

praedicare

SUMMER 2026 • VOLUME II • ISSUE 2



Welcome Home

*Dominican Parishes and Campus Ministries
Welcome Record Numbers of New Catholics*

A Magazine for the Friends of the Dominican Friars Province of Saint Joseph

Dear friends in Christ,

“Since it was the will of God’s only-begotten Son that men should share His divinity, He assumed our nature in order that by becoming man He might make men gods.”

These are striking words from St. Thomas Aquinas, which he wrote in honor of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. Jesus Christ wishes to share His divinity with us! We, of course, do not become gods by nature, but rather we participate in God’s own life by grace. We become “gods” by gradual conformity to Christ. Transformation in Christ is a great mystery, one which we hope to shed a little light on in this issue of *Praedicare*.

The Dominican Friars are privileged to participate in God’s plan by preaching the saving truth of Jesus Christ. “The Dominican wants nothing more than to be a ‘preacher of grace’—one who never tires of unveiling the truth and the beauty of the gift of God: the Gift that is the very person of Jesus Christ,” writes Fr. Michael O’Connor, O.P.

For those who are not yet Christians, God leads them from the preaching of the Gospel to the sacrament of baptism, where the soul is transformed in a radical way. In baptism, the Blessed Trinity comes to live within the soul. Thus, baptism is a tremendous gift—one worth celebrating.

And while any single baptism is worth celebrating, the Dominican Friars have much to celebrate since so many people have come into the Church this Easter season through our ministries. For instance, a number of our parishes welcomed 80 or more people into the Church this Easter season.

Fr. Jonah Teller, O.P., a parochial vicar at St. Joseph’s Church, attributed this fruitfulness to the strength of Dominican formation, which he called “strong, trustworthy, coherent, and wise.” Indeed, formation as a Dominican Friar takes a man and shapes him into a preacher, ready to give himself fully to God. What goes on in initial formation for religious life is something of a mystery, even for many faithful Catholics.

The formation process transforms a friar so he can effectively preach the Gospel, wherever it is needed. Ultimately, the purpose of formation is conformity to Jesus Christ Himself—that the friar, and all those whom he encounters, can become like Jesus. We are all called to grow into “the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13) and to enjoy Him both in this life and for all eternity!

Know of my prayers for you and your loved ones, that you may attain to the full stature of Christ!

In Christ, Our Lady, and St. Dominic,



FR. JOHN PAUL KERN, O.P.

Executive Director
Dominican Friars Foundation



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*A Magazine for the Friends of the
Dominican Friars Province of Saint Joseph*

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On the Cover

566 people were baptized, confirmed, or received into the Catholic Church this Easter at the hands of the Friars of the Province of St. Joseph. Please join us in praying for them and in giving thanks to God for their fidelity to His grace.



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In baptism, "we are forever marked at the core of our being for the purpose of worshiping God," writes Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P. (The Baptism of Christ, Fra Angelico, 1400-1455, Museo di San Marco, Florence, Italy)



TRANSFORMED BY GRACE FOR FULL STATURE

FR. ANDREW HOFER, O.P.

Do you know when the anniversary of your baptism is? If you don't, I recommend that you contact the parish where you were baptized (or the parish where you were received into full communion, if baptized outside the Catholic Church). Ask for that date and celebrate it. On January 12, 1997, Saint John Paul II baptized 19 babies and afterwards proclaimed, "We should celebrate the day of our baptism as we do our birthday! But how many of the baptized are fully aware of what they have received?" What do we receive at baptism? God gives us principally two great gifts.

We receive the gift of an indelible mark called a character upon the soul. The baptismal character is necessary for the valid reception of other sacraments, which may have further requirements for validity. For example, a baptized man and a baptized woman, without impediments to marriage, may receive the sacrament of marriage together. Also, a baptized man may receive sacred ordination, which, along with confirmation, imposes a character that deposes the soul to worship God. Three of the seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, and holy orders) confer a sacramental character. We cannot lose a sacramental character—whether we are in heaven or in hell, we are forever marked at the core of our being for the purpose of worshipping God.

We also receive at baptism the precious gift of sanctifying grace. Baptismal grace removes original sin and any personal sins, and it gives us participation in the divine life. Grace deifies us, making us "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). This gift is astounding. Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches, "The good of grace in one is greater than the good of nature in the whole universe." In this grace, we enjoy the Blessed Trinity dwelling within our souls. By the infusion of grace, with its many virtues (especially faith, hope, and charity), gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, and the Beatitudes, we become transformed as God's beloved children, adopted in the Spirit to be conformed to the Son Who is the Way to the Father. Grace is the seed of glory, for no one goes to see God in heaven's glory except by having the grace

of Christ at work in the soul at the point of death. Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, who spoke of her littleness, ran in grace like a giant to heaven!

But grace, unlike a sacramental character, can be lost during this life on earth. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, or confession, restores grace to the soul with the forgiveness of mortal sins, and it also forgives venial sins, which hinder our growth in grace. St. Thomas Aquinas, who extols the awe-inspiring importance of a soul in grace, teaches that we do not customarily have absolute certainty about whether we have grace. The Church's *Code of Canon Law* says: "A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible." Notice that it does not say "A person who is conscious of being in a state of grace may receive Communion..." We do not need to "feel" grace at work. Before she was put to death, St. Joan of Arc was asked if she was in the state of grace. She superbly replied: "If I am not, may it please God to put me in it; if I am, may it please God to keep me there." While her accusers thought otherwise, grace perfected St. Joan.

God wants us all to be perfected by grace in the communion of the Church. Saint Paul says, "Grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:7). This grace comes to transform us to grow, so often in hidden ways, to "the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). That all begins with baptism. Celebrate it! 🌹

Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P., entered the Order of Preachers in 1995 and was ordained to the priesthood in 2002. He is a Professor of Patristics at the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies and serves as the Editor-in-Chief of *The Thomist*, a quarterly academic journal that seeks to cultivate a fruitful dialogue between modern and contemporary philosophical systems and the classical tradition of philosophy and Christian theology.

IF YOU KNOW *the* GIFT *of* GOD

Preaching the Truth & the Beauty of the Gift

FR. MICHAEL DOMINIC O'CONNOR, O.P.

"If you knew the gift of God, you would ask for it..." These words of Our Lord to the woman at the well capture both the fundamental conviction and method of Dominican Preaching. The Dominican is one who believes with the deepest confidence that *preaching the truth and the beauty of the Gift of God* is precisely what gives rise to the path of surrender and love in souls, which is the very path of their transformation in Christ.

