

The Newsletter of the Dominican Friars Foundation



# BLACKFRIARS

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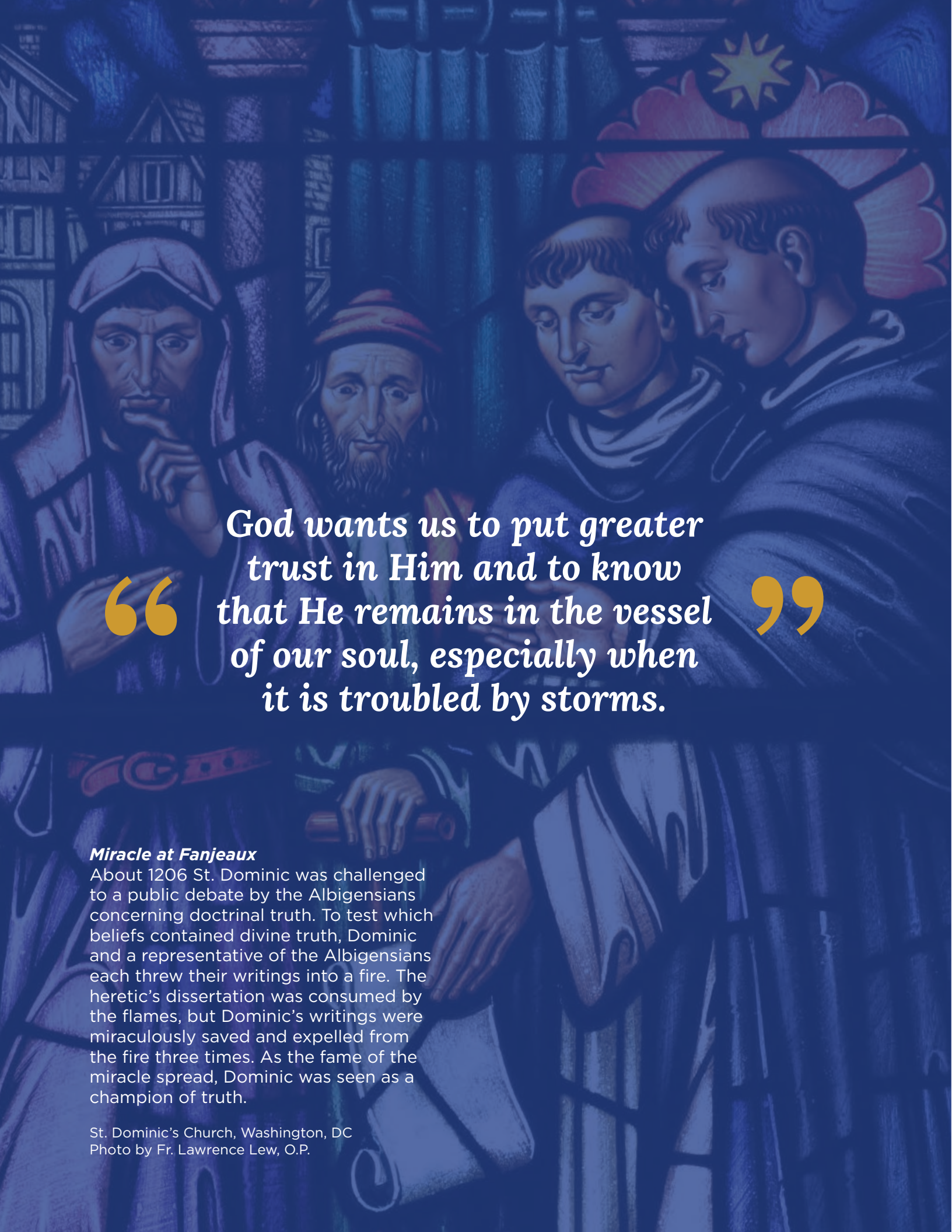
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Fr. Bill Garrott, O.P., leads a FOCUS mission near Anchorage, Alaska. Br. Titus Sanchez, O.P. (far right), entered the Dominican novitiate following the mission. Photo courtesy of Zach Fiedler and FOCUS. Used with permission

Volume VI, Issue IV



“God wants us to put greater trust in Him and to know that He remains in the vessel of our soul, especially when it is troubled by storms.”

***Miracle at Fanjeaux***

About 1206 St. Dominic was challenged to a public debate by the Albigensians concerning doctrinal truth. To test which beliefs contained divine truth, Dominic and a representative of the Albigensians each threw their writings into a fire. The heretic's dissertation was consumed by the flames, but Dominic's writings were miraculously saved and expelled from the fire three times. As the fame of the miracle spread, Dominic was seen as a champion of truth.

