

# THE CRUSADER

A PUBLICATION OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS REGIONAL SCHOOL

WINTER/SPRING 2013



## For All My Life: The Life of a Dominican Sister



**PLUS**  
**Race for Education**  
**Year of Faith**

# LETTER FROM SISTER



**The “door of faith” (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into His Church. It is possible to cross that threshold when the word of God is proclaimed and the heart allows itself to be shaped by transforming grace. To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime.**

Pope Benedict XVI—

*Porta Fidei, 1*

DEAR FRIENDS,

What a privileged opportunity it is for us to live in this season of grace! This Year of Faith is a unique opportunity for each one of us to renew our relationship with God and to rededicate ourselves to be powerful witnesses of the truth of the Gospel.

With an increase in secularism in our culture, it is no longer easy to casually live our faith. The decision to be true, faith-filled disciples of the Lord must be a conscious, intentional decision that each one of us must make. The object of our faith is not merely a sterile list of dogmas and precepts, but rather God’s self-revelation of himself to us. In faith we can respond to God’s invitation and enter into a relationship of love.

God desperately wants to be in a relationship of love with each one of us. He calls us to himself in many different ways. Some he calls to be his close disciples who stand in his stead through the priesthood. Others he calls to a vocation of love through a spousal love with another in marriage and others through a spousal love with himself alone in the consecrated life. Regardless of our vocations, each one of us is invited to respond to his invitation through faith, crossing the threshold and setting out on a “journey that lasts a lifetime.”

As we journey together during this Year of Faith, I pray that each of us may respond to the Holy Father’s invitation to deepen and renew our relationship with Him and allow ourselves to be transformed by God’s abundant grace.

**In Christ,**

Sr. Maria Goretti, O.P.

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*Photography by: Jim Holmes Photography, Lisa Julia Photography, Jennifer Cole, Shari Youtz and proud parents*

St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School  
**AQUINAS**

St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School  
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# FOR ALL MY LIFE: THE LIFE OF A DOMINICAN SISTER

BY BARBARA BOLAND, SHARI YOUTZ  
AND SR. MARIAN SARTAIN, O.P.

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Whether one catches a glimpse of their full white habits and black veils or hears the rustle of the long rosary beads hung from their belts, an encounter with the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia can prompt inquisitive looks or curious questions. What is it like to wear the same type of clothing every day? In a material world such as ours, who would willingly choose not to own anything? Perhaps we simply assume that the sisters have never had a "normal" life; or that they must have known from childhood they wanted to dedicate their lives to God. Even though we may see them often, the sisters remain a mystery to us.

Sister Christiana, O.P. made her perpetual vows this past summer. She acknowledges receiving her share of curious glances, or questions similar to those above. She explains that, years ago, she could not have foreseen having a call to religious life. Though she attended a Catholic school when she was growing up, her family was not really practicing the Catholic Faith. Sister Christiana says that she had "no idea about the joy and peace that come from a true relationship with God." She describes herself as a fiercely independent child. She mentions this to the parents of her students, who admit having the same problem with their children. "Having a strong will can be a blessing, as long as one learns to direct it toward God," she says.

Sister Christiana was leading a quite "normal" young adult life when she first met Sister Maria Goretti, who was at that time the principal at the school where she was teaching as a lay person in Atlanta. She had completed her college degree, had her own car, worked a full-time job and lived on her own. Sister Christiana had a social life filled with family and friends. She was not discerning a religious vocation, nor had she ever really considered it a possibility; but then, never having met a sister in a habit before, she says that her "life changed the day I met Sister Maria Goretti." She was deeply moved by the joy, purity and love for God that she saw in Sister Maria Goretti. She says, the "Lord drew me to Himself through a desire to belong to Him completely, as Sister Maria Goretti did."







Sister Christiana with her sisters, Lauren and Jessica Mickwee

A young woman called to religious life certainly remains the same person; but her perspective on life is centered now in God and directed first toward Him, his love, and in seeking to return his love more and more deeply. "I am not looking at the world through the lens of myself: *my* plans, *my* dreams, *my* hopes and anxieties—that is, simply on a natural plane," says Sister Amata Christi, "Our life has to be lived from the perspective of Christ, so that whatever work we do (or whatever we desire or choose), is all influenced by the fact that we belong to God. He has called us apart, so that, learning to know Him deeply, we can better teach others to know Him. The religious woman is consecrated to God, so that our very lives are given over to Him. Everything we are, everything we do, is meant to speak to others of God's presence and his love."