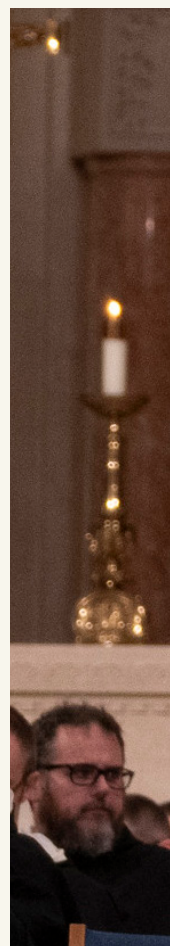
The dual dynamic of gift and path that is at work here is wonderfully captured in the first homily that Pope Leo XIV preached after his election to the Chair of St. Peter. The Holy Father reflected on this dual dynamic in the life of St. Peter and at the heart of all Christian salvation, saying: *"Peter understands both of these things: the gift of God and the path to follow in order to allow himself to be changed by that gift. They are two inseparable aspects of salvation*

entrusted to the Church to be proclaimed for the good of the human race" (Homily, May 9, 2025).

Two inseparable aspects of salvation: but two aspects that—most importantly—rely upon an inner logic of ordering and movement. It is always *the gift of God* that must come first, that must first be made known and be welcomed—in order that the path of discipleship and conversion and transformation might be born within the human heart, in that very place where the one who has encountered the gift of God comes to desire it all the more: asking for it, and allowing himself to be changed by it.

Pope Leo rightly notes that this twofold mystery of salvation—*the gift of God and the path to follow in order to be changed by the gift*—has been entrusted to the whole Church to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth for the salvation of souls. But in a special way, the Dominican rejoices in this articulation of the evangelical mission of the Church because it corresponds so deeply to his own defining conviction and to the grace of St. Dominic that is his charism and inheritance.

St. Dominic is known to have especially treasured the Epistles of St. Paul. One might well wonder if his favorite Pauline verse was not that very verse wherein the Apostle articulates to the Romans this principle which resonates so profoundly with the mission of the Order of Preachers: *"Be transformed by the renewal of your minds"* (Romans 12:2)—by the faith that sees the truth and the beauty of the gift of God. St. Dominic believed that it would never be sufficient for the preaching of the Gospel to center on moral exhortation, to focus firstly and lastly on "behavior modification." This lover of the Truth understood that the deepest and surest transformation of the human person into Christ could only come by way of *"putting on the mind of Christ,"* by seeing more and more—with the light of faith and the gift of grace—as God sees. Indeed, St. Dominic knew that when one sees as God sees: one sees that *everything is gift* in the One Who is all in all.





Living and abiding in the grace of St. Dominic, the Dominican preacher believes firmly and truly that it is the primacy of God's grace, the centrality of God's gift, of His divine initiative, of His saving work in every human soul, that alone can sustain and foster and bring to full fruition the complete transformation of the human soul by that same gift of grace. And so it is that the Dominican wants nothing more than to be a "preacher of grace"—one who never tires of unveiling the truth and the beauty of the gift of God: the Gift that is the very person of Jesus Christ.

In the arresting words of St. Augustine: "*You cannot love what you do not know.*" If love is the crowning glory and ultimate end of the Christian

life, it belongs to the preacher to lead souls to the full embrace of that love by opening their minds ever more to the beautiful, glorious, saving truth of Who God is, of what He has done for us in Jesus Christ, and of all that He has prepared for us in the Heaven of His own Heart. Because: *if you truly know the gift of God—you will ask for it, and welcome it, and allow yourself to be changed by it ever more—unto eternal life.* ✠

Fr. Michael Dominic O'Connor, O.P., entered the Order of Preachers in 2006 and was ordained to the priesthood in 2012. He is the Director of Liturgical Music and lecturer at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD. He is also the Director and Co-Founder of The COR IESU Project, a Dominican preaching initiative that assists in priestly formation.



Fr. Pius Henry, O.P., (left) and Fr. Raphael Arteaga, O.P., (right) were ordained to the priesthood at St. Dominic Church in Washington, DC, on Saturday, May 23.

FREEDOM for GOD

The Dominican formation process molds men, freeing them to give themselves to God and to the faithful.

Each Dominican friar has a different story of how he first met the Order of Preachers, a different personal history, and (usually) a different family of origin. From out of these many paths for different men across the generations, one Order emerges dedicated to preaching the Gospel for the salvation of souls.

The Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph have ordained over 65 men to the priesthood over the last decade. They have all joined generations of friars who have gone before them. The Dominican Order has an 800-year history that spans the globe due in part to how men are transformed into preachers through the formation process.

Formation is the preparation a friar goes through before he is ordained to the Priesthood and assigned to a long-term ministry. It aims at developing him emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and pastorally so he can carry out his duties effectively.

In one sense, formation appears simple. It begins when a young man enters the multi-week postulancy, followed by the year-long novitiate at St. Gertrude Priory in Cincinnati, OH. The novices of the Province traditionally receive the Dominican habit on August 8, the Solemnity of Our Holy Father St. Dominic. They are gradually introduced to the life of the Order, its history, its customs, and its chant (there are lots of chant lessons in the novitiate!).

After just over a year in the novitiate, our novices make their first profession of vows on August 15 (the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary), formally becoming Dominican Friars. Then they are off to Washington, DC, where they enter what's called the studentate, and pursue graduate-level studies in philosophy and theology at the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception (PFIC) at the Dominican House of Studies.

Both the Church and secular accrediting institutions have recognized the PFIC, allowing it to grant both ecclesiastical and civil degrees. Before priestly ordination, Dominican student brothers earn both a Baccalaureate of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.), an ecclesiastical degree, and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.), a civil degree. At the end of five to seven years—the length depends on the friar's previous coursework—they are ordained priests and sent out into the world for a lifetime of ministry.

Underneath this straightforward progression from postulant to priest, a lot more goes on under the surface.

One friar, Fr. Philip Nolan, O.P., the editor-in-chief of *Magnificat*, who was ordained to the Priesthood in 2022, called the novitiate a “spiritual bootcamp.”

Another friar, Fr. Bonaventure Chapman, O.P., who was ordained to the Priesthood in 2017, described parts of the formation process as “stones just sharpening each other through blunt force contact.”

Fr. Joseph Scordo, O.P., has been a

Dominican priest for almost 60 years. For him, life in the novitiate was “very strict, very ordered.”

“It was a challenge,” he said, “but it was good. It was good.”

“Joyful Generosity”

Formation is good because God is good. According to Fr. Philip, the formation process allows friars to “give their life to the Lord in joyful generosity.”

“Jesus called the disciples to be close to Him and then He sent them out,” he said. “Formation is learning to be close to Him so that you can freely go out and serve Him.”

