



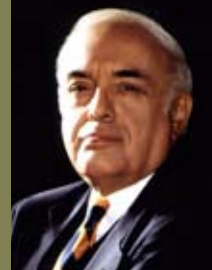
Ends and Beginnings

TMC seniors depart to ringing words by leading scholars and a prominent entrepreneur



Faculty Contribute to Book on Catholic Economics

Two TMC professors help rediscover the Church's social teaching

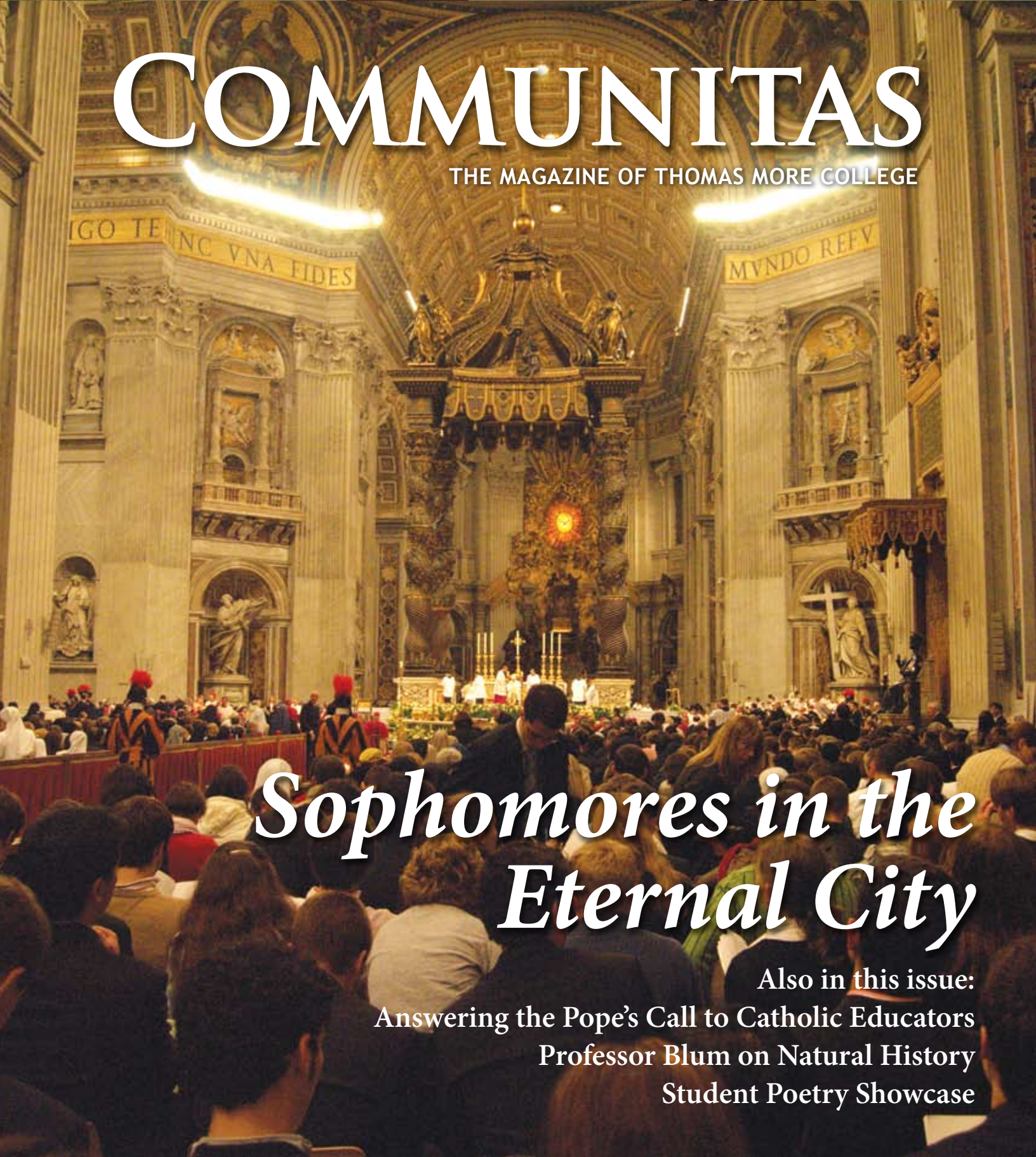


Journalist Endows TMC Scholarship

Washington opinion leader Robert Novak creates scholarship fund for inner city youth

COMMUNITAS

THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS MORE COLLEGE



Sophomores in the Eternal City

Also in this issue:

Answering the Pope's Call to Catholic Educators

Professor Blum on Natural History

Student Poetry Showcase



President Nelson discusses the work of the College with Francis Cardinal Arinze, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

As an academic year ends and our students depart, my thoughts turn to pilgrimage. Each student comes to Thomas More College along the road to some place else. Our school is a way station, like one of those “hospitals” of the Knights of St. John (now the Knights of Malta). Hence the word “hospitality.”

Viewed in the light of eternity, every place on earth is but a rest stop on man’s journey. The Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel described man as *homo viator*, the wayfarer. The great Southern writer (and convert) Walker Percy explored the tortuous paths we moderns take to the Eternal City.

Pilgrim College, Pilgrim Church

BY DR. JEFFREY O. NELSON

To navigate these “labyrinthine ways,” one needs the internal compass that comes with a fully humane education, yet no one can achieve that fullness unless he is oriented toward God. Teaching students to look to this North Star, magnetizing their souls with a love of beauty, truth, order, and freedom, is the task of the Catholic educator.

This has been a year of growth for the College. Our Rome program, now in its 25th year, will expand to two semesters and move to a tranquil campus in Rome maintained by monks from the Middle East. In this issue, our recent Rome sophomores offer meditations on the meaning of their own Roman pilgrimage (p. 12).

We are proud to add two new and talented people to Thomas More College: political philosopher Walter J. Thompson from the International Theological Institute in Gaming, Austria, and painter David Clayton, who will join us as Artist-in-Residence and set up his studio on campus (p. 2).

Our current faculty continue to grow as scholars and authors; Professors William Fahey and Christopher Blum recently contributed to a new anthology on Catholic social teaching (p. 3), while our Writer-in-Residence John Zmirak has published a theologically-inspired graphic novel (p. 7)—and I successfully completed my doctoral studies on Edmund Burke at the University of Edinburgh.

Most importantly, our students persevere, excel, and achieve. We highlight their literary attainments in our first selection of student poetry from the College’s “Writing Workshop”(p. 22).

No pilgrim can travel alone. We lean on each other, and bear each other’s burdens. I depend on input, feedback, and support from the College’s many well-wishers—from those near and far who wish to walk the same pilgrim path.

Jeffrey O. Nelson, Ph.D.
President

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Front cover: Thomas More College students attend Mass at St. Peter's Basilica during Holy Week.

Above left: Professor Paul Connell explains the theological significance of the cupola to students in Rome.

Above middle: Graduating seniors wait to collect their diplomas.

Above right: Students studying the structure of creation by handling nature.



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More Top Talent Comes to Thomas More College

This autumn, **Prof. Walter J. Thompson** joins the faculty at Thomas More College after more than a decade of distinguished service at the International Theological Institute (ITI) in Gaming, Austria. While studying political philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, Prof. Thompson was invited by Christoph Cardinal Schönborn to assist in the founding of the ITI, a papal institute for the study of philosophy and theology. He has served as the Institute's Vice-President and as its Academic Dean. Prof. Thompson was one of the chief architects of its curriculum, which seeks to renew the study of theology by focusing on Holy Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Fathers and Doctors of the Church from both East and West. In his many years of teaching through the curriculum, Prof. Thompson himself read and re-read his favorite writers—from Augustine and Athanasius to Dante and John of the Cross. Thomas More College students will not be surprised to find him to be yet another professor with a particular love for the *Iliad*, Plato's *Republic*, the *Divine Comedy*, and the stories of Flannery O'Connor. Nor is it odd that a former student of Fr. James Schall, S.J., at Georgetown University should relish the novels of P.G. Wodehouse. The Thomas More College community welcomes Prof. Thompson, his wife Ruth, and their seven children.

David Clayton will join the College community in the 2008-2009 academic year as its first Artist-in-Residence. Mr. Clayton is an Oxford graduate and Catholic convert who studied Materials Science and then took a graduate degree in Engineering. He is trained as an artist in both the Byzantine iconographic and Western naturalistic traditions, which he studied intensively in Florence. He has won commissions on both sides of the Atlantic, including a five-foot cross that hangs over the altar at Pluscarden Monastery in Scotland, and an icon of the Sacred Heart commissioned by the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham, England. He designed the program for ResSource School of Art (Oxford, England) and is an illustrator of several of the books in a new catechesis series. He worked closely with staff at the Maryvale Institute in the design of their theory-of-art course, and he served as a reg-

ular lecturer at the Institute's residential weekend classes. David also writes for the College's journal *Second Spring*, and has been an occasional feature writer for *The Catholic Herald* newspaper in London. Mr. Clayton will be establishing a studio at Thomas More College that will be open to students interested in furthering their own artistic skills, and in deepening their appreciation of the connections between beauty and humane education.



