

The Newsletter of the Dominican Friars Foundation



BLACKFRIARS



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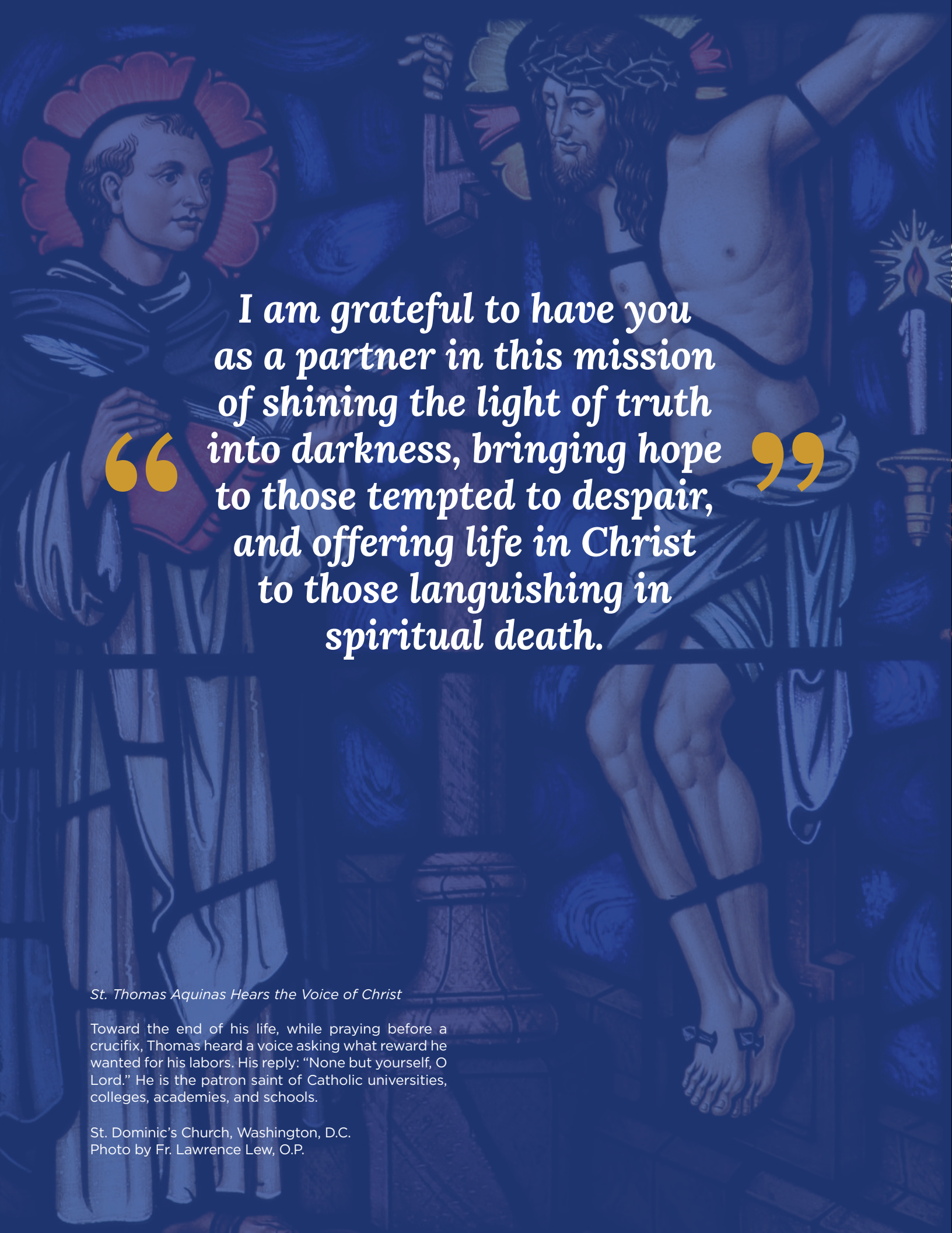
Meet our New Executive Director

**The Hillbilly Thomists Play the
Grand Ole Opry**

**Friars of Godspaining lead
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The Hillbilly Thomists, a bluegrass band comprised of Dominican Friars, took the stage at the Grand Ole Opry to perform the welcoming concert for the 140th annual Knights of Columbus Supreme Convention (see page 4). Photo by Matthew Barrick

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I am grateful to have you
as a partner in this mission
of shining the light of truth
“into darkness, bringing hope”
to those tempted to despair,
and offering life in Christ
to those languishing in
spiritual death.

St. Thomas Aquinas Hears the Voice of Christ

Toward the end of his life, while praying before a crucifix, Thomas heard a voice asking what reward he wanted for his labors. His reply: “None but yourself, O Lord.” He is the patron saint of Catholic universities, colleges, academies, and schools.

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



A Special Message from the New Executive Director
of the Dominican Friars Foundation

Dear Friends,

It is with great joy and excitement that I take the helm of the Dominican Friars Foundation as Executive Director. I thank you, our benefactors, who share in our zeal to win souls for Christ, for your support and partnership in our Dominican mission of preaching for the salvation of souls.

For the past ten years, you have partnered with my brother priest, Fr. Gabriel Gillen, O.P., to build up the Order of Preachers. You have made sacrifices for those reached by our preaching, many of whom encountered the Word of God for the first time through a Dominican friar, whether in school, church, on a college campus, or even by watching one of our preaching videos online. I am excited to pray for you and I look forward to getting to know you as we work together as partners in mission.

I come to you most recently from serving as campus chaplain at the University of Louisville. From my recent experience serving on a college campus I know that young people are searching for answers but they are drowning in confusion. In fact, our society as a whole is confused and searching for answers.

Jesus Christ is the answer. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. With Him, we have abundant Life. Without Him, we do not have any life worthy of the name at all. We must shout the saving truth of Jesus Christ from the rooftops, following in the footsteps of our Holy Father St. Dominic. Together, we can proclaim Him anew to a generation very much in need. When the Word of God is proclaimed boldly, men and women respond; when they encounter Jesus Christ in the sacraments, they are transformed.

This issue of *BlackFriars* highlights Dominican Friars engaging our culture in creative ways to preach the saving truth of Jesus Christ to people who may not otherwise encounter Him. You make this kind



Fr. John Paul Kern, O.P. (center), and Fr. John Baptist Hoang, O.P. (right), with students of the University of Louisville Catholic Campus Ministry

of creative and effective outreach possible. I am grateful to have you as a partner in this mission of shining the light of truth into darkness, bringing hope to those tempted to despair, and offering life in Christ to those languishing in spiritual death.

Please know of my prayers for you, that as a partner in mission you may be filled with the Holy Spirit, strengthened in your faith, and moved by the love of God to be a bold witness and ambassador for Christ.

I look forward to collaborating with you for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. May God bless you and your loved ones abundantly.

Yours in Christ and St. Dominic,

Fr. John Paul Kern, O.P.
Executive Director
Dominican Friars Foundation



HILLBILLY THOMISTS BLUEGRASS BAND PERFORMS FOR KNIGHTS ON OPRY STAGE

By Katie Peterson. This article originally appeared in *The Tennessee Register* and is reprinted with permission.

As a boy growing up in the Nashville area, Chris Gautsch never expected to perform on the most well-known stage in the city—the Grand Ole Opry—especially after becoming a Dominican priest. But the unexpected came to fruition for him.

Today he is Fr. Peter Gautsch, O.P., and he and six of his fellow Dominican friars graced the Opry stage as the Hillbilly Thomists in August to perform the welcoming concert for the 140th annual Knights of Columbus Supreme Convention.

“It’s a dream, and growing up in Nashville, I never, ever imagined I’d be on that stage,” Fr. Gautsch said. “It was a total thrill.”

When he was young he liked serving as an altar boy and said he thought then that he would want to be a priest but he had “a pretty uninformed and naive view of what the priesthood was about at that time,” he told the *Tennessee Register*, Nashville’s diocesan newspaper.

As a junior at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, he was given an opportunity to spend a semester abroad in Rome at the Dominican-run Angelicum, formally known

as the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, and “the idea of the priesthood and religious life really came back in a big way,” he said.

“The more I learned about the Dominican Order, the more I came to love it and found that I really thought that I was made for that,” Fr. Gautsch said.

Following his graduation from Notre Dame, where he received a bachelor’s degree in theology and music, he entered the Dominican novitiate.

During his time at the Dominican House of Studies, he became close with several of his brothers and found that they enjoyed playing music, coming together once a week to play some of their favorite tunes.

As word spread about their jam sessions, they began to play for receptions at ordinations and other small events. Eventually, they adopted the name “the Hillbilly Thomists” to fit their bluegrass sound and their training in Thomism.

Fr. Peter Gautsch, O.P. (second from the right), is on stage at the Grand Ole Opry with the Hillbilly Thomists. Photos by Matthew Barrick

“What we hope for our music is that it helps people to think about God and to hope in Him and to see the goodness and joy that comes from living for Him and directing everything in one’s life toward Him.”

As CD sales went up, the group began receiving letters from people wanting them to come and perform for an event. So, they cleared their calendars for two weeks to tour the country fulfilling some of those requests, one of which was the invitation from the Knights of Columbus to perform for convention attendees.

“They said, ‘By the way, it’s going to be at the Grand Ole Opry’ and our jaws all dropped,” Fr. Gautsch recalled. “The exciting thing about it for me, aside from just being on that stage and playing, is this is my home, this is where I grew up, so to be able to have friends and family come join in that was amazing.”

Through their music, Fr. Gautsch said, he hopes the band is carrying out its mission as preachers.

“The origins of the way the band came about was from our fraternal life, our common



life together, but it was directed towards preaching,” Father Gautsch said, adding that the songs have themes about hope in God, the reality of grace and the goodness of creation.

“What we hope for our music,” he added, “is that it helps people to think about God and to hope in Him and to see the goodness and joy that comes from living for Him and directing everything in one’s life toward Him.”

FRIARS OF THE GODSPLAINING PODCAST LEAD PILGRIMS ON THE CAMINO

By *BlackFriars* Staff



Early this summer, Fr. Jacob Bertrand Janczyk, O.P., and Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P., of *Godsplaining*—a weekly podcast in which the friars discuss all things Catholic—led 15 young adults on a 12-day walking pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago. The “Camino” is a historic pilgrimage route with medieval origins that has grown in popularity in recent years.

Most modern walkers of the Camino are motivated by secular concerns, and the *Godsplaining* group drew attention. Fr. Jacob Bertrand recalled, “Fr. Gregory and I were in our habits, and we were with a fairly large group, so we stuck out. The witness of living the faith and walking a pilgrimage as Catholics, God willing, had more impact than I realized.”

Godsplaining exceeded two million listens this year and can be heard wherever podcasts are downloaded.

Fr. Jacob Bertrand Janczyk, O.P. (back left), and Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P. (back center) stand with pilgrims before the Santiago de Compostela Archcathedral Basilica in Spain.



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: AN INTERVIEW WITH FR. THOMAS MORE GARRETT, O.P.

By *BlackFriars* staff

Before joining the Order, Fr. Thomas More Garrett, O.P., was a lawyer in private practice and worked as a US Congressional aide. After his ordination, he joined Providence College as an associate vice president and associate general counsel, and serves on the faculty of the business school, where he teaches courses in business law and financial markets and institutions. In 2022, he was appointed Promoter of Catholic Social Teaching by the province.

What is your role as Promoter of Catholic Social Teaching, and is there a particular focus you hope to bring to it?

The promoter's role is to create opportunities for the province to contribute toward the advancement of the Church's social teaching and then to raise awareness of those efforts so that others might join us.

There are a couple of areas that merit greater attention. For example, the dignity of the human person receives significant attention today. Should dignitarian rights not include protections for conscientious objections on the part of participants in the marketplace? Reports of various professionals from pharmacists to photographers losing their jobs or having their businesses shuttered appear regularly. This should not happen in a society that prizes the dignity of each individual.

What are some challenges facing young professionals today?

Workplace activism that advocates social change has been on the rise in the last several months. Many of the young people we serve will encounter pressure to contribute and support initiatives that are contrary to the genuine good of society. I think that God has placed Dominicans in their lives, in part, to equip them to manage these circumstances.

Are there any Dominican saints who we can look to as exemplars of living according to the Church's social teaching?

Our own St. Martin de Porres is the patron saint of social justice. St. Martin is a literal fixture on the PC campus with Dominican Fr. Thomas McGlynn's life-sized statue of the saint featured prominently outside of Martin Hall. St. Catherine of Siena is another great example. Along with working tirelessly to serve the disadvantaged in her city, St. Catherine was actively engaged in helping reestablish political peace by convincing the Holy Father to return to Rome and bring an end to the nearly 70 year-long Avignon papacy.

Follow the
Promoter of Catholic Social Teaching:

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LETTER FROM THE PRIOR PROVINCIAL

On June 10, I was elected Prior Provincial of the Province of St. Joseph at our quadrennial Provincial Chapter. I am very humbled to accept this office and know that I only fulfill it through God's Grace and with the prayers and support of all those who are friends of our Province.

One of the sacred duties of the Prior Provincial is to receive the vows of men entering our Order on behalf of the Master of the Order. On August 15 in Cincinnati, Ohio, nine men made profession into my hands, becoming new members of our Province. These men had completed a year of formation as novices. After profession, they headed to the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC, to begin their academic studies. As they departed, we welcomed 12 new novices who were vested in the habit of the Order to begin their year as novices.

The Prior Provincial not only welcomes new members into the Order but also cares for those who have given lives of service in the Order. Shortly after receiving the vows of the new friars, I had the privilege to celebrate the Funeral Mass for Fr. Gregory Doherty, O.P., one of our friars who died at the age of 91. Fr. Gregory made his own profession over



A friar makes his simple profession to Fr. Darren Pierre, O.P., Prior Provincial.

70 years ago and served as a missionary in Pakistan and the Philippines for over 55 years.

We are very thankful for all our benefactors who make our lives possible, and to God who has continued to bless us with the gift of vocations. We pray that through His Grace, these vocations may bear fruit in His Church for many years to come.

Very Rev. Darren Pierre, O.P.
Prior Provincial

LOOKING TO MAKE A POWERFUL IMPACT IN OUR GREAT COUNTRY?

A gift from your IRA will make a difference!

Do you have a traditional IRA account?

If you are 70 1/2 or older, you may make a tax-free contribution of up to \$100,000 from your IRA directly to the Dominican Friars. Your gift from your IRA will help bring about the renewal of the Church and culture through the faithful preaching of Jesus Christ.

For more information on an IRA Rollover, please contact our Planned Giving Office at (646) 350-0108 or email plannedgiving@dominicanfriars.org.





DONOR PROFILE

MRS. JAYA THADANI

Mrs. Jaya Thadani is a longtime supporter of the Dominican Friars and a parishioner at the Dominican parish of St. Denis in Hanover, New Hampshire, which serves the Dartmouth College community. BlackFriars sat down with Mrs. Thadani to discuss her remarkable journey to the US and to the Catholic Faith.

Why did your family leave India?

My grandfather became a Christian at great personal cost when he married an Anglican convert. He was a Sikh, and gave up both property and family ties in order to become Christian.

When the British empire withdrew and India was partitioned, there was little place for Christians. My father thought it would be better for the family to move to England.

What made you interested in the Catholic faith?

In England, I met Baroness Bosch Van Drakestein, who had founded a lay order for women called 'The Grail.' She gave me a job

selling tickets to a Passion Play and introduced me to a Dutch priest who gave me instruction in the Catholic faith. He and the Baroness received me into the Catholic Church.

What brought you to the Hanover, New Hampshire, area?

My husband, an economist educated in India, was offered a job by the World Bank, and we moved to Washington, DC, in 1971. Our son went from Georgetown Prep to Princeton, and then on to Yale for medicine. After completing a doctorate at Yale, he was offered a job at Dartmouth as a neurologist. Dartmouth was expanding its neurology department, and they asked him to come to New Hampshire and to be part of it.

What are your hopes for your grandchildren and great grandchildren?

I want them to have faith. In America, young people are very practical, but they don't always go into the deeper side of things. Although religious beliefs in India are sometimes inadequate, they are never simply ignored. Here, public schools teach nothing about the spiritual needs of the person.

My son has done much to instruct his children on Mass and Christian beliefs and living. I'm so thankful for this, as well as for the prayers of the Dominican Order for my grandchildren. Neither in India nor in England did I see such a combination of learning and diversity of interests as among the Dominicans serving at St. Denis in New Hampshire.

The Dominican Friars thank Mrs. Thadani and keep all our donors and their families in our daily prayers!



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