According to Fr. Brian Chrzastek, O.P., an assistant professor of philosophy at the Dominican House of Studies, formation is not like simply teaching a skill or a technique; nor is it teaching a man how to act or put on a costume. It's a more radical shaping of the man.

“One of the motivating phrases for the Thomistic Dominican tradition is ‘Grace perfects nature,’” Fr. Brian said. “So formation is the activity of the individual being formed—or allowing himself to be formed—in

order to become the very thing that he's supposed to be.”

With the Dominican Order's emphasis on the fraternal life of the friars, the formation process also teaches the young men who enter about how to live in community as Dominicans. When men enter the Order, they are placed under the care of the novice master, who guides them through their first year.

Each novice has his own personal history, a different upbringing, a different experience and understanding of the faith, different talents—not to mention different faults and blind spots.

“Part of formation is healing our blind spots, or at least beginning to,” Fr. Philip said.

Among the novice master's many responsibilities is to point out how a novice's behaviors are impacting the community.

Fr. Philip said such corrections sting but he was “extremely grateful” for them. In offering correction, the novice master helps “us become more virtuous and more able to stand on our own two feet in the religious life, not



Newly professed friars, after finishing their novitiate, perform the *venia*, a form of prostration unique to the Dominican Order, as Fr. Allen Moran, O.P., Prior Provincial of the Province of St. Joseph, formally assigns them to academic studies.

merely following rules...but seeing the point and living by them," he said.

If being corrected by the novice master is not enough, the novices also help to form one another—through living life in common and through a practice known as “fraternal correction.” Learning the art of fraternal correction allows the friars to address problematic behaviors that happen in community once they are out of the novitiate and studentate. St. Dominic, in particular, was known for his gracious manner in correcting his brethren.

“St. Dominic was really good in the sense that he was known for correcting his brothers such that they only realized that they had been corrected later by him,” said Fr. Bonaventure, who serves as an assistant student master at the Dominican House of Studies. “This is a goal that's close to Jesus’ perfection as far as I can tell.”

Novices fall far short of St. Dominic’s skill in offering correction, but they practice. “You rather muck it up a bit,” Fr. Bonaventure said. “It's a lot of trial and error.”

As time goes on, a friar comes to trust his brothers, receive their correction, and modify his behavior. He eventually comes to a point where he will start to think proactively about how his behavior affects his brethren.

“It helps you to be attentive to occasionally check in and say, am I doing anything to my brothers, that's damaging the relationship of the community and therefore turning them away from God and towards me in anger and dislike,” Fr. Bonaventure said.

God's Daily Grace

Just as the formation process helps a man live with the other friars, it also helps him live with another person: himself.

“We all come into formation with all sorts of fears and hangups and wounds and memories and uncertainties,” said Fr. Philip.

“A big experience of novitiate is learning that you are a project beyond your own capacity to fix,” he said. Every novice is like, “Wow, I am broken and I can't fix myself.”

The discovery of one's own poverty leads a novice to even greater discoveries.

“A big one for me was learning that God is abundant, that I didn't have to worry about running out of strength to live the religious life, but that He Himself would provide the strength and the grace to live each day,” said Fr. Philip.

“God, little by little, and [in] surprising ways, begins to heal,” he said.

Sent to Serve

Following ordination, friars are sent out to engage in various kinds of ministries: as pastors, parochial vicars, campus ministers, college professors, hospital chaplains, among many other ministries.

A friar sooner or later recognizes that his classes at the House of Studies have not prepared him for every situation he will encounter in ministry.

“There are all kinds of difficult situations that you can't really prepare for,” said Fr. Brian, who was ordained to the Priesthood in 1992.

Nonetheless, the formation process is still a critical tool in preparing to handle such situations effectively. “It's kind of a remote preparation in the sense of learning...[to] adjust or respond to any particular situation,” Fr. Brian said.

Fr. Scordo is a unique example of how formation prepares a friar to take on unanticipated ministries. Almost 20 years after his ordination as a Dominican priest, he went through another formation process: to become a chaplain for the U.S. Navy.

He heard members of the armed forces might go six months without access to the sacraments. So he volunteered to serve as a chaplain in the Navy. This led him from parish ministry in the United States to ministry around the world, including in Afghanistan during the Global War on Terrorism.



Fr. Pius Henry, O.P., (left) greets his father after being ordained to the priesthood at St. Dominic Church in Washington, DC, on Saturday, May 23.

Another friar who gave him advice before joining the Navy said, “If you're trying to escape authority, don't join. If you're trying to escape frustration, don't join. If you want to go to work, join.”

So he did.

He said his formation as a friar had many similarities to his training as a Navy chaplain. They both taught him patience. They taught him to be positive, to adapt, to persist. They taught him to depend on God.

Over 60 years have passed since Fr. Scordo received the Dominican habit. He doesn't plan to stop his ministry even as the years pass. “I don't regret any of it,” he said.

Fr. Bonaventure expressed a sentiment explaining why someone could pour out his life as a Dominican friar and not “regret any of it.”

“Do you want to live a life fully devoted to Christ and with brothers who love you?” he said.

“That sounds pretty good. Maybe a lot of people are called to that.” ✠



Welcome H



ome

*Dominican Parishes and Campus Ministries
Welcome Record Numbers of New Catholics*



From Virginia to New York, the trend is the same. And the Dominican friars, as well as the laypeople helping them, are thrilled with it. In some cases, longtime churchgoers now have to show up 30 minutes early to get a seat at Mass!

What is going on?

Fr. Jonah Teller, O.P., a parochial vicar at St. Joseph's in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, describes it as "radical conversion to the Catholic faith, seemingly out of nowhere."

Five years ago, his parish helped about 15 people join or rejoin the Church. This year, it was 87.

The number is about the same for Fr. Joseph Hagan, O.P., a parochial vicar at the University Parish of St. Thomas Aquinas, attached to the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville, Virginia. More than 80 people passed through their program to join or return to the Church this year.

What is drawing them in?

"The Eucharist," answers Fr. Joseph simply. "That the Eucharist is truly Jesus Christ."

The friar noted that those who come from the Protestant traditions, or from no faith basis at all, realize that "the experience of going to a Mass, and

being physically inside a church with a tabernacle is something that can only be...experienced in a Catholic church."

He has found that many people have a "sense of skepticism" about any fulfillment that can be found with secular values, but that's not the reason they are coming to the Church. "When I ask them, they bring up the Eucharist, even though it is nothing new."

"Other Christian services are often good here, but they are clearly man-made. It is clear that humans put them together: song, preaching, then song. But when you come to Catholic Mass, there is a mysterious, and yet inviting and attractive, strangeness," he said.