St. Dominic's Church, Washington, DC  
Photo by Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P.



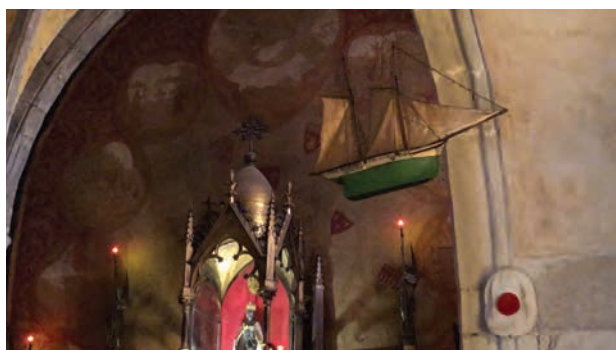
Letter from the Director

**Dear Friends,**

When the storms of life arise, it's understandable that parents become distressed about their children and people become troubled about their health or that of others. Equally unsurprising are financial worries, worries about relationships, worries about our Church, our country, and our world. Yet Jesus tells us, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25). God wants us to put greater trust in Him and to know that He remains in the vessel of our soul, especially when it is troubled by storms.

I remember being worried about my first day of work on Wall Street. A relative had just given me an Armani suit, so I wasn't concerned about my clothing as I walked into the firm. Ironically, a colleague pulled me aside and warned me not to dress better than the boss! I never heeded that advice until years later when I traded in all my suits for the same humble garb worn by our founder, St. Dominic.

In October I traveled with two other friars and a group of pilgrims in the footsteps of St. Dominic. It was a privilege to bring your intentions with me and to offer Mass for you



Black Madonna at Rocamadour, France, with model of miraculously saved ship



Chapel at Rocamadour, France

at these holy sites. We began in the beautiful small town of Caleruega, Spain, where St. Dominic was baptized. We continued with a visit to the home of Pierre Seilhan, the man who graciously donated his house to St. Dominic in 1215 for it to become the very first home of the Dominican Friars. Here, I had a deep sense of gratitude for the pivotal role you play in the renewal of the Church. We journeyed to Fanjeaux, where St. Dominic founded the first Dominican convent of nuns and on to Notre Dame de Prouhile where Our Lady appeared to him in a vision in 1208.

Our final stop was at the stunning cliffside Marian pilgrimage site of Rocamadour where St. Dominic came to pray. There is a bell at the top of the chapel that rings out when a ship has trouble at sea. The chapel is filled with models of ships that were miraculously rescued. It was here that I entrusted each of you to Our Lady's intercession and to all the Dominican saints who, trusting in Mary and her divine Son, arrived safely at the heavenly harbor.

*Father Gabriel*

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



# AUTHOR J.D. VANCE BECOMES CATHOLIC AT DOMINICAN PARISH OF ST. GERTRUDE

By Fr. Henry Stephan, O.P.



**Author J.D. Vance entered the Catholic Church at the Dominican parish of St. Gertrude in Cincinnati this August. *Hillbilly Elegy*, Vance's bestselling memoir about growing up poor in rural Ohio, is being made into a motion picture by director Ron Howard. Fr. Henry Stephan, O.P., parochial vicar at St. Gertrude's, sat down with Vance to discuss his conversion.**

**Looking back at *Hillbilly Elegy*, do you think it contains traces of your search for God that played out in your eventual arrival in the Catholic Church?**

By the time I wrote *Hillbilly Elegy*, I was convinced there was a real spiritual problem

in my own community and broader American society. One of the things I realized, personally, is that I was a relatively broken person. That's probably true of most people if they are being honest with themselves, but it was certainly true of me. That recognition was powerful and it led me ultimately to the conclusion that the task of fixing myself wasn't really something I was up to the challenge of. I had to rely on somebody else: specifically, Christ.

**Has your relationship with Jesus Christ deepened after starting to receive the sacraments and being part of the Church?**

It has certainly deepened. I've been Catholic now for a few months and the act of participating in the sacraments, praying, attending Mass, and thinking about the faith and my role within it have brought me closer to God.

**Do you think becoming Catholic will shape your life and work in the future?**

I certainly hope being Catholic will shape all parts of my life, including what I write and what I say, but especially the way that I treat people and engage with my family. I really don't know what's next. I have a job working in DC that I really like; my family is healthy; my wife is expecting our second baby in just a few months; and so for now my goal is to focus on first being a good Christian, and second being a good husband and father, and third doing my job well. Eventually we'll see where that all leads.

