINTING OF NEW AND NEWLY REDISCOVERED WORKS.

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LEARNING AND LIFE

Continued from page 1

of a hero in World War I.

And still he argued in that sermon, which is titled “Learning in Wartime,” that periods of unusual turmoil are not as abnormal as we think. That conflict, controversy, and ultimately death are part of human existence. We just ignore it much of the time. And we must continue to pursue the important human things, learning among them, no matter the time in which we live. St. Thomas More says in *A Man for All Seasons*, “The times are never so bad but that a good man can live in them.”

There’s a lesson here for us too at this unusual moment in our national history. We’re all going to have to train ourselves to greater physical bravery because of the many palpable threats to both faith and reason that are all too obvious in the world today. We’re not in civil war, but we’re experiencing nationwide outbreaks

of violence nonetheless. Merrimack, New Hampshire is a safe haven, but we should all keep that larger context before us in our daily prayer and work.

And I want to suggest to you that it may be even more urgent that we develop the intellectual courage, along with intellectual skills, to confront “the great cataract of nonsense” about which Lewis spoke. And there’s no better way to see what needs doing than to continue what you are already doing here at Thomas More College: studying the great books and figures of the past who have survived the nonsense and turmoil of their own ages—and much else since—because they have significant truths to convey to every age.

Don’t think that this is a mere private luxury while so much of seeming importance appears to be going on in public. Here’s an example of why from one of the great books. One feature of Dante’s *Inferno* that it took me years to appreciate is that he puts the fraudulent far deeper down in Hell than the physically violent. He suggests in other places that this is right—he seems to think Aristotle agreed—because a physical attack is only against the bodily life that we share with animals. An attack on the truth, however, strikes at our rational souls, the distinctive feature of a human being. This is something worth pondering amidst all the current talk about the desire to be—physically—“safe.”

Truth is not only something “out there.” Truth is what a human being is called to know and live by. Truth is an appropriation of “what is” as my dear friend, the late Fr. James Schall, used to say, borrowing from Plato. Being in contact with “what is” rather than with our fantasies of what is not means we will live lives of authenticity, lives linked to, formed and energized by, the deepest truth of all, God Himself. We will all be seeking truths in various

ways this year and, *Deo volente*, finding it, little by little. And then starting the lifelong process of living the truth.

The learning and the living are both parts of a liberal arts education, the education that makes us truly free (*liber*). I’ve already mentioned to students in the course I’m teaching this semester that at about your age I came across a passage in Ezra Pound’s translation of the Confucian *Analects* that I’ve never forgotten. (In our course, we’re reading T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land,” for which Pound was a kind of midwife.) Here’s the passage from Confucius that I’ve quoted to them (Bk. II, 4):

1. He said : At fifteen, I wanted to learn.
2. At thirty, I had a foundation.
3. At forty, a certitude.
4. At fifty, knew the orders of heaven.
5. At sixty, was ready to listen to them.
6. At seventy, could follow my own heart’s desire without overstepping the t-square.

Thanks to God’s Revelation in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, we have considerable advantages over even the wisest pagans, but notice how the progression in Confucius goes from seeking knowledge to acting according to “the orders of heaven.” This is a sharp reminder of what a lifelong project a liberal-arts education must be for us.

Don’t let this discourage you. What it means is not that it takes forever; it’s that it takes you toward the eternal. Heaven. THE Truth, God Himself. Liberal learning is not the same as living faith. But it’s one of the important channels of opening up our lives to the greatest things, so long as we don’t make an idol out of our own learning.

The literature of spirituality is full of warning about not letting knowledge make us “puffed up,” which is to say beset with a pride that vitiates the good of learning. That phenomenon is only too common, even among people studying the very greatest things that have been thought and said.

As the first St. John Henry Newman Visiting Chair at this college, I feel obliged to quote a warning by the great saint about confusing even the most rigorous and far-ranging use of reason with the full range of the Christian life: “Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and the pride of man.”

That’s from *The Idea of a University*, a book in which the saint is trying to define what a liberal arts education is and is not. It would be hard to say that the world, even many in the academic world, have taken to heart what he was trying to say. We still have the illusion that smart is good, that by a strange

elision, the best are the brightest. This despite the fact that very smart people do very bad things every day.

There’s a humble, practical human side to these things as well. To put this in the most ordinary day-to-day terms, I’ve worked for three decades in organizations in Washington that have had—or I’ve had myself—interns from a variety of secular and Catholic colleges and universities. Without making invidious comparisons, let me just say that I’ve found students of Thomas More College as well prepared intellectually as any—and generally better prepared in human terms. Cherish that humanity and cultivate it as one with liberal learning.