"God is initiating relationships with these people; He is drawing them in," offered Fr. Jonah, as if nothing further can be said.

Fr. Boniface Endorf, O.P., the pastor of St. Joseph's in Greenwich Village, also points to the awareness of Christ's presence as the main draw.

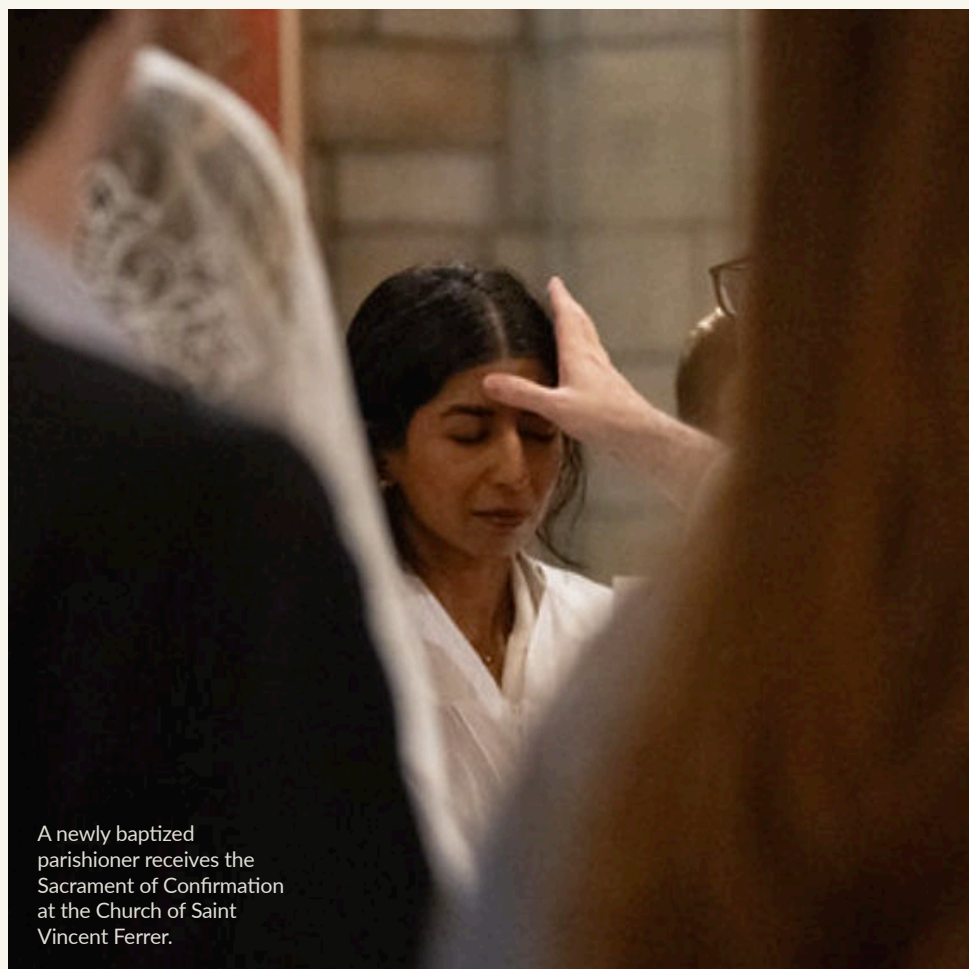
"We want someone who walks into our doors for the first time to think that this is a place where God is present. I hope they want to encounter God here. We have a reverent and beautiful liturgy, and of course we hope the preaching is good too," he said.

Harvesting

Certainly, the Dominican Friars are trying to be an effective instrument for God's efforts.

"The will of God is delightfully mysterious. Our job is to harvest what is in front of us. We reap where we did not sow," Fr. Jonah explained, acknowledging that his Dominican formation has helped him be a tool in the Lord's hands.

"It makes me so grateful for the



A newly baptized parishioner receives the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Church of Saint Vincent Ferrer.



Young Mass-goers at St. Joseph's sit attentively in the pews. St. Joseph's Church has seen a dramatic rise in adult conversions this Easter.

formation I received at the Dominican House of Studies; the other friars and I were given a strong, trustworthy, coherent, and wise intellectual formation, steeped in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, that we can distill down to our OCIA program in an easy way," he said.

How does an adult join the Church anyway?

Every adult catechumen journeys through what is known as the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, or OCIA.

The goal of any OCIA program is for adults to learn about the Catholic faith; that process hopefully culminates in the reception of baptism (for those who haven't already been validly baptized), confirmation, and the reception of Holy Communion.

The sacraments of initiation are the first window into the life of grace that

the Church promises.

We asked our priests to talk about how they explain these three sacraments to those who are about to receive them and become new members of the Church.

Starting with baptism, Fr. Jonah brought up his go-to metaphor:

"Imagine that we've got this big bowl of clear water, and this new, dry sponge. When I let the sponge go into the water, the water will infuse the sponge, and that's what baptism is. You are baptized into Christ Jesus. You are baptized into His death, and into His resurrection—so your soul, your being, is plunged into the mystery of Jesus Christ: that He lives for God, that He was resurrected, all that is given to you, like water is given to the sponge."

After baptism comes confirmation.

Fr. Joseph offered his explanation for this sacrament: "No one is a benchwarmer in the Catholic Church;

everyone has a mission. Our mission is what we're made for, but it is far beyond our natural capacity. Everyone has a vocation to holiness, and that vocation—whether [lived in] marriage or the priesthood—is going to be challenging. We all have a vocation to love and forgive our enemies, which we know is hard, and fortunately in the sacraments God offers to give us the strength we need."

Fr. Jonah uses a different image: "Confirmation is the strengthening and maturing of the life of baptism. Compare an infant to a 25-year-old man—there is a big difference."

Finally the newly confirmed are invited to receive their first Holy Communion.

Fr. Jonah explains the Eucharist by saying, "With the Eucharist, you are what you eat. You are transformed by grace to become what Jesus Christ is by nature. If you don't eat, you will die. You



will get hangry, you will decay.”

Fr. Joseph explained further, “There is a spiritual rebirth in baptism, which parallels beautifully with the motherly nature of the Eucharist. A mother feeds a newborn with her body, and Jesus does the same thing with the Eucharist.”

Fr. Boniface spoke to a similar sentiment, “If I didn’t eat any food for a week, I’d be a mess physically. We do that spiritually to our souls when we don’t receive the Eucharist; we lose that inner strength. The key is to stay close to Christ through the sacraments. We are not saved by our own willpower.”

How does an OCIA program work, concretely?