David Clayton (top) and Walter J. Thompson and family (bottom)

Thomas More College Faculty Contribute to Book on Catholic Economics

Two members of Thomas More College's faculty, Provost William Fahey and Professor of Humanities Christopher Blum, joined other distinguished writers by contributing essays to a newly published volume that re-examines the modern economy in light of Catholic social teaching: *Beyond Capitalism & Socialism: A New Statement of an Old Ideal*, edited by Tobias Lanz.

Echoing the 1930 agrarian manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* by "Twelve Southerners," *Beyond Capitalism & Socialism* lists as its authors "Twelve Catholics." Other eminent contributors include Dale Ahlquist, President of the American Chesterton Society (also creator and host of the EWTN television series, "G. K. Chesterton: The Apostle of Common Sense"); Gary Potter, a founding editor of *Triumph* magazine; Aidan Mackey, founder of the Distributist Society; and many other widely-published writers on economics and social questions. A must-read for Catholics interested in economic questions, this book offers answers that may surprise and will certainly intrigue believers all across the political spectrum.

Rather than describe their contributions, we prefer to offer excerpts from Professors Blum's and Fahey's essays, so you can sample them for yourself.

From "For the Life of This Pig," or, "An Essay on the Benevolence of the Butcher"

BY DR. WILLIAM FAHEY

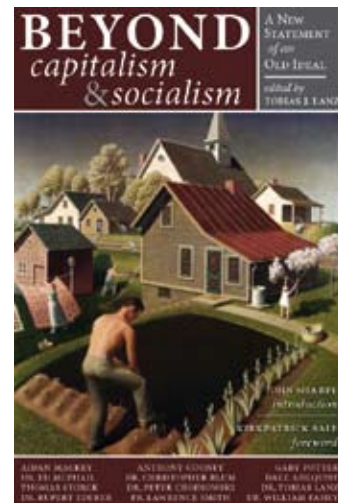
*My heart is longing for them day by day
Where I spent life's golden hours
In the veil of Shenadoah
Mid the green fields of Virginia far away.*
—Traditional Virginia Ballad

The old man knew how to kill the pig. We desired to know. With our thoughts of health, and our longing for tradition, we desired to participate in a nearly forgotten ritual, but our desire was that born of books, and of a certain suspicion that the promises of this world were but vain smoke.

Everything set down here finds its cause in the old man, for they did not slaughter hogs when I was a boy in Hudson, Ohio. My friend, our host, had lived his early life in one of Maryland's first planned communities. As the old will remember, butchering sessions normally fall between early December and February. The exact date varies slightly, sometimes by region, but behind the region is typically religion. Catholics

tend to slaughter pigs near the Feast of Saint Nicholas. An early December slaughter gives one just enough time to hang hams in one's chimney and have the meat smoked by Christmas. Such chimneys are rare today, now that function and beauty have been divorced. In Virginia, the original harvest feast of St. Martin marked the earliest point of slaughter. The old man, however, remained true to the traditions of his own valley: slaughters always fell within two days of Thanksgiving. There was good planning in this, since the autumn feast provides abundant "leftovers" for the men, and a country man can rarely stand a full day of inactivity. The timing is tempered to the season by long experience. For by December, much of the surplus crops and waste have been eaten. The hogs are over two hundred pounds. Their flesh is crucial fare during the winter. The cool air protects the savor of the pig. In warm climates, slaughter and consumption were side by side, for culinary reasons as well as for health.

The old man went over the basic steps of the slaughter more than once, for repetition is the mother of every discipline. I was surprised at the simple elegance of it all—the ordering of each part which seemed to unfold before us naturally and well-paced like the cadence of the old man's



speech. For when he spoke, I imagined it like the phrases and homespun rhythm that once were heard as butternut soldiers marched north with Lee on a summer's day. But now it was winter and my thoughts turned back to practical matters, for the rustling of the leaves and a little snort heralded the presence of the pig. The pig had lived to his maturity with his brethren in the shade of oaks, while eating happily from the land and enjoying splendid air and plenty of roaming ground.

Having lived within yards of one family, sharing the same round of sun and rain, and hearing nothing but the sound of the woods and the laughter of children, he was about to move from the life of a pig to the stuff of man....

From “Un Homme de Tradition: René de La Tour du Pin and the Principle of Association”

BY DR. CHRISTOPHER O. BLUM

The Roots of a Social Catholic

Charles Humbert René de La Tour du Pin Chamblay de la Charce (1834–1924) belonged to a noble family of the Champagne region of northeastern France whose earlier members included a veteran of St. Louis' crusade and a victim of the Terror. The family had remained faithful to France's ancient Catholic piety, with that sternness that characterized the French nobility at its best. La Tour du Pin liked to repeat his father's admonition about the responsibilities their 750-acre estate would one day convey to him: “Remember that you will only be the administrator of this land for its inhabitants.”

A soldier captured by the Germans during the Franco-Prussian war, and held prisoner in Aachen, La Tour du Pin and his fellow prisoner Albert de Mun were befriended by a German Jesuit who put into their hands Emile Keller's fiercely Catholic *Encyclical of December 8 and the Principles of 1789*. The encyclical in question was Pius IX's *Quanta Cura* (1864), the one to which the *Syllabus of Errors* had been attached as an appendix. In *Quanta Cura*, Pius IX affirmed that “human society, when set loose

from the bonds of religion and true justice, can have, in truth, no other end than the purpose of obtaining and amassing wealth” (§4). Keller agreed, and argued forcefully that the lot of the suffering working classes would be improved only when Europe had rejected the unbridled cupidity enshrined in the principles of 1789 and again embraced the spirit of association that had animated Europe's Christian past. This argument profoundly shaped René de La Tour du Pin's thinking, inspiring in him a life-long questioning and elaboration of what he called the “traditions of the hearth.” Through his participation in what has come to be known as the Union de Fribourg—annual meetings of leading Catholic social theorists held in the Swiss university town of Fribourg in the 1880s—La Tour du Pin is numbered among the architects of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*.

La Tour du Pin saw that the social and legal changes wrought by the revolution in France and extended throughout Europe by Napoleon had left the working classes at the mercy of the owning classes. Like Ketteler, he held that the workers were in need both of voluntary associations, or unions, that would strengthen their position within society, and of legal and institutional changes that would make these associations permanent and truly oriented towards the common good. For La Tour du Pin, these associations were not to be composed merely of workers, for that would be to widen, not lessen, the breach and the strife between the owning and the working classes. Instead these unions should be modeled upon the guilds of old, which had combined owners and workers into associations that protected both their economic interests and their communal way of life. To protect these associations from the corrosive effects of

unlimited competition, La Tour du Pin held that the state would need to guarantee their legal and social standing. Such a state would also recognize the rights of individuals, but would do so within a context of pre-existing common rights and needs. La Tour du Pin once described this kind of corporate state as “a return not to the form but to the spirit of the institutions of the Middle Ages.” He rightly saw that such a corporate organization of society would necessarily involve a rejection of the legacy of the French Revolution....



*Pope Leo XIII, founder of modern
Catholic social thought.*

Alumnus Artist Welds Innovation and Tradition

Umberto Eco closes his seminal *History of Beauty* by predicting that we “will no longer be able to identify the aesthetic ideal diffused by the mass media of the twentieth century and beyond. [We] will have to surrender to the orgy of tolerance, the total syncretism and the absolute and unstoppable polytheism of Beauty.” A bleak outlook to some. But Thomas More College graduate Peter Skidd finds solace in his ability to engage this new aesthetic through his strikingly beautiful artworks, which range from traditional through what critics call “transitional” to contemporary.

After graduating from Thomas More College in 2000, Peter attained his MFA from the New York Academy of Art in Manhattan—a graduate school devoted to the study of the human figure. At NYAA, Peter was able to explore the precision of anatomy, perspective, and color.

Peter’s education in the human figure and in traditional French academic painting became the underlying structure for his transitional and abstract work. “My art is an exploration of new techniques which draws on my formal education and experience. ...I am constantly searching for simple expressions of aesthetics.” This includes his newest creations, carefully wrought in steel.

While most successful artists outsource steps along the way, Skidd says, “I do every step myself—from acquiring the metal to welding it, grinding it, painting it, sealing it, and then marketing it. People notice the high-quality craftsmanship, the detail.”

After leaving an art fabrication company, Peter started a business in late 2006, diving into his designs and fabrication with such force that his art has become widely appreciated through high-end art shows, galleries, and dealers. Less than two years later, he is negotiating with clients, seeking out the best vendors, planning his next move—all while scrambling to fulfill commissions.

