



Found in Translation

Dr. William Fahey uncovers and restores lost pages in the works of St. Robert Bellarmine



Convocation 2007

Starting the academic year, students and teachers ponder the question: "Would I die for Socrates?"

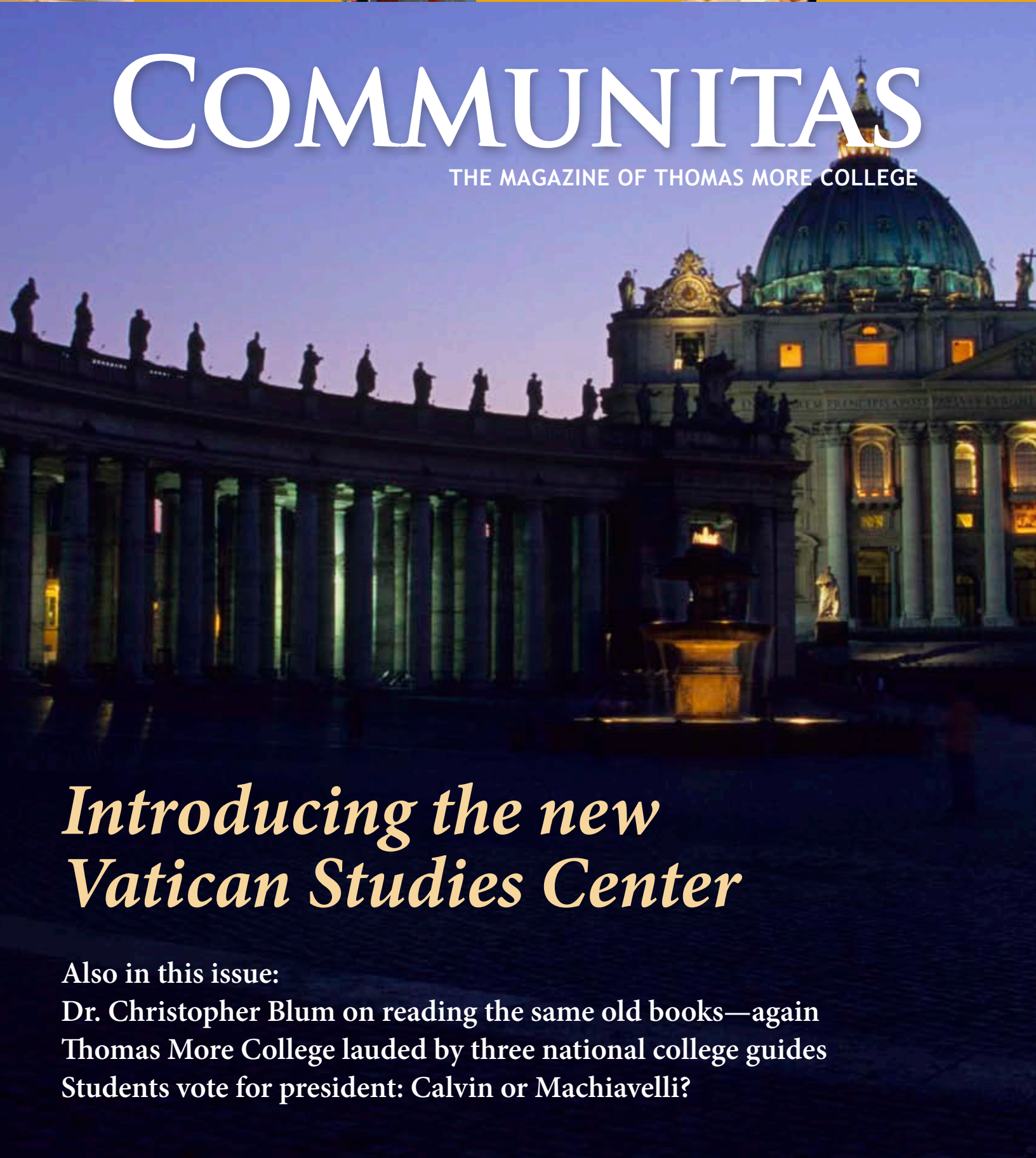


State of the College

President Nelson unveils plans for growth and explores the deeper mission of the College at the 2007 President's Council dinner

COMMUNITAS

THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS MORE COLLEGE



Introducing the new Vatican Studies Center

Also in this issue:

Dr. Christopher Blum on reading the same old books—again
Thomas More College lauded by three national college guides
Students vote for president: Calvin or Machiavelli?



President's message

BY JEFFREY O. NELSON

This issue of *Communitas* marks a number of milestones for Thomas More College. We just enrolled the largest freshman class in the College's history. We are also including, for the first time, the contributions of new faculty and staff—in the form of reflections by newly-appointed Professor Christopher Blum, College Provost Dr. William Fahey, and our new Writer-in-Residence, Dr. John Zmirak. In our cover story, we document the work of our newly-established Vatican Studies Cen-

ter—which held its first event on the Merrimack campus on November 15. That evening, papal knight and Vatican historian Charles A. Coulombe told assembled students about the Catholic heroes of 1860-1870 who defended the Papal States. For our President's Council dinner, we invited Robert Spencer—probably the first *New York Times* best-selling author to speak at the College—who discussed Pope Benedict's Regensburg address and the problem of politicized Islam. On a lighter note, the College enjoyed its first Oktoberfest, evoking the same celebration in the Holy Father's home town, Munich.

Alongside these “firsts,” we continue to value all the wonderful things which have happened every year since the foundation of the College—which now enters its 30th year. Once again, a high-minded group of students

have come to explore the great works of the West through the prism of the Faith. Once again, our dedicated teachers have collaborated in the Humanities sequence that anchors our curriculum. Once again, our campus has been brightened by the visits of priests and theologians, artists and authors, the virtuosi and the virtuous. As it does every year, our dining hall hums daily with conversations among our students about the eternal things, the icons of truth and beauty that form the subject of our studies. As Pope Benedict reminds us, the beauty of our Faith is that it inspires Hope, and draws us all to a deeper Love of truth.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey O. Nelson, Ph.D.
President

COMMUNITAS | *staff*

Jeffrey O. Nelson, Ph.D., *Publisher*

John Zmirak, Ph.D., *Editor*

Charlie McKinney, *Assistant Editor*

Carolyn McKinney, *Art Director*

Paige E. Scarlett, *Copy Editor*

Mark Hieronymous and Prof. William Fahey, *Contributing Photographers*

Contributing Writers and Editors:

Andrea Kirk Assaf, Prof. Christopher Blum, Stratford Caldecott, Prof. Paul Connell, Prof. William Fahey, Denis Kitzinger, and Sara Liston

Contact *Communitas* at:

Thomas More College of Liberal Arts
Six Manchester Street
Merrimack, NH 03054
info@ThomasMoreCollege.edu
(800) 880-8308

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(Left) Marianna Nino dons Bavarian garb for Oktoberfest.

(Middle) Stonyhurst College, England's elite Catholic preparatory school

(Right) Thomas More College students visit a local Orthodox church to learn about icons from Prof. Vigen Guroian.



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THE STATE OF THE COLLEGE

Remarks by President Jeffrey O. Nelson to the Thomas More College President's Council on November 3, 2007

It is said that in the spiritual life, no one ever stands still—he is either moving upward or sliding back down. While I wouldn't press overly hard on the analogy between an immortal soul and a college, I think there is some resemblance between the stories of a soul and of a school. Every liberal arts college worthy of the name serves a "spiritual" purpose, insofar as it seeks to liberate the human spirit from the utilitarian bonds of simple self-seeking and the cultural narrowness most of us carry with us from childhood. Few of us are raised like the old European aristocrats, with a broad grasp of culture and a sense of the Whole that is our own civilization. What a liberal arts school strives to do is to introduce that kind of liberality, proper to a natural aristocracy, to the sons and daughters of every social class.

A liberal arts college that calls itself Catholic has additional challenges that follow from its mission: it must accomplish everything that is demanded of a secular school—and more. A purely vocational education might be called one-dimensional, since it moves

like an assembly line from a simple starting point to a single terminus—producing a pupil who is skilled at performing a set of useful tasks. An irreligious liberal arts school operates in another dimension, offering a much wider range of learning intended to grant its graduates access to a wide array of disciplines, and a broad understanding of human life. It's less of a straight line than it is a circle. But insofar as its horizons are purely worldly, it still lies flat. It cannot provide a coherent account of our nature and destiny.

On the other hand, a college founded in the Catholic tradition is, in this sense, three-dimensional, accounting not just for length and width, but also height. If a secular school is a flat circle, a Catholic college is a sphere, a globe, if you will. Like the earth itself, its inhabitants depend upon the light that falls upon them from outside, from elsewhere, from Above. That free gift of Grace, and the truths that come from Revelation, illumine the entirety of the enterprise. Or so we hope. So we strive. It is liberal and liberating because it orients one to the fullness of reality itself. G.K. Ches-

terton once reflected in *The Coloured Lands*, “All my mental doors open outwards into a world I have not made.” An authentically Catholic liberal arts college prepares its students to study in the spirit of a Chesterton: comprehensively, comparatively, universally, and particularly, applying the fruit of learning to the contours of a world made by Someone else.

