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BLACKFRIARS

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**Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati:
Fellowship for Catholic
Young Adults**

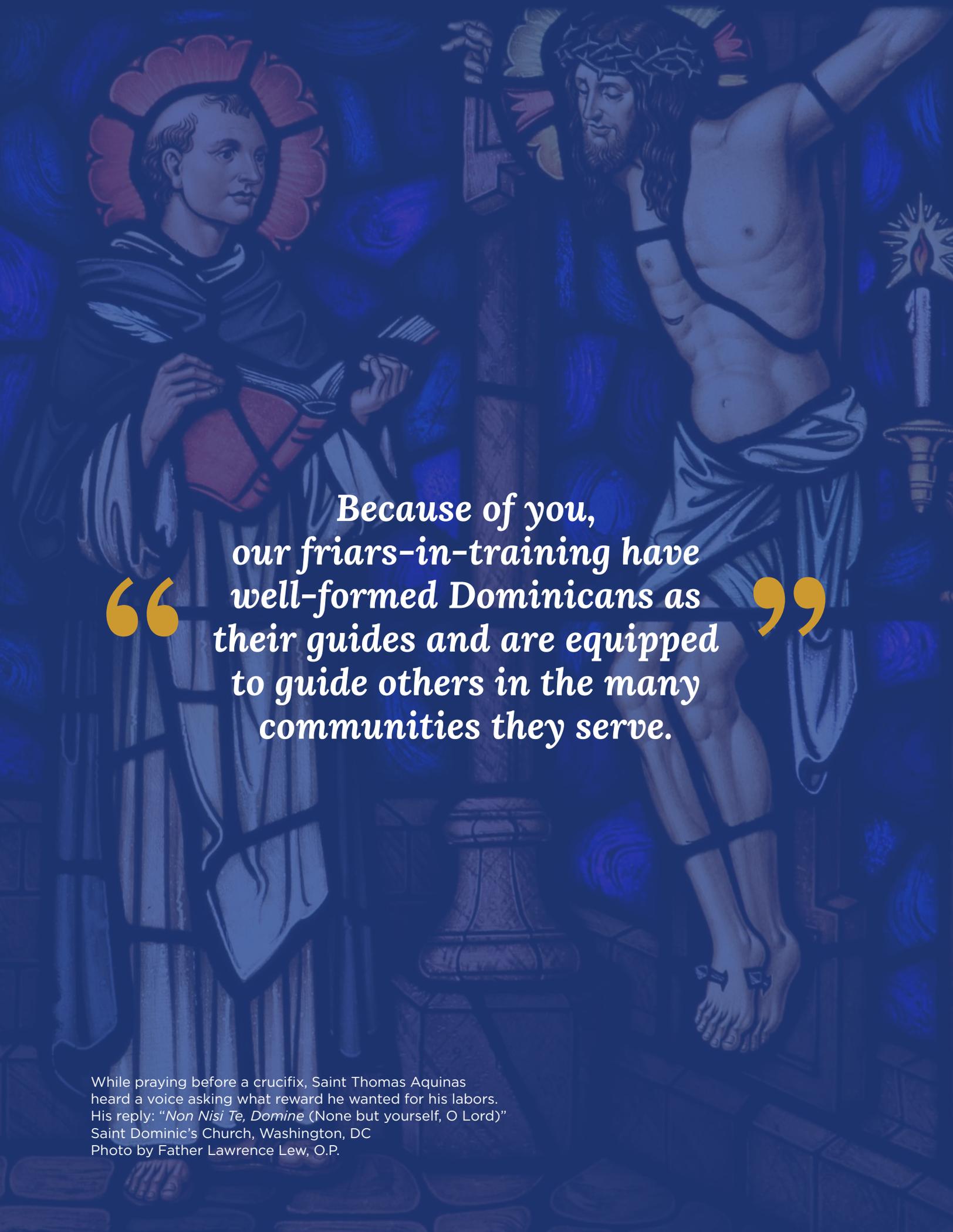
**A Catholic School Deepens
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Thomas Joseph White, O.P.**



Photo: Father Matthew Carroll, O.P.,
teaches religion at Saint Vincent Ferrer
High School in Manhattan.
Photo by M.J. O'Toole

Volume IV, Issue IV



“Because of you,
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well-formed Dominicans as
their guides and are equipped
to guide others in the many
communities they serve.”