The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia begin the formation process as postulants for one year by immersing themselves in the religious life at the Motherhouse in Nashville, Tennessee. They attend all community prayers and become accustomed to the Dominican way of life,

as it is lived day by day. If they have not previously attended college, they begin their studies of theology and philosophy, as well as courses preparing them to be teachers. Postulants learn the basics of Dominican spirituality and history, and begin to learn the Dominican charism, or spirit, that is the particular heritage of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia. The Sisters' daily prayer in community is their primary mission, from which flows their active apostolate of teaching. Their Dominican charism is thus both contemplative and apostolic.

At the end of the postulant year, a sister receives the Dominican habit with a white veil, and becomes a *novice*. She also receives her religious name at this time. The novices study the theology of the vows, Sacred Scripture, the theology of the spiritual life, and other subjects preparing them for the profession of their religious vows.

Following her year as a novice, the sister makes her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience for three years. At her first profession, the sister receives a black veil, symbolic of conversion, penance, and

consecration to God. A sister may then finish her college coursework and obtain her teaching certification; or, if she entered with her certification, she may begin teaching. At the end of the third year, the sister renews her vows for another two years.

Final profession takes place five years after first profession. The sisters will readily explain, however, that a sister's formation in religious life is never truly complete. "It is a pursuit that never ends. We are always, everyday, seeking to grow in our relationship with God, and in the commitment we have made to Him," says Sr. Christiana.

"Our vows are the heart of who we are," says Sister Christiana. "They are mysterious even to us!" The sisters are careful to point out that every baptized person is called somehow to enter into the mystery of God's own life. That is the vocation of every Christian. In making the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, a sister is called by God to be even more deeply "rooted" in the consecration of her baptism. She is called to give herself totally over to Him. This gift is not only for herself, but her life is supposed to be a sign to all God's people of their own call to love God above all things within their own vocations. That is what is meant by the call to holiness. "We feel such joy from being so loved by God, says Sr. Christiana." It is a joy they want everyone to know, and to desire.

By the vow of chastity, a sister is called by God to give herself to Him in love, sacrificing the beautiful joys of marriage and family. Christ is her spouse, and her children are all those whom she seeks to bring to Him as she gives herself to Him alone. "Just as a woman called to marriage must focus her attention on her husband and family, a sister's life is centered on God, on her religious community, and on those whom she serves for the love of God." She describes her community as her family. "It is a grace to share in this journey towards God with sisters I love." Sister Christiana explains that the sisters always live in a convent, with a community of at least four sisters. There they pray together, have their meals together, and join in a common apostolate. The schedule of the house places God as the first priority. The sisters delight in spending time together and they enjoy simple recreation times together each

day. The sisters' life in community is also a sign that love for God bears fruit in love for others, and vice versa. That is what heaven is like!

"I seek to place all of my hope in God," said Sister Christiana, in explaining the vow of poverty. Taking a vow of poverty, "clears out what is not necessary to get to God." The sisters do not have money of our own, and what they need is provided through the community. The less cluttered one's life is, the more room there is to grow in one's relationship with God. The vow of poverty helps the sisters learn to have total dependence on God, not on material things. This is a witness that they want to offer the world. "Poverty makes our lives exciting because we are always standing with our hands outstretched to God," she says. "We know we are undeserving of the immense treasures He bestows upon us and our life is lived in gratitude for these gifts."

The vow of obedience is often the most difficult one for people to understand. It is important to realize that, in making this vow, a sister does not "give up her will," or lose her freedom. Instead, she is called to submit her will to God, really to *enter into* His will. Through her religious superiors, she seeks, in faith, to allow God to direct her choices, so that His will and His desires are the center of everything she does. There is real freedom in learning to desire only what God wants.

"In a society that so often sees freedom as the ability to do whatever I want, just because I want to do it, our life of religious obedience witnesses to the freedom of seeking to learn and love the will of God."

"We must remember that our God is a personal God who is Love," says Sister Christiana. "We must trust God knows us, and loves us and desires our happiness." She

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## **Horarium (Latin for “the hours”), is the name given to the daily schedule of those living in a religious community.**

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**4:50 A.M.**—Rising Bell.

**5:20 A.M.**—The sisters assemble in the chapel for a half hour in meditation.

**5:50 A.M.**—Morning Prayer (Lauds) of the Divine Office. The sisters chant the Divine Office together each morning, evening, and night.

**6:30 A.M.**—Mass at Our Lady of Angels parish. The sisters pray their daily rosary together in the car on the way to Mass.