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Photo: J.D. Vance, right, prepares to receive Baptism, Confirmation, and first Holy Communion from Fr. Henry Stephan, O.P. Photo by Rod Dreher; used with permission.



# AQUINAS 101: THE WISDOM OF ST. THOMAS, FREE AND ONLINE

An interview with Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P.

**Friars at the Thomistic Institute, an apostolate of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington DC, have launched a free online course designed to introduce college students to the thought of the Angelic Doctor. Within three months, Aquinas 101 has an enrollment of nearly 20,000 and continues to release videos guiding students through St. Thomas's Summa Theologiae. BlackFriars spoke with Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P., of the Thomistic Institute about this new venture.**

## **How did the friars come up with the idea for Aquinas 101?**

We had been having conversations about how best to be of service to the Church and to the university. We were of one mind that St. Thomas Aquinas is an especially wise guide and, for the casual viewer, an excellent entry into the Catholic intellectual tradition. It's proper to our own charism to explain and follow St. Thomas and to present him as a good way to know the Lord and love Him well.

## **Why are Dominicans especially suited to teaching the thought of St. Thomas?**

The whole Dominican life is tailored to put a man face to face with the living God, so that

he himself is transformed by the renewal of his mind. The genius of Dominican preaching is that others are afforded an entry into that relationship. What is being communicated [by St. Thomas Aquinas] are the very mysteries themselves. The Dominican Friars are well suited to communicate the mysteries by which we ourselves have been transformed in the context of prayer, study, liturgy, and the common life.

## **How does this fit into the larger mission of the Thomistic Institute?**

The goal of the Thomistic Institute is the evangelization of secular academia. As a lot of academic settings become more and more embattled, and it becomes more and more difficult to discuss perennial truths, we want to carve out a space in which it is possible to encounter the Catholic intellectual tradition. It's a service to the students first—for the salvation of their souls.

To enroll in the course,  
visit [Aquinas101.org](https://Aquinas101.org).



*“We want to carve out a space in which it is possible to encounter the Catholic intellectual tradition. It’s a service to the students first—for the salvation of their souls.”*



## DOMINICAN FRIARS EDIT WORLD'S MOST-READ CATHOLIC WEBSITE

By *BlackFriars* staff

Fr. Aquinas Guilbeau, O.P., and Fr. Patrick Briscoe, O.P., bring their theological expertise to *Aleteia.org*, a Catholic news, lifestyle, and spirituality site that reaches 20 million readers worldwide each month.

“Fr. Patrick and I contribute to *Aleteia*’s wonderful collaboration the 800-year intellectual and spiritual tradition of the Dominican Order. As preachers, we know that the truth is inherently pastoral, and *Aleteia* offers us the opportunity to prove this in a unique way,” says Fr. Guilbeau, who is the senior editor of the English edition.

Launched in 2013, the site is published in eight languages and aims to provide a “Christian vision of the world” that is “free from ideological influences.”

“We work very hard to say only the good things men need to hear, to quote the Scriptures, to build people up by sharing a good word about

the Church, and to not be weighed down by inside Catholic baseball that can overtake our proclamation of the Gospel. We have the greatest story to tell,” says Fr. Briscoe, who is deputy senior editor of the English edition.

**“We have the greatest story to tell.”**

*Aleteia*’s focus on the proclamation of the Gospel has yielded fruit. According to Fr. Briscoe, several readers of the Arabic language version were baptized last year, and some even took “*aleteia*,” which means “truth” as their baptismal name.

“When you’re looking around the world and asking, ‘how do we reach people,’ you realize that everyone is looking at their phone. It’s the new means for preaching,” Fr. Briscoe says.

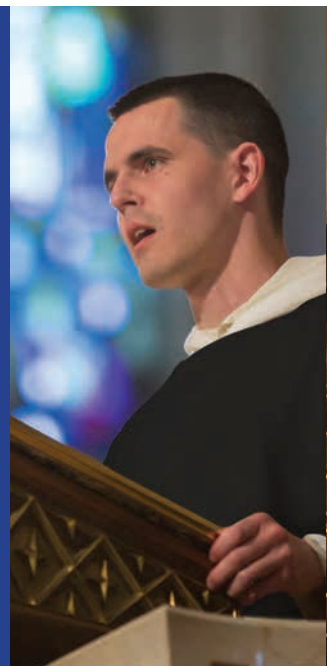
Photo: Fr. Patrick Briscoe, O.P. (fourth from left), attends *Aleteia*’s global editorial meeting in Rome with editors from the major language editions.