Thomas More College has always held to this most capacious understanding of its purpose. Since its founding, our teachers and staff and students have sought a complex, variegated view of culture and the human person’s relation to it. We pursue what we rightly call a Christian humanism on the model of our namesake, the martyred patriot and statesmen who died branded as a traitor, St. Thomas More. Our task here is illumined by the paradox of that great Englishman’s death at the hands of England, whose last words spoken on earth included this phrase: “The King’s good servant, but God’s first.” There is irony there, but also necessity, an urgent logic which we as educators cannot ignore: precisely because he served God first, Thomas More served his king all the better. Likewise, as Christians, we are all the better equipped as humanists, since we see man in full, in all dimensions, and cling to the eternal source of his dignity—which demands we not shortchange any aspect of his greatness.

Thomas More College was one of a small band of brave independent schools founded to swim against the stream, and in this it succeeded—thanks to the hard work and self-sacrifice of its founding generation. Peter Sampo, Mary Mumbach, Brian Shea, Paul Connell, Deborah Enos, and the many other dedicated teachers, priests, and students who have worked over the past three decades to advance its mission, managed to keep alive the ancient flame of Christian humanist education, albeit cupped in their hands against the gales of a New Hampshire winter. And in many ways, the tide is turning—has already turned. The long pontificate of John Paul II and the fresh one of Benedict XVI have worked mighty things—in the college of bishops, in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the recent efforts at liturgical restoration, the founding of new orders and institutes promoting sanctity among the laity, as well as the many other initiatives which collectively are called the “New Evangelization.”

In partnership over time with the great centers of liberal learning, Thomas More College will continue to play its role in this enterprise. We remain true to our identity, and sink deeper roots in it every day.

We are, first and foremost, a teaching college—and to that end, we have hired new and dedicated teachers to bring up our staffing to effective levels and ensure the student/teacher ratio required for such a small and intimate school. We are working to augment our math and natural sciences program, and integrate it more fully into the Core Curriculum that stands at the heart of our educational enterprise. We are strengthening our commitment to the teaching of rhetoric, the discipline that formed the young St. Augustine and served as the basis for early monastic education from the age of Boethius up through the early Middle Ages, re-emerging with the humanists of the Renaissance, and the Jesuit academies that restored Catholicism through much of Europe. We continue to look at new ways to deepen and strengthen the already vigorous educational enterprise we inherited and are still inheriting from those who established this College.

2007 PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM



- ☛ “The Enduring Political Wisdom of St. Thomas More,” given by Dr. Peter Sampo
- ☛ “The Catholic Mind of Edmund Burke,” given by Jeffrey O. Nelson
- ☛ “Every Little Social Commonwealth: Jane Austen’s Vision of Social Order,” given by Dr. Christopher Blum
- ☛ “The Vision of Caroline Gordon: Seeing Reality Through Analogues, Not Doubles,” given by Dr. Mary Mumbach
- ☛ “Prospects for Christian Renewal in the Islamic World,” given by Robert Spencer, best-selling author and scholar on Islam

Read and listen to these lectures and more in TMC’s new online lecture library
www.ThomasMoreCollege.edu/lectures

Our alumni are already making a great difference in the world. People often ask me: “What can you do with an education like yours?” To which the easy and correct answer is simply: “What *can’t* you do?” Thomas More alumni are working as lawyers, doctors, teachers, priests, religious, financial analysts, counselors, political consultants, elected officials, business owners, journalists, marketing professionals, information technology experts, corporate managers, and faithful Catholic parents.

It is no secret that we hope to grow, expanding the College when the time is right, in order to serve up to 360 students. The education offered here is something special, something precious, and something we would like to offer to more young people. That growth will entail many changes, but none that will alter our es-

The Christian humanist approach alone, we believe, can adequately prepare young minds to retain both integrity and openness throughout their lives.

sence. To firm up our current operations, and prepare for a slow, prudent expansion, our administration has expanded the College’s efforts at fund-raising and alumni involvement—with results that are already encouraging. And now, as we prepare to celebrate thirty years of excellence in Catholic liberal arts education, we stand poised to develop out from our solid foundation of humane education. Our gradually expanding infrastructure will allow the College to extend its reach, as well as to cooperate with existing initiatives that serve the Church and her vision of human dignity ennobled and transformed by Grace.

I speak here of the centers which have been recently founded at the College, whose purpose is to bring the vision of the Good which we hope to transmit here to a wider world. It is a historic role of the liberal arts College to be of service not only to its students, but to the wider culture of which it is a part. Given the many and urgent demands of our time for renewal of the Church and the political order, this is an especially significant mandate. And so in the next phase

of the school’s institutional life, we hope to sharpen our strengths, and use the resources of the College to serve our region, our country, and, most of all, the Church, from which we draw our deepest strengths and whose Magisterium guides our steps. In both ways, Thomas More College will continue to be a model of Catholic wholeness in an age of fragmentation. As a new-style Catholic college, it is ever ancient in its ends, ever new in pursuit of these ends.

Centered on the renewal of Christian humanism as the foundation of the New Evangelization, the College is humane in scale, with an orientation “born from the heart of the Church,” toward the service of humanity and the renewal of culture. Drawing upon these strengths, Thomas More College is able to be both creative in meeting the needs of its students and the community, and dynamic in radiating its holistic, Catholic vision through the wider cultural arena.

The most advanced of our newer initiatives is the College’s new Vatican Studies Center.... [See cover story for more information.]

Thomas More College has also undertaken the role of publisher of *Second Spring: An International Journal of Faith and Culture*, edited by distinguished Catholic writers Stratford and Léonie Caldecott of Oxford, England. The journal’s mission is to explore what it means to be a Christian humanist today. It is interdisciplinary, topical, and orthodox. Subjects regularly covered include the arts, sciences, technology, liturgy, new ecclesial movements, metaphysics, history, literature, poetry, and the world of books. Past contributors have included a distinguished group of international scholars, including the current pope. Second Spring Books will issue a series of scholarly and catechetical works aimed at bringing this vision to a wider public—a task it is already undertaking. The great Newman scholar, Ian Ker, is now editing a modern edition of Cardinal Newman’s great sermon, “Second Spring,” along with other related writings of Newman. That work will serve as an appropriate introduction to the ethos of what, we hope, will be an influential, if always modest, Catholic liberal arts college press. In Summer 2007, Second Spring Books’ Catechesis division published its first title, *The Mass Illustrated for Children*. This colorful, winning introduction to the liturgy—intended especially for children’s use during Mass—has been greeted enthusiastically by teachers, priests, principals, lay religious leaders, and families across the country.

The Caroline Gordon Program for the Study of Literature as a Mode of Knowledge will be directed by Dr. Mary Mumbach after she completes her 30-year tenure as Dean of the College in the Spring of 2008. Dr. Mumbach will continue as a full professor with the added responsibility of designing and directing the Program, an institutional vehicle to advance the understanding of literature as a mode of knowledge through scholarly conferences, lectures, and publications. The Program will also, it is envisioned, develop seminars for current teachers of literature in high school and/or college, training them to incorporate the insights and theories Dr. Mumbach has explored throughout her academic career into their classrooms and curricula.

We hope that these initiatives will provide support to our students and professors first and foremost, but also to sometimes isolated groups of brilliant, devoted Catholic educators and apostles whose missions comport with our own, and whose efforts could benefit from our support. We will always choose such initiatives judiciously, and with a keen eye toward their compatibility with our mission as a college.

The project of Christian humanism is to find the seeds of the timeless amidst the temporal and to form ourselves on earth into the souls we are meant to be in eternity. The vision of the whole, of the cosmic plan of Redemption unfolding amidst our ticking clocks and buzzing phones, informs our daily moments of introspection and our hourly decisions. The theologians of the Renaissance preached that Christ's incarnation made all of earthly life potentially sacred and elevated mankind vastly beyond the condition of sinless Adam: the genuflection in the Creed takes place not at "*crucifixus etiam*" but at "*incarnatus est*," for it is here that man's salvation began.

We honor the human person as the created *imago dei* and view the soul infused with grace as engaged in a process of what the Greek Fathers called "theosis." As St. Athanasius wrote: "The Son of God became man so that we might become God." This elevated vision of redeemed man, which Pope John Paul II drew from the documents of the Second Vatican Council and preached so eloquently, is entirely countercultural in our time—which combines a Promethean hunger for what Eric Voegelin called "power over Being" with an anthropology that verges on zoology.