What is the essence of Peter Skidd’s art? The artist tries to explain: “You can see *through* the colors; the light diffuses through it. The light goes through the color and back out again; the art *becomes* that light.” He says that he learned to balance part and whole—to seek out organic form—through his education at Thomas More College.

In March 2008, thousands of international and local visitors viewed Skidd’s work at the world ArtExpo at the Javits Center in New York City, where Skidd marketed his work to dealers and the public.

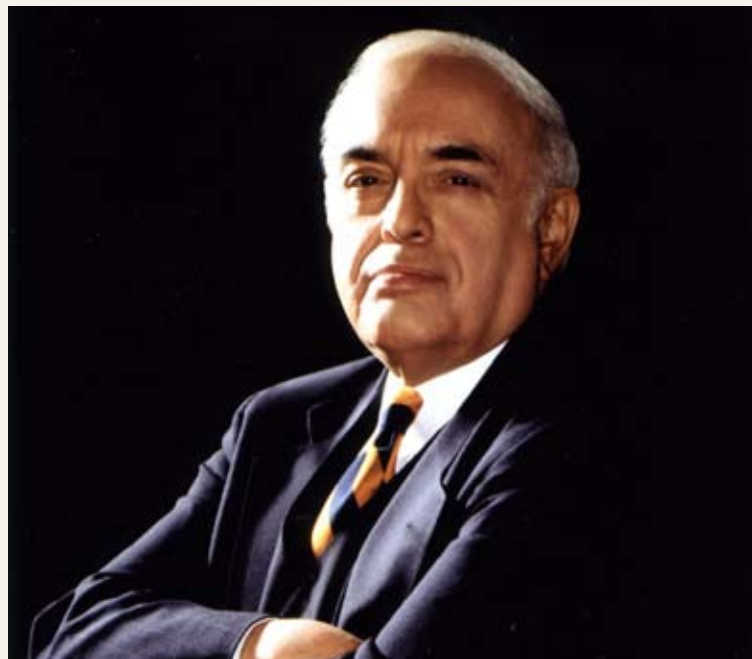
Peter Skidd’s art may be viewed at PeterSkidd.com, at LeKAE gallery in Scottsdale, Ariz., at Renee Taylor Gallery in Sedona, Ariz., or at one of the upcoming art shows listed on his site.



Top TV Journalist Endows TMC Scholarship Fund for Inner City Youth

Eminent Washington political journalist, TV pundit, and Catholic convert Robert Novak is reaching out to help develop the next generation of intellectual leaders—and doing so in underserved communities, by endowing a scholarship fund that will make it possible for inner-city high school graduates to attend Thomas More College. Deeply concerned about the quality of education which is being offered to young people of limited means, Mr. Novak is working with the Washington, D.C.-based Youth Leadership Foundation (YLF), which serves disadvantaged youth from Washington's inner city. The YLF operates two supplemental educational programs for D.C.-area minority students, intended to hone basic reading, writing, and comprehension skills and to increase proficiency in core subjects of English, math, science, and history. These after-school, weekend, and summer programs also stress the importance of character development, aiming to produce "future leaders who do their work with a spirit of service toward others." The YLF will help identify likely candidates who can apply for the Robert Novak Scholarship, and attend Thomas More College.

College President Jeffrey Nelson traveled to Washington, D.C., on May 27 to thank Mr. Novak at a festive luncheon with leading area Catholics. Nelson said, "We are delighted that Mr. Robert Novak, in his great generosity, has chosen to help us reach out to students who have suffered the most from the decline of education and a misguided, false egalitarianism—those who attend our crumbling inner-city schools. It is in such places that young people are least likely to be offered the treasures of our civilizational heritage. Indeed, many of them must look out for their personal safety, and strive to learn what they can in an atmosphere that can only be described as hostile to education. Now those who—despite such environmental handicaps and the many toxic distractions of our time—demonstrate intellectual promise and personal character, thanks to Mr. Novak, can pursue them in an atmosphere of contemplation and collegiality."



Nelson continued: "These students will be welcomed by our close-knit and studious community of burgeoning scholars can attend daily Mass in our small but reverent chapel. They may take part in the May Crownings we hold at our humble Grotto to Our Lady and join in the medieval dinner we host each year to mark the birthday of our patron saint, Thomas More. They'll tour the Vatican, explore the Roman Forum, walk the streets of Assisi, and attend Mass with the Pope. They will study the progress of man from his first pagan fumbblings, through the High Middle Ages and Counter-Reformation, up through today's post-Christian crisis. In other words, they will receive the education they deserve, perhaps for the first time in their lives. With us, they will look beyond that crisis, in hope of discerning the signs of where the Spirit is leading the Church in the 21st Century."

Anyone who wishes to support the Robert Novak Scholarship Fund so that we may offer assistance to a larger number of students, please contact Charlie McKinney at (800) 880-8308 or cmckinney@ThomasMoreCollege.edu.

Writer-in-Residence Publishes Graphic Novel

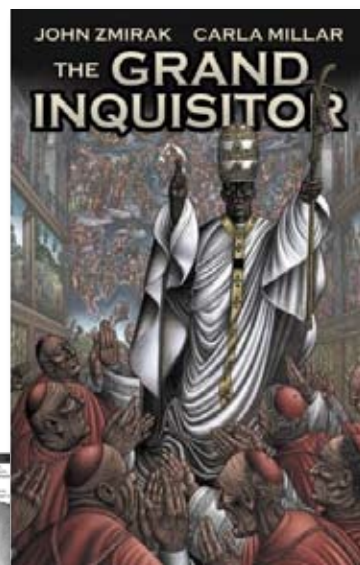
The Grand Inquisitor isn't your average Catholic book. For one thing, it's a graphic novel, where the images carry equal weight with the text. For another, it's a story about intrigue at the Vatican... which is where most Catholics stop reading, afraid they've come across another *The Da Vinci Code*, or some crackpot conspiracy theory. But this book uses the current enthusiasm (see also *Angels and Demons*) for speculative stories about the Church to defend the Faith, and explore the temptations that lead Christians to water down or distort the Gospel. As international Catholic news agency Zenit wrote: "The story is set during a conclave, involves kidnapped cardinals, but champions the cause of orthodoxy and fidelity to the Magisterium. *The Grand Inquisitor* features all the staples of a good *noir* thriller—dark, graphic design, striking portraits, and flashes of razor-sharp wit—but contrary to genre which invariably transmits an anti-Christian message, Zmirak's story is rooted in love for the Church."

The book was written in blank verse by Thomas More College Writer-in-Residence Dr. John Zmirak, and illustrated in some 60 pages of exquisite images by Carla Millar. It tells a deceptively simple story. As *Publisher's Weekly* sums it up: "When a priest from Sudan is invited to Rome during the Vatican conclave to select a new pope, he finds himself instead kidnapped to a mental hospital where he is threatened/tempted by an aged cardinal. The canny old man knows that the young, black prelate will become the next pope, and the cardinal wants to make sure that his long career of deliberately subverting Church doctrines won't be wasted. This conservative Catholic graphic novel is a debate between the earnest fundamentalist priest and the slippery European autocrat."

Robert Spencer, *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*, said of the new book: "*The Grand Inquisitor* is an awe-inspiring

achievement. Written in spare, supple, and beguiling blank verse, it offers an explanation of the Church's travails over the last generation that is, at once, breathtakingly inventive and thoroughly believable—as the epigraph makes clear. Along the way, John Zmirak directs his piercing gaze toward secularism, Islamic supremacism, and other contemporary challenges for the Church, and concludes with a magnificent expression of abiding faith and hope. This is an imaginative, insightful, and simply beautiful meditation on the reality of the Church and the world, the wheat and the tares before the harvest, and the holy dilemma of the lover of souls. Nothing short of a masterpiece."

Interviewed by Vatican Radio in Rome about the book, Zmirak said it had been inspired by the same concerns Cardinal Josef Ratzinger expressed in a Dallas talk to bishops in 1991, a talk he quotes in the epigraph of *The Grand Inquisitor*. "The story is meant to dramatize the dangers that can arise from spiritual pride, and a misplaced compassion that tempts us to 'dumb down' the Faith in the hope of lightening people's burdens," Zmirak said.



SOPHOMORES



in the Eternal City



Can a city be sacred? Many of the most eloquent writers in our tradition—from Cicero to Wendell Berry—hold up as the ideal a rural existence lived in intimate communion with Creation. Thomas More College's New Hampshire location, while not exactly agrarian—our barn holds a chapel instead of cattle—is sheltered from the distractions of urban life. Our solitude makes space for the many hours of reading, writing, and earnest conversation with mentors and peers that comprise our educational quest.

But there's another tradition, too. Father Pierre-Marie Delfieux, the Sorbonne University chaplain who founded Paris' thriving Jerusalem Community, once wrote that not everyone is called to seek out God in the desert. Delfieux taught that since each human being is the image of God, a great city is crowded with millions of opportunities for reverence and love, had we only the eyes to see.

