

The Newsletter of the Dominican Friars Foundation



BLACKFRIARS



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Divine Mercy in Manhattan

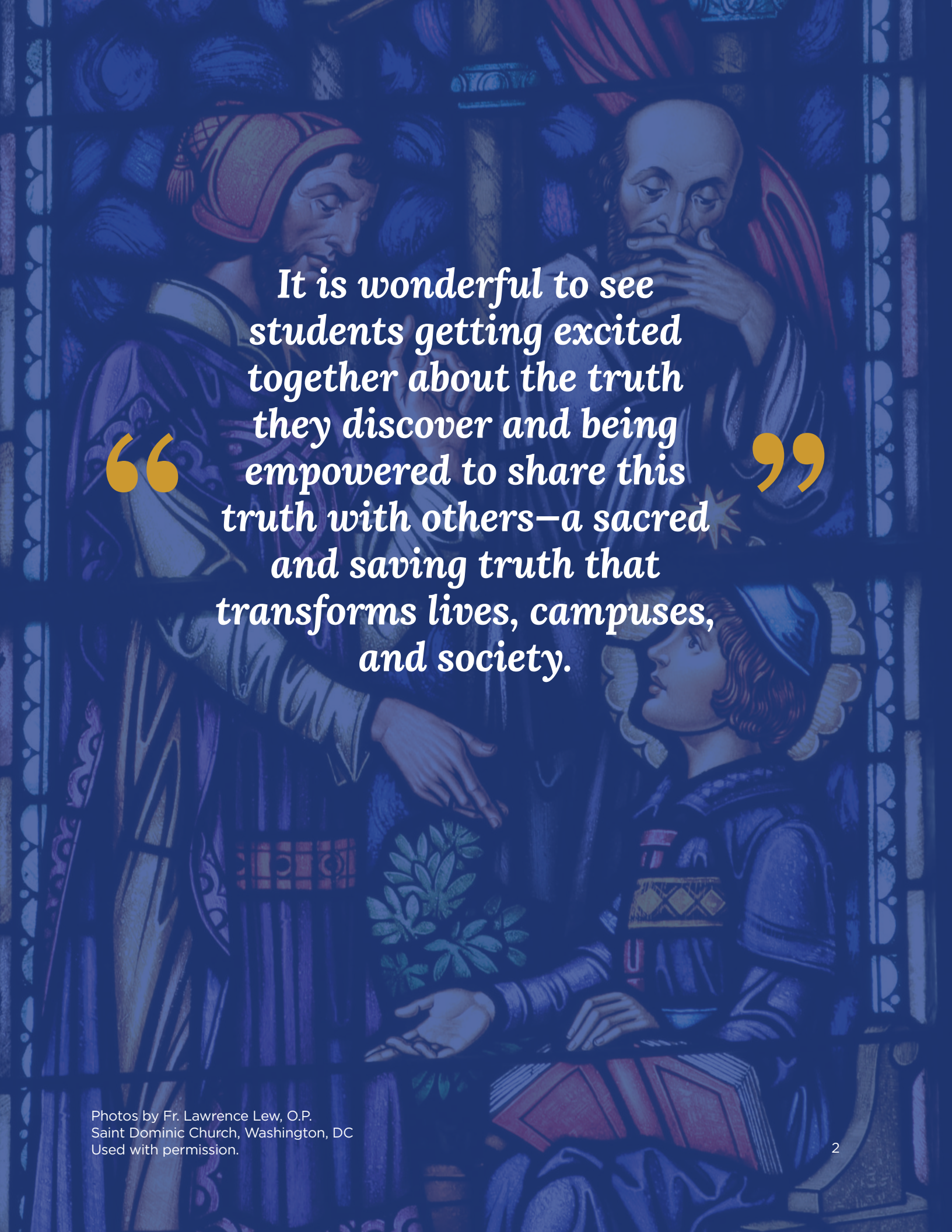
The Virtue of Friendship

Q&A with Curtis Martin

Pursuit of Truth on Campus

The first Perpetual Adoration chapel to open in Manhattan is at St. Joseph's parish in Greenwich Village. Photo by Jeffrey Bruno.

Volume X, Issue III



“ It is wonderful to see students getting excited together about the truth they discover and being empowered to share this truth with others—a sacred and saving truth that transforms lives, campuses, and society. ”



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends in Christ,

We are now in back-to-school season and I am happy to share with you several exciting things God is doing through the ministry of Dominican friars for the salvation of souls at universities throughout the country.

As the Eucharistic Revival continues to highlight the important truth that it is Jesus Christ himself who is truly present in the Eucharist, we can recall the necessary conclusion drawn by St. John Paul II about what this means for our lives and the life of the Church: “The Church is from the Eucharist.” Our spiritual life, our salvation, and the life of the Church is from Jesus Christ, present in our midst, in the Eucharist.

It is no surprise then that at this same blessed moment when our Dominican friars recently opened the first perpetual Eucharistic Adoration chapel in Manhattan, these friars, who serve St. Joseph’s parish in Greenwich Village and the NYU Catholic Center, were also asked to take on ministry to several additional campuses in New York City. The abundant graces of the Eucharist are fueling the growth of the Church, even in the midst of a harshly secular environment.

When I was a college student, Catholic campus ministry offered me a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, a community to form true friendships, and an understanding of who I am as a beloved child of God and the purpose of my life. In this issue, we talked with Curtis Martin, the founder of FOCUS, and Fr. Joseph-Anthony Kress, O.P., chaplain at the University of Virginia, who spoke with us about the distinctive power of the Dominican charism to animate thriving campus ministries and change students’ lives in our age of confusion and isolation that desperately hungers for truth and communion.

This summer, I also had the privilege of serving at the Thomistic Institute’s Student Leadership Conference, also featured in this issue, where over 100 student leaders, representing over 80 campus chapters, gathered for spiritual and intellectual nourishment and fellowship at the Dominican House of Studies. The Thomistic Institute brings the riches of the Catholic intellectual tradition to universities in an attractive way through a growing network of campus chapters. It is wonderful to see students getting excited together about the truth they discover and being empowered to share this truth with others—a sacred and saving truth that transforms lives, campuses, and society.

This is what Dominicans have been doing for 800 years—bringing the Savior of the world to universities through our preaching of truth, the forgiveness of sins, and the Eucharist, and inviting students to authentic and life-changing friendship with Christ and with one another.

Thank you for partnering with us in our Dominican mission. Your support for our Dominican formation programs ensures that these flourishing ministries transforming young peoples’ lives and saving many souls will continue to grow and bear good fruit.

In Christ and St. Dominic,

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



Cardinal Dolan blesses the Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel.
All photos by Jeffrey Bruno.

DIVINE MERCY IN MANHATTAN

By *BlackFriars* Staff

“The city that never sleeps needs a chapel that never closes,” said Fr. Boniface Endorf, O.P., pastor of St. Joseph’s parish in New York City, now home to the first perpetual Eucharistic Adoration chapel in Manhattan. Fr. Boniface’s tagline is fitting because it corresponds to this offering of *all* of time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Someone will always be in prayer before the Eucharistic Lord on this island of 1.6 million inhabitants.

When Fr. Boniface began his assignment as pastor in 2018, the Young Adult Office of the Archdiocese of New York reached out to him and said the Cardinal had been wanting a perpetual adoration chapel in Manhattan because there had never been one. “So that put the idea in my head,” he said, “and I started raising the money to build the space.” Cardinal Dolan blessed the Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel this July, nearly five years after the initial idea was proposed.

In designing the chapel, Fr. Boniface wanted to do it right—he wanted to build a space so that when people walk in, they’re struck by its beauty because “beauty helps them in their own prayer. It helps them think this is a place where you would encounter God.”

Because St. Joseph’s church is Greek Revival architecture, Fr. Boniface and architect Zeke Balan sought classical edging but went toward Romanesque in the design of the chapel. The rood screen, like a lot of classical architecture, has beautiful detail but it also serves a need, he explained. It prevents people from walking up to the altar and taking the monstrance. The rood screen has decorative symbolism and is essentially a catechesis for what you are doing in adoration, and what God is doing in you. “For instance, on the bottom of the screen, it has very earthy images like grapes and vines and the images get more complicated and geometrical at the top to image heaven and the move from earthly to divine realities. The metal work on the doors are in the shape that Dante described as the shape of heaven in *Paradiso*. On the sides there are seraphim adoring God.”

The centerpiece of the chapel is a mosaic of the Divine Mercy image from which the chapel is named. There is also a 16th century statue of a Dominican saint, Catherine of Siena, gesturing with her right hand toward the Eucharist. “And at the center is the beautiful monstrance and the

Eucharist itself. So, all of this beauty of the chapel draws you to Beauty itself.”

The Dominican friars who live at St. Joseph’s pray the Liturgy of the Hours in the chapel—morning and evening prayer—and the hope is to do this every day, Fr. Boniface said. “Traditionally, as Dominicans, praying of the divine office is public, but when we took over this parish in 2004 it was a diocesan parish, so wasn’t set up for that.” Up until now, the friars prayed the office in a chapel in their cloister. But one advantage of this new chapel is that we set this up with choir stalls for the office, so people can come join us for prayer, he said. Fr. Boniface explained that this recovery of praying the hours for the laity was the hope of Vatican II. That’s one of the reasons they shortened it and translated it into the vernacular, so it wouldn’t just be priests and religious praying it, but it is the prayer of the whole church.

The friars at St. Joseph’s parish have headed Catholic campus ministry at NYU for many years (and this year the ministry of the friars will expand to serve students from several more campuses in Manhattan) and the parish attracts many young adults in Manhattan—half the parishioners at St. Joe’s are under the age of 40. According to Fr. Boniface, this adoration chapel couldn’t come at a better



time because he sees something in this generation that wasn’t present in previous generations—questions of “Who am I?” “What does it mean to live in the world?” “In America?” “In my family?”

In his ministry to young people, he sees there is great confusion. “There is even anger and resentment especially as more and more families are broken and there’s this sense of being lost, even despair...and in this void grows ideologies and conspiracies.” But in this adoration chapel, before the Eucharistic Lord, “people will find their truest identity as a child of God, loved by God, and called back to God. They’ll know they’re not a cosmic accident and that life isn’t meaningless—but they are loved, and created for a reason, and are called to a great mission and ultimately being led to an eternal life with God. So then everything in their life is not about filling their meaningless void with meaningless desires, but striving to grow in holiness and love and virtue.”

Fr. Boniface and his fellow Dominican friars hope this first ever perpetual adoration chapel in Manhattan will be a source of grace that will transform people’s lives. There’s so much suffering in the world and in New York City, so many people are so unhappy and they don’t know that it doesn’t have to be that way. “They don’t know that there’s a God they can turn to who loves them. And that’s why it’s divine mercy. He’s just waiting for them to pop in, and be healed, and lifted up. We can find happiness in Christ, anytime.”





THE VIRTUE OF FRIENDSHIP

By Br. Finbar Kantor, O.P.

Relationships are central to the life of society. From the foundational relationship of the family to the civic relationships that undergird political and economic systems, our entire lives are built upon relationality. This need for relationships goes deeper than the framework of contemporary culture to the core of human nature. “It is natural for man, more than for any other animal, to be a social and political animal, to live in a group,” St. Thomas Aquinas writes in his *De regno*. At our core, we need relationships with other people to help us understand ourselves and to deepen our relationship with God.

Fr. Joseph-Anthony Kress, O.P., chaplain to Catholic Hoos at the University of Virginia since 2017, describes his ministry on campus as a ministry of relationships. He sees in the undergraduates in his care a deep need for relationships, primarily a relationship with God. The students at UVA (like many of those at other colleges

served by the Dominicans) are motivated and high-achieving. But schedules filled with classes and extracurricular activities often mask students’ painful isolation under a blanket of events, projects, and noise.

When campuses around the country shut down in 2020 and these distractions were removed, many students discovered a profound loneliness, an aching for relationships. But the pandemic did not cause this isolation, says Fr. Joseph-Anthony, it only opened peoples’ eyes to a problem that already existed. It is a problem that has existed from the very beginning of human history and one of the core wounds of original sin. The solution to this isolation has always been the same: a relationship with God.

Fr. Joseph-Anthony Kress, O.P., chaplain at the University of Virginia, leads students across campus on a Good Friday. Photos by Justin Vinh.

After students returned to campus, Fr. Joseph-Anthony knew that the answer to the problem of students' isolation would not be more events, but leading the students to a radical and transformational relationship with Jesus Christ. "If we do anything, any thing that we're doing has to be geared towards impacting relationships." Supported by a team of FOCUS missionaries, Fr. Joseph-Anthony has formed the UVA chaplaincy into a mission of relationships based on trust and authenticity. The relationships developed among the students rest on the virtue inherent in an immersive Catholic worldview. "There are so many communities [on campus]," Fr. Joseph-Anthony told me, "but only one is built on virtue." Through these relationships, students are formed not merely as students who happen to be Catholic, but as Catholic adults pursuing virtue and truth together. They learn and experience the proper dynamics of friendship and intimacy, supported by the clarity that virtuous relationships provide. Building virtuous friendships based on a proper understanding of relationality has enabled students to engage each other in difficult conversations on topics like drug use, pornography, and sexual assault.

Fr. Joseph-Anthony's ministry of relationships has produced some impressive results. In the last two years, 40 students have entered or returned to the Church through the OCIA (formerly RCIA) program at St. Thomas Aquinas, the university parish. Impressively, most of these conversions or reversions were sparked by students going

out to their classmates. Fr. Joseph-Anthony sees "students who have a deep encounter with Christ and then they turn around and are on fire and are ready to go." UVA now has 33 Bible study groups often led by undergraduates, including groups in fraternity and sorority houses and others with student-athletes. The influence of the relationships built by UVA's campus ministry continues to be felt even after graduation through vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and faithful, intentional marriages.

Though he has learned a lot in his six years at UVA, Fr. Joseph-Anthony credits the formation at the Dominican House of Studies with laying a foundation that has helped his ministry. Dominican formation imparts a deep understanding of human nature and an intellectual rigor that friars can bring to bear upon their ministry. The Thomistic worldview imparted by our formation helps us to pierce the chaos and confusion of our current society. Over the years of formation, this understanding of reality becomes second-nature for friars. "But for a student who's looking for answers, who's exhausted," says Fr. Joseph-Anthony, "it can be really revelatory." Fr. Joseph-Anthony's ministry at UVA aims to hand on this ordered view of the world and provide students with the answers they need, leading them closer to Christ. It is not a ministry without challenges, but Fr. Joseph-Anthony trusts in God's grace to continue to guide his work at UVA. "The Lord is faithful and this is his work. If we surrender ourselves to him in all that we do, his work is the most beautiful masterpiece you'll see."

UVA students at the Easter Vigil.





Photo: Curtis Martin is the founder of FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students). Photo courtesy of FOCUS.

Q&A WITH CURTIS MARTIN

By *BlackFriars* Staff

BlackFriars: *Congratulations on 25 years of the founding of FOCUS! Your vision and your commitment to forming young people on college campuses has borne much fruit. What were the indicators in the prevailing culture that led you to found FOCUS 25 years ago? And what are the challenges in the culture you see today?*

Curtis Martin: One thing that hasn't changed is that college is a great place to lose your faith if you're not careful. It was that way 25 years ago and it's that way today. If we have a spiritual plan, we can thrive; unfortunately, most young people don't. Both myself and my wife are prodigal Catholics. By the time we got to college, we met evangelical Protestants who were present on the college campus, but the Catholic Church was not. Each of us independently had an intense conversion back to faith in Christ, which temporarily left us with faith in Christ but not in the Church and the sacraments. We both found our way back to the Catholic Church by the grace of God and met after that, and

our earliest conversations were, "Why do you have to leave the Catholic Church to find Jesus Christ?" Most everyone knows someone who was raised Catholic who is now evangelical because of their time on college campuses. Our competitors and our opposition in the culture wars are trying harder. The money that evangelicals put into campus ministry was staggering compared to the Catholic Church. And the number that Planned Parenthood is putting into college campuses is staggering compared to evangelicals. Essentially, other people want our kids more than we do. So, we asked ourselves, was God calling us to offer a response? FOCUS is the result of that.

What has changed since that time is that the Catholic Church has awakened to the need on college campuses. The good news is we win every time we show up. And we lose by forfeit. When the Catholic Church shows up with a vibrant, engaging, sacramental presence, it's wildly successful. And in FOCUS's case, we see our job as lay Catholics is to draw students back to the priesthood and back to the sacraments. So, we really don't do most of the work. We build a bridge. But it's really the priests—it just shows the power of the priesthood—it's faithful priests who are joyful about their priesthood that lead to fruitful Newman Centers and chaplaincies every time. And if we can reach students and bring them back to priests like that...there will be fruit.

BlackFriars: *FOCUS missionaries work closely with Dominican friars on a number of college campuses. How has the presence of the Dominicans impacted the students you serve?*

Curtis Martin: None of the authentic longings of the soul are being met by the average university today. Intellectually, the university is filled with wokeness and deconstruction. People are taught what to think but not how to think, so students are not asking the right questions to get the right answers and the Dominicans have the best patrimony to address this—they really are

perfectly situated to address the intellectual vacuum on most campuses. They meet the spiritual one as well (the sacramental and the human). FOCUS has been very blessed to be of service to the Dominican friars and there's much more work to be done.

BlackFriars: *You recently quoted a statistic that 93% of Catholics raised in the faith leave the Catholic faith by the age of 23. How do Dominican friars on college campuses help stem that tide?*

Curtis Martin: The culture has never been more loud and more godless. We've had godless cultures before, but this one wins. The pornography industry alone is a bigger industry than all major sports teams put together. This culture comes at you. Families are in crisis. Couples aren't having children so they don't have a lot of brothers and sisters to play with. And if you do have siblings, you probably have your own room, your own tv, and your own devices. It's wildly isolating. While the statistic is accurate by the age of 23, the reality of the matter is our young people are getting into serious spiritual danger at age 8, 9, and 10. And it usually happens within 24 hours of parents giving their kid a cellphone. We go on mission trips with our college students and it's the first time they haven't had a cellphone in a decade and the first time they've gone a week without pornography. So, when you remove that distraction and you get them close to the poor so they can encounter Christ in the poor, and you get them close to a priest and the sacraments, lives are changed. When we're seeing young people leaving the Church in their early 20s it's really a last step of a war that has been going on for a decade for those young souls and the Church is ill-prepared to respond. But the renewal in the Dominican Order shows there are real pockets of vibrancy in the Church able to respond. And the young vocations in your province indicate that the Dominican community is rendering itself relevant to young people—so that's an important reality.

BlackFriars: *Bishop Barron has said that "Dominicans are in the truth business." Why is the mission to preach truth more important than ever on college campuses and, in your view, how does their training help meet this need for clarity in a very confused age?*

Curtis Martin: St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* is his most famous work but he also wrote *Summa Contra Gentiles* which is an articulation of the faith to nonbelievers. And, apart from these two great works, he spent most of his time breaking open the scriptures, and now those writings are being translated into English. We need to know the truth with great clarity as expressed in the *Summa Theologica*; we need to have a heart for those who don't know the truth as found in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*; and we need to speak to them of God as found in Thomas' words on scripture. This is the patrimony of the Dominicans (and of course prayer and the Rosary), but we are in an intellectual crisis right now where people don't see things clearly. My friend Dr. Ted Sri says our Catholic faith is like a lens—it's not what you look at, but what you look through. We live in a culture that doesn't have healthy lenses. The Dominicans have always been in the habit of sharing with people not just what to think, but how to think about everything. They provide that lens. Dominic was one of the most gifted preachers of his age. He wasn't having success evangelizing the people he was working with, even though he was winning all the arguments, he was not winning their hearts. And Mary appears to him and says, essentially, the problem is their hearts. You need to pray for them. With the Rosary, seeing our Lord's life through the Blessed Mother's eyes, becomes another lens. If you spend 20 minutes praying the Rosary, you've spent that time thinking about the life of Christ. That's a good thing for your soul. When you look at Jesus, and the dynamism of salvation history, it shapes the way we think about everything. And that's the comprehensive project that the Dominicans have always been about.



BlackFriars: *College students are in a colossal identity crisis. What do you think this crisis stems from? And how are Dominicans positioned to help students discover who they are?*

Curtis Martin: There is nothing more natural to the human person than “relationship”. The problem is we live in a very unnatural world. The first relationship any of us know is that of a son or a daughter and our relationship with our earthly parents should point to the Blessed Trinity, particularly to God the Father. But our society is disordered and broken and that iconic reality of the family doesn’t function the way it was meant to, so young people today grow up with deep wounds from their family of origin. The second relationship is brother and sister but because of contraception there is no experience of brotherly love. The average person in Italy today doesn’t have a brother, doesn’t have a sister, doesn’t have a first cousin because they’re only children of only children. There’s no lived experience of brotherly love. And anyone who’s been in a family knows that the reality of brotherly love is complicated—that ability to fight and to love in a nonsexual way is missing from our culture. It’s been reduced to erotic love which is the next form of love, marital

love as husband and wife. But we skip the son or daughter. We skip the brother or sister. There’s no foundation. The Catholic Church, with its anthropology and theology of the body, is the only answer here. But the problem with theology of the body and Catholic anthropology is it involves detailed and intricate philosophical language that has to be translated for the average person. The average person is not going to understand the words we use. And that’s where Dominicans have always been great—taking this truth, and without changing it, rendering it accessible. There’s a rich history of the Dominicans and their ability to do this. Just like in the 1960s there was rebellion against the Church’s teaching on birth control and for a couple decades there were only intricate philosophical and anthropological arguments so people were stuck—either they were trying to be faithful but didn’t know how to explain the Church’s teaching, or they decided they were not going to be faithful. We are in a similar situation today with gender. There is no answer right now except ones that are deeply theological and deeply philosophical and the Dominicans (again) are uniquely positioned to articulate fundamental principles and then render a translation that the ordinary person can make sense of and that the world is desperately looking for.



PURSUIT OF TRUTH ON CAMPUS

By *BlackFriars Staff*

The purpose of life is to know God. Period. That is St. Thomas Aquinas' central claim in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, and it was Fr. James Brent, O.P.'s central claim as he opened the Thomistic Institute's Student Leadership Conference, where over 100 university campus chapter student leaders gathered with the Dominican friars this past summer in Washington, DC.

Fr. James, who teaches philosophy at the Dominican House of Studies, put forth that there are two competing answers we often hear regarding how we can know God. One answer holds that we can only know God through our experience of him, then giving our heart to him. And the other posits we can only know God by reasoning our way to him.

"These are two absolutizations—the relational against the rational," he argued, "and this is a false dichotomy." It's also not Catholic, because the Church is a both/and. "So when we see this dichotomizing taking place, it's a sign that the Catholic spirit has been lost or undermined in some way." His point is that most Catholics today are

in one camp or the other, and that is not good for the Church.

He challenged Thomistic Institute leaders to follow the path of integration in their walk in faith. He's convinced this path of integration is something very much needed in the Church today and believes that it is a calling that Thomistic Institute student leaders have been given. "A complete Catholic life involves both relationality and rationality and the integration of all of these things—the affective, the relational, the rational, the analytical, the argumentative, the conceptual, the apologetic—all of it belongs together. All of it has its place in the life of the Church and in our lives." He noted this kind of integration happened more naturally in previous generations, but today's world calls for a more intentional integration of heart and mind.

Photo: Fr. Ambrose Little, O.P., Assistant Director of the Thomistic Institute, talks with students at the Thomistic Institute's Student Leadership Conference held in Washington, DC, this summer. Photo by Rui Barros.



St. Thomas also taught that this pursuit of truth is best lived in friendship. In fact, the vision Aquinas had is “friends pursuing truth together, together with God, who is the truth,” said Fr. James, which is the essence of the task of the Dominican friars at the Thomistic Institute. In their work with college students on over 80 college campuses throughout the US and internationally, the friars are pursuing truth together with students, in a very intentional way. And in this pursuit of truth, in this integration of heart and mind, they are helping form thousands of students in a mode that is not happening elsewhere in the Church or the culture. That’s the Dominican formation and charism at work—because of a rigorous intellectual and spiritual formation, they’re positioned for this task of walking with others in this search for truth, especially on college campuses.

Fr. Dominic Legge, O.P., Director of the Thomistic Institute, told student leaders that they are the protagonists of this work on their campuses because they know what their fellow college students need to hear. The Thomistic Institute chapters are an academic

outreach which introduce students to this rich intellectual tradition, Fr. Dominic said. What a difference it makes when someone begins to taste this rich tradition and realizes that it is there, he continued. “That can be the spark that sets off the flame that will burn for a very long time. And that flame has the Holy Spirit as its source—that kind of divine desire for God that’s hiding there in that thirst for the truth. So we want to at least give students a taste. We want them to understand that there is no conflict between the truths of the faith and the very sophisticated natural science and other explorations of natural reason, rightly done. Those kinds of studies can never pose a challenge to the truths that God has revealed because God is the source of them all. This is the deepest impulse of what we’re doing.”

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

Photo: Fr. Dominic Legge, O.P., Director of the Thomistic Institute, presenting to student leaders at this summer’s conference. Photo by Rui Barros.



Scan the code to visit our website.

For correspondence related to this newsletter, email editor@dominicanfriars.org

Dominican Friars Foundation

141 East 65th Street
New York, NY 10065
Phone: (212) 744-2410



www.dominicanfriars.org



facebook.com/dominicanfriars



instagram.com/dominicanfriars



twitter.com/dominicanfriars



youtube.com/DominicanFriarsMedia