We sometimes overlook the fact that we have to work at living out the knowledge we acquire just as much as we have to work to be good at playing a musical instrument, or sports, or being good at science or math. It’s good to know the theories and procedures for such training. But even better to actually do the things necessary to bringing them within our reach. Cardinal Newman

in a famous essay warned about the “Danger of Accomplishments.” And part of the danger, as he conceives of it, is to assume that because we’ve read or approved of something we’ve encountered, that we are already living it.

Still, what God has assigned human reason to do, it must do. We are heirs to the richest cultural tradition in the world, what I call The Catholic Thing—the concrete historical reality of Catholicism. It was born from Judaism and, through that spiritual parentage, even reaches back into the great ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. In its early days, it confronted, absorbed, and redirected what was then the most sophisticated society in existence, Greco-Roman culture. When that culture fell, Catholicism preserved what it could and rebuilt the rest over centuries, incorporating new influences from Northern Europe and, during the great age of exploration, from the entire globe. In short, it’s survived wars and revolution, changes in culture and the collapse of whole civilizations. Despite its all-too-human imperfections, there is simply nothing like it.

So as we begin this academic year, as we are “called together” to undertake a great common task, let’s be grateful for the great tradition of faith and of reason that we are so fortunate to inherit. Let’s be mindful of what a great privilege it is to have these days to live and work in the presence of such great and often holy human beings. And let’s also treasure the fact that we are a small face-to-face community of teachers and learners. Pope Benedict XVI, as you probably know, was fond of saying that it has always been “creative minorities” who move history. Or if that seems too big a job to you for now, we could at least try to live up to an old Italian saying that I myself am fond of: *siamo pochi, ma buoni*—“We’re few, but we’re good.” Thank you.



CONFUCIUS



ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

A PRO-LIFE CONVERSION

Continued from page 7



ASHTON WEED AT THE MARCH FOR LIFE

them, because we're all part of the Body of Christ. So I can't just sit back and say, "Oh, someone else is going to change this." I'm called to action, even if it's not something that makes me particularly comfortable.

We who are pro-life argue for the sanctity of life; we say babies are beautiful; we care about people. The abortion promoters take all of that beautiful emotion and they flip it, they undermine it: "What are you going to do when your parents find out? What are you going to do when the community shames you? What are you going to do with your life when you're sixteen and have a baby and you're living on the streets?" The pro-abortion culture is asking you to make your decision based purely on negative emotion. They prey emotionally on young minds.

I think there's an interesting advantage to being somewhat aloof, and intellectual, like I tend to be. Sometimes being too emotional, even though well-intended, actually has the effect of turning young women away, because it's too much. "How could you? It's a baby?"

They mean well. But I say, "Hey, don't let all these people emotionally sway you. Let's break this down. Here are all the places you can go to get free medical care. You can do this."