The history of Christendom is written in the stones and on the ceilings, in the streets and the cemeteries of great cities, where we stand astonished at the beauty unveiled by man. If our study is both of God and man, and of God made man so that man might be made God, then we are called to learn from and love

the works of man. So it is fitting that Thomas More College students spend a semester in one of the world's great cities—site of the empire that shaped Western history and the seat of the universal Church.

It may be easier to remember the presence of God in Rome than in most world cities. Your first clue is the sight of so many priests and sisters in full habits on the buses and in the streets; of many races and dozens of different orders, they are surprisingly young, and always willing to offer directions to the baffled traveler. The skyline is dominated not by skyscrapers, but by the dome of St. Peter's—the massive baroque basilica that grew from the lonely burial site of a fisherman killed for a carpenter.

The very ground is catacombed with—well, *catacombs*, the secret caves where persecuted Christians interred their dead. Each year, the students explore the tunnels of St. Sebastian and of St. Callixtus, praying at crypts of early popes and the tombs where priests said clandestine Mass over the bodies of recent martyrs. In 2005, Thomas More College students were privileged to be in Rome at the death of

continued on next page »

« Thomas More College students and Vatican Studies Center staff pose with Roman nuns who specialize in Vatican communications.

Why Rome?

BY DR. PAUL CONNELL

It may seem a little strange for someone educated in the tradition of the Southern Agrarians, with their defense of rural life, to praise the city and its attributes.

Yet having lived in Rome off and on for twenty years, I have come to love the hustle and bustle of city life: the street sweepers early in the morning, the evening stroll, the crowded buses, the intensity of space, the drama of the piazzas, the hourly bells, the beggars in front of churches, stylish divas on mopeds, pilgrims, seminarians, tourists, gypsies—all of life's grand pageant.

What is it that the city adds to life? At its best, the city gives to the person a sense of *urbanitas*—which essentially means the attributes of one who lives in a city. To be urbane means to have a sense of refinement and elegance, a broad cultural knowledge, courtesy, and sophistication, an openness to ideas and thinkers, especially those who are not of one's own immediate sympathy or faith—as Aquinas was open to Aristotle. Essentially, it is what we call being civilized.

Ultimately, the city lends a dignity and elevation to the human person. As Lewis Mumford concludes in his magisterial *The City in History*:



Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI. In 2008, through the College's Vatican Studies Center, students and faculty gained tickets to the memorial Mass Pope Benedict held in St. Peter's Square for the anniversary of Pope John Paul II's death. As sophomore Paul Kniaz reflects, "Going to Masses, visiting the Vatican, seeing all the clergy—it helps you realize the universality of the Church. People are coming from all over the world, converging on this place. The Church's history is tied into so much beauty. We can see the impact it has had over the ages and how much beauty it has brought to the world through architecture alone."

Throughout most of Rome, every 500 yards or so there stands an exquisite chapel or church—one perhaps designed by Bernini or Borromini, and ornamented with art that ranges from ancient mosaics to high Baroque altarpieces, from Renaissance frescos to affectionate memorials of Padre Pio festooned with plastic flowers. "Beauty is everywhere, and the works of people who struggled to

achieve it," Zachary Durst reflected. "It's not just in museums and galleries, where you pay to see it. Michelangelos and Raphaels are placed in thriving parishes. They're a living part of the city."

Each day for 90 minutes or so—in between the classes which sophomores take with visiting or resident faculty, replicating the Humanities classes going on in Merrimack—Director of the Rome Program Dr. Paul Connell leads the student body on explorations of the city focused on theology, art, and architecture. Because of Rome's unique history—



"Being in Rome puts our Humanities classes in the right perspective... We get to see that what we're reading isn't just a bunch of books; it's real, it's incarnate in the world."

it was actually governed by popes from Gregory the Great (604 A.D.) up through the Bl. Pius IX (1878 A.D.)—most of the city's historic sites now serve the Church. Buildings that didn't start out as Christian temples, such as the exquisite Pantheon, usually ended up that way. (Indeed, that's what saved such architectural treasures from neglect or destruction.) Likewise, what's left of the baths of Diocletian is now the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels and of the Martyrs—fittingly named for the thousands of

The final mission of the city is to further man's conscious participation in the cosmic and historic process. ... That magnification of all the dimensions of life, through emotional communion, rational communication, technological mastery, and above all, dramatic representation, has been the supreme office of the city in history. And it remains the chief reason for the city's continued existence.

The city itself can be a tutor in all of these things, and an especially important one for those who would call themselves “Roman” Catholics, whose destiny is not a garden paradise but a city—the New Jerusalem.



Christians killed by the same emperor in the last and greatest Roman persecution of the Church.

Other ancient structures, such as palaces of various emperors, now survive only in their pillars—which hold up countless churches in Rome. These precious, mismatched marble columns are called by art historians *spolia*—recalling the “spoils of Egypt” which the Hebrews took with them in Exodus. The principle of consecrating the best that pagan man has crafted to the greater glory of God animates the Christian intellectual tradition. This argument was used by St. Augustine to justify his use of Greek philosophy and Roman rhetoric, and St. Thomas in defense of Aristotle. This ingrafting of Christian Faith into human wisdom lies at the heart of liberal arts education.

Students are not slow to put the pieces together. As sophomore Tyler Tracey points out: “Being in Rome puts our Humanities classes in the right perspective—it’s the study of humanity from Gilgamesh to the Second Vatican Council. So we’re in the right place—Rome, the foundation of Western civilization. We get to see that what we’re reading isn’t just a bunch of books; it’s real, it’s incarnate in the world.”

As students reverently explore these structures, they learn that Rome is a *palimpsest*, a dense, irregular overlay of elements that have built up over three millennia—from the early Republic up through the Christian empire, the Dark Ages, Medieval and Renaissance Rome, the glories of the Counter-Reformation, and the persecution suffered by the popes during the French Revolution and the *Risorgimento*. Each period left its mark, sometimes in a single church, as one looks from floor to ceiling. As sophomore Zachary Durst observes, in exploring Rome: “You see so many different levels of history, time periods super-imposed upon each other, dating back before Christ. It gives you a very real sense of history, takes it out of your imagination and makes it something literally concrete. Reading things scratched on a wall 2,000 years ago makes you think: There was someone standing here that long ago, where I am standing now. It offers you a sense of your own place.”

Indeed, the Roman semester is meant to do more than immerse students in the details of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance art—or even the particulars of Church doctrines represented in those artworks, however sublime both might be. According

(LEFT) Students take notes on the details of the Roman piazza for their art and architecture class.

(RIGHT) TMC sophomores visit the headquarters of *L'Osservatore Romano* and meet with its editors.

to Dr. Connell, "The major metaphor of our sojourn in Rome is that of a pilgrimage. One undertakes a pilgrimage in part to undergo an interior change of heart. Like the speaker in the poem 'The Archaic Torso of Apollo' by the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, one is asked by that classical work of art to 'Change your life.'"

Sophomore Alexandra Winchester reflects, "Seeing all the different styles of art in the churches—from ancient through the baroque—recalls our humanities studies. Just witnessing so much beauty nurtures your perceptions, and inspires you to become the sort of person who can really appreciate it."

Of course, there is no single "transformation" which Thomas More College expects to enact within its students. Rather, the encounter with beauty, the quest for truth,

the deepening of faith, are a natural part of a liberal arts education, with outcomes as distinctive as the individuals who walk through our doors as freshmen.

Students also traveled outside Rome, of course—exploring Renaissance churches in Florence and Orvieto, visiting the cave of St. Benedict in Subiaco, the eerie Etruscan tombs at Cerveteri, and the city of St. Francis, Assisi.

And many ventured outside the classroom, gallery, and basilica to engage in one of the Church's most critical apostolates today—communications. Some one-third of Thomas More College sophomores took advantage of the internship offered by the College's Vatican Studies Center with the Internet-based Catholic media agency, H2o News. Students Lucy Domina, Caitlyn Lynch, Mariana Niño, Francesca Ponelli, Nicholas Smith, Emily Wilson, Alexan-

dra Winchester, and Lauren Witter worked weekly with Vatican Studies Center director Tony Assaf to help create TV broadcasts about Church news that would be sent around the world—editing copy, correcting translations, and dubbing the voices of newsmakers, cardinals, and even Pope Benedict XVI. "I'd always hated listening to my own voice, but this experience has helped me gain confidence in public speaking," said Mariana Niño. "It's exciting

A Group Essay on Rome

BY MARIANA NIÑO, FRANCESCA PONELLI,
AND EMILY WILSON

As the semester came to a close, we realized that we had just experienced one of the most crucial aspects of our Thomas More College education. We saw man's inner glory inside the historic churches—and his outer weakness in the sometimes dilapidated facades. But most of all, we found that all of our experiences, our excitement over learning, and our hope for living great lives were expressed in Rome's austerity and opulence, which might be summed up as the Baroque. As our teachers have been trying to show us, we *are* Baroque. Our outer lives ought to be simple and austere, but our inner lives, our souls, must be opulent in prayer and contemplation.