**7:00 A.M.**—The sisters eat breakfast together at the school.

**7:30 A.M.–3:30 P.M.**—School day

**4:00 P.M.**—Depart school and return home.

**5:00 P.M.**—Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Depending on the time or the season of the year, the sisters often have a period of adoration for a half an hour before Evening Prayer. There is silence in the house for a half of an hour before Vespers.

**5:30 P.M.**—Evening Prayer (Vespers) followed by 15 minutes for spiritual reading.

**6:00 P.M.**—Dinner. The sisters take their meals in silence while they listen to readings from Scripture and other spiritual books. The readings nourish the soul as the food nourishes the body.

**6:50 P.M.**—Recreation. The sisters gather together for a period of recreation during which they can talk with each other, play games, or simply enjoy one another’s company.

**7:50 P.M.**—Night Prayer (Compline). The sisters pray this final hour of the Divine Office together followed by a procession in honor of the Blessed Virgin as they sing the *Salve Regina* followed by the O Lumen, a hymn to St. Dominic.

**8:05 P.M.**—Silence. The sisters observe silence in the house after Compline. During this time they may pray, prepare their lessons for the next day, study, or return to their cells. Each sister has her own room called a “cell” from the Latin word *cella* which means “small room.” This is her space to be with the Lord alone. The rooms are very simple with a bed, desk, and a cross. The cell is a special place of silence and prayer, with no television, computer, music, etc.

**10:00 P.M.**—Profound Silence. This is a deep and special silence that will end with the Angelus the next morning as the sisters begin another day.

points out that whatever the sisters are called to do, wherever they go or what they are assigned to teach, it is still their choice to obey. She says, “Religious women are not weak. They have chosen to unite their wills with the will of God to serve Him with obedience and love, following in the footsteps of Christ.”

The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia wear the religious habit at all times. Wherever they go, the sisters are happy to be a sign of God’s presence and of eternal values. “The habit is a sign of consecration,” says Sr. Christiana. “It is a reminder first of all to ourselves, that we belong to God. It is also a sign to those who see us.” In a society where there are very few reminders that God exists, the sisters are happy to be signs of his presence in the world. “Seeing us, others can be drawn to think of God, and to raise their minds and hearts to Him.” Sister Christiana remarks with a smile, “We get to wear our wedding dress every day.”

The joy of their vocation is evident in the sisters. “Joy comes from the supreme conviction that we are loved. We are very blessed to live a life of great love; to know that we were called here out of the grace and goodness of the love of God. Our love responding to His love makes us very joyful. Every single thing that happens in the day is a manifestation of God’s love,” says Sister Christiana. The sisters are also certain that by living their vows faithfully, they are doing God’s will. “There is a great peace in that, because we do not have to go searching anywhere else. We know that His will for us is found in *this* moment, in *this* class, with *these* sisters, with *these* students.”

The daily life of the sisters at the convent, then, is representative of their whole religious life, which is first and foremost oriented around their consecration to God. From their relationship with Him flows their relationship to each other as sisters, as well as to those whom they serve. “We are not women who simply wanted a career as teachers. We are women seeking to respond to the love of God who calls us,” Sister Christiana explains. “From that love, flows the desire to bring the Word of God here, to this school, to these families and to all we meet.”





# ST. THOMAS AQUINAS REGIONAL SCHOOL GOLF CLASSIC

MAY 2, 2013 | 8:30 A.M.  
OLD HICKORY GOLF CLUB

Check our website at [Aquinastars.org](http://Aquinastars.org) for more information and to register



# PENNIES FROM HEAVEN FOR HURRICANE VICTIMS



Beginning with an idea from Myles Sherman, a few eighth grade students decided to hold a “Penny War” between the boys and girls at Aquinas to raise money for the victims of Hurricane Sandy. Everyone at Aquinas got into the competition by putting pennies in their own gender’s jar which counted towards the total or placing silver coins or paper bills into the other gender’s jar which reduced the total. The Penny War successfully raised a total of \$1,535.28, with the girls prevailing.

Myles particularly wanted to help those who suffered the heaviest losses in New York and New Jersey because his father anticipated being deployed there for disaster relief. The

money they raised was given to St. Rose of Lima Catholic School in Rockaway Beach, New York. The school was only able to re-open with power from generators and heating the school with heating oil. They also served breakfast to their students because many were without a home or their parents were unable to return to work, due to power failures and destruction from the storm. Electric power was restored at the school during Thanksgiving weekend but the area continues to be devastated. As of late December, there are still eleven miles of debris and rubble in the Rockaways.