While praying before a crucifix, Saint Thomas Aquinas heard a voice asking what reward he wanted for his labors. His reply: “*Non Nisi Te, Domine* (None but yourself, O Lord)”
Saint Dominic’s Church, Washington, DC
Photo by Father Lawrence Lew, O.P.



Letter from the Director

Dear Friend,

The expression “Verso l’alto” can be found on the bottom of a well-known photo of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati climbing a mountain and gazing upward. Literally, the translation is “toward the top.” Pier Giorgio actually wrote these words himself on the back of the photo, which was taken by a fellow climber on June 7, 1925. Because of Pier Giorgio’s sudden illness and death one month later, it turned out to be his last climb. Although it was never his personal motto, “Verso l’alto” became representative of Pier Giorgio’s earthly life—a constant striving to reach the summit of eternal life.

A new climber usually has a guide to lead him. The guides are experts who have climbed extensively. They provide the novice with lots of information, including: how to get there, approaches to the peak or routes, difficulty of the climb, gear to take, dangers, and other important information. Frassati did not want to attempt the path to sanctity alone so he became a professed member of the Third Order Dominicans on May 28, 1922, to imitate the example of Saint Dominic. He was also devoted to the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Catherine of Siena.

The main piece of gear for safety through all of climbing history is the rope. The rope is the safety line that connects partners together. If the leader falls, his partner, the belayer, will stop his fall. As Dominicans, the Rosary is our rope in which we help one another in our daily lives. Pier Giorgio always had the Rosary with him and derived strength from it for his tireless efforts to build a truly Catholic culture among his

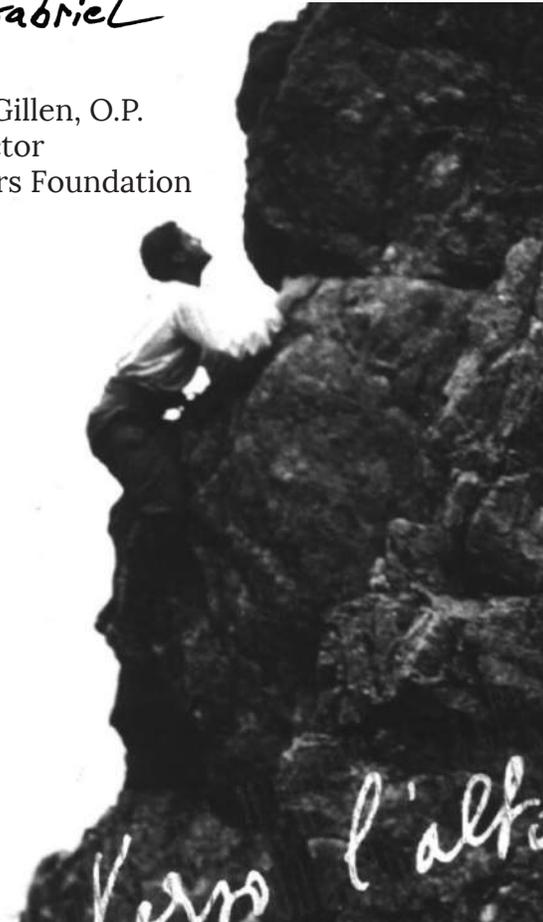
peers. In this issue, I invite you to read about how young adults across our country are following his ascent up the mountain.