The OCIA program at St. Joseph’s is led by a simple, two person team, made up of Fr. Jonah, who provides the theological instruction, and a lay parish Ministry Coordinator who has been tasked with scaling up the growing program.

Through the official parish program, the students become a real community, as they walk together on the months-long journey.

“The questions and conversations come from so many viewpoints, it’s awesome to see,” Fr. Jonah noted.

This year’s class, he said, could be generally divided into those who were raised Catholic and wanted to be confirmed—the smaller portion. And then the rest—some 70% of the group—“who have had a radical conversion to the Catholic faith, seemingly out of nowhere, by God’s grace.”

Will they stay?

While it is certainly exciting to welcome so many people into the Church, the friars, the parish workers, and the new Catholics themselves are aware that this is just the beginning.

Fr. Joseph noted how the parish wants to continue to accompany these

new members of the Church beyond the formal OCIA period. He spoke of having volunteers and a system in place for what comes after receiving the sacraments of initiation. “After Easter, it is important to be aware of the challenge to endure in a sometimes hostile environment,” he acknowledged, and to support our Church’s newest members as they continue to grow in their understanding and practice of the Faith.

Fr. Jonah shared that the vibrancy of the new growth is making the whole parish “encouraged and happy... especially among young people.”

These new Catholics have truly helped to renew parish life across the Province of St. Joseph, reminding all the faithful that everyone has a part to play in the work of nurturing faith in others, in bringing our friends and family—and even ourselves—into the fullness of Christ. ✠

2026 Priestly Ordinations

YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER!



FR. PIUS MARY HENRY, O.P.

Hometown: Reading, MA

Alma Mater: The Catholic University of America

On how God uses the friars to form new preachers:

This, then, I think is the greatest challenge of formation: maintaining a receptive attitude to this new life as it is handed on to you from those who live it. Our life is handed on to us every day by every brother with whom we live—the question is whether or not we are receptive to the life that God wants to give us through them. This process is surprising—pleasantly, or not so pleasantly at times—nonetheless, God uses everything, pleasant and unpleasant, as His instruments to help us to grow into the Dominican priests that He wants, not the Dominican priests that we think that we should be.



FR. RAPHAEL MARY ARTEAGA, O.P.

Hometown: Pawtucket, RI

Alma Mater: Providence College

On coming to know Jesus more deeply through the formation process:

By coming to love Jesus in the liturgy, especially in the daily conventual Mass, my formation process has helped me come to deepen my prayer life and to meet Jesus in the Eucharist, in the Scriptures, as well as in the community and in those to whom I preach.



Solemnity of Holy Father Dominic



Profession of First Vows
St. Gertrude Church
Cincinnati, OH



Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception
Washington, DC



"May God grant you pardon and peace..." Fr. Allen Moran, O.P., Prior Provincial of the Province of St. Joseph, absolves a penitent at the 3rd annual Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, on September 27, 2025.

God's Mercy, Always Available

Dominican parishes serve as major hubs for confession, offering God's mercy to all.

A penitent walks into a Dominican church in New York City. It's about 20 minutes before confessions are slated to start. In front of one confessional, there's already a line 10 to 15 people deep. People are starting to gather in front of the church's other confessional too.

A woman leans over to the penitent and asks, "Are there guides to confession in there? I haven't been in a long time."

"The priest will help you—just tell him you haven't been in a while," he says.

Scenes like this play out frequently in churches wherever Dominican Friars are found.

Many Dominican parishes, especially those in the center of large cities, have publicly scheduled times for confession six or seven days a week—sometimes multiple times a day. For instance, St. Patrick Church in Columbus, OH, has confession

before every Mass on Sunday.

"We are a parish that knows that the mercy of God is always available," said Fr. Paul Marich, O.P., the pastor of St. Patrick Church.

"Confession is a sacrament of healing," he said. "What you do see in souls coming to confession is that great desire for the healing of Christ with whatever sin that they are struggling with or whatever wounds that they have to bring before the Lord."

And people are seeking Christ the Healer in the sacrament. Friars do not usually keep tallies of the numbers who seek confession, but Fr. Paul estimates that 250-300 people come to his church each week for the sacrament.

His estimate tracks with numbers seen at other Dominican parishes. Between St. Joseph Church in Greenwich Village and the nearby Catholic Center at New



Fr. Raymond La Grange, O.P., explained that the Dominicans' theological emphasis on happiness through virtue shapes how the Friars guide penitents through the sacrament of confession.

York University, Dominican Friars hear about 200 to 250 confessions each week. About the same number confess each week at the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer in the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Even in the much smaller city of Charlottesville, VA, the friars spend a combined 10 hours a week hearing confessions. And at the most recent Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage, 15 Dominican priests heard more than 800 confessions over the course of 3 hours.

Made for Happiness

Telling a stranger—or, perhaps worse, someone you know—the bad things (sometimes very bad things) you have done is rarely a pleasant experience. So the popularity of confession at Dominican parishes may mystify many in the secular world.

Yet for the penitent, this experience leads to happiness, due in part to the Dominican Friars' approach to the sacrament.

Fr. Raymond La Grange, O.P., who served as a parochial vicar at the Church of Saint Vincent Ferrer before returning to further graduate studies, explained that the Dominicans' theological emphasis on happiness through developing virtue shapes how they guide the penitent through the sacrament.

"You want to be happy because you're a human, and that's what humans do. Your ultimate happiness is in God, but you're trying to place your happiness in something else," he said. "So can we help you see the truth and go toward it?"

To be able to help a person see the truth, a Dominican priest completes a rigorous philosophical and theological education before he hears his first confession. Friars take about six classes on moral theology as part of their seminary studies, and these classes place a greater emphasis on God's grace, the virtues, and the beatitudes than the typical education provided

to diocesan seminarians or members of other religious orders. The Dominican Order also requires its candidates for the priesthood to pass a special exam on the sacrament before they are allowed to hear confessions.

The rigorous academic training the friars receive means they can engage deeply with people in confession.

“When I’m trying to understand or want to have...a deeper conversation about what it is that I am confessing, then I can rely on the Dominicans for that kind of guidance and that kind of deeper understanding,” said Simon Ciccarillo, a lawyer who first encountered the friars at St. Dominic Church in Washington, DC.

Just as they are intellectually deep, they are also “genuinely caring about the person making their confession,” he noted.

As a convert, Ciccarillo’s encounter with the Dominicans’ intellectual tradition was transformative.

“I literally became Catholic when I converted, but I don’t think I became a complete Catholic until after I had...spent some time in a Dominican parish,” he said.