Top left clockwise: Liam Fitzgerald, Katherine Mendell, Miranda Smith, Jason D’Silva, Myles Sherman

# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE EIGHTH GRADE INDUCTEES INTO THE NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY

The five pillars of the NJHS are Scholarship, Leadership, Service, Citizenship, and Character. Sister Maria Goretti said, "Being accepted into the National Junior Honor Society is a great honor and privilege. However, with this recognition there also comes the responsibility to use your gifts, not for yourselves, but in service of others. It is a challenge to be selfless. It is a challenge to truly be a young man or woman for others."



**Enrique Botteri**

**Thomas Choe**

**Ethan Dagdagan**

**Samuel Davis**

**Liam Fitzgerald**

**James Gallagher**

**Ryan Kelly**

**Nathan Kolkmeier**

**Philip Mazzoccoli**

**Alena McGuire**

**Katherine Mendell**

**Roman Puglise**

**Christina O'Farrell**

**Myles Sherman**

**Miranda Smith**

**Brooke Tran**

**Nikolas Tsiamis**

**Bernadette Zapiain**



# RACE FOR EDUCATION



Our students ran under a beautiful blue sky on November 16, 2012, when they participated in the Race for Education at Aquinas. This day is the culmination of efforts by the Parent Teacher Organization to raise funds for specified projects. This year, the PTO wished to purchase two new basketball goals and a new volleyball net system at the school. This year's Race for Education has raised over \$36,000 to date!

The PTO coordinator, Anne Eckman, managed each step of the Race for Education project with parent volunteers. Our parents are asked to supply addresses for family, friends, neighbors and other businesses that they patronize. Students then complete a letter explaining that the students will run/walk around a designated

area to raise funds for the school and the student requests sponsorships. The letters are then mailed to each person on the student's list. The Race for Education letters form an envelope which can be mailed back to the school with a donation.

The students enjoyed prizes for participating such as receiving out of uniform days, popsicles and movies. Students look forward to running around a pre-set track in the school parking lot with their friends (pre-K ran in the school gym). Music is played while the students run around the track and water is supplied for the students. Parent volunteers mark each lap completed by the students on a card. The boy and girl from each grade who ran the most laps received a blue ribbon



and a water bottle prize. The winners for each grade were: PreK—Madeline Crean and Brianno Quiroz, K—Chinenye Obasi and Christian Dray, 1—Kamryn Winger and Philip Gigrich, 2—Audrey Gillooly, Emily Norko (tied) and Alex Barkhimer, 3—Alyssa Berzins and Michael Clark, 4—Faith McNulty and Ethan Dray, 5—Adriana Bustelo and Adam Holdaway, 6—Alexandra Horan and Julien Xantus, 7—Kaitlyn Cox and Blake Savage-Collins, and 8—Miranda Smith and Joseph Costello.

Anne Eckman solicited donations from local businesses to support the Race. She obtained parking cones, pizza for the volunteers, water for the children and other monetary donations used to defray the administrative costs. This year, postage

was the only significant administrative cost for the Race, while the net was applied directly to the fundraising objectives. Anne Eckman has worked tirelessly to oversee the Race requirements and record all of the donations received. We wish to thank Anne and the PTO for a tremendous job again this year!

The PTO has already purchased the volleyball net system and the basketball goals, which arrived in time for our basketball season. If you still want to support the Race for Education, there is still time to submit your donation. Funds donated to the PTO will be used for the continuing support of the students and faculty. We deeply appreciate all donations made to Aquinas in supporting our school!



## FOOTBALL

The football team showed much improvement as the season progressed. The boys worked very hard this year under the leadership of Head Coach JP DeGance. Many of our parents and alumni enjoyed watching them play at our 2nd Annual Fall Festival. The cheerleading squad was very enthusiastic at many of our home football and soccer games and they cheered our teams on to victory.



**It was an exciting fall sports season at St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School as our Crusaders participated in girls volleyball, boys soccer, cheerleading and football.**

## VOLLEYBALL

Volleyball Coach Beth Robertson said, "Following a fantastic 6-5 season, the STARS varsity volleyball team brought home a third place trophy in the Catholic Schools Tournament on November 10, 2012!" Coach Robertson and the team wish the outgoing 8th grade players the very best in their future endeavors. Coach Robertson is looking forward to an even stronger season in 2013. Both varsity and JV teams enjoyed using the new volleyball net system provided by our PTO.