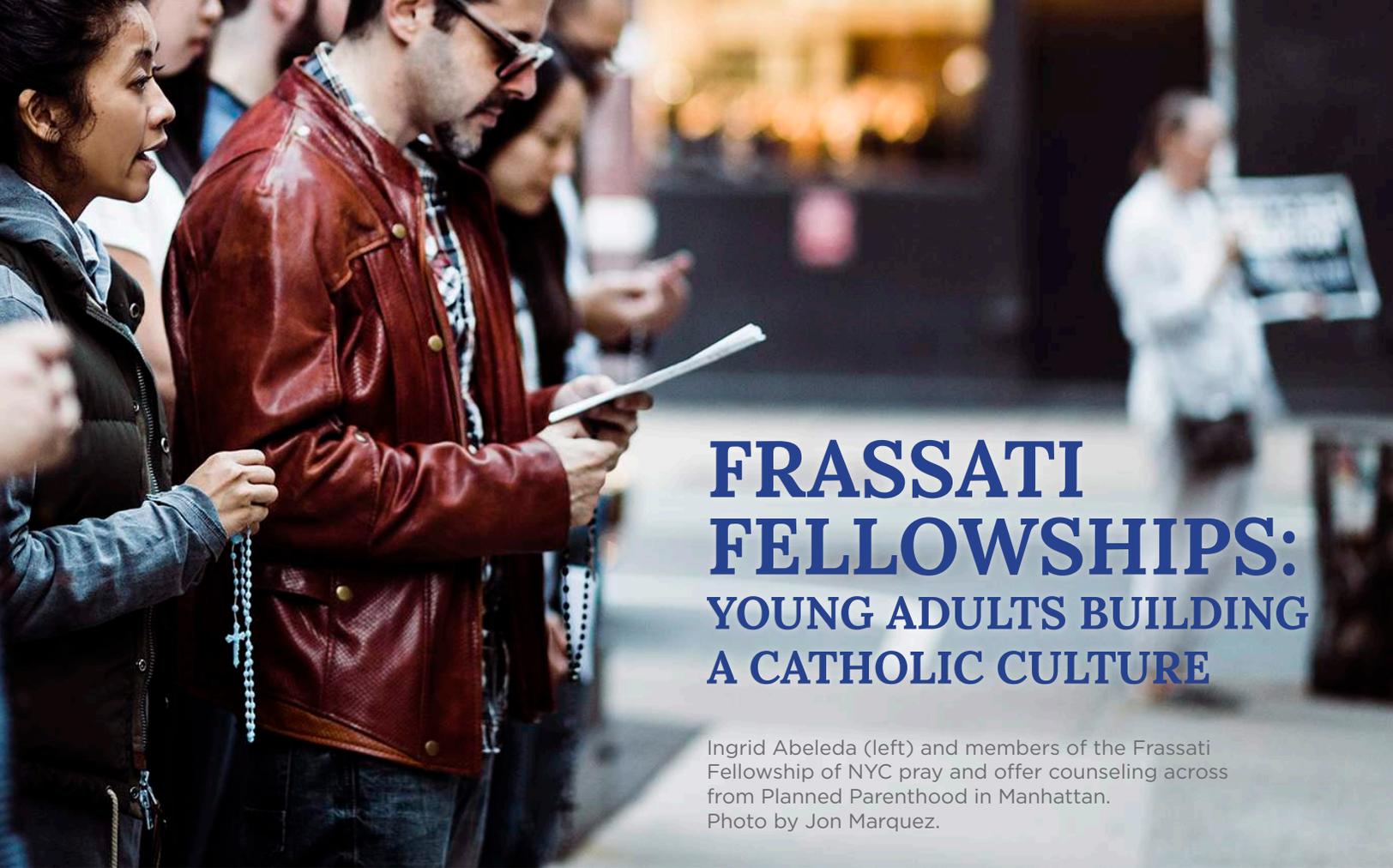
Because of you, our friars have well-formed Dominicans as their guides and are equipped to guide others in the many communities they serve as priests, including college campuses and young adult fellowships. Yet their impact on our nation begins even as friars-in-training at the Dominican House of Studies. As my brother priest, Father Thomas Joseph White puts it, “Many people in Washington are either converting or deepening their faith because of the work of the young Dominican student brothers there.”