It is our project at Thomas More College to form our students spiritually and intellectually through a searching, fearless encounter with the culture and history of the West—viewed through the lens of a critical respect for the human person and his works; for his search for meaning; for his fumbling attempts to capture in motet or marble, in sketch or stanza, the glimpses of Grace which have been granted him. This properly humanistic approach alone, we believe, can adequately prepare young minds to retain both integrity and openness throughout their lives. This is a great calling. It is our mandate. I ask you all to keep Thomas More College—its students, professors, administrators, and supporters—in your prayers in the coming months and years.



(Top) Drs. Paul Connell and Peter Sampo enjoy good conversation with a guest of the College before the dinner program.

(Middle) Phillip Messing and Marianne Nay entertained guests with beautiful piano and violin duets.

(Bottom) Daria Miranova, Jacinta Latawiec, and Emily Wilson share in the soiree at the Nashua Radisson.

Convocation 2007: ‘Would you die for Socrates?’



On September 14, the faculty and students of Thomas More College, including its largest ever freshman class, gathered to begin a new academic year. After a Mass celebrated by Manchester Bishop John J. McCormack, students re-assembled for Convocation. Garbed in cap and gown, faculty and administrators offered remarks to set the tone for the year of study.

Dean Mary Mumbach began by invoking Pope Benedict's 2006 Regensburg address, which reaffirmed human reason as intrinsic to the fulfillment of Providence. Dr. Mumbach said, "Most of us like to think that we would die for love of country, freedom, Faith, family, friends (however fervently, we hope it never comes to that)." She suggested that by citing the centrality of reason in the articulation and life of Faith, "Pope Benedict has given witness that we should be willing to die for Socrates. And, by implication, for Homer, for More's *Utopia*, for Augustine's *Confessions*, and for Shakespeare's plays," she said. She explained that St. Thomas Aquinas and our long tradition owed its existence, in part, to Socrates. Considering that Socrates had died to allow us to share in the life of reason (*logos*), Pope Benedict was willing to risk his own life and reputation for Socrates. Would we do otherwise?

College Provost Dr. William Fahey rose next, noting that this day fell on the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross. For pagans and many moderns, the Cross is nothing but a sign of torture and defeat. St. Paul called the crucifixion a "*moria*," a sign of Christian "folly" for the ancient critics of Christianity. The best of the pagans found wisdom through suffering, but often fashioned it into something self-centered. (Oedipus: "It was Apollo, my friends, who brought my bitter sorrows to completion, but the hand that struck me was

none but my own!"). The Cross alone, Dr. Fahey explained, gives true meaning to suffering. Furthermore, suffering cannot be the end for man—the Cross is completed and crowned by the joy of Easter Sunday. So, too, our own suffering must be understood as only part of a journey that ends in true leisure and joy.

Mrs. Debora Enos gave the faculty address, exploring the roots of the word "nostalgia." The word comes from two Greek roots, *nostos* (home) and *algeo* (pain, grief, distress), which suggests that nostalgia is, by no means, always a bad thing. We crave a place of security, safety, and certainty—and the quest for those things sends us, as it sent Odysseus, through elaborate byways that transform us and bring us home as deeper and wider men than those who set out. So should the journey of higher education unfold, Mrs. Enos suggested. Learning is not the accumulation of information, but the transformation of the self through the experience of encountering great minds and ideas.

President Nelson concluded the evening with an exploration of the meaning of "magnanimity," or greatness of soul, which Aristotle used to describe great men—and its transformation through centuries of Christian reflection. One needs something of this quality of greatness of soul even to undertake a liberal arts education, Dr. Nelson explained—since such an endeavor requires the student to explore a variety of viewpoints, consider at once the part and the whole, and respect the variety of opinions without veering away from the Truth. Dr. Nelson ended with John Henry Newman's eloquent picture of the great-souled (magnanimous) man as the ideal product of a liberal education, the person fully-developed in his qualities, open to Truth, and grateful for all he has been given.

Fall lecture series in review

SEPTEMBER 28, 2007

“I Confess the Cross because I Know the Resurrection: An Orthodox View of Theology, Art, and Literature of the Crucifixion,” Dr. Vigen Guroian, Professor of Theology and Ethics, Loyola College

This was the first in a new lecture series, “Children of Abraham: Prospects for Religious Dialogue and Common Ground,” funded by a grant from the Our Sunday Visitor Institute. Dr. Guroian made note of the tendency of modern Western Christians to focus, in their personal piety, on Christ’s human as opposed to His Divine nature. He illustrated his point by juxtaposing examples of ancient Armenian and Byzantine icons of the Crucifixion, which typically depict a triumphant Christ hanged at Golgotha, next to Renaissance and neo-classical portraits of the same, which present a more harrowing image: the suffering, forsaken Christ. Dr. Guroian noted how this diversity in devotion poses challenge to ecumenism between East and West.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2007

“Pinocchio and the Moral Imagination,” Dr. Vigen Guroian, Professor of Theology and Ethics, Loyola College

Students and faculty were treated to a talk building upon Prof. Guroian’s newly re-released *Tending the Heart of Virtue* (Oxford University Press), in which he explores moral and theological themes in the texts of classic children’s stories—contrasting them with the permutations these tales undergo at the hands of the likes of Disney Studios. In his talk, Dr. Guroian criticized the sentimentalized adaptation of the Italian story of Pinocchio—and responded to children’s book author Maurice Sendak, who famously preferred the upbeat, Americanized version. Dr. Guroian explored



Prof. Vigen Guroian addressed students on the theology of icons in the opulently adorned St. Philip Orthodox Church in Nashua as part of the Children of Abraham lecture series.

the Christian themes of sin, punishment, and forgiveness which animate the original tale.

OCTOBER 5, 2007

“Robert Frost and Poetic Dualism,” Dr. Peter Stanlis, Professor Emeritus of English, Rockford College

While he is mostly known as the leading scholar alive on the works of the political philosopher Edmund Burke, this fall Dr. Peter Stanlis spoke about his other lifelong interest, explored in his recently-published book, *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*. His talk focused on what the poet called his philosophical “dualism”—an honest recognition of the apparently conflicting claims of spirit and matter, religion and science, faith and reason. An intimate of the late poet, Dr. Stanlis agreed with Frost that rationalism ruins poems and the humanities. Poems are self-sufficient; they do not require rationalization. Once when Frost was asked what one of his poems meant, his reply was a pithy, “It means exactly what it says.”

OCTOBER 12, 2007

**“Hope and Suffering: The Art of the Baroque,”
David Clayton, Director, ResSource (a center for
Christian artists based in Oxford, England)**

Students gathered in the Ballroom on a crisp Friday evening to meet David Clayton—one of the few living artists who has been trained in the methods of the Old Masters, as well as the techniques of Byzantine iconography. After telling the story of his conversion to Catholicism, which began with an epiphany of the beautiful at the London Oratory, Clayton used slides to illustrate his talk on the nature of Christian art in detail. For the Christian, he said, good art must reflect truth and beauty. It must be true in that it reflects the Church’s world view in both content (*what* is painted) and form (*how* it is painted). Clayton reflected on how the art of the 17th-century Baroque, which is the product of the Counter-Reformation, communicated *through form* the truth about creation. For example, we see in the paintings of Velázquez, how dark shadow is contrasted with bright light. The shadow represents both the sin and suffering inherent in a fallen world, but it is always contrasted with bright light. The baroque artists always tried to ensure the impression that ‘light overcomes the dark’ and they always tried to do it *beautifully*. The message of this art, Clay-

ton said, is that the acknowledgement of suffering is not the *full* truth, because it is transcended by hope through Christ, the Light of the world. The masters of the Baroque demonstrated through visible form—as Pope John Paul II noted in his “Letter to Artists” (1999), writing that the “*beautiful is wedded to the ‘true,’ so that through beautiful art ... souls might be lifted up from the world of the senses to the eternal.*”

NOVEMBER 1, 2007

“New England’s Unsung Saints,” Professor John F. Quinn, Salve Regina University

The College’s celebration of All Saint’s Day began with tales of heroes of the Faith who lived within a few hours of campus, who sowed tiny mustard seeds in hostile Puritan ground. Historian Prof. John Quinn noted that in 1700, Massachusetts decreed life-sentences in prison for any Catholic priests found in the colony. It was not until the 1770s that a very small Catholic community began to make itself known in Boston. It was only with the entry of Catholic France into the Revolution on the rebels’ side that hostility towards Catholicism began to fade—even in Puritan Boston. In 1788, the first Mass was offered in Boston. Prof. Quinn related the stories of Catholic leaders who worked doggedly, despite a terrible priest-shortage, to minister to wide-flung flocks of isolated Catholics. He traced the Church’s growth and the resurgence of anti-Catholic feeling. Prof. Quinn recounted incidents of persecution faced by the budding Church, such as the burning (by a Nativist mob) of the Charlestown convent of Ursulines in 1834, and the brutal assault on Fr. John Bapst in 1854. Fr. Bapst survived the attack, and went on to become the first President of Boston College. The last figure Prof. Quinn covered was Dr. Horatio Storer, a Protestant professor of medicine at Harvard who led the 19th century fight to outlaw abortion in America. Storer later became a Catholic and helped build churches throughout the region. Prof. Quinn noted that there were many more such heroes of the Faith in the New England region, and suggested that their examples inspire the students in an age when the Church faces equal—if very different—obstacles.