## CHEERLEADING

The Aquinas girls' cheerleading team has been working very hard this year to be the best that they can be. This year, for the first time, cheerleading was opened up to fourth grade girls and several joined

the squad. Coach Daniela Moghtadaie said, "At the Fall Festival, they performed a routine which they learned in only four practices!" Coach Moghtadaie said that they practice each cheer many times to perfect every movement and every phrase. The cheerleading squad invites everyone to come out to a basketball game this season to support our teams and see just how hard our cheerleading squad has worked.

## BOYS SOCCER

Our boys soccer team, coached by Thomas Dent, won first place in the entire Diocesan Soccer Tournament. Coach Dent said, "The boys played two very competitive games. They brought all of their training, knowledge, determination and support together, to give a great demonstration of how the game should be played." He



was thrilled with the boys' progress this year. "Some players brought a game that I knew was in them. Maybe it was that they knew it was their final (game) or maybe it all just clicked on the day, but as a coach it is not the victory that is so great, as it is to see your players achieve something you knew they had and watch them realize that potential." Their hard work and determination were evident that day and the win was a true team effort.

We want to thank all of the coaches: Therese McMahon, Tessie McNulty, Lisa

Cox and Beth Robertson for volleyball, Donald Palmer and JP DeGance for football, Daniela Moghtadaie for cheerleading and Thomas Dent for soccer. Their numerous volunteer hours and dedication to their teams are the foundation of our successful sports program.

We are enjoying our winter sports season this month of boys' and girls' basketball and wrestling. We hosted the Annual Aquinas Wrestling Tournament again this year on January 12, 2013. Please come out to see our home games and wrestling matches.

Check our website (<http://aquinastars.org/>) under the parents tab, and click on the athletics button to see the calendar with game dates and times. Go Crusaders!

**“ ...as a coach it is not the victory that is so great, as it is to see your players achieve something you knew they had and watch them realize that potential.”**

# YEAR OF FAITH



With all my heart I seek You;  
let me not stray from Your  
commands...  
Open my eyes, that I may consider  
the wonders of Your law.  
I am a wayfarer of earth;  
hide not Your commands from me...  
Make me understand the way of  
Your precepts,  
and I will meditate on Your  
wondrous deeds...  
Your compassion is great, O Lord...  
(Psalm 119:10, 18-19, 27, 156)

## PROFESSION OF FAITH

On September 11, 2012, Aquinas religion teachers made a public Profession of Faith in front of the entire school community. The Profession of Faith differed slightly from the version used during the regular Order of the Mass. The religion teachers, Sister Maria Goretti and Mrs. Ferguson stood before the students, faculty and staff at Our Lady of Angels Church and read their Profession of Faith. After Father O'Keefe accepted their Profession, each religion teacher formally signed their Profession of Faith on the altar. It was an important start to the Year of Faith at Aquinas in recognition of the first pillar of the Catechism for the Catholic Church.

## VIRTUES IN PRACTICE

The Virtues in Practice program covers 27 virtues in a three-year cycle, beginning in this Year of Faith. The Year of Faith focuses on Catholic devotions and putting the virtues into practice with an emphasis on service projects. Each month, a virtue is discussed with the students and a saint is introduced to reinforce the concept as an example for everyday life. The saints that are studied vary according to primary, intermediate and middle school levels, in order to provide a more complex understanding of each virtue.

Virtues in Practice facilitates the implementation of the virtue in school and at home by requiring the students to choose a project each month that manifests the virtue. Projects can incorporate a new practice that the children use throughout the month, such as making notes about God and leaving them for others to find, or a singular activity, such as discussing with friends the ways that a person can show gratitude. Parents are able to guide each student by helping to choose the project, referencing the virtue throughout the month,





writing comments on the child's experience with the project, modeling the virtue and, with older students, use it as a topic for larger discussions. The students submit a form indicating their project and comments about their experience each month for a completion grade in religion. These forms become a significant, written testimony of each child's growth in their faith.

## ALL SAINTS' DAY

While the vigil of this feast day is more commonly well-known, our students celebrate the saints by studying their lives and creating a costume to wear on All Saints' Day. Both the second and fourth grades integrate All Saints' Day projects into their religious curriculum. The second grade teachers give each student a saint and the students create posters about their saints including their feast day, whether they are patrons of specific things or people, and facts about their lives. The fourth grade chooses a different saint than the one that they had in second grade. They conduct more research by checking out books from the library or doing internet searches. The

fourth grade produces a written report on their saint and gives an oral presentation on their saint while they are in costume.