Sacramental Abundance

While people are drawn to Dominican confessors for their theological learning and compassion, there are also practical reasons their ministry sites are major centers for confession. An abundance of vocations means Dominican parishes generally have more priests assigned to them than the average parish. Additionally, Dominican parishes may also be associated with larger Dominican houses or “pories” that are home to other friars whose primary ministry is not at the parish, but who will also assist in the sacramental ministry of the parish. Since Dominican parishes can draw upon the service of a larger number of priests, they can make the sacraments more readily available than most parishes.

Having a Dominican parish offer many opportunities for confession enriches its whole diocese in a paradoxical way. On the one hand,

Fr. Paul noted that the greater availability of confession lifts a burden on the local diocesan priests, since their parishioners can easily go to a Dominican priest. On the other hand, he has also seen more and more diocesan parishes in the Columbus area increase the opportunity for confession during the workweek and on Sundays.

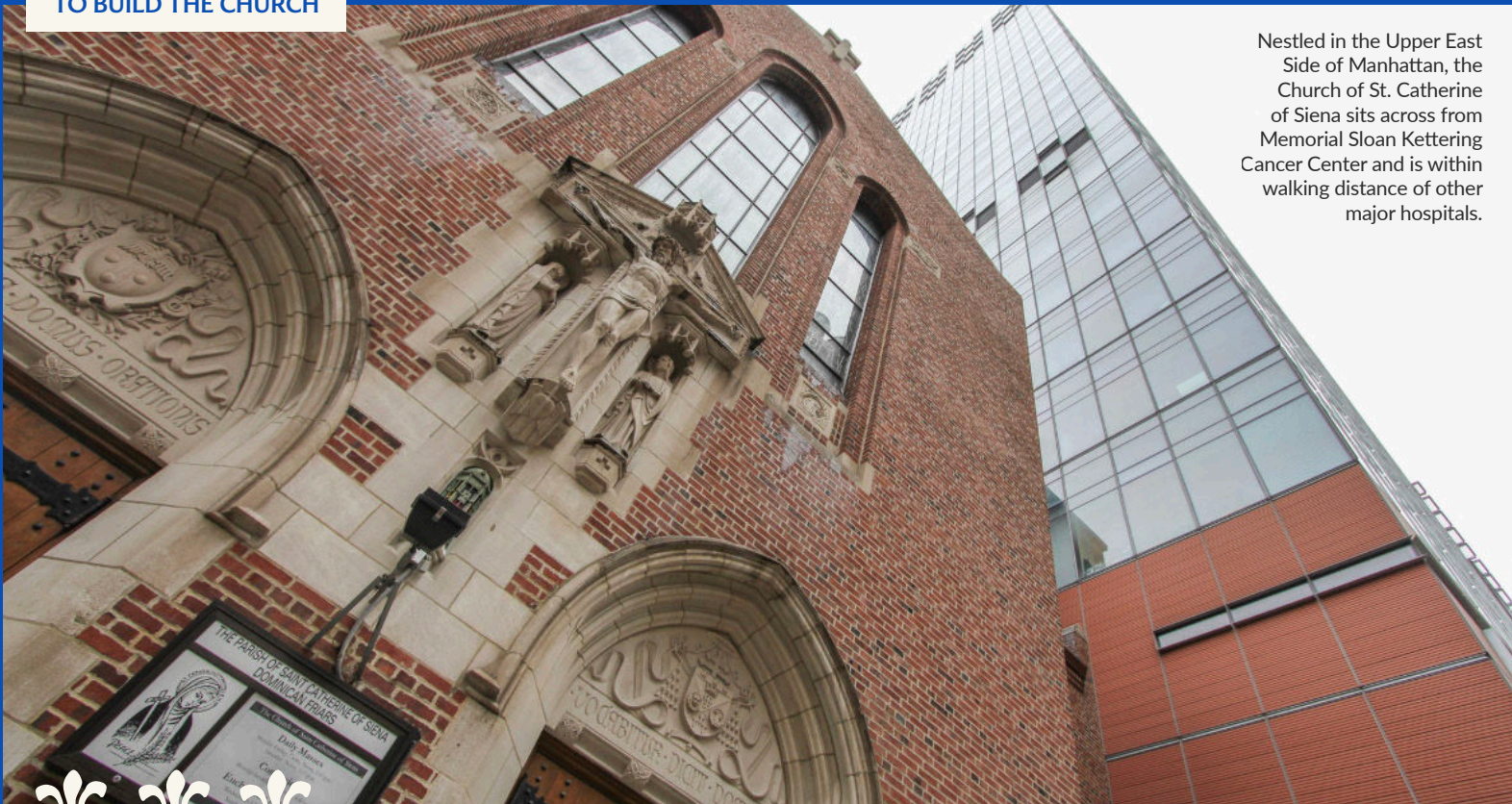
The increase in the opportunity for confession and the number of people showing up for the sacrament are signs of hope, just as the sacrament itself is a sign of the penitent’s hope, which ultimately rests in God.

Fr. Raymond reminds us that “When a penitent considers their sins, they should think, ‘I’m sorry for them, but my hope is in God, not in me, not in what I’ve accomplished, not in what I’ve become, not in how good or bad I am. My hope is in God’.” ✠



“What you do see in souls coming to confession is that great desire for the healing of Christ with whatever sin that they are struggling with,” says Fr. Paul Marich, O.P., pastor of St. Patrick’s Church in Columbus, OH.”

Nestled in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, the Church of St. Catherine of Siena sits across from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and is within walking distance of other major hospitals.



PREPARING US TO LIVE WITH GOD

*Dominican Healthcare Ministry: for the sick,
and for the professionals caring for them*

In 1897, the Dominican Friars working on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, in New York City, at the parish of St. Vincent Ferrer, opened a mission on East 68th Street and placed it under the patronage of St. Catherine of Siena, patroness of those who care for the sick.

And shortly thereafter, by God's Providence, the best hospitals in the city—and in the country—began to spring up in the immediate neighborhood of the Church of Saint Catherine of Siena.

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, one of the nation's premier

cancer hospitals, became a neighbor of St. Catherine's in 1939. There was also New York-Presbyterian, which opened on East 68th Street in 1932. And then the Hospital for Special Surgery opened a few years later.

The Dominican Friars have continued to work in this region of the city for more than 125 years, and are now directing a multifaceted and extensive ministry at those hospital systems.

The province has assigned five priests to the Dominican Healthcare Ministry (DHM), including Fr. Columba Thomas, O.P., who is a medical doctor and an assistant professor of medicine at the

Pellegrino Center for Clinical Bioethics at Georgetown University, and serves as the Director of Bioethics for DHM.