Is there anywhere more Baroque than Rome? We would see in the Piazza di S. Maria in Trastevere bishop and beggar, young and old, the brilliant and the insane, all in one afternoon. Living right in the heart of the city, we could hardly help stumbling upon some of the most beautiful art and architecture in the world while going about our daily business. We were able to learn from Rome as well as from each classmate. As the program came to its end in April, we realized the organic and virtuous friendship with our class; the type of friendship which Aristotle writes about. We each grew as individuals but we also grew as a class and as close friends. We are privileged and honored to be a part of this unique and life-changing opportunity that Thomas More College provided for us.



for me to hold the microphone and know that I'm narrating important news about the Church that's distributed throughout the world. My family also enjoys hearing me do the reports, which they access on the Web."

Others took advantage of Vatican Studies Center events to meet with the staff of *L'Osservatore Romano*, Vatican Radio, and the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. In future years, the Vatican Studies Center will feature lectures, meetings with cardinals, and other informative encounters with the people who help the Vicar of Christ govern the Church throughout the world.

Yet amidst all the literally numberless opportunities for exploration and diversion in a glittering, ancient city, students remain focused on the task at hand—doing their reading, writing their papers, and wrestling with the challenging ideas that have shaped the West. It's all about integration and balance, students agree. Said Alexandra Winchester, "I have gained a greater appreciation for the readings and the ability to call studies my 'work' in life. I have to put aside other things and make time to read Flaubert, Descartes, Voegelin, Pieper. I'm able to sit in a cafe or in a garden and read, despite all the distractions of the city—and I really appreciate that."



Rome Program to Expand in New Location

BY DR. PAUL CONNELL,
DIRECTOR, ROME PROGRAM

The Rome semester of 2008 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the program. Over the years, the College has been very fortunate to have found sites to conduct its Rome Program—all residences operated by religious orders—which were marked by beauty, tranquility, and security in optimal locations in the city. Beginning in September 2008, the College will conduct two semesters in Rome for its sophomore class at a new location in the Portuense section of Rome. Half the class will attend in the fall, the other half in the spring. The Villa Serenella, a monastery owned by the Antonine order of the Maronites, will provide accommodation, meals, and classroom space for Thomas More College. It will also be the headquarters for the Vatican Studies Center and the hub of Roman pilgrimages and retreats conducted by the College during the summer months.

Villa Serenella is a stately, typical Roman villa surrounded by 13 acres of olive groves, pine trees, walking paths, a soccer field, and fountains. Just seven miles from the Vatican, the Villa is located in a non-touristy Roman neighborhood with bus connections to the historic center. The Villa began as a private residence in the late 1800s, complete with horse stables, gardens, and a mosaic swimming pool. After years of neglect, the villa was painstakingly restored in 1998 by Lebanese monks, who established the Collegio San Isaia there for the order's monks and priests. At the Villa, Thomas More College students will enjoy communal daily life in a setting of beauty and tranquility that will refresh both body and soul after daily tours in the highly urban environment of Rome. The on-site chapel, the extensive grounds, the quiet spots for reading and writing, the frequent opportunities for conversation while relaxing on the terrace or warming up by the hearth all contribute to a fertile environment for intellectual, cultural, and spiritual growth.

For more on the history, development, and growth of the Thomas More College Rome program, please visit our web site: www.ThomasMoreCollege.edu.





Learning the Truth

BY DR. JEFFREY O. NELSON, PRESIDENT

As with so many of Pope Benedict's statements and writings, his recent "Address to Catholic Educators" at the Catholic University of America is hard to paraphrase, since in itself it is so compact, dense with insight, and rich with provocations for further thought. When one searches for telling quotations for inclusion in an essay, the number of phrases worth repeating and considering simply piles up—until at last you are tempted simply to reprint the entire document. Instead, I will do my best to reflect in brief on the parts of his message that seem most pertinent to my own role as the leader of a small Catholic liberal arts college.

"First and foremost, every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4)." A central truth, and yet one that *is* all too easy to forget—particularly when the daily task entails managing an institution, planning budgets, juggling numbers, raising funds, and organizing all the necessary, but seemingly impersonal, aspects of any going concern. Yet this statement of Pope Benedict is so important it might be worth putting on a plaque that sits on my desk—the reminder that, amidst all the noble abstractions and the realms of information that students must master in various fields, their task is also starkly simple: learning the Truth by meeting a Person. A Person who does not just *speak* the truth—like many prophets and philosophers—but One who simply, mysteriously embodies the Truth, or better, *is* the Truth embodied. His actions and words, life and death, descent and resurrection—all these, seen as a whole, shape for our deepest reflection the very form of Truth. Since each of us is the image of God, every encounter with a student who, however imperfectly, comes to us in search of the Beautiful

and the True is, conversely, helping to create another encounter with Christ. Thus, in every honest academic dialogue, in some sense, Christ speaks to Christ.

But to quote the Bible, "What is truth?" Pope Benedict answers this waggish, perhaps even sarcastic question: "Truth means more than knowledge: knowing the truth leads us to discover the good. Truth speaks to the individual in his or her entirety, inviting us to respond with our whole being. ...Far from being just a communication of factual data—'informative'—the loving truth of the Gospel is creative and life-changing—performative" (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 2). This assertion condenses in a very few words a crucial distinction upon which we, as Catholic educators, must insist—not only against the technocrats in secular institutions, but also against the "inner technocrat" with which most of us must contend as moderns. Having grown up in a civilization that has willfully turned away from ultimate questions—supposedly for the sake of peaceful co-existence—we encounter an internal resistance to such a lofty conception of our task as teachers. We grow up prematurely jaded and must spend our maturing years recovering the innocence of youth, the phase of life which naïvely, but correctly, believes that ideas (wrong ones or right ones) change the world—and that mind is the master of matter. How much more true this becomes when we think with the mind of the Church, which partakes in the Logos that masters and orders creation. By meditating on this idea, we can, with time, recover enough of our youthful innocence to serve our students.

Then Pope Benedict hits us with this: "When nothing beyond the individual is recognized as definitive, the ultimate criterion of judgment becomes the self and the satisfaction of the individual's immediate wishes." This state-



by Meeting Christ

ment should sting, since it cuts across the grain of nearly every aspect of our contemporary culture—from the craze for self-assertion that permeates the Blogosphere to the proliferation of electives in modern American colleges. Our entire economy, it might be argued, rests on the “the satisfaction of the individual’s immediate wishes,” and the process of globalization consists in bringing this alternative “gospel” to the poor. Perhaps this tendency is the one we will find most challenging with our students, most of whom have grown up without any reason ever to question this premise. Only the beauty of truthful teaching, of leadership bravely exercised with respect for human dignity, can help tug at this veil which obscures the vision of Truth from the eyes of the young who hunger for it.

With his professorial clarity, Pope Benedict digs deeper than ideology or economics, to hit the nub of the modern disorder: “Yet we all know, and observe with concern, the difficulty or reluctance many people have today in entrusting themselves to God. It is a complex phenomenon and one which I ponder continually. While we have sought diligently to engage the intellect of our young, perhaps we have neglected the will. Subsequently we observe, with distress, the notion of freedom being distorted. Freedom is not an opting out. It is an opting in—a participation in Being itself.” Not just the intellect, but the will—the essence of our freedom, the nexus of choice, the part of ourselves which is so mysterious that neurologists try to argue it away. It is in the will that the self says “I will” or “I will not.” *Serviam or non serviam.*

The almost mystical reality we face as educators is the fact that we must help to train our students’ wills while leaving them free. It is not for us to go further than God, who leaves each of us with the final say—or nay-say—for

our soul. But that does not mean we can simply shrug and watch our charges stumble through error into evil; that way has been tried for a generation at Catholic colleges, and we have all seen where it leads. While we might not legally stand any longer *in loco parentis*, and while our mission calls us to lead in the formation of *the mind*, we still retain moral responsibility for doing all we can to form and purify young peoples’ wills and to uplift their souls. In this regard, at the outset of his remarks, the Pope applied to teachers the words of St. Paul: “How beautiful are the footsteps of those who bring good news” (Rom 10:15-17).

In an age of bigness, when our youth stand as isolated and seemingly insignificant individuals before the modern behemoth university, this is best done in small-scale educational communities—where the individual intellect can be engaged and the individual will can be challenged with the Truth. In small communities, it is still possible to do this daily, with specific regard for each human person. The order of love reposes on specific knowledge of each specific person within the community. We must ask ourselves, is such a knowledge, and thus such a love, possible at a behemoth university? Yet even within small communities, the world is ever with us. Wherever and whenever we engage the person, it must be done against the backdrop of a culture which discourages self-control (much less external control) and worships the colossal, the powerful, and the impersonal. Truly, the only “hope” for us is the Hope that began the entire enterprise of Catholic education—which, it is worth recalling, started with a small community gathered in the upper room.