Thank you for being our partner and making this possible as we all journey *Verso l’alto!*

Father Gabriel

Father Gabriel Gillen, O.P.
Executive Director
Dominican Friars Foundation





FRASSATI FELLOWSHIPS: YOUNG ADULTS BUILDING A CATHOLIC CULTURE

Ingrid Abeleda (left) and members of the Frassati Fellowship of NYC pray and offer counseling across from Planned Parenthood in Manhattan. Photo by Jon Marquez.

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, 1901-1925, was a Third Order Dominican known for his love of the poor, his rich spiritual life, and his joyful personality, by which he drew many of his peers to Christ. He was a tireless organizer of his fellow students for Catholic causes in an era marked by the empty ideologies of Fascism and Communism in his native Italy. In 1990, Frassati was beatified by Pope Saint John Paul II. Today, young adult fellowships that bear his name are building a thriving Catholic culture in a skeptical age.

Father Jerome Zeiler, O.P., parochial vicar of Saint Patrick's Church in Columbus, Ohio, is the chaplain of the Columbus Frassati Society, which offers a packed roster of spiritual, social, and service events that regularly gather from 20 to 50 young adults.

“How do you confront the Culture of Death—a materialistic, secular, godless culture—when you're immersed in it? You have to do more

than go to Mass on Sunday. You need a Catholic culture that is more powerful for you than the worldly culture that surrounds you,” says Father Zeiler.



Father Dominic Bump, O.P., keeps vigil across from an abortion clinic in lower Manhattan with the Frassati Fellowship of NYC.

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According to Father Zeiler, the group has grown organically by word of mouth and through Facebook. Young adults tend to move on as they get married—often to fellow Frassati members.

The Frassati Fellowship of NYC is one of the largest and most active of the Frassati groups (which are independent from one another) and is supported by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal and the Sisters of Life as well as the Dominican Friars. Father Dominic Bump, O.P., offers spiritual direction to the young adults of Frassati NYC.

“Frassati helps them build virtuous friendships that are ordered to the highest good, which is ultimately Sainthood. Relationships formed in Frassati are deeper, more real, and without cliques,” says Father Bump, who accompanied Frassati Fellowship of NYC at a 40 Days for Life vigil outside a Manhattan Planned Parenthood in October.

Ingrid Abeleda, Frassati NYC’s pro-life ministry leader and the organizer of the vigil, discovered the Fellowship through a service project at a parish damaged by Hurricane Sandy in Brooklyn. “I’ve really found a family here, a place in the Church, a way to grow, and a sense of accountability,” Ingrid says. “We’re not perfect, but we encourage one another to grow in sanctity.”



Brother Ignatius Weiss, O.P., with the DC Frassati Fellowship, Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland. Blessed Pier Giorgio was known for his love of the outdoors. Photo by Nik Barrows.

The DC Frassati Fellowship is perhaps the most connected to Blessed Pier Giorgio’s Dominican roots. Participants meet at the Dominican House of Studies and take part in the priory’s Masses, Holy Hours, and Liturgy of the Hours.

“The life of the Priory overflows into the Frassati Fellowship,” says Brother Ignatius Weiss, who is coordinator, together with Brother Frassati Davis, of the fellowship’s core team. “Parishes provide a spiritual home for our members, but the Dominicans offer them a special grace to inform their way of living as Catholic young adults in Washington, DC.”



WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

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To learn more, contact **Father Gabriel Gillen, O.P.**
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Email: director@dominicanfriars.org.