## If you are 70 ½ years of age, you can get a tax break—even without itemizing.

Simply make a charitable gift from your IRA via a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), also known as a “Charitable IRA Rollover.” This can qualify as a Required Minimum Distribution, lets you lower your income tax for this year, and allows you to help the Dominican Friars to renew the culture! To benefit from this opportunity you must make your gift by year-end, so act fast!

Learn more about how you can redirect IRA income to enjoy valuable tax savings this year, while joining the Dominican Friars in our renewal mission!

**CONTACT DIANA KILARJIAN, DIRECTOR OF GIFT PLANNING**  
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## LETTER FROM THE PRIOR PROVINCIAL

Dear Friends,

Did you ever think of December as “Mary’s Month?” We usually reserve that distinction for May, which sounds like Mary, contains “Mother’s Day” and is flush with the new life of Spring. December has a strong claim to our Blessed Mother as well. Here’s why:

We will be celebrating the Immaculate Conception on December 9 (this year) and Our Lady of Guadalupe on the 12th. Advent’s fourth Sunday, the final days of Advent and Christmas Day invite us to reflect and rejoice on how the virgin from Nazareth gave us the very best gift of all in the Savior of the world. On the last Sunday of the year we celebrate our Blessed Mother’s place in the Holy Family. Finally, we begin the new year on the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. And then there is the figure of Mary in our crèche at home and in those we see outdoors. I hope you will agree that Mary has two months, May and December!

I like Caryll Houselander’s reflections on the Mary of Advent as helping us to understand why we honor her in December. In *The Reed of God* she writes:

**“Our Lady said yes for the human race. Each one of us must echo that yes for our own lives.... What we shall be asked to give is our flesh and blood, our daily life – our thoughts, our service to one another, our affections and loves... our**



This brass statuette surmounts the lectern in the Dominican House of Studies, Washington DC. Our Lady is shown as the Seat of Wisdom, pregnant and in a posture of prayer.

**waking, working and sleeping.... In order that our lives may bear Christ into the world.”**

May our Blessed Mother’s intercession strengthen and sustain you as you prepare for Christ’s coming and for His presence in the Year of our Lord, 2020.

Come, Lord Jesus!

Very Rev. Kenneth R. Letoile, O.P.  
Prior Provincial



Over 200 men consecrated themselves to St. Joseph at the Dominican parish of St. Mary in New Haven, Connecticut, where they were gathered for the Knights of Columbus College Councils Conference.

*Photo by George Hosek, courtesy of the Knights of Columbus.*

# ONE FAMILY, THREE DOMINICAN VOCATIONS

By *BlackFriars* staff

**Fr. Paul Clarke, O.P., was ordained to the priesthood this May by Bishop Robert Barron. His two older sisters are members of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia, better known as the Nashville Dominicans. Together with another family, the Clarkes are the founders of Cluny Media, “a publishing house dedicated to preserving and promoting the Catholic literary and intellectual traditions.”**

## How did your sisters' vocations influence your own path to religious life?

Growing up I didn't see a lot of religious, and certainly not young religious, so it was a bit of a shock when I was a sophomore in high school and my oldest sister came home from college and announced that she was entering the Nashville Dominicans. The next year my second sister entered the same community.

What I saw in my sisters' lives and in the Dominican friars I met through them was, paradoxically, that all these men and women who had given up so much had a tremendous joy and freedom that I couldn't quite explain.

## How did your Dominican formation prepare you for the priesthood?

Dominicans are known for our emphasis on the intellectual life. Our immersion in study is meant to conform us to Jesus Christ, who is the Truth. We take as our model and teacher



From left: Sr. John Peter Clarke, O.P., Fr. Paul Clarke, O.P., and Sr. Beatrice Clarke, O.P.

our elder brother St. Thomas Aquinas. His teachings open up a whole vision of reality, from the highest things—the Trinity, the mystery of creation and salvation—to the last things and the moral life.

Study transfigures our vision of what it means to be a human being called to the life of grace and to eternity. Over the course of time it begins to shape us into men who are able to articulate that same vision to other people. To become preachers of grace, as St. Dominic wanted his followers to be, we spend time at the cross of the desk.

***“What I saw in my sisters' lives and in the Dominican friars I met through them was, paradoxically, that all these men and women who had given up so much had a tremendous joy and freedom that I couldn't quite explain.”***

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Tune into **Sirius XM129** every Friday at 1:00pm ET for the Dominican-hosted *Word to Life* radio broadcast (now also available as a podcast).



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