This essay first appeared in the Bulletin of Catholic Higher Education, which is published by the Cardinal Newman Society, and is reprinted with permission.

On Natural History

BY DR. CHRISTOPHER O. BLUM,
PROFESSOR OF HUMANITIES

As “the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,” (*Psalms* 123:2) so do the liberal arts regard their queen—theology. And so it is the perennial task of Catholic teachers of the liberal arts to reflect upon their practices in light of their goal: to train the mind to be as fit as possible to receive and to meditate upon Divine Truth. To instructors of mathematics and natural science, the old arts of the quadrivium, the task is both urgent and difficult. In the modern era, as Pope Benedict XVI reminded us in his *Regensburg Address*, these studies proceed by assuming the “mathematical structure of matter” and overwhelmingly focus upon “nature’s capacity to be exploited for our purposes.” A Catholic liberal arts education ought not to remain satisfied with such an approach, however technologically potent it may be. To the one who seeks wisdom, the study of the Creation begins in wonder, in asking “Why?,” and then seeks knowledge of the causes of things so as to contemplate the traces of the Creator’s handiwork.

At Thomas More College, our study of the Creation begins with a semester of Natural History, which is the tale told about the world of things that grow and change according to their natures. From the vantage of the traditional disciplines, the course constitutes a preparation for philosophical studies. Its proximate aims are three: to give the students fruitful experiences of the natural world, to begin to inculcate a habit of reflecting upon order and seeking to know the causes of things, and to encourage the desire to know the highest truths.

Experience is the watchword of the Natural History course. In an essay written more than fifty years ago called “Learning How to See Again,” Josef Pieper warned that “man’s ability to see is in decline.” His point is more valid today. In order that we might avoid becoming “totally-passive consumers,” Pieper urged both the renunciation of the “illusions incessantly generated by the entertainment industry,” and the regaining of “authentic and personal observation.” Following his advice, Thomas More College’s Natural History course seeks to begin to restore the kind of sensory skill that our ancestors took for granted: the ability to make dis-



LETTER TO THE GUILD OF MASTERS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
BY ST. THOMAS MORE (1518)

...There are some 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...
they adorn the queen of heaven with the
spoils of the Egyptians.

tinctions among the different living things that we see. The students, therefore, study flowering plants and ferns, trees and shrubs, aquatic insects and birds, and record their observations in written descriptions and sketches. Their readings help to focus their vision as they consider the careful description of natural things in classic texts such as Theophrastus’ *On Plants* and Thoreau’s *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. If, as Fr. Robert Sokolowski has argued, the “method of philosophy” is “making distinctions,” then a course in Natural History is indeed an appropriate beginning for the journey towards wisdom.

In nature, however, there is both difference and sameness. And it is in the reflecting upon the sameness, that rises above the difference, that we begin to appreciate the order of things. First the student learns the difference between sycamores and oaks, then he sees that the sycamores tend to be found in wet areas and the oaks in more dry. Again, he first discovers that some aquatic insects are predators and others

are filter feeders; then he realizes that the former are more abundant in smaller, headwater streams and the latter in medium-sized rivers. Having taken note of the patterns that are to be seen in the natural world, the student is now ready to seek the reasons why. And the classic texts of natural history that he will read in the class, from Aristotle to Fabre, similarly begin with the perception of patterns, or sameness, and then seek the causes of the order of nature. A course of only one semester must have limited goals. Nevertheless, it is a real service to the education of our students to begin to develop the habit of considering order and pondering its causes.

Aristotle famously observed that “all men by nature desire to know.” Yet not all knowledge is equally worthy or desirable. The “most universal knowledge,” that which is “most removed from the senses”—the knowledge of God, which he held to be the highest and best. He did not, however, disdain knowledge of animals and plants, which, though less desirable in itself, is easier for us to attain. In a celebrated passage in the *Parts of Animals*, he affirmed that, though some living things “have no graces to charm the sense... even these, by disclosing to intellectual perception the artistic spirit that designed them, give immense pleasure to all who can trace links of causation, and are inclined to philosophy.” The reason for this pleasure, he explained, was that “absence of haphazard and conduciveness of everything to an end are to be found in Nature’s works in the highest degree, and the resultant end of her generations and combinations is a form of the beautiful.” The Christian study of the Creation ought to tend toward the recognition of this order and beauty and also to the expression of gratitude for it. Indeed, the mind of man was made to recognize and to rejoice in God’s beauty, of which the Creation is a reflection. From *Laudate Dominum de Caelis* (*Psalms* 148) to St. Francis of Assisi’s *Canticle of the Creatures*, the Catholic tradition has paid eloquent testimony to this truth, a truth wonderfully set to music by Josef Haydn in his great oratorio, *The Creation*: “All was not yet brought to fulfillment. / For he was missing from the whole Creation, / Who could look upon God’s Work gratefully, / And praise the goodness of the Lord.” The encouragement of gratitude for the marvel of the Creation should result in a wise stewardship, but also (and crucially for the life of the mind) should deepen the desire to spend life and eternity knowing the Creator.



Thomas More College's 2008 **PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL DINNER AND SYMPOSIUM**



Save the Date
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11

11:00 AM

Symposium featuring Thomas More College's
faculty on “Remembering the North
American Martyrs”

5:00 PM

Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

6:00 PM

Reception and President's Council Dinner

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE
CONTACT CHARLIE MCKINNEY AT
(603) 880-8308, EXT. 21.**



the



2008 Graduates

*Sarah Bridget Alcaez
Jeanna Therese Bowen
Andrew James Cain
Kevin John Michael Connell
Elizabeth Gowlan Healy
Emilie Christine Helzer*

*Beatrice Marie Kniaz
Rebekah Ann Lamb
Anna Maria Mendell
Thalia Dora Bachmann Meyer
Joseph John Myers
Agustin Nino*

*Rohit Prakash
Alexis Diane Recch
Nicholas David Roh
Andrew David Skia
Matthew Stephen S
Margaret Ellen Stra*

End of the Beginning



"In my end is my beginning." So wrote Anglo-Catholic poet T.S. Eliot in "East Coker," quoting the motto Mary, Queen of Scots, embroidered on her handkerchief while awaiting her execution. This famous phrase points to the paradox at the heart of temporal life in a fallen world that hurries on towards its end—which Christians believe will only be its beginning. So our graduates finish their business with us ... and we call it "Commencement." The moment which begins the march toward a vocation, toward productivity and progeny, wrinkles and middle age, senescence and the grave, and then ... Resurrection.

The ironies wrapped up in the term we use at the end of each student's time with us are heightened and resolved by a Faith that renders bitter death a bitter sweet—and finds at its core a seed that grows into something much larger than the fallen fruit. "[U]nless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). How fitting then that at Thomas More College we begin Commencement exercises with a Mass—an unbloody sacrifice, a death that feeds us Life.

On Trinity Sunday 2008 (May 18), the seniors of Thomas More College joined Fr. Alvaro de Silva and Fr. James Schall, S.J., in the celebration of Mass under the tent on the College green. The Thomas More College schola, led by choir director Elizabeth Black, chanted the propers for the liturgy in Latin. In the homily delivered to some 200 students, faculty, family members, and staff, Fr. Schall explored the meaning of the Trinity in the light of Aristotle's theory of friendship—noting that God was never alone, and created us in His image not from a need for companionship, but out of abundant love. He called on all

present to carry that love forth into the world, whatever their tasks in life.

After a festive lunch on the lawn, all gathered again for the academic exercises. The first to receive an honorary doctorate and speak was Prof. Peter Stanlis, Professor Emeritus of English at Rockford College, and a leading scholar both in the work of Edmund Burke, and of New Hampshire poet Robert Frost. Prof. Stanlis explained how divergent philosophies of man lead to radically different styles of education, which shape (or mis-shape) students. Stanlis contrasted the educational theories of biologist Thomas Henry Huxley, and the Oxford convert John Henry Cardinal Newman. Huxley saw religion as superstition, and man as a clever primate who uses technology to make himself (in Descartes' famous words) the "master and possessor of nature." Education should serve this strictly utilitarian end. Most modern universities, Stanlis said, have adopted Huxley's grimly pragmatic program. By contrast, Newman argued in *The Idea of a University* (1852) for a truly humane education which takes account of man's Classical and Christian heritage, his animal and spiritual natures, and his faculties both for faith and for reason. This richer approach to education was once dominant throughout the West, but today survives only in enclaves, Stanlis lamented. Happily, he said, Thomas More College is one of them. He exhorted its graduates to carry on the task of broadening and deepening their humanity in whatever endeavors they undertake.