Both grades wear their costumes to Mass on All Saints' Day. All of the students get to go trick-or-treating at the Our Lady of Angels Rectory. The sisters and priests enjoy guessing each child's saint based on clues from their costume. This year, the children's costumes included popes with mitre hats, nuns, Romans in tunics, knights and even Native Americans (in celebration of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha).

## FAMILY FAITH NIGHTS

The Dominican Friars, Sisters and Catechists of St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School and the three local Catholic parishes created a unique opportunity to learn and grow more in our Catholic faith by sponsoring a four-part series known as Family Faith Nights at Aquinas. Based on the four pillars of the Catechism for the Catholic Church, each Family Faith Night provides an in-depth discussion designed for all but the smallest Catholics. Father Alan Moran, O.P. led "I

Believe; Fundamental Faith: A Relationship of Love" on October 22, 2012, and Father Giles Dimock, O.P. lectured on "I Encounter; Sacramental Life and Imagination: A Catholic Worldview" on December 3, 2012. Upcoming topics are: "I Live; Freedom and Morality: A Desire for Happiness" on January 14, 2013, with Brother Ambrose Little, O.P., and "I Respond; Prayer and Holiness: A Response to God" on March 4, 2013.

Adults are treated to keynote speakers from the religious community in the Parish Hall while children attend their own age-appropriate lessons on the same topics. Childcare is provided for those three and younger. Each adult and child is then free to experience the catechesis with their cohorts, while allowing time to absorb the information from an individual perspective. Krista Bassett said, "This was really kind of critical for me. Although I'm teaching (my daughters) and I'm working with them on their level, I'm not really studying at my level."

Lisa Barrett Roder particularly enjoyed seeing her former professor of Sacraments, Fr. Dimock, whom she met while she was a student at Franciscan University of Steubenville. Fr. Dimock's reference to St. Thomas Aquinas' belief that "all Sacraments point to/draw us to the Eucharist" was the core lesson for Mrs. Roder. She also found it meaningful when he mentioned the relational, ongoing action of the Sacrament. "It is not just something that happens to us," said Mrs. Roder. Melissa Chaves enjoyed how Fr. Dimock linked the Sacraments "to a fuller relationship with the person of Jesus." The lessons on the Sacraments also resonated with our students. The sixth grade students, for example, explored the symbolism of the pelican and how Catholic tradition has linked it to our understanding of the Eucharist. The Family Faith Nights are a wonderful opportunity to involve the entire family in learning the important tenets of our faith.

## INTERVIEW WITH DENNIS WOLSTENHOLME



Lt. Col. Dennis Wolstenholme, USAF

**“...I don’t doubt that every penny spent is only making my children better people.”**

Dennis Wolstenholme began as a first grader at St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School (then known as “Aquinas School”) in 1977, when the school first opened. His parents were a fixture at Aquinas and they dedicated many hours to supporting the school. He was a member of the first 8<sup>th</sup> grade class to attend Aquinas throughout their primary school years. Dennis went to Paul VI High School and graduated in 1989. He completed his undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering at Virginia Tech and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Air Force in 1993.

Dennis finished his Master of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology, where he specialized in stealth technology. He later graduated as a Flight Test Engineer from the USAF Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base. Dennis planned and conducted flight testing of the F-22 Raptor aircraft. He said that he enjoyed being a flight test engineer the most and he would love to go back. He presently develops and integrates high technology rapidly into warfighting capabilities in Washington, D.C.

Dennis married his wife, Kathleen, in 1997 and they have five children. All five children are current students at Aquinas: Erin in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Brian in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Joey in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Claire in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and Kyle in Kindergarten. Kathleen recently joined the faculty at Aquinas where she is working as an Instructional Assistant in Kindergarten.

**Q Aquinas is celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Please discuss what the school was like, when it first opened.**

Aquinas is very different from when it opened in 1977. There were not nearly as many students. Most classes started with only one grade, not two like today. The only extra-curricular activity that was offered was band. I was a proud member of the band for four years (4<sup>th</sup> through

8<sup>th</sup> grade). In fact, Mrs. Herbert was the band instructor as she is today. I was shocked when my children started attending Aquinas in 2004 and I found out that Mrs. Herbert was the band instructor. She still remembers that I was one of her thousands of students. Mrs. Herbert is the clearest example of the dedicated faculty and staff that has made Aquinas the success it is. The school building itself has grown over the years. I remember when the wing was added that currently holds Pre-K and other classes. Since then, the second floor has been added. The curriculum has dramatically changed as well. I am constantly amazed at the level of complexity that my children are taught. The principal when I was first at Aquinas was Sister Christine. She started the school and guided it through those early years. She eventually went on to become the Mother of the Dominican Sisters in Nashville. I knew she was an instrumental figure in the larger Catholic religious community when she was one of a few sisters that had a personal visit with the Pope!