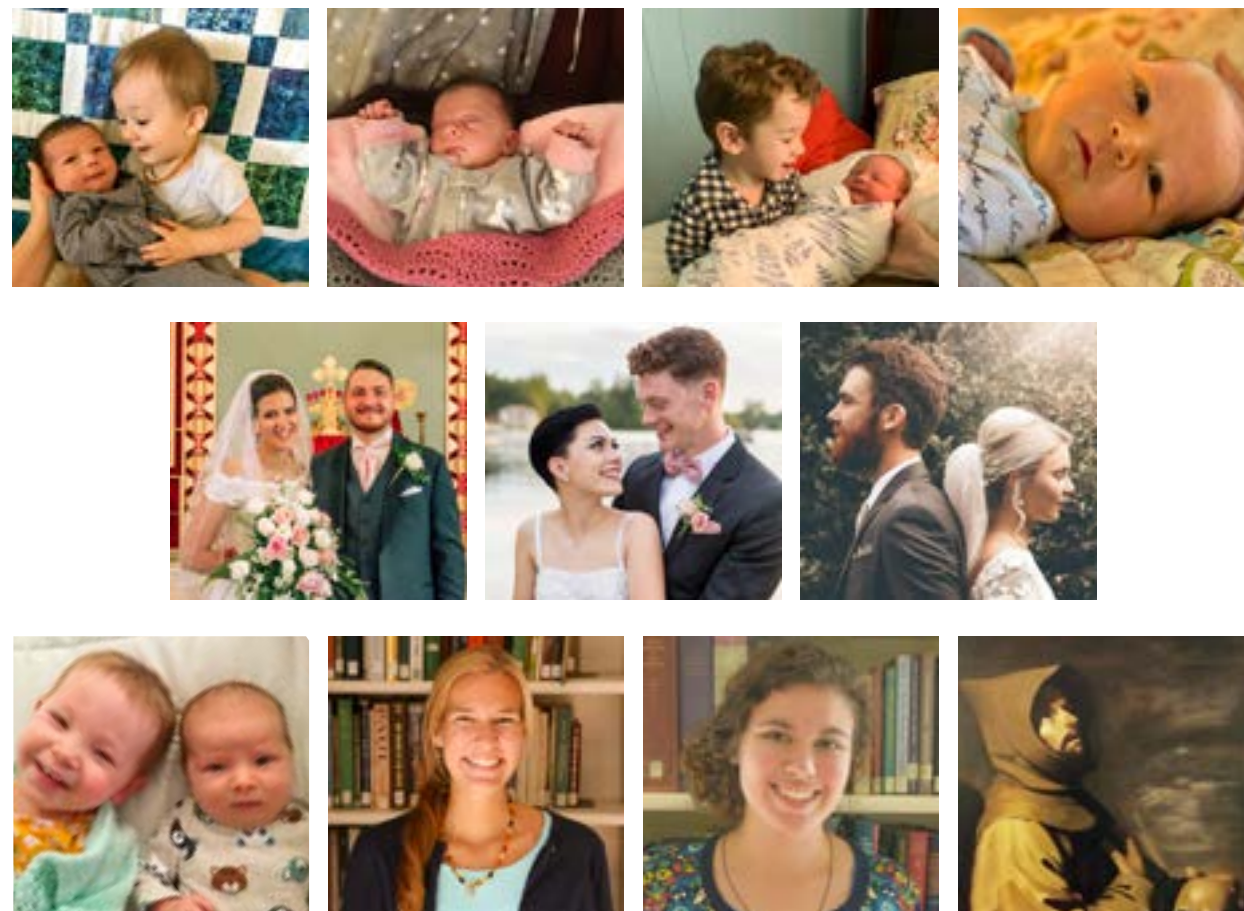
I'm in postulancy right now with the Third Order Dominicans. One of our apostolates is First Concern, a pregnancy resource center in Clinton, Massachusetts. They've been doing some amazing work. They train doulas who go with the women to every single appointment. Most of the time you don't have your mother, you don't have the man, you're just by yourself. You need to have the real support of another person walking with you. Many pro-life people just approach it as "don't kill your baby," but the reason most women don't carry the pregnancy is because there's no support. I think that this avenue, of all the things I've seen, is one of the best ways to save lives, and to change hearts and minds.

We live in this really evil culture where you actually have the legal right to kill your child. If you didn't, even if you did have your mom or your boyfriend or

your abuser pressuring you, you could say, "I'm legally in the right for carrying this baby to term." But that right to protect the child has been taken away, which is so tragic.

It really comes down to the proper understanding of marriage and the family. Very few people are selfless enough to consider having a large family, but at Thomas More you're surrounded by these families with eight or nine kids, and they're so excited each time to welcome a new life. That witness of the faculty families was supported by the instruction I received. Our culture is so sterile—most people aren't having children, you never really see babies. When that happens, you can't really even have the conversation with yourself, "Can we or can we not kill a baby?" because it becomes something purely abstract. Whereas when you're in a community like this, and you're seeing newborn children all the time, you're able to make the connection: This is a person—why are we even having this conversation?

THE SOCIETY PAGE



"The glory of God is man fully alive, and the life of man is the vision of God."—St. Irenaeus

Left to right, top to bottom:

BIRTHS: Louis Victor Carroll Dougherty, son of Daniel Dougherty '17 and Cecilia (née Yellico) '18; Maria Therese Guenzel, daughter of Paul Guenzel '14 and Madeline (née Steigerwald); Eliot Francis Gendron, son of Matthew Gendron '11 and Isabella (née Anderson) '16; Theophan Christopher O'Connor, son of Ethan O'Connor '17 and Eileen (née Lloyd) '18; Gwilym Martin Mitchell, son of Instructor Clarke Mitchell and Catherine (née Hieronymus).

WEDDINGS: Matthias Kroger '20 and Pauline Ullmer '21; John Thompson '20 and Marielle Choiniere; Aidan O'Connor '20 and Maria Simpson '20.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Mary Richert '18 received her Master's in Theology from Ave Maria University; Helena Davis (née Fahey) '18 received her Master's in Political Philosophy from Hillsdale College; Charles Easterday '18 completed a reproduction of *St. Francis in Meditation* by Francisco de Zurbarán.

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