Fr. Hyacinth Grubb, O.P., the Executive Director of the Dominican Healthcare Ministry, told us about their work:

"In 2002, our ministry was revamped to include not only direct care of the sick, but also a new focus on bioethics and education. It became apparent that there was a need for a Dominican presence in the world of medical ethics. So since then, we have a twofold mission—both to the sick locally, and also to medical professionals through the larger hospital culture in the U.S."

Q. What is it that you do on a day to day basis?

We are the full time chaplains at those three hospital systems. We visit anyone who asks for us, Catholic or not.

These are people who are facing mortality in a new way, through all the difficulties of illness. When we are sick all the parts of our life become more poignant and sharp, both the good and the bad. There are many people who are confronting family dynamics or issues that are made more pressing by illness. People need the guidance of the Church in that. Nurses and physicians, and patient families will request us and then we go.

Q. How does your staff share the duties of being on call at these hospitals?

We have four [friars] who share a pager, 24/7, 365 days a year. There is never a time when a priest is not available.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about Last Rites and how a Catholic should look at them?

Last Rites is a little bit of a misnomer. It consists of confession, Communion, and anointing of the sick, together. Confession and Communion we should be receiving throughout our lives, and anointing is something we should be receiving throughout the course of an illness.

Last Rites is...a preparation for eternal life. [These sacraments] are about preparing us to live with God, and share His life fully. So the Last Rites are a powerful moment of grace, and they are something people are very open to receiving.

We hear confessions from people who have been away from the Church for 20, 30, 40 years on a daily basis. These sacraments help us overcome the particular trials and temptations that come with approaching the end of our lives.

Q. How did you become involved in this ministry?

Typically, work in a hospital is a unique environment—the Church does not own these hospitals, so having the proper training is very important...

Every student brother has some sort of hospital experience...I was at St. Patrick's in Columbus, working with a chaplain at the Ohio State Hospital. I had never been exposed to medicine or healthcare in any way before, but I really enjoyed that summer. I also had a great experience working with the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne [who work with terminally ill cancer patients who cannot afford hospice care].

Q. How do you go about dealing with patients, and the families of patients, at the last moments of their lives?

Sickness and death are something that we carry [along] with our families. One of the hardest parts of being sick is often the kinds of suffering that it puts our families through. Marriage vows include the "in sickness and in health" part, because we typically don't need vows for the happy times in our lives. Families and loved ones sit by the hospital bed in the same way that the Blessed Virgin and St. John stood by the Cross of Christ. Their vocation is to witness and pray, just as the duty of the sick person is to offer themselves to Christ.

For the dying, it is important to pay early attention to our own spiritual care. When we are very sick we are quick to go to physicians, which is good – that's why we have doctors – but we should also seek out the sacraments early in any illness, and continue to receive them frequently up until the end.

Q. What is a lesson you think the healthy should learn from those who are dying well?

I think the first lesson is that we will

not always be healthy. Every one of us will at some time be in that hospital bed ourselves. This is one of the unique things about this corporal work of mercy, of visiting the sick. All the other works are directed towards people in circumstances we may never share, but we are **all** destined to be on the other side of that hospital bed.

We should practice the ordinary daily virtues, particularly of prayer, because they are good in themselves, and also because when we are sick, we will already be prepared to pray well through that. We should meditate on the Gospels, and the role of the crucifixion narrative. The most important thing Jesus did in His life was suffer and die on the Cross, and the most important thing we can do is to suffer and die with Him. We offer our prayers and sufferings for our families, our friends, even our city, and country. That's how God worked redemption first, and that's how He'll work it for us.

Q. Do you have any final thoughts for our readers?

The only thing I would leave readers with is a request for prayers on behalf of the sick. The most important thing we do when we are sick is pray, and so that's also the most important thing we can do for them. ✠



Fr. Hyacinth Grubb, O.P., proclaims the Gospel at the 2026 Dominican Healthcare Ministry Mass for the World Day of the Sick on February 7.



SPIRITUAL FEARLESSNESS

Astronomer Karin Öberg's Journey to God Through Intellectual Inquiry

Secular writers often pit science against religion. Religious writers sometimes paint modern universities as fiercely hostile to any religious belief.

Harvard University professor Karin Öberg, a friend of the Dominican Friars, disproves both of these simplistic narratives.

Öberg is an internationally recognized astrochemist known for her work studying the origins of life. She got her PhD in 2009 and has been a professor of astronomy at Harvard since 2013, but it was at her previous position, at the University of Virginia—where the Dominicans lead a university parish—that she found her “very strong connection” with the Order.

That chapter is one of the later ones in her faith journey, though.

Öberg grew up in a non-religious household in largely secular Sweden. Even though she was baptized in the Church of Sweden, she did not really profess Christian doctrine—but she believed in God's existence and in moral goodness.

In college, already on the road to scientific success, she began to struggle with the conflict between materialism and her belief in moral realism and free will.

“Becoming more conscious about that is what started the journey back into faith, or into more

mature faith, in my early 20s,” she explained.

As is the case with many intellectuals, it was through reading that Öberg found Christianity. C.S. Lewis' writings helped convert her to Christianity.

At first, she started attending an Anglican church near where she was studying in the Netherlands. Then, her brother—a non-believer—gave her a copy of G.K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, which got her looking seriously into the Catholic faith.

Thinking fearlessly

Directly after her conversion to Catholicism in 2012, Professor Öberg worked in her first faculty position at the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville, where the Dominicans care for St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish.

“I felt a very strong connection with the [Dominicans] immediately,” Öberg recalled. She was also already connected with the Dominicans without realizing it. “I had chosen St. Catherine of Siena as my patron saint, without realizing that she was a Dominican. So I'm not sure if I chose the Dominicans, or if the Dominicans chose me.”

The Dominicans shared her zeal for the intellectual life.

“I think what initially attracted me was this combination of deep respect for the intellectual gifts, and for using your mind in a sort of fearless

way, with a spiritual fearlessness,” she reflected.

And the parish’s namesake, St. Thomas Aquinas, appealed to her deeply.

“I discovered Aquinas. It is impossible to not fall in love with Aquinas,” Öberg recalled. “At the University of Virginia, I found a model for how to use my intellectual gifts within the spiritual life, how to engage with a tradition in this sort of deep and beautiful way.”

Astronomy and spirituality

That spirit of fearless, rigorous thinking has made Öberg’s work meld with her faith, even giving a new joy to her studies.

“To be able to see new things about the cosmos, to sort of lift the veil and to understand a little bit better why the cosmos works the way it does—it’s a very joyful thing,” she said.

As an astronomer, she says she understands why Aquinas and the Psalmists use astronomical images, noting how space is the “greatest thing that we can see” and thus a “natural thing to be curious about.”