**Q What is a fond memory of your time at Aquinas?**

One of my fondest memories at Aquinas was a soccer game between the grades that we played when I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. At the time, Aquinas did not have organized sports so if an Aquinas student played sports, it was through the local youth league in Woodbridge, Dale City, or Lake Ridge. This game presented the first real opportunity to play on the same team as my classmates. It was a fun and exciting day. I do not even remember which class won but just getting to experience the camaraderie and teamwork on that day is something that I will never forget.

**Q You graduated in the first 8<sup>th</sup> grade class that attended Aquinas throughout your primary education. How do you feel it prepared you for higher education and possibly, your career?**

I was very well prepared for high school. I was able to take mostly honors classes and AP level classes. This was only possible with the strong foundation provided at Aquinas. This foundation has served me well throughout my career which has been focused on some of the highest technology in the United States.

**Q Are you still in touch with any of your former classmates?**

I do keep in touch with many of my classmates: Bill Carter, Jenny (Gehris) Wells, and Tracy (Johnson) McNulty. In fact, Tracy recently moved into my neighborhood, so I see her frequently.

**Q As someone who has an undergraduate and advanced degree in engineering, what do you think about the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program at Aquinas? Do you feel that a program like this will assist the U.S. in strengthening education in these areas?**

As an engineer, I see that STEM education is critical in any high tech career field. Technology is the future of the U.S. industry. The U.S. is transitioning from a manufacturing industry base to a high tech base with information technology driving the engine of change. Even those career fields that do not appear to be high tech are at their foundation based on technology. Have you looked under the hood of your car recently? Today's auto mechanic has to understand technology just to repair a modern vehicle. I wish STEM were available to me when I attended Aquinas.

**Q Your parents were instrumental in the early success of Aquinas. Please describe their involvement in the school then and now, as grandparents.**

My parents were deeply involved in the early years of Aquinas School. They volunteered thousands of hours to help build the school into the successful institution it has become. They continue to be involved and recently were key members of the OLA/Aquinas Auction Committee that raised thousands of dollars to help the parish and school improve the facilities and infrastructure.



**Q All five of your children attend Aquinas and your wife, Kathleen, is an instructional aide here; that is an incredible legacy! Why is an Aquinas education so important to you as a parent?**

We chose to send each of our five children to Aquinas because it provides not only a solid academic education, but more importantly, provides a solid foundation in the Catholic faith. I am continuously amazed at the wisdom the school is imparting on them. Sending your children to a Catholic school in Northern Virginia is not an easy choice. In general, the local public schools offer a good academic education. But the local public schools cannot offer the moral and religious instruction that is so important in today's world. As every parent knows, sending your children to a Catholic school can be financially challenging, but I don't doubt that every penny spent is only making my children better people. Recently, my wife, Kathleen, joined the faculty and staff at Aquinas as a Kindergarten aide. She is thoroughly enjoying the time she spends with the students in her class. It has only increased our appreciation for the dedication of the faculty and staff that make Aquinas the great school that it is.

**Q How has Aquinas changed over the years?**

Aquinas has only improved over the years, as demonstrated by being recognized as

a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, Aquinas has many extra-curricular activities including drama, music, band, and sports. The faculty and staff are dedicated to the students and ensure that the students become healthy, successful, and rooted in their Catholic faith.

**Q You must be extremely pleased that your oldest child, Erin, is graduating from Aquinas this year. Has she decided where she wants to attend high school?**

I could not be more proud of my daughter, Erin who will graduate this year from Aquinas. She has received a great education at Aquinas and is prepared to succeed in high school and beyond. She plans to attend John Paul the Great next year. We are very excited for her.

**Q Any other thoughts or comments about Aquinas?**

Kathleen and I could not be happier at our choice to send our children to Aquinas. It is a great school. We encourage the other parents at Aquinas to participate more fully in their children's education. The easiest way to participate is to become active in our Parent-Teacher Organization. There are many opportunities to volunteer and become more instrumental in making Aquinas the best school it can be.



## AQUINAS ON AIR

**“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”**

The Christian radio station, WGTS at 91.9 FM, airs recordings of local school children reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:15 a.m. each morning. An Aquinas student, Evan Owen, told his mother that he would like to participate, so his mother submitted a request for five Aquinas classes to say the Pledge on their station. A producer from WGTS, Spencer White, notified the school that Mrs. Owen's request was accepted.