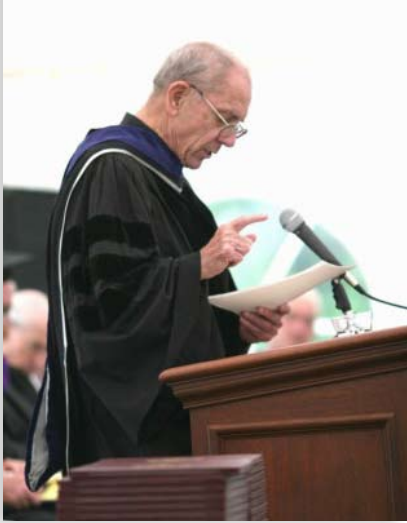
Next to speak was William Simon, Jr., an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and former candidate for California governor. As a faithful Catholic active in public life, Mr. Simon addressed the civic foundations of our free society. "The Founders had a more all-encompassing view of virtue than we do in today's society. Their idea of virtue embraced the importance of excellence, courage,



(Top) President Nelson congratulates Jeanna Bowen, graduate in Literature.

(Bottom) Anna Maria Mendell receives her sash from Provost William Fahey.

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Commencement speakers (left to right) Fr. James Schall, Prof. Peter Stanlis, and Mr. William Simon, Jr.

and integrity. They also believed that virtue had to be grounded in reality, and not be just a series of platitudes or clichés floating in thin air. Religion provided virtue its content and its inspiration, but also its sanctions. John Adams explained why that is true. Adams said “We have no government armed with powers capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, or revenge would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net.” Simon warned of the apathy, nihilism, and emptiness that begin to prevail in a society characterized by a “naked public square,” denuded of the symbols and strictures of revealed religion. Simon called on students to be public witnesses for their Faith, in private and civic life. “I can think of no mission more worthy for the graduating class of 2008 than helping to reinforce America’s true foundation,” he said in conclusion.

The final guest speaker to receive an honorary degree was Fr. James Schall, Professor of Government at Georgetown University. At once a scholar and a popular author, Fr. Schall chose this occasion to explore the role played by the study of literature in the search for “the highest good,” which Plato defined in *The Laws* as “to become as virtuous as possible and to continue to exist in that state as long as life lasts.” Apart from the love of beauty, the purpose of studying fictional stories is “to enable us to find out things that we need to know but things that we may never have yet experienced in our own

world before we need them. Literature, to which this college is devoted, allows us to live more lives than our own. ... Literature and biography also prepare us to know what happens or might happen in the souls of others when they choose to pursue the various ends open to their souls.”

And what we see in those souls—or in our own—can often surprise us. Fr. Schall quoted a little-known remark of Abraham Lincoln, who once observed “Nearly all men can handle adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.” Or, Fr. Schall observed, allow him to live in peace—because “the activities of peace, if we do not know what they are, are much more dangerous to civilization than the activities of war.” For most of us, the good life

will take place in the workplace, academy, or family. There, another kind of moral courage is required, which requires sometimes the rejection of pleasure and the pursuit of high and difficult tasks. Here the conscience is our only mainstay, a conscience rightly formed in a community such as a college rightly ordered. That is the deepest

purpose of such a school. Fr. Schall observed, near his conclusion: “To found and attend a college named after Thomas More strikes me in our day as an act of courage.”

The ceremony concluded with President Nelson’s address to students, his reflections on Pope Benedict’s encyclical *Spe Salvi*, and the pope’s recent talk to Catholic educators (see p. 14).

For most of us, the good life will take place in the workplace, academy, or family. There, another kind of moral courage is required, which requires sometimes the rejection of pleasure and the pursuit of high and difficult tasks.

Feasts and Seasons

BY DR. JOHN ZMIRAK

SEPTEMBER 23—PADRE PIO: WARNING ... SOUL READER!

This beloved, gentle-hearted Italian saint did the 20th century a favor by serving as a one-man window into the Middle Ages. Many saints' lives are full of bizarre, implausible-sounding events: miraculous cures, self-punishing penances, outrageous miracles, and seemingly pointless wonders. Such lives have surely been embellished over the centuries, to the point where the truth is so encrusted with legend that it's impossible to know what really happened. Probably not much. Right?

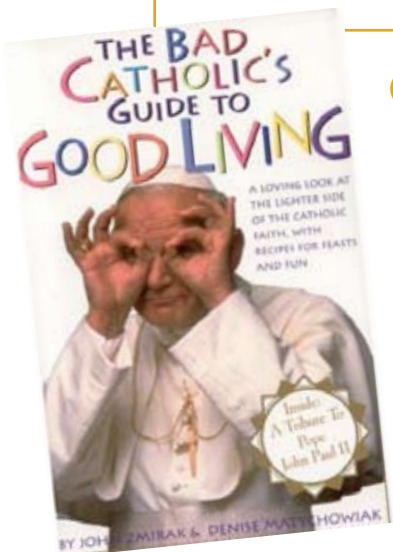
I'm not so sure. In the case of Padre Pio the same sorts of miracles found in medieval legend are attested by dozens, even hundreds of perfectly modern people—literate, educated Americans and Europeans who had TVs and radios, took penicillin, went to dentists, and everything. Yet they reported that Padre Pio:

- Appeared in two or more places at once, sometimes hundreds of miles apart, to heal the sick or hear confessions. He even visited the Vatican, without leaving his remote village of San Giovanni Rotondo.
- Experienced the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, in his hands, feet, and side. Doctors could not explain these wounds, which went so deep that you could put your finger all the way through his hand, and which bled when he said Mass—but which healed instantly upon his death.
- Showed himself in the clouds during World War II, to warn aside Allied pilots trying to bomb his village.
- Could read the souls of those who came to him in confession, telling them their sins before they opened their mouths.

This last aspect of Padre Pio's supernatural gifts is the most unsettling. A prominent Catholic journalist now living in Rome once went to Pio for confession. He carried with him a long-time sin to which he was quite attached. The moment he met St. Pio, the priest looked up at him and smacked him, hard, across the face. "Cut it out!" said Pio. And the addiction departed, never to return.



The recently exhumed remains of Padre Pio are now on display at the Church of St. Mary of Grace in San Giovanni Rotondo.



CELEBRATE

If you haven't been to confession in a long time, this feast day makes an excellent occasion to get back in the habit. Given the probable state of your soul, you don't want a Padre Pio to read it. It's mortifying enough kneeling in that box and telling a weary stranger the most intimate, ludicrous details of your spiritual life. If the prospect of returning to this sacrament terrifies you, here's a helpful baby step: Find a confessor who understands English (so the whole thing's valid), but who speaks it haltingly, if at all. With the shortage of vocations in America, it's becoming ever easier to find such men. In major cities, African, Polish, and Vietnamese priests can usually be located and relied upon to listen compassionately, speak a few heavily accented words, and then give absolution. But beware of Filipinos! They're usually quite fluent.

*Adapted from The Bad Catholic's Guide to Good Living,
by Thomas More College Writer-in-Residence Dr. John Zmirak.*

Let Tree and Fall

BY IAN RICHARDS, '11

Nine months upon the wake of nature's swell,
A sprout leaves through the break of mother's flesh,
From birth, eyes born to thoughts of that above,
Breach clouds whilst standing rightly in the earth.
He grows in sight, and does not cloak his roots,
But wears the shameless stitch of nature's wear,
And welcomes spring as well as fall, for change,
He knows, comes into season, just as out.
He, when wed, does not unwed his rings,
For sees to loose but one's to lose oneself,
Wind tests him, as do little girls and boys,
But, arms set straight, he'll bend before he breaks.
When summer's head red autumn takes away,
Ne'er are his hands seen doubtful, weak or want,
Reaching back to catch leaves as they fall, and
Rake o'er dreg lock, or fasten a toupee.
Then he, in last of winters, softly drops,
A faithful fall, straight-kneed return to earth,
True and trusting through the end, when time came
To descend, he lets tree be tree and fall.

Two Devotional Limericks

BY WILLIAM HERREID '10

King David's dull head was on fire
for the elegant wife of Uriah.
She went for a swim
when the Snake entered him,
and he thought on the spot he would wife her.

There was a Samaritan bird
whose relationship straits were absurd.
She would sure be in Hell,
but one day at the well
she was given a drink by the Word.

The Buzz-Saw in the Upper Bunk

BY JOSEPH RUDOLPH '11

O! This noise I cannot bear much longer. This
Saw-snoring crashing from the bunk above—
The unbearable din of rusty chains through
Rusty throat. Falling on me and so I cannot fall
To sleep; the sweet sleep that keeps me awake—longing ...

O the dev'lish machinery! O unbearable sawing!
The roommate snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled.
O horrid rat'ling—O why must I fumble
With these little foam earplugs that pain me
So, yet eliminate no noise—just soft'n the roar.
Finally I drift into a shallow sleep
That gives not Rest. And my dream soon took
A sick'ning form, grotesque and horrid:

The boy on the lower bunk tossed and turned
Neither 'sleep nor awake he inward fumed
Till the saw no longer he could take
And grasping a book of Shakespeare's works
He raised his arms toward heaven to strike—
His roommate snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled.
And the hand fell and then: gone oh gone!
Sawed at the wrist o blood! O blood spraying!
Red everywhere and yet the roommate snored on.

