

The Dominican Saints as Models of the Mission and Core Values of Mount Saint Mary College

In the Catholic and Dominican traditions, we have always used art as a means of visually presenting the religious truths that we believe as Catholic Christians and Dominicans. These truths of the faith give us inspiration in making our life journeys and are a source of ever new insight in understanding the values that guide us in fulfilling the mission of preaching and teaching entrusted to our care. The art of the Founders Chapel is a visual presentation of the understanding of these core values that have guided the Newburgh Dominican Sisters in their ministry of teaching and service at Mt. St. Mary College. The Dominican saints portrayed in the windows represent those who have faithfully lived these values and serve as models to guide others.

In any work of art in general or in works that represent Dominican iconography in particular, one must look at individual pieces to understand the program as a whole and also ask how these pieces are related to each other. One must also ask what the artist intended to communicate through the work of art, while also recognizing that each individual will bring his or her own unique perspective of understanding and interpretation in viewing the work of art.

Etched on the terrazzo floor outside the Founders Chapel is the seal of the Congregation of the Most Holy Rosary. Its most prominent features are the black and white cross of the Dominican Order, the rosary for which the Congregation is named and the white ribbon with the Latin word *Veritas*-truth, the motto of the Order, inscribed upon it. In the 14th chapter of St. John's Gospel, Jesus says: "I am the way, the truth and the life." As Dominicans we believe that through Jesus, the truth, we come to know the truth of who God is, the truth of who we are as human beings, and the truths of the created world that we see around us.

Associated with *Veritas* are two other Dominican mottoes: 1) *contemplari et aliis tradere contemplata*, which means to contemplate and to share with others what we have contemplated and 2) *laudare, benedicere et praedicare*, which means to praise, to bless and to preach. The Dominican charism calls us to be both contemplatives and apostles. In our lives as preachers we are asked to balance prayer, silence, study and communal living with service to others through an engagement with the needs of the world in which we live.

One of the stained glass panels in the entrance way, shows four Dominican women from the monