

The Newsletter of the Dominican Friars Foundation



BLACKFRIARS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Keeping the Faith on College Campuses

*The Importance of Loving
God with the Mind*

Growing in Virtue

The number of students coming into the Church or completing the Sacraments of Initiation at Brown University is a great sign of hope. Here, Fr. Edmund McCullough, O.P., baptizes a Brown University student in Manning Chapel. Photo by Brian Nguyen.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends in Christ,

Fall is now upon us, which means back-to-school for many, including both our young friars in formation and all of the Dominicans who serve on university campuses.

Campus ministry is such a critically important element to the life of college students, especially today. Sometimes, it's the pivotal element in the life of a student. In my own experience, it was at college that I discovered the richness and beauty of the Catholic faith and the gift of the Eucharist. Entering the Catholic Church and growing in a vibrant Catholic campus ministry eventually led me to become a Dominican Friar and a priest. God is so good!

Dominican Friars are doing this same thing for many college students today—sharing the fullness of truth in Jesus Christ, building up strong faith communities, and providing spiritual nourishment through the sacraments. In this issue of *Blackfriars*, you can read about what God is doing through the ministry of the Dominican Friars on the campuses of Brown University and Johns Hopkins.

In addition to our work in Catholic campus ministries, our Thomistic Institute continues to grow through an increasing number of student chapters on college campuses throughout the US and abroad and is opening up the intellectual horizons of college students to the timeless wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas. The Thomistic Institute started out on four campuses in 2015—Harvard, Duke, Yale, and Brown—and has grown to nearly 100 campuses today. So, the work of the Province of St. Joseph is having a real impact on the lives of college students in places we couldn't imagine reaching even 10 years ago.

Your support for the formation of our friars is what enables us to send out well-trained, zealous priests to serve on college campuses and many other apostolates. Every Dominican Friar is formed in a life of liturgical prayer and rigorous study of the Catholic faith, aided by the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and this equips us to hand on the fruits of our contemplation and study through our preaching and teaching, bringing the full truth of the Catholic faith to nourish hungry souls in a way that they may not have heard before.

Thank you for your partnership in our Dominican mission. Please continue to keep us in your prayers and know of our prayers for you and your loved ones.

In Christ and St. Dominic,

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



Fr. Josemaría Guzmán-Domínguez, O.P., chaplain at Johns Hopkins University, with some members of his student flock.



KEEPING THE FAITH ON CAMPUS

By *Blackfriars* Staff

“Prefer Jesus to everything,” was the parting wisdom Fr. Edmund McCullough, O.P., gave to students at his last *Munderground* talk this past semester. He told the nearly 60 students gathered for the Monday night talk at Brown University that “the spiritual is more important than the material” and he reminded them that “union with God in the sacraments is the main event” in each of their lives.

Fr. Edmund, who served as chaplain for Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design Catholic community for four years, arrived on campus in the summer of 2020. The Catholic community had just bought and renovated a new Catholic Center just a stone’s throw from the Ivy’s renowned “Quiet Green”. Although it was COVID times, and universities were dealing with a temporary mass exodus, Catholic students at Brown and RISD now had a place to call home when they would eventually return to campus.

Almost 400 miles down Highway 95, Fr. Josemaría Guzmán-Domínguez, O.P., serves another group of Catholic college students. He is chaplain at Johns Hopkins University, based at our Dominican-run university parish of Saints Philip and James in Baltimore. The Hopkins students are integrated into parish life, which is served by three Dominican friars.

The parish campus houses the Newman Center, a place dedicated to the students, who have access to it 24/7.

“A home away from home” is how the students themselves describe their experience of the Catholic community at Brown and at Johns Hopkins. Oge, a sophomore studying Health and Human Biology, says the Catholic community is vitally important to her time at Brown because she is with others who share her same beliefs and she hears the same advice that her parents would give her, “so it feels like home.” Fr. Edmund agrees, saying “it’s certainly a more welcoming environment than the SciLi” (science library) at Brown. “Students can detect— even people who are not Christians—the spiritual power of the place. It feels different. That sounds subjective, but

See **KEEPING THE FAITH** on page 4

Photo: College students are all ears at a recent *Munderground*—a Monday night talk every week at the Brown-RISD Catholic Center. Photo by Brian Nguyen.



From **KEEPING THE FAITH** on page 3

students tell me it feels better to them,” Fr. Edmund said. Aside from the welcoming community to be found at the Catholic Center, he believes students are also attracted to the solidity of Catholic doctrine found there and it’s also a place where students can get answers to hard questions, which is a very good thing because Brown students ask a lot of questions.

Community is top of mind for Fr. Josemaría in his ministry at Hopkins where, when he first arrived, he noted a trend of isolation among students—this sense of isolation was exacerbated by what he terms “a long COVID” at the university. So, his emphasis these past two years has been primarily on the social and the spiritual. “Hopkins is a unique kind of place,” Fr. Josemaría said. “It attracts very bright students who want to be doctors or engineers and who want to make an impact on the world, so it’s hard for them to take time from their work to learn about God, and to worship, and to be with friends.” He went on to say that this social isolation is a real obstacle to living out and sharing the faith at Johns Hopkins. “It can be a very lonely campus because they’re studying all the time,” he noted. This sense of isolation is not unique to that campus. Fr. Edmund notes a lot of the suffering he sees in general in college students at Brown is because they’re isolated behind their screens all day. So, providing a place like the Catholic Center where students can develop Catholic friendships and where they can “be authentically human, and not just producers” is important.

Moving from the profane to the sacred, the ultimate goal of the Dominican Friars on both campuses is to help students to not only develop authentic Catholic friendships, but to develop a lasting friendship with God. This movement toward friendship with God translates concretely in providing daily access to the chapel, encouraging students to develop a habit of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, offering daily Mass, and providing numerous opportunities for confession and meeting with students one-on-one for spiritual direction.

The construction of the chapel in the Brown-RISD Catholic Center was one of the milestones of Fr. Edmund’s tenure there. The chapel, which students have access to 7-days a week, gives them the opportunity to have a life of prayer and to talk to God every day, he said. “There are other prayer spaces on campus but to have a chapel with the Blessed Sacrament reserved is something different.” Saints Philip and James also recently established an Adoration chapel. Students and parishioners can access it during the day to pray before the Eucharistic Lord. And as a result, students there are developing a habit of prayer.

Photo: Fr. Edmund McCullough, O.P., chaplain at Brown University for four years, on retreat with students. The retreats are a great opportunity for students to disconnect and spend time with the Lord. Photo by Brian Nguyen.

Julia, whose concentration is Applied Math and Computer Science at Brown, sees in herself an increase of reverence in prayer and at Mass after witnessing the reverence Fr. Edmund has for what he is doing. “It’s made my faith more real to me, and over the past three years I have grown in intimacy with Jesus because of the reverence I have seen.”

Brown and Johns Hopkins students also point to an approachability of the Dominican Friars who serve them. Fr. Josemaría recounted what one international student says when she goes back home to her family. She speaks about the friars with a certain familiarity, calling them “my Dominicans, my Dominicans in Baltimore!” he laughed. “So that quality of nearness to the students we serve—that access and approachability—then transforms the way they see the faith, the priesthood, and the Church,” he said. The students also see the joy of the friars. What comes to mind for Fr. Josemaría when he thinks about what the Dominican Friars have inherited from St. Dominic, he says “it is not only the charism of preaching the truth but also his joy... the joy of living out the gospel. This is a joyful way of life we’ve inherited as an Order. And I can’t tell you how many times the students have pointed that out.”

Photo (Right): Every Wednesday night at the Brown-RISD Catholic Center, students fill the chapel to pray before The Eucharistic Lord. Photo by Brian Nguyen.

Photo (Bottom): Johns Hopkins Catholic students fielded an intramural soccer team this year. Donning the name, the Holy Goalies, the team made it to the semifinals, cheered on by the Dominican Friars.





THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVING GOD WITH THE MIND

By *Blackfriars Staff*

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37). For most people, when going on retreat, the focus is on the movement of the heart—to move one’s will, so to speak, to love God more. Generally, retreat experiences are primarily focused on the affections, says Fr. Irenaeus Dunlevy, O.P. And, while that’s a good thing, it’s only part of the greatest commandment Jesus gives us.

For Dominican Friars, loving God is not just about the will, but it’s also, perhaps more so, about the mind. So, when the Thomistic Institute brings students on retreat, they call them intellectual retreats because “the weekend retreats for college students at the Thomistic Institute are meant to be an introduction to loving God with the mind,” said Fr. Irenaeus, who serves as Coordinator for Campus Outreach for the Thomistic Institute. On these retreats, students hear lectures engaging theology and philosophy, pray the Liturgy of the Hours with the friars, and have meals and recreation with the friars

and speakers—so that what they are studying begins to enter into their own prayer and conversation.

What was initially started 15 years ago by Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., and Fr. Dominic Legge, O.P., as an academic research institute for Thomistic scholars who would come together for academic conferences has since grown from four campus chapters in 2015 to nearly 100 Thomistic Institute campus chapters today, primarily in the US, but also as far as England, Ireland, Scotland, and Mexico. They’re also getting requests for chapters in Indonesia, Brazil, and Australia. And the primary goal of the Thomistic Institute is to introduce thousands of college students to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Photo: Thomistic Institute campus chapter students traveled to Washington, DC for this year’s Veritas 2024 conference. Here, Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P., and Matt Fradd, from Pints with Aquinas, talk about podcasting as a means of evangelization. Photo by Rui Barros.

But why do today's university students want, or need, to study the thought of Aquinas? Fr. Irenaeus explains that St. Thomas was one of the greatest thinkers of Western civilization, but from the Enlightenment to the Modern period, much of Aquinas's thought was needlessly dismissed at the university. As a result, many Catholics have not heard from one of the greatest teachers in the Church's intellectual tradition. A huge gap exists actually, he said. So, it's the goal of the Thomistic Institute to fill that gap. "It turns out students desire this—and not just Catholics, but any student who has questions about God, faith, science, and reason," he explained. The Thomistic Institute sees the vital importance for the Church of handing on this tradition, so that is precisely what they are doing through their student chapters, their many intellectual retreats, their study abroad program in Rome at the Angelicum, the Aquinas 101 series on Youtube, and their annual Veritas conference held in Washington, DC.

Fr. Irenaeus explains that students are looking for answers to the big questions that are ignored in the classroom. Questions like, *Who is God? What is the human person? What is happiness? Does truth exist? What does one discipline of knowledge have to do with another discipline of knowledge?* "Dominicans are particularly poised to answer this because we live it," he said. "We have St. Thomas Aquinas as our teacher so we can answer questions about God's existence, about the flourishing of the human person, about happiness and beatitude, about the unity of the sciences, and about the interaction of faith and science."

He has seen first-hand in his work with students on campuses across the country that they are relieved to find they can ask questions and there is somebody there, particularly the Dominicans, willing to engage those questions with them. "Because we're not afraid of seeking the truth. Questions are not



Thomistic Institute's student leaders attended Veritas 2024 from as far away as Oxford, England. Photo by Rui Barros.

a disturbance to our faith, but actually can lead to greater understanding," Fr. Irenaeus said.

The Dominican Friars who minister at the Thomistic Institute are seeing the fruits of their efforts pay off. On a broad level, Fr. Irenaeus says he notices more students who are engaging these higher-level questions about the faith than when he was a student. And he believes this is a good thing for the Church. "The Thomistic Institute reassures students that the faith is something they can engage intellectually. And for many students it's their first encounter with an intellectual heritage they didn't know existed. So, we're entering in, as to say, look what belongs to you. You can study the truth in this way." To learn more about Thomistic Institute programs, visit thomisticinstitute.org.



An essential part of the Thomistic Institute retreats is time to converse with one another and the friars about what they're learning on retreat. Photo by Rui Barros.



Fr. Basil Cole, O.P., professor emeritus at the Dominican House of Studies and author of *Angelic Virtues and Demonic Vices: Aquinas's Practical Principles for Reaching Heaven and Avoiding Hell*.

GROWING IN VIRTUE

By Br. Jerome Masters, O.P.

In his recent book, *Angelic Virtues and Demonic Vices: Aquinas's Practical Principles for Reaching Heaven and Avoiding Hell*, Fr. Basil Cole, O.P., sets out to make the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas accessible to anyone. Fr. Basil wrote an earlier book for priests called *The Hidden Enemies of the Priesthood: The Contributions of St. Thomas Aquinas*. In this new book, Fr. Basil seeks to take the lessons from his earlier book and make them accessible to those who are not priests—the thought being that more people need to know about this than just priests.

The book is divided into two parts. The first goes through the demonic vices, and the second through the angelic virtues. “In order to battle against vice and cultivate virtue, it is essential to understand

the final goal of man’s existence,” Fr. Basil says in the introduction to the book. In other words, we need to understand that heaven is our ultimate goal, and by knowing that goal we can cultivate the virtues we need to get there.

In the first part of the book, Fr. Basil explains the vices that we face in this life. These are the capital vices with one “Queen” of them all. Namely: Pride as queen, Lust, Vainglory, Avarice, Envy, Anger, and Gluttony. He first explains what each vice is by providing quotes from Scripture, offering what St. Thomas has to say about it in some of his most famous works (mainly the *Summa Theologiae*), and explaining what St. Thomas means in the text provided. Fr. Basil ends each chapter with clear examples of how different people such as priests, nuns, and laymen might exhibit these different vices in their lives. He explains how these vices tie into one another and truly make one a slave to sin if there is no fight to cultivate virtue. This section can help us come to an understanding of the spiritual life, because one is coming to understand the enemies that are fought in the spiritual life.

In the second half of the book, Fr. Basil explores the virtues we need to cultivate in order to fight these vices and ends with the necessity for prayer. The virtues give us the strength to fight these vices in order to attain our final goal, heaven. Fr. Basil demonstrates how, when we cultivate virtues, we can live happy lives. He considers what St. Thomas Aquinas and other spiritual masters of the Church say about the virtues and how they can be lived out by everyone. There are also helpful practical tips on how to cultivate the virtues throughout this section of the book.

One theme that recurs throughout the entire book is that everything begins with God and not ourselves. Fr. Basil reminds us that in order to fight the queen vice of pride we need to humble ourselves and remind ourselves that everything good in our lives comes from the one who is goodness itself. Therefore, it is only by God’s grace that we can grow in virtue. The only thing we can do on our own apart from God’s help is cultivate the vices! Praying to God for growth in virtue and cooperating with his grace every day is the way for us to begin and continue to grow in virtue throughout our lives toward virtue’s goal — God himself.



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