David Clayton, iconographer and director of Oxford-based ResSource, speaks to Thomas More College students in the dining hall.

NOVEMBER 1, 2007

"Scholarship and Sanctity," by Fr. Romanus Cessario, O.P.

After celebrating Mass for the Solemnity of All Saint's, Fr. Cessario began his lecture by emphasizing that the purpose of scholarship is the discovery of truth. He noted that, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, "an intellect is said to be good because it knows the True." Therefore, if God is forgotten in the scholarly enterprise, the human race loses its intelligibility, and the pursuit of truth is thwarted or, at least, gravely reduced. Fr. Cessario stressed that it is "risky business to develop the intellectual virtues without the moral

virtues." Accordingly, he turned the discussion to the significance of the monastic pattern of life for the student and the corresponding development of his intellect. In such an organized pattern of self-denial and prayer, the intellect is allowed to unfold its potential without grave disorders of the soul. The student is, then, positioned to discover the True. The monastic pattern of life, Fr. Cessario emphasized, is not simply reserved for those within the religious order; rather, it is a beautiful way for the laity to maintain a holiness of life *within* the world without constant distraction, especially those distractions of popular entertainment that so easily lead us from holiness in thought.

Visit Thomas More College's new website

WWW.THOMASMORECOLLEGE.EDU

Elegantly redesigned, with a fresh feel and improved navigation, the Thomas More College web site now offers more to visitors:

- Descriptions of Thomas More College's new academic centers, such as our Vatican Studies Center
- Online ordering of archived editions of the College's flagship journal of faith and culture, *Second Spring*, and lists of upcoming titles from Second Spring Books, the imprint of the College
- An email newsletter that keeps subscribers up-to-date on what's happening at the College
- Text, audio, and video of guest speakers and performers on campus
- A calendar of upcoming campus events that are open to the public

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of LIBERAL ARTS

Six Manchester Street, Merrimack, NH 03054
Ph (603) 880-8308 | info@ThomasMoreCollege.edu





Vatican Studies Center

TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH

As the semester opened, students who ventured into the Thomas More College bookstore may have heard something unusual coming from the adjoining office—the sound of Arabic on the telephone.

That is because one of our renovated offices now houses Tony Assaf, editor and creator of the Arabic language version of the Catholic Internet news service Zenit. Begun in November 2006, in the wake of Pope Benedict's Regensburg Address, the service is now the main source of information about the Church for media throughout the Arab world. Assaf is also founding-editor of the Arabic edition of the newly-launched Catholic television news agency H20—which produces short news stories for broadcast online and on Catholic TV stations around the world. While both news agencies are based in Rome, the Arabic editions of Zenit and H20 are created and distributed around the world via Internet from Tony's office. In managing these services, Assaf draws on experience with major Italian news networks, the United Nations' World Food Program, and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Assaf is a native speaker of Arabic and is also fluent in Italian, French, and English with an academic knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Syro-Aramaic.)

But Zenit and H20 are only two of the activities of the chronically-busy Mr. Assaf, a Maronite Catholic journalist and

translator who was born in Lebanon and studied philosophy, theology, and communications in Rome. Tony and his wife Andrea Kirk Assaf—they met at a Mass in Rome—spent several years writing for the authoritative magazine *Inside the Vatican*, and they bring that experience to bear in their work for Thomas More College. Tony heads the College's new **Vatican Studies Center**, which operates from Merrimack and from our campus in Rome.

The idea for the Center grew out of the Vatican Forum lecture series begun by Andrea in 2003 in the Holy City. As she told *Communitas*: "That was the year the sex-abuse crisis really exploded in the press, and Rome was suddenly full of journalists who didn't understand how the Vatican worked. They thought it was just like the White House—with a press secretary who issued official statements at organized briefings. Of course, that isn't the case. The Vatican, for better or worse, doesn't interact that way with the media. Instead, you would sometimes get one outspoken official or another who would make a personal statement to a reporter—and the press would trumpet that as the Holy See's position. They didn't know any better. Also, a vast amount of misinformation was circulating about the Church, her structures, teachings, and traditions. At best, the coverage was superficial and didn't do justice to the Church's position."



Andrea decided to organize a series of lectures and symposia which would offer world journalists, as well as students and seminarians in Rome, an informed and intelligent perspective about current cultural controversies or issues in the news involving the Church—through meetings with great thinkers, Church officials, and experts affiliated with the many universities and seminaries of the city. Vatican Forum speakers have included theologians, journalists, clergy, and academics of various specialties addressing reporters from the Associated Press, Fox News, *The Wall Street Journal*, Zenit News Agency, *Inside the Vatican* magazine, *Catholic World Report*, Reuters, *Newsweek* magazine, *The National Catholic Reporter*, Vatican Radio, *Rome Reports*, *Osservatore Romano*, CNN, BBC, and *The National Catholic Register*. Vatican Forum events in 2007 included:

- **“An Insider’s View of the Vatican,”** an in-house lecture for Thomas More College students with Peter Martin of the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See and Kishore Jayabala of the Acton Institute (formerly of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace)
- **“The Problem of Modernism in the Thought of Flannery O’Connor and Benedict XVI,”** with Dr. Hank Edmondson, Georgia State College
- **“Chesterton on the Youth of the Church,”** with Dale Alquist, President of the Chesterton Society
- **“The Intelligible Sphere: Religion and Civil Society in the 21st Century,”** by Dr. John Farina George Mason University, Florence campus
- **“The God That Did Not Fail: How Religion Built and Sustains the West,”** by Dr. Robert Royal, President of the Faith and Reason Institute, delivered

to Thomas More College students and faculty in Rome.

The Vatican Forum will continue its activities, now as part of the work of Thomas More College’s Vatican Studies Center. Operating on two continents, the Center aims to provide a resource center for students and the general public for the study of the Vatican’s historic and ongoing role in world civilization. Its lectures, programs, and pilgrimages are intended to spread understanding of Church teaching and social thought, as well as to explore their applications in individual lives and in public policy.

Just how can the Vatican Studies Center achieve these lofty missions? In little ways that can have a big impact. In addition to enriching the College’s Rome semester with speakers and symposia, it will bring experts on papal history and Church teaching to New England to address and field questions from the general public, students, faculty, and religious leaders across the region. The Center is also arranging internships for students and alumni with Catholic media organizations in Rome and around the world.

Operating on two continents, the Vatican Studies Center aims to provide a resource center for students and the general public for the study of the Vatican’s historic and ongoing role in world civilization.



In Rome, the Center will also offer pilgrimages for English-speaking Christians who want to experience a two-week pilgrimage so they can gain a deeper understanding of Christianity's roots. It will educate teachers, students, and the public about Church teaching and doctrine through its Vatican Forum lecture series, as well as debates, seminars, and high-profile conferences that cover a wide range of issues, including Catholic social thought, the relationship between faith and reason, sacred Scripture, liturgy, art, music, bioethics, and other Church issues and trends.

The Vatican Studies Center will be publishing its own monographs through the College press. Currently, speakers in the Vatican forum will be featured in the College's journal, *Second Spring*, edited by Stratford Caldecott. The Center intends to work with Second Spring Books to commission the publication of biographies, translations of important works, histories, fiction, and poetry that stimulate a Culture of Life in our time. Mr. Assaf plans to prepare and support Catholic high school teachers by conducting teacher training programs and by publishing an array of teacher's and student's guides to the sacraments and Catholic devotions.

(Left) Thomas More's First Vatican Forum event in Rome featured Dr. Robert Royal of the Faith and Reason Institute.

(Middle) Vatican Forum founder Andrea Kirk Assaf reading at the Midnight Mass in 2004 at St. Peter's Basilica in the presence of Pope John Paul II.

(Right) Vatican Studies Center director Tony Assaf greeting Pope John Paul II at the Vatican in 2004.