Waking to morning's angry bells I heard
That awful unceasing saw. It only serves to sev'r
From sweet sleep—This bunk I cannot bear!
I dragged on, drowsy, with my affairs.

Student Poetry Showcase

One of the lynchpins of education at Thomas More College is the study of literature. A natural outgrowth is the careful nurturing of the art of reading and writing, primarily through our four semesters of Writing Workshop. In both Writing Workshop I and IV, students are encouraged to write original poetry as graded assignments. On these pages is a selection of the best verse produced by students in those courses, as chosen by the College's Writer-in-Residence, Dr. John Zmirak.

Aiden

BY CATHERINE HOLLINGER '11

As he runs 'round in the grass, his laughter
Is wild and his eyes shining. He runs
Up to me, throwing hard his small body
Into my legs, causing me to rock back
Slightly as he throws his arms into the
Air demanding, "Auntie come pick me up!"
I laugh to myself as I lift him up
Into the air as he smiles, placing
The rambunctious three year old on my hip.
I kiss him tenderly on his soft cheek
As his arms wind about my neck and he

Playfully buries his face in my ear.
Humming softly to him I walk slowly
Back into warm house as my heart swells,
Knowing that I never knew such a pure,
Untainted innocence, and love was real
Until this sweet boy, my nephew was born.
In the house I place him down and smiling
Softly to myself I gaze down at him.
I see so much of my brother in his
Face but his spirit is purely his own.

Two Roman Poems

BY SEAN BUTNER '10

La Piazza

A fountain, rendered useless by the rain,
Gave its meek contribution to the street.
Potable water lost its clarity
As it ran off into the dingy-brown
Floodtide of the Easter Janiculum.
The city became more Venice than Rome—
The silting dynamic of renewal.

A wall-fountain by San Cosimato,
With a modern mosaic backplash,
Dove into the walkway beneath the playplace.
Fresh rainwater mixed with the recycled
Waterfall that runs continuously.
Save a few cars and a starving student,
The entire piazza was empty.

The rain stopped a short while later.
The clouds threatened, keeping us all at bay,
Not wanting us to see the rebirthing
Of cobblestone, tessera, and asphalt.
Even the still-life that human hands made
Became re-lightened by the clouded sky.

La Strada

An
Accordion wafts its dulcet melodies through the streets,
And into eddies
Formed by brick walls
Trapping the late afternoon air tightly.
And in the drafts
Distance is lost

As laden strollers spend the sun crossing from nap
to nap
With not a care except their mother's lingering
perfume
Mixing with the foreign sounds.

These
Buskers spend their time pumping and extracting
city air.
From time to time
They halt the wind
With the serpentine flow of their unabashed
extractions
Which carry with them a lifetime's worth of
dripping sounds.
Then, at other times
They corrugate life,
Texturing it
With the sharp staccato
Of small hand-motions.

But
As they drink the city back in, or spit it back out
They shape the subtle soundtrack of our humanity,
And let us know
That this space
Is more than cobblestones
Ringed in with brightly colored buildings and
littered with
The absently discarded refuse of people.
Rather it is home
To a multiplicity of persons,
Each one dignified
By the way he slept

In his tired mother's arms under a clarion blue sky.

Spring 2008 Lectures and Events in Review



National Review's Jonah Goldberg, Rob Long, and Mark Steyn offer commentary and lead discussion on the Republican and Democratic debates prior to the New Hampshire presidential primary.

JANUARY 5

"A Night at the Political Improv," Jonah Goldberg, Rob Long, and Mark Steyn of *National Review* magazine.

The first event sponsored by the College's Center for New England Politics and Culture, this evening at the Manchester Radisson centered the debates of both major political parties only days before the New Hampshire primary. Co-sponsored with *National Review* magazine, this light-hearted night of punditry featured three of that journal's best known political writers. Some 400 members of the public attended, as did faculty, staff, and students. Together, commentators and crowd watched and then discussed the forums of candidates for Republicans and Democrats. Participants described the evening as "like an old-fashioned New England town meeting."

JANUARY 25

"The Catholic Church, the Society of Jesus, and the Challenges of Dialogue with the Orthodox Sister Churches," Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Robert F. Taft, S.J., former Professor of Oriental Liturgy at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, and Visiting Professor of Liturgy at the University of Notre Dame.

A theological lecture, this event took place at Our Lady of the Cedars Melkite Catholic Church in Manchester, New Hampshire, and was attended by sundry members of the New England clergy, as well as Thomas More College students, teachers, and the general public. Father Taft's lecture surveyed relations between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. Father Taft echoed the heartfelt wish of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI that union between East and West be advanced. Only an honest appraisal of history and the willingness to ask (and to offer) forgiveness for past misdeeds can lay the groundwork for unity, Father Taft argued—suggesting a number of moves which the Holy See could make to foster closer ties. Father Taft's lecture offered much food for thought, and invited questions from students and community members.

FEBRUARY 29

"Philosophers Turned Green: the Art of Environmental Stewardship," Matthew Cuddeback, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Providence College.

This insightful talk pursued the question of our responsibility towards Creation and tradition. Professor Cuddeback argued that man's care of the land is bound up with a proper understanding of human communities and localities. The true steward of the environment should combine proper care of the earth with a love for human places and history. Man's bond with the land, Professor Cuddeback argued, is bound up with memory—one faculty which distinguishes us from the

beasts. Through remembrance of what has gone before, one forms a bond with his forefathers, past and roots. This knowledge provides a love of one's particular place and roots. With that love comes a desire to nurture and care for the place—a *pietas* which is well nurtured by a liberal arts education, with its focus on reverence for tradition, Professor Cuddeback explained.

APRIL 18

“Faust and Madame Bovary: from Ecstasy to Agony,” Marie Cabaud Meaney, D.Phil., Postdoctoral Fellow, Villanova University.

This lecture was perfectly timed, as the students had just finished studying *Madame Bovary* in Humanities. In her talk, Dr. Meaney delved into Goethe's poem and Flaubert's novel, explaining that each can be seen as a case-study in modernity—in man's evasion of the Last Things, particularly the finality of damnation or salvation. Dr. Meaney compared the lust for power and technological hubris of the scientist Faust, with Emma Bovary's unmeasured passion and self-absorption. These two modern types, Dr. Meaney explained, can serve as philosophical keys for understanding the crisis of contemporary culture.

MAY 3

“Fatima, Ecumenism, and the Icon of Our Lady of Kazan,” Robert Moynihan, founder and editor, *Inside the Vatican* magazine.

Mr. Moynihan's talk was held immediately after Thomas More College students, faculty, and staff joined Fr. Healy of St. Patrick's Church for a May Crowning at the campus grotto. Moynihan recounted the Fatima prophecies, the Communist oppression of Christians in Russia—and the fate of the miraculous Icon of Our Lady of Kazan. A central object of devotion to Russian Christians, it was stolen and sold by the Bolsheviks—then tracked down and purchased by the Blue Army. It resided at Fatima until Pope John Paul II gave it back to the Russian Orthodox church as an ecumenical gesture. Moynihan discussed his own role in the return of that icon, and the prospects for Christian renewal in Russia and a closer relationship between Rome and Moscow.

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TABLE OF RATES PER ANNUM

Age	Rate
60	5.7%
65	6.0%
70	6.5%
75	7.1%
80	8.0%
85	9.5%
90+	11.3%

think again.

With the recent fertility and embryology legislation in Britain, my country has proved itself once again in the vanguard of the culture of death. It was a cluster bomb of decisions, hotly contested in parliament and in the media, and at the time of writing, though the battle continues, the bomb has fallen and we are waiting for the explosion. The upper limit for legal abortions was kept at 24 weeks, the need for a father was dispensed with, animal-human hybrids approved for medical experimentation—an all-out assault on traditional notions of the family and human identity.

Where did all of this come from? How did we get to this position? Some years ago I stood in the death-camp of Auschwitz, now a museum and a shrine, and suddenly the link became clear to me. The modern campaign against whole categories of human life, whether Jews or embryos, only

became possible thanks to a philosophical revolution that took place in the 14th century—based partly (I am sorry to say) in my own home town of Oxford. Sweeping aside the common-sense realism of St. Thomas and his predecessors, the Nominalist philosophers taught that “human” is only a word, a label we stick on those we decide resemble us sufficiently. Does a “blob of cells” or a member of another race count as “one of us?” Not if we need a convenient source of stem cells, or a scapegoat for our troubles.

Philosophy is not just for specialists. All of us have a philosophy, even if it is unexamined and incoherent. We need to become more conscious of our assumptions and where they come from. And we should not be content with basing our moral decisions on convenience or emotion. The truth is out there.

Stratford Caldecott

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Editor, *Second Spring*



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