“That’s why the Psalmist and St. Thomas Aquinas often use astronomical objects as examples,” she said. “In the grandeur of creation, these are the biggest things we can grasp naturally.”

Handing on the Fruits of Contemplation

The Dominican Friars live by the motto, “To contemplate and hand on the fruits of contemplation.”

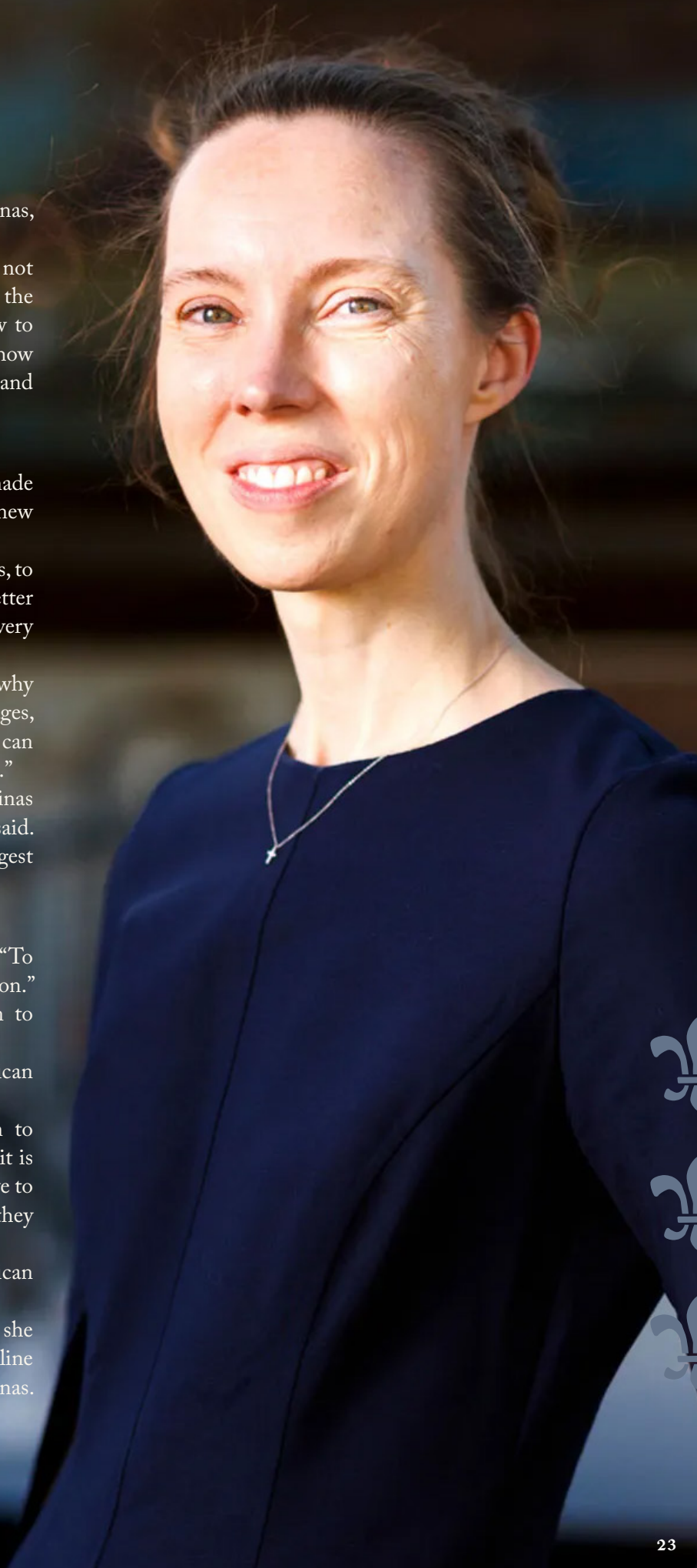
Öberg also lives by this motto, handing on to others the gifts she has received.

For one, she’s a monthly donor to the Dominican Friars.

She also teaches a seminar on Catholicism to first-year students at Harvard. “I think for them it is just so important that they feel like they don’t have to put their intellectual curiosity to one side when they are engaging with their faith,” she said.

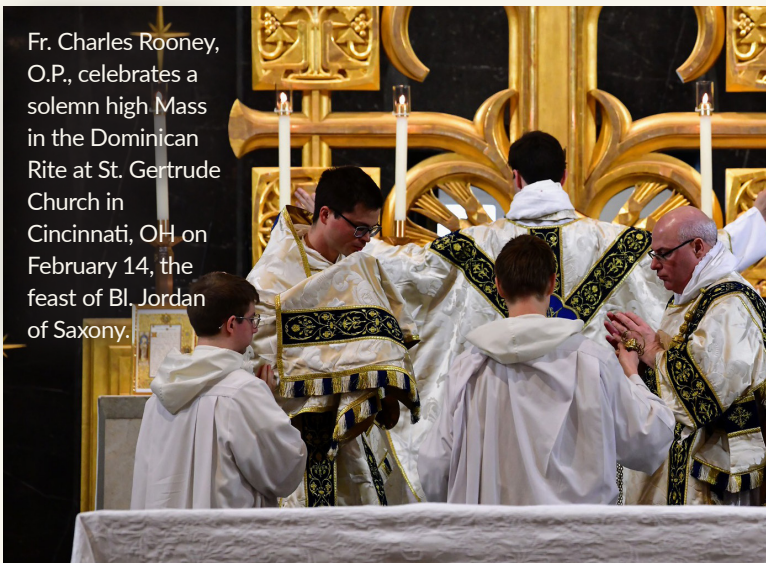
Of course, she sends them to the Dominican Friars.

“I point them to *Aquinas 101* all the time,” she said, referring to the Thomistic Institute’s online introduction to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. “I think that is just such an easy way to start.” ✠





Fr. Peter Martyr Yungwirth, O.P., pastor of the Parish of St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Catherine of Siena, rededicates the statue of St. Vincent Ferrer at his church in New York City on Tuesday, May 5. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops recognized the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer as a National Shrine in April.



Fr. Charles Rooney, O.P., celebrates a solemn high Mass in the Dominican Rite at St. Gertrude Church in Cincinnati, OH on February 14, the feast of Bl. Jordan of Saxony.



Parishioners at St. Patrick Church in Columbus, OH, process around the parish grounds and neighborhood with a statue of St. Patrick, the patron of their parish, on March 17.



Fr. Michael Weibley, O.P., pastor of Saints Philip and James Church in Baltimore, MD, baptizes a catechumen at the Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 4.

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Young parishioners assist their Pastor, Fr. Paul Marich, O.P., during a Eucharistic procession outside of St. Patrick Church in Columbus, Ohio.