THE LATEST FROM THE VATICAN FORUM

Blessed Pius IX Comes to the Thomas More College Cafeteria

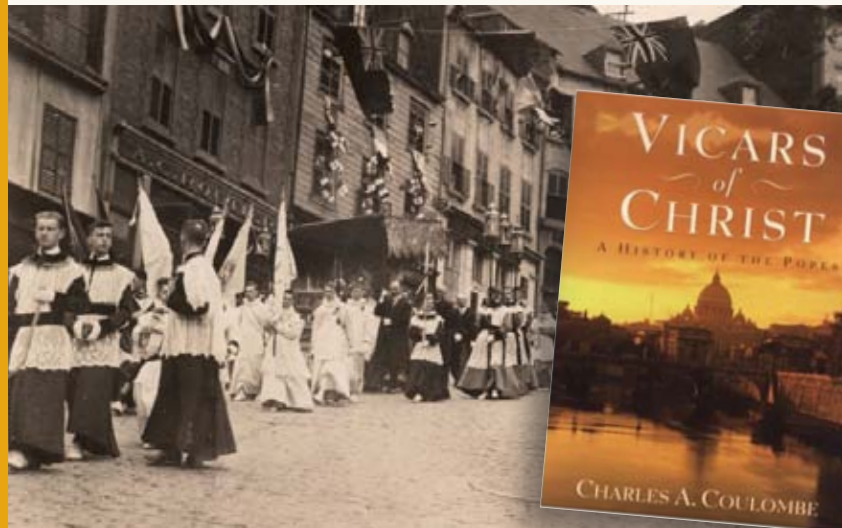
The first Vatican Forum event on the Merrimack campus took place just before the Feast of the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul. In a dinner lecture, Charles A. Coulombe, Knight Commander of the Papal Order of St. Sylvester, spoke about the Papal Zouaves, the subject of his forthcoming book, *The Pope's Legions: The Remarkable Story of the Papal Zouaves* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008).

These companies of international Catholic volunteers struggled from 1860-70 to defend the Papal States and Blessed Pius IX against attack. One volunteer was Maximin Giraud, who with Melanie Calvat had experienced a vision of the Virgin of La Salette. Others included heirs to two European thrones; descendants of the leaders of the Vendee rising in 1793; a future casualty at the Little Big Horn; one of the first Australian poets; and the father of a saint.

The hastily organized, outnumbered papal force acquitted itself bravely against Garibaldi's invaders in numerous battles before its final defeat on September 20, 1870—when Pius IX surrendered, and became the "Prisoner of the Vatican."

But former Zouaves went on serving the Church, playing an important role in every political struggle in which she was concerned, forming Catholic political parties and swelling the ranks of Catholic Action. For instance, in 1880, Capt. Leopold Joubert, late of the Papal Zouaves, hired former colleagues to train a native army for the White Fathers to fight slave traders in Africa.

Coulombe is the author of several books, including *Vicars of Christ: A History of the Popes*. A former contributing editor for *The National Catholic Register*, he has published innumerable articles, and lectured at such universities as Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, John Carroll, and USC. He is co-author, with Thomas More College's Writer-in-Residence Dr. John Zmirak, of the upcoming *The Bad Catholic's Guide to Vatican II* (Crossroad, 2008).



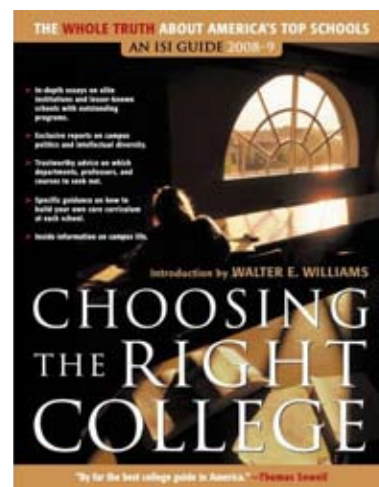
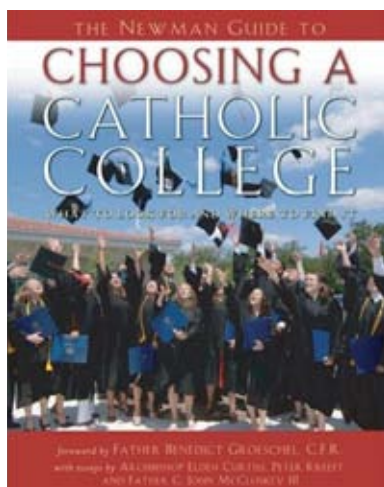
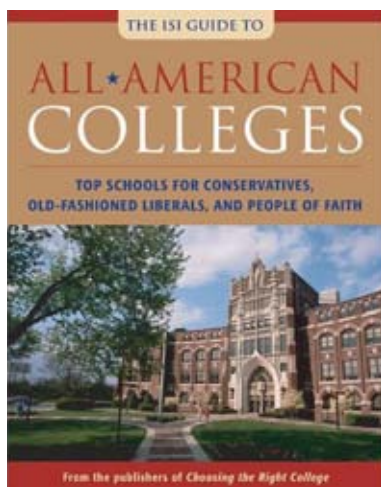
Thomas More College lauded in national college guides as ‘rigorous’ and ‘Joyfully Catholic’

Once again, Thomas More College is grateful to note its favorable inclusion in national college resources. The College was lauded in the newly-released 2007-2008 edition of Intercollegiate Studies Institute’s *Choosing the Right College: The Whole Truth About America’s Top Schools* (available at www.collegeguide.org), a book devoted to judging schools for their intellectual excellence, true academic freedom, and devotion to the traditional mission of liberal arts education. Thomas More College has been recommended in every edition of the guide since its inception in 1994.

Thomas More College was also singled out for inclusion in the recently-released *All American Colleges: 50 Top Schools for Conservatives, Old-Fashioned Liberals, and People of Faith*. These books’ entries on the College were compiled after a series of on-campus interviews and extensive research via email with students, teachers, and alumni. The entries reflect the healthy growth that the College is experiencing, even as it undergoes transitions. The College has seen the entrance of new faculty and staff members, as well as a new administration—but the same mission and devotion to offering a transformative education in the liberal arts through the Catholic humanist worldview that inspired our namesake remains.

While its entries on other colleges frequently point out how the schools fall short of their stated missions, shy away from the faiths which founded them, or allow students to miss important aspects of liberal learning, *Choosing the Right College* praised Thomas More College for staying true, keeping focused, and holding its students to high standards. It noted that the core curriculum in place at the College is one of the strongest in America and that Thomas More College graduates are known for their creativity and intellectual ambition.

A third, and most gratifying, tribute to the College came with the publication of *The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College*—published by The Cardinal Newman Society (www.cardinalnewmansociety.org), which has, since 1993, monitored the curricula, campus life, and public discourse of Catholic-identified colleges across the United States. The Newman Guide classified Thomas More College as “Joyfully Catholic,” and said that the school provides “a rigorous, classical education.” The editors also wrote that the College “has long emphasized its intellectual offerings and has recently strengthened its already notable Catholic identity.”



On Rereading

BY CHRISTOPHER O. BLUM,
PROFESSOR OF HUMANITIES

It seems almost to be a definition of a teacher to say that he is one who regularly rereads good books. In this regard, a teacher is like the master of any craft. The master baker experiments with strudels and tortes, but he also makes the best baguette. The master cabinet-maker stretches his talents with inlaid patterns of rare woods, but is daily relied upon for his solid dovetails in pine and oak. So also the teacher seeks to test himself against harder and more significant works than he has yet read—perhaps St. Augustine on the Trinity, or the *Aeneid* in the original Latin—but also hones his abilities by rereading the books that he regularly teaches.

This practice of the regular rereading of good books seems also to be appropriate, and even necessary, for the pursuit of wisdom. It was almost two centuries ago that the French Catholic man of letters Louis de Bonald warned that “the immense quantity of books makes us read more, and, among the society of the dead as among that of the living, an overextended acquaintance does not leave enough time for good friendships to form.” If the magnanimous man walks and speaks slowly because his mind dwells only on the few matters that are of the greatest importance, then the wise man, we might infer, ought to read only those few books that are truly most significant, and to reread them often

enough that they shape the contours of his mind. For the teacher is called to be wise, and to form lasting friendships with the wise who have gone before so as to be able to hand on their hard-won legacy.

It was in my fourth year at the University of Virginia that my own mentor, a professor in the Department of English Literature, taught me about the importance of rereading. He faced a difficult public presentation before a critical audience at one of the Ivy League universities. I was then working as a carpenter’s helper at his home and so regularly joined his family for lunch. In a few minutes of conversation one day, he told me about the task he faced, and explained to me that he was preparing for it by rereading Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. To think like Aristotle, he said, was to think rationally and accurately. In the event, his presentation was well-received, thanks in part, I believe, to his chosen

mode of preparation. I have since learned to see in it an appropriate image of the teacher’s pursuit of wisdom. For just as every Christian is called to reread the Sacred Scriptures regularly and with attention, submitting his own mind to their teaching and measuring his own thoughts against the standard that they set, so also the teacher—a particular kind of craftsman within the community that is the Church—is called to the additional task of rereading those texts that are the measure of his mind, immortal texts like the *Aeneid*, *King Lear*, Augustine’s *Confessions*, and, yes, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The teacher is called to be wise, and to form lasting friendships with the wise who have gone before so as to be able to hand on their hard-won legacy.