Father Matthew Carroll, O.P., with religion students at Saint Vincent Ferrer High School. Photos by M.J. O'Toole

SAINT VINCENT FERRER HIGH SCHOOL: A CATHOLIC SCHOOL DEEPENS ITS DOMINICAN ROOTS

Saint Vincent Ferrer High School, a girls' college preparatory school on Manhattan's Upper East Side, was founded by the Dominican Friars in 1884 and recently took two steps to deepen its Dominican roots.

The principal, Sister Gail Morgan, O.P., reached out to Prior Provincial Father Kenneth Letoile, O.P., to request that a Dominican Friar be assigned as the sophomore religion teacher. "It was my desire to have more of a Dominican presence at the school," says Sister Gail.

In response to her request, Father Matthew Carroll, O.P., began teaching religion in September 2016. "A large part of teaching has been developing relationships—not simply conveying knowledge, but getting to know the students and helping them grow in the faith and become the young ladies God intended them to be," says Father Carroll.

On September 8th, 2017, the feast of the Blessed Mother's birthday, Sister Gail together with Sister Martha Kunesh, O.P.,

and Sister Christine Cosgrove, O.P.—all Dominican Sisters of Our Lady of the Springs of Bridgeport—began wearing the



Sister Martha Kunesh, O.P., with math student



Sister Christine Cosgrove, O.P. (left), with Sister Gail Morgan, O.P.

Dominican habit. Their habits were made by the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia in Nashville, Tennessee.

According to Sister Gail, in the wake of Vatican II, many religious felt pressure to abandon traditional garb. “The mantra was that we should be attentive to the signs of the times. Those signs are very different today. People need to see that we’re committed to religious life.”



Prior Provincial Father Kenneth Letoile, O.P. (right), oversees a Dominican Traditions seminar led by Campus Chaplain Father Peter Martyr Yungwirth, O.P.

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE INSTITUTES DOMINICAN TRADITIONS SESSION

This August, Providence College inaugurated a Dominican Traditions session as part of the orientation program attended by all incoming freshmen. “We introduce students to the Dominican way of life, including our

four pillars: prayer, common life, study, and preaching. In a sense, everyone at Providence College can participate in this life,” says Assistant Chaplain Father Dominic Verner, O.P.

AN INTERVIEW WITH FATHER THOMAS JOSEPH WHITE, O.P.

Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., is one of the principal organizers of the Thomistic Institute, which brings accessible presentations of Catholic theology and philosophy to over thirty college campuses, including Harvard, Yale, Brown, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, and the US Naval Academy. Fr. White's latest book, *The Light of Christ: An Introduction to Catholicism* was published in August by Catholic University of America Press.

Why did you open *The Light of Christ* with a chapter on faith and reason?

One of the questions that haunts people today is whether there is an absolute religious authority—or any authority whatsoever—worth putting their trust in. Is it reasonable to try to believe what another tells you? What is entailed with that act of trust? Catholics believe that grace is present in the giving of divine revelation and in the act of supernatural trust, faith, and hope when we assent to that revelation. But grace still builds on something very human in us, which is the capacity to believe what another says and to be taught by another.

What's behind the current renaissance of Thomistic thought?

Millennials are often looking for tradition, stability, and identity more than creativity, engagement, and the mentality of freeform theology. They have all the freedom they could



Father Thomas Joseph White, O.P.
Photo by George Goss

want, but not much grounds our culture in something stable and solid. Aquinas is re-emerging as someone who transmits the tradition with elegance and depth and who provides a deep understanding of the structure of reality. These are things a lot of young people feel they lack and rightfully need.

What is the impact of the Dominicans in this climate?

In Washington DC, where we have more than sixty Dominicans in formation, they are having a massive effect on the local Church. This is because of their absolute commitment, but also because of their understanding of the faith and their capacity to communicate it with clarity and joy—an extremely effective witness to the faith and life of the Church. Many people in Washington are either converting or deepening their faith because of the work of the young Dominican student brothers there.

To learn more about the Thomistic Institute, visit thomisticinstitute.org.

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