Mr. White visited Aquinas on Tuesday, November 20, 2012, to record the children saying the Pledge. Before recording the children, Mr. White explained the recording process and then asked the teachers to discuss class projects or events. Everyone

was amazed to learn that Mr. White only needed his iPhone and a microphone to make a quality recording that could be played on the radio! The following classrooms were thrilled to be recorded saying the Pledge: Mrs. Leckey's morning pre-K class, Mrs. Jacobeen's first grade class, Sister Mary Seton's second grade class, Miss Stone's fourth grade class and Mr. Baum's sixth grade class. Our recordings aired on WGTS during the week of December 10, 2012. The audio files were also uploaded to the WGTS website at: <http://wgts.org/say-the-pledge/>

Mrs. Leckey's morning pre-K class and Sister Mary Seton's second grade class recording the Pledge of Allegiance for WGTS



# St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School

PRESENTS



MUSIC BY

**Alan Menken**

LYRICS BY

**Howard Ashman and Glenn Slater**

BOOK BY

**Doug Wright**

Based on the Hans Christian Andersen story and the Disney film

Music Adapted and Arranged by David Weinstein

**Friday, March 22 & Saturday, March 23, 2013**

AT

**Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School**

17700 Dominican Drive, Dumfries, VA

*A performance not to be missed for anyone who enjoys  
dancing, singing, acting and a whimsical story*

# FALL FESTIVAL 2012



The best of autumn was celebrated on October 12, 2012, at the St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School Fall Festival, sponsored by the PTO. For the second year, the Fall Festival was held at Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School football field. Family and friends made the most of the sunny day to eat, play games, get their hair or face painted, take a funny photo and watch the football game.

The PTO provided lots of food options with the newest addition of Chik-Fil-A chicken sandwiches to the usual favorites of pizza, hot dogs, popcorn and candy. The Chik-Fil-A cow even made an appearance to greet students and pose for pictures. Families took turns at winning one of many delicious desserts at the cake walk game by walking in a circle to music and then sitting on a numbered chair chosen at random. It proved to be a very popular activity by selling out of cakes before the end of the football game.

Midway games were provided free of charge and tickets were available for other activities. Children enjoyed jumping in the inflatable bounce house throughout the festival. An instant photograph booth was new this year. Everyone was able to choose from silly accessories, such as a paper moustache on a stick, and pose for an instant picture, taken by Lisa Hill-Sutton of Lisa Julia Photography. Older students and parents sprayed temporary neon colors onto hair and did face painting, as well. Aquinas spirit wear was also available for purchase.

The first graders, led by Mrs. Jacobeen and Miss Corson, continued the tradition of singing the National Anthem before the football game. Cub Scout Pack 501 served as the color guard. The Aquinas football team made a valiant effort but they were not able to overcome the Washington Jesuit Academy team in the end. The Aquinas Fall Festival has become one of the major events of autumn for students, parents, alumni and friends!

# Aquinas & JP the Great

## BUILDING TRADITIONS TOGETHER



HAPPY NEW YEAR TO THE CRUSADERS  
FROM THE WOLVES!

## Experience JP the Great!

### Special Middle School Invitations:

- **Band and Choir Music Festival:** January 26, 2013. Learn new music, meet new friends, perform at JP!
- **Free Admission to Varsity Basketball Games:** January 30. Girls play at 4:30pm, boys at 6:00pm!
- **2nd Annual Futsal Tournament:** February 9. Futsal is a type of indoor soccer for boys and girls!
- **Preview Open House:** March 14, 4 – 6pm. All are welcome!



[jpthegreat.org](http://jpthegreat.org)

17700 Dominican Drive, Dumfries • (703) 445-0300

St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School  
**AQUINAS**

St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School  
13750 Mary's Way | Woodbridge, VA 22191



## SAVE THE DATES

**JANUARY 29, 2013,  
10 A.M.**

**Open House Tours at St. Thomas  
Aquinas Regional School**

**SPRING, 2013**

**WeatherBug station launch at  
St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School**

**MARCH 22 AND 23, 2013**

**The Little Mermaid, Jr. at Pope John  
Paul the Great Catholic High School**

**MAY 2, 2013, 8:30 A.M.**

**STARS Golf Classic at Old Hickory  
Golf Club**

**MAY 3, 2013**

**Grandparents' Day at St. Thomas  
Aquinas Regional School**