Found in Translation

Dr. William Fahey's quest for the Catholic political tradition

Secret archives and lost manuscripts are not just the stuff of summer fiction. Recently, the Provost of Thomas More College, Dr. William Fahey, travelled throughout Great Britain looking at early printed books and little-known manuscripts in his scholarly effort to recover the political vision of St. Robert Bellarmine.

Dr. Fahey's travels took him to a quiet and still remote corner of northeast England: the Ribble valley, lost somewhere between Lancashire and Yorkshire, a place very much the image and inspiration of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Shire*. Here is found one of Europe's oldest Catholic schools, Stonyhurst College. The school's original location was at St. Omers in France. Established by the Jesuits with funds from Philip II, the college was to educate the sons of British Catholics. This foreign establishment was needed to counter the extreme measures and persecution of Catholicism undertaken by Elizabeth Tudor. In the British Isles, all Catholic children above the age of seven were to be taken away from their parents for education in Protestant households. "By this means," wrote William Cecil, Secretary of State to the "Virgin Queen," "you shall under the colour of education, have them as hostages of their parents' fidelities... and by this means, their number will be quickly lessened." That coercive measure was promulgated in 1583 and within a year Fr. Robert Person, S.J., initiated the idea of a school for the education of the British faithful. The College was staffed by Jesuits and

formed its young men along the principles set out in the *Ratio Studiorum*, the educational plan followed by most Jesuit schools and colleges until the Second World War. In addition to the rigors of a humanist education, the young men were nourished by a rich sacramental life and strong Marian devotion. Many of the graduates returned to Britain to stand fast in the face of over a century of persecution. Nearly two dozen graduates are documented martyrs; fifteen have been canonized.

For two hundred years, the College was one of the only places for British Catholics to receive a formal education with countrymen of their faith. Through those centuries, the graduates of the school returned and took up places as quiet witnesses for the Faith in England. In truth, graduates of the school were not always demure, however, and one usually finds Stonyhurst alumni taking leadership roles in the Jacobite uprisings, which attempted to restore the legitimate ruling family—the Stuarts—to the throne.

The present location of Stonyhurst College, outside of the English village of Hurst Green, dates back to 1794. To the English country house that inspired Arthur Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles* came British refugees of the French Revolution. The students and faculty established themselves in the decrepit Stonyhurst Hall, one of the homes of the aristocratic Catholic Weld family. The original intention was for the Welds to give use of the hall and





lands to the exiled school until such time as they could reclaim their property on the Continent. That time has never come and the College is now one of the oldest and most prestigious academic institutes in Europe. Among its graduates one finds Titus Oates, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Plunkett, Fr. Bede Jarrett, O.P., Fr. Martin D'Arcy, S.J., as well as Americans such as John Carroll—the first Archbishop of Baltimore and founder of Georgetown University, and his brother, Charles Carroll—signer of the Declaration of Independence. Seven Stonyhurst “old boys” earned the Victoria Cross, Great Britain’s highest military distinction. Gerard Manley Hopkins studied philosophy and taught classics there for a time. After the English Seminary College was evacuated from Rome during the Second World War, it was temporarily established at Stonyhurst; and J.R.R. Tolkien spent his summers in residence there so as to be close to his son Michael. Considerable portions of the *Lord of the Rings* were written during this time and much of the area clearly shaped Tolkien’s imagination.

Over the last few years, the treasures of Stonyhurst have been undergoing careful cataloging by the Curator, Mrs. Jan Graffius. Thousands of priceless books

and manuscripts on Catholicism in the British Isles have been preserved, along with a wonderful collection of early printed books from various printing houses in Europe. Mrs. Graffius has even initiated a revived Press—the St. Omers Press, dedicated to printing high-quality editions of some of the art and rare works housed in the libraries and museum at Stonyhurst. Matching and surpassing these earthly treasures are hundreds of relics, many of them of the British martyrs. Amongst these are two hats of St. Thomas More: one a jaunty green felt hat left accidentally at a friend’s house in Flanders, the other an embroidered sleeping cap fashioned perhaps by his daughter Meg. There is also the cord which bound St. Edmund Campion as he was led to his execution. Perhaps the greatest treasure of all is one of the few authenticated fragments from Jesus’ Crown of Thorns. It is a full *spina*—or thorn—taken from the Sainte Chapelle of St. Louis, set among pearls, and given as a wedding present to Mary Queen of Scots. Before her martyrdom, it was given as a consolation to Bl. Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland, who went on to lead the Catholic uprising against Elizabeth in 1569.

At Stonyhurst, in what are called the Square and Arundel libraries, surrounded by books and manuscripts dating back to the sixteenth century, Dr. Fahey examined five original manuscripts of St. Robert Bellarmine’s writings. A manuscript, properly understood, is the original copy of an author’s work, written in his own handwriting. Dr. Fahey was recently awarded an Earhart Fellowship in support of his work of Bellarmine’s political writing. Known chiefly as a generous apologist for the Catholic Faith, Robert Bellarmine and his political works have been neglected of late. Yet the political work of Bellarmine is one of the finest examples of continuity and adaptation in an age of transition. Trained both as a Thomist and as a humanist, Bellarmine brought together these traditions and placed his learning at the service of the Church



←
St. Thomas More's night cap (left) and an early edition of St. Robert Bellarmine's *De Officio Principis Christiani*, signed by Bellarmine and sent to an English Catholic (right)



and his society. Bellarmine's writings preserve the clear Aristotelian emphasis on the virtues within political life and the desire to encourage a balanced polity under monarchical rule. Yet Bellarmine was not shy about adapting his methods of research and style of writing to suit the taste of the age, taking great interest in the new learning of humanism, especially in its rich development of the historical imagination.

Due to his particular fondness for the British Isles and his desire to bring the British people back into the Catholic fold, St. Robert dedicated considerable time sparring with Anglican opponents over the nature of the political order. In particular, Bellarmine championed the superiority of the moral realm over the merely temporal, continuing the Patristic and Medieval tradition of recognizing the significance of the secular, while refusing to permit political and economic affairs to be stripped of a religious dimension. Indeed, St. Robert argued consistently with British and Continental authors that the Papacy had a distinct role to play even in the temporal order. Through his spiritual and moral authority, the Pope could rebuke and effectively nullify the legitimacy of political authority. Although the Papal intervention was largely sacramental and moral, its effects were real and its use legitimate, both according to European political tradition and scriptural author-

ity. The legacy of Bellarmine's thought is evident in Catholic social and economic teaching, which consistently defends the primacy of moral order, in general, and Catholic magisterial authority, in particular. During the French Revolution, five treatise of Bellarmine were smuggled from the Catholic school in France to

Stonyhurst. How they ever left Rome and made their way to France remains a mystery.

At Stonyhurst, in what are called the Square and Arundel libraries, surrounded by books and manuscripts dating back to the sixteenth century, Dr. Fahey examined five original manuscripts of St. Robert Bellarmine's writings.

Dr. Fahey's work centered on an examination of one of Bellarmine's last treatise, the *De Officio Principis Christiani* ("The Office of the Christian Prince"): a work of three books considering the virtues necessary to govern men, along with a series of short biographies of great leaders from the Old Testament and medieval history. The Stonyhurst manuscript of the *De Officio* contains marginal notes and

corrections not in the printed Latin edition. Indeed, there are whole sections of the manuscript which are not included in the printed volume available to scholars. While at Stonyhurst, Dr. Fahey discovered four pages of Bellarmine's text that had been placed in another one of St. Robert's manuscripts and, thus, never included in the scholarly editions. Over the next few years, he will be working to reconstruct a proper Latin edition of the *De Officio* and to assemble an anthology of St. Robert Bellarmine's political and legal writings, which he will then translate into English.

FALL 2007 STUDENT ACTIVITIES

9/8 - Orientation hike @ Mt. Cardigan
w/ Dr. Fahey, Dr. Blum, and Mr. Kitzinger

9/22 - Regensburg Moment program, speeches
by Dr. Mary Mumbach and
Dr. Glenn Arbery at Assumption College

10/5 - Trip to Robert Frost farm

10/19 - Film showing: *Babette's Feast*

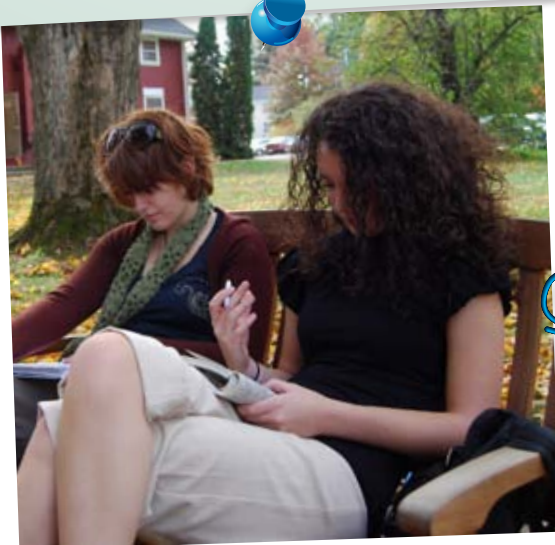
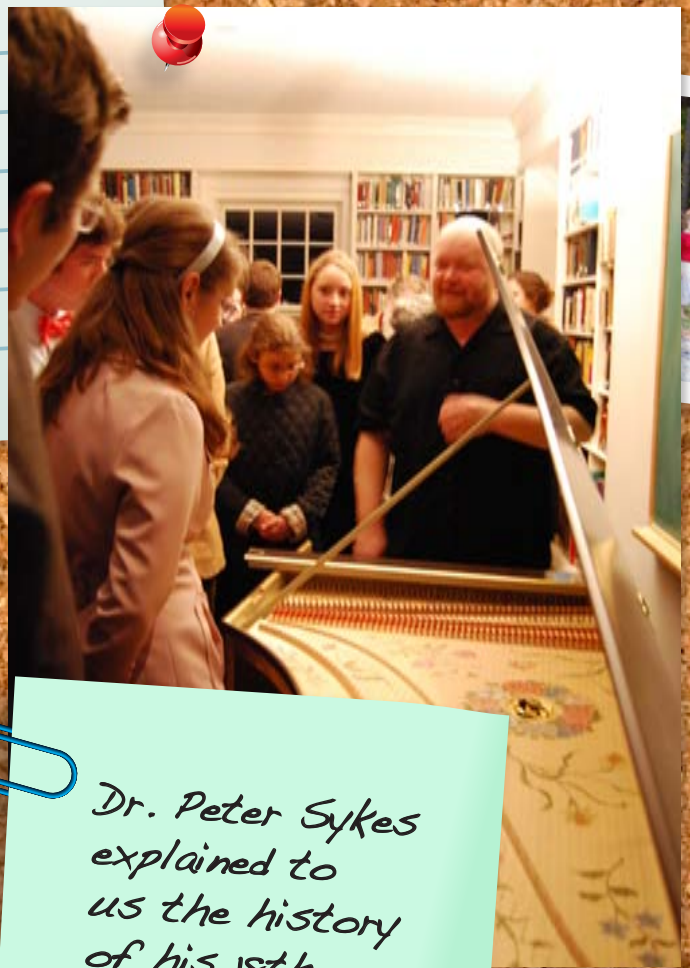
10/20 - FALL BONFIRE!

10/26 - String quartet with Peter Sykes per-
forming Bach's Goldberg Variations

10/27 - Pumpkin carving and Halloween Dance
in the Cafe

11/1 - Solemnity of All Saints:
Romanus Cessario, O.P.

11/9 - Portland String Quartet
performing Haydn's String
Quartet in C Major and
Eliot's "Shaker Variations"



Studying...
or trying!

Dr. Peter Sykes
explained to
us the history
of his 18th
century replica
harpsichord



*Saints vs.
Sinners*



*Oktoberfest 10/23
We enjoyed wurst and
red cabbage, prepared by
Tony Assaf and German-
born Denis Kitzinger,
TMC's director of
Student Life*



Enjoying the fall!



@ Robert Frost's farm



the string quartet

The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford

MOVIE REVIEW BY PAUL CONNELL,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE

Who is the hero? Prospective students of Thomas More College are asked to write an essay answering this question as part of their application process. Such is the importance we place here at the College on the study of this figure.

The hero comes in many forms: the quasi-divine warrior, the chivalric knight, the freedom-fighter, the outlaw. In whatever form in whatever age, the persistence of the hero attests to the fact that there will always be men who will not accept a purely mundane existence, who will desire a life beyond mere comfort and security, who will withstand the temptation to mediocrity.

How would one know what “truth,” “honor,” “loyalty,” and “courage,” looked like unless these qualities were somehow embodied? Yet a hero stands apart from his deeds, with his heroic essentials revealed less in the doing than in their memory.

An instance of how the figure of the hero is manifested in the modern world can be found in the recently released *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*. Adapted from a novel by award-winning Catholic novelist Ron Hansen (who gave the Commencement address at the College in May 2007), and written/directed by Andrew Dominik, the film traces the last months in the life of Jesse James, his “assassination” by Robert Ford, and the troubling aftermath of the event.

Filmed in the Canadian Rockies, the scenery is at times haunting, but it is also harsh and terrifying, cold as the northern sky to which the camera often turns. The setting may be nineteenth-century frontier America, but make no mistake: this is the modern world, a world of rugged individualism; corrupt railroads and banks; rough, lonely towns; and strangely claustrophobic interiors. Most men are out for themselves, and then there is Jesse James, a folk hero among the people, one who stands apart: violent and yet polite and reserved, he has robbed banks, stagecoaches, and trains and killed many men.

How can this person be thought of as heroic? Modern literature and myth attest to the fact

that heroes do not come in pure form as in previous eras, but are distorted in their presentation, looking more like their opposite. As Catholic cultural theorist Marshall McLuhan has noted, because of the modern world’s intolerance of passion, passion is forced into monstrous, outlaw forms such as we see in Faulkner’s Joe Christmas, Emily Brontë’s Heathcliff, and the Jesse James of frontier legend. In James’ case, we might see him as a figure called forth by the people, the expression of a deep longing for a man of a type too scarce in the American experience.

Jesse James is a man of few words; he tends to act rather than speak; intuitively he knows that his band of men will betray him and that Robert Ford will assassinate (and not merely kill) him. In fact, James seems to set up the situation leading to his shooting, so that he will ultimately triumph in the manner of his death, leaving Robert Ford to suffer ignominy and be branded forever as a coward.

Robert Ford stands as a warning for those who would create an idol out of the hero. Paradoxically Ford—far from hating James—had long adored him and even emulated him. That type of identification turns the desire for the heroic into the reverse, with Ford standing as the double, the impostor, who is reviled by the people for his self-serving and cowardly act. He becomes a player in what is essentially a circus, baring forth his essentially venal character, and is himself ultimately killed; but in that instance, unlike James’s, there is a sense of rectitude and of fate running its course.



Feasts and Seasons

HOLY GROUNDHOGS! FEAST OF CANDLEMAS—FEBRUARY 2



Set on the 40th day after Christmas, this feast marks the day when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem in obedience to the law. On this feast day, the Church has traditionally blessed candles and distributed them to the congregation to mark the entry of Christ, light of the world, into His father's Temple. From this custom, the day took the name Candlemas.

The day also marks the Presentation of Christ. Since every child born carries the legacy of Adam and Eve's rebellion, each son or daughter had to be presented to God, then "ransomed" back with a lamb or some birds, which were sacrificed in the Temple. Church fathers have pointed out that the child Jesus carried no taint of sin, and did not really need to be redeemed back. Jesus would go on to become *the* sacrificial Lamb, the ransom paid to God for all the sins of men; so the Presentation of Christ in the Temple serves as a little prefigurement of Calvary. This makes it a fitting time to finally take down all those Christmas decorations.

Because it marks one of the transitional moments in the calendar, the weather on this feast of lights was chosen to forecast the coming of spring. As the old poem goes: *"If Candlemas be fair and bright, Winter has another flight. If Candlemas brings clouds and rain, Winter will not come again."*

German immigrants who came to America in the 18th century recalled this ancient tradition but felt uncomfortable with its Catholic associations. So in good Protestant fashion they replaced Our Lady with a groundhog. That's why Americans think of the Feast of the Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Christ as the day on which Bill Murray romances Andie MacDowell under the benevolent patronage of Punxatawney Phil.



Groundhog Stew

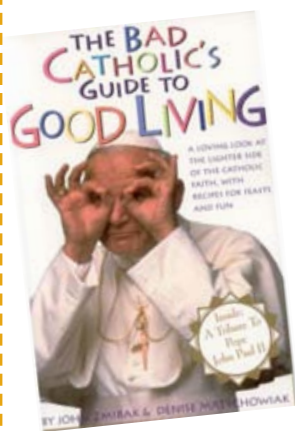
A rustic treat your guests will never forget.

1 woodchuck
3 onions, sliced
1/2 cup celery, sliced
Vinegar and water
Salt and pepper
Cloves

Clean woodchuck; cut into serving pieces. Soak overnight in a solution of equal parts of water and vinegar with two sliced onions and a little salt. Drain, wash, and wipe. Parboil 20 minutes, drain, and cover with fresh boiling water. Add one sliced onion, celery, a few cloves, and salt and pepper to taste. Thicken gravy with flour.

CELEBRATE THE FEAST

As is traditional, take down your Yuletide decorations and make them into a bonfire—especially fun with an artificial tree. (Please note: Unless you are struggling to avoid foreclosure and hope to collect an insurance payment, it is best to do this outside.)



Then attend your local parish's lavish celebration of this feast, which is sure to include a solemn procession, the formal blessing of candles, and polyphonic choral renditions of traditional chants such as *"Adorna thalamum tuum, Sion."* Bring along your groundhog, to have him blessed.

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

A Student Presidential Survey



The study of political science at Thomas More College is meant to educate the student in prudence, or practical wisdom. The editors of *Communitas* decided to tap into the prudence of Thomas More College students by posing them a sharp political dichotomy between two historical figures whose writings they have studied in this year's Humanities sequence. An informal, lighthearted survey of students asked them to "vote" in an imaginary presidential campaign that offered just two candidates: John Calvin and Niccolo Machiavelli.



THE RESULTS

Emily Wilson, '10: "I'd vote for Macchiavelli, who was a great admirer of Republican Rome. In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli points out the evils of tyranny and honors those who expelled the tyrannical Tarquins from Rome. Machiavelli would be more likely to preserve a democratic order than Calvin—who, believing that he is absolutely right, would not look for input from citizens in the formation of law."

Jack Betz, '11: "In such a bleak presidential race, I would most certainly choose John Calvin. While I cannot agree with him on the finer issues of Christian worship, we at least concur that there is a God and that Christ is the Messiah—whereas the unbelieving Machiavelli advocates ruthless ambition. Additionally, Calvin's experience as leader of the community in Geneva demonstrated that he was more than capable as an administrator."

Catherine Lloyd, '11: "Undoubtedly Machiavelli. While many of his ideas are radical and even extreme, he seems to me to have had a firm grasp of human nature, and the self-confidence needed to properly run a state. He wrote that the leader of a state should work tirelessly at the various aspects of leadership (such as the art of war), and that the apparent grandeur and glory of the person holding office is important for the psyche of the people. Lastly, unlike Calvin, Machiavelli clearly had a passion for politics. (For heaven's sake, the man wrote hundreds of pages about it.) One is always better at, and takes more pride in, what he loves."

Nicholas Rohlfing, '08: "Machiavelli, because he would get things done. There would be no bickering, no whining, and no problems from the Congress or the media. He would consolidate power, makes examples of his opponents through a tasteful execution or two, and that would be that. Sure, he might be oppressive, but he'd watch out for the Common Good as well as his own."

Beatrice Kniaz, '08: "I'd hesitantly choose John Calvin. At least he believed in virtue and favored religion dominating the government, rather than the other way around—whereas Machiavelli believed in power politics, and would subject everything to the State, including the Church. Indeed, Machiavelli ultimately saw the State as being above right and wrong. Calvin was a man of order, unifying the smaller Protestant congregations. Perhaps Calvin could unify our country. On the other hand, he would probably shut down Thomas More College."

Ruminatio

considerations from an academic life

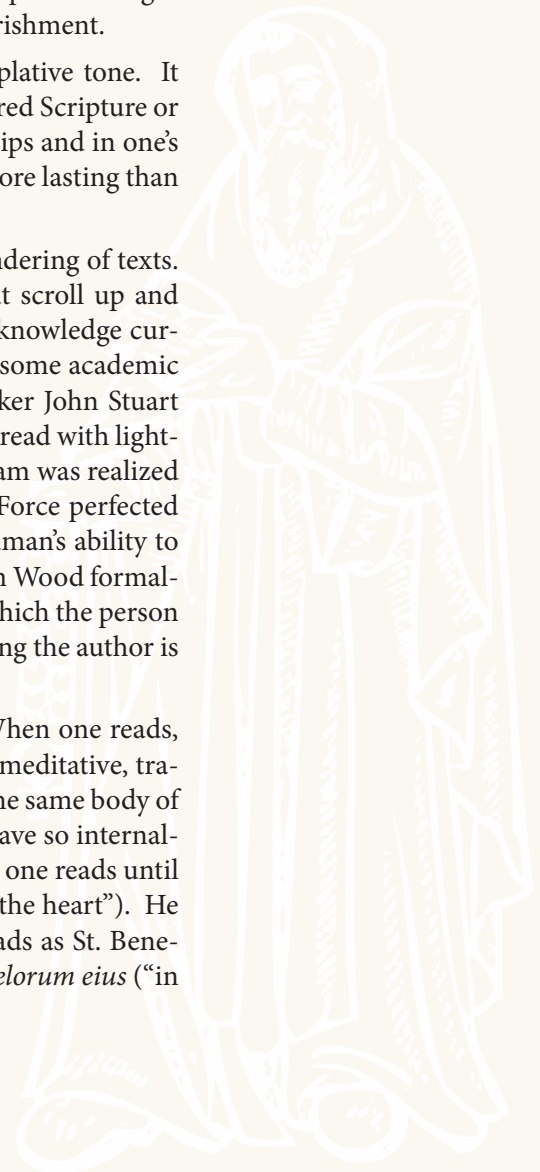
BY WILLIAM FAHEY, PROVOST AND PROFESSOR OF HUMANITIES

“To ruminate,” Dr. Johnson tells us, is “to chew the cud,” like an ox. Yet Johnson goes on in his famous dictionary to state that “to ruminate” is also “to muse on” and “to meditate over and over again.” This page will be just that, my ox-like ponderings about things that I have mused over, chewed upon, and found tasty. The expression, in fact, entered into modern languages from Latin: *rumino*, *ruminare*—to chew. Virgil sings of the happy bull who *ilice sub nigra pallentis ruminat herbas* (“beneath the dark holm-oak chews upon his bright grass).” Having tried green teas, I prefer a different sort of nourishment.

For the monks of the West, rumination took on a contemplative tone. It described the practice of slow reading, of taking a line from Sacred Scripture or pagan literature and turning it over and over again upon one’s lips and in one’s heart. Monastic *ruminatio* was the mastication of something more lasting than grass. To ruminate was to nourish the mind and soul.

Our hasty age has largely forgotten this steady and slow pondering of texts. We read to win information; we gaze not on paper pages, but scroll up and down the luminous nothing of the Internet in search of some knowledge currency that we fool ourselves will be of profit. Our age, even in some academic environments, promotes “speed reading.” The utilitarian thinker John Stuart Mill yearned for a method by which humans could be taught to read with lightning rapidity, to absorb the page rather than the word. His dream was realized shortly before the Second World War. The United States Air Force perfected techniques to link men with machines so as to increase the human’s ability to process information. It was at the University of Utah that Evelyn Wood formalized the process and coined the method of “speed reading,” in which the person looking at a text “gets the information, feeling, and understanding the author is trying to convey.” The word was no longer important.

I prefer the advice of the Cistercian Arnoul of Bohériss: “When one reads, one should seek savor, not information.” This is the active, but meditative, tradition of reading that we have lost—to read and read and read the same body of literature, or better the same text, or best a few lines, until we have so internalized them that they inform and nourish us. In such a tradition, one reads until he can taste the reading with the *palatum cordis* (“the palate of the heart”). He reads with determination and seriousness and true joy. He reads as St. Benedict, the master of Arnoul, wrote *in conspectu Divinitatis et angelorum eius* (“in the presence of God and his angels”).



think again.

Was Pope John Paul I assassinated?

Was Pope Pius XII in league with Hitler?

Does strict Catholic teaching relegate pagans to Hell?

Was Galileo a martyr for science, persecuted by the Inquisition for teaching that the earth moved round the sun?

Did the ancients believe the earth was flat?

Did Jesus have a child with Mary Magdalen?

It would not take much intellectual effort to establish that the answer to all these questions is the same: *No*. But isn't it amazing how many people think the opposite? Maybe the questionable word in that last question is "think." These prejudices and distortions of the truth are passed from mind to mind, sometimes through books and newspaper articles, without much that you could call *thought* really taking place at all. Most people, without realizing it, acquire their fundamental beliefs the way a magnet acquires iron filings: they "attract" the notions

that appeal to them, the things they want to believe, and those beliefs tend to stick. They are rarely examined; instead they help to define the shape of our thought, the pattern of the invisible field of force in which we are content to live.

In his book *The Common Man*, G.K. Chesterton argued that we are all secretly philosophers; but most of us are bad philosophers. We do not know how to think carefully or coherently. As a result, we think carelessly and incoherently, both about ideas and about facts.

It is the purpose of the Liberal Arts to make good philosophers of us: to teach us to think for ourselves, to develop the habits of coherent inquiry into truth. We need to make up our own minds, not make do with what Chesterton calls "the tags and tail-ends of somebody else's thinking" (and of someone else's bad thinking at that).

I answered those first six questions with a *No*. But don't take my word for it.

Stratford Caldecott

Stratford Caldecott
Editor, *Second Spring*



THOMAS MORE COLLEGE
of LIBERAL ARTS

Six Manchester Street
Merrimack, NH 03054

www.ThomasMoreCollege.edu



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