



Basilian Fathers

BICENTENNIAL • 2022

St. Thomas Aquinas (ca 1225 Naples-1274 Southern France)

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As one of the major patron saints of the Priests of St. Basil, we honor his memory, try to emulate his holiness and virtue, and pray for his continuing care for us.

His life is an inspiration for us. Educated in the monastery school of Monte Cassino, then in the newly founded University of Naples from age 15, he chose the mendicant Order of Preachers to be a priest-teacher seeking “Evangelical Perfection” in radical poverty, obedience and chastity.¹ From there he joined his confrère Professor Albert as his 20 year-old student at the great University of Paris, following him to Cologne and returning as professor himself to Paris from 1252. This “dumb ox” was to have his voice heard thunderously throughout the

¹ Joseph Pieper, Guide to Thomas Aquinas, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991 (original edition in German: Hinführung zu Thomas von Aquin, Kösel-Verlag, Munich)

world, although he remained a self-effacing priest, praying for wisdom, yes, but also for serenity without frivolity, and maturity without self-importance. He avoided pomposity in life and in his writing, but sought truth passionately in every quarter, truth in every argument, truth about God above all, but creation's truth as well as that found in culture. He is the most excellent general teacher (*communis*: for the entire community of God's people) and yet universal in the true spirit of education in and about all things. Known best for his philosophical and theological works, written while leading a very active life, he was also a formidable mystic, sublime poet, and ambassador of popes, beautiful model of goodness, discipline and knowledge for Basilians and for the world.

Canonized just 50 years after his death, he was named Doctor of the Church in 1567, and our patron from the founding of the Basilian community in 1822. Not only did we study his way of thought as priests, we also taught his methods in seminaries, *collèges* and universities to lay and clerical students, as we continue to do in all our apostolates.

Coming from Waco to Houston in 1900, we established St. Thomas High School as well as the minor seminary of St. Mary's, where St. Thomas played a definitive role. Then, when asked to come to Rochester at the first-called Cathedral School, subsequently Rochester Catholic High School, it became The Aquinas Institute when we took charge in 1922. Thomistic studies were fundamental at St. Michael's College School in Toronto from its very beginnings under Mgr. Charbonneau (an alumnus of our school in Annonay), but we also brought two of the 20th century's greatest scholars of Aquinas to lecture and teach there: Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain. Basilian scholarship has also contributed to many fine works on Thomistic learning, most recently at the Center named after him in Houston. The patronage of Thomas continues to help us flourish in Mexico and Colombia. *Vivat Tomaso de Aquino!*

"O salutaris hostia quae coeli pandis ostium.

Bella praemunt hostilia: Da robur fer auxilium.

Uni trinoque Domino, Sit sempiterna gloria,

Qui vitam sine termino, Nobis donet in patria. Amen"

"Grant me, O Lord my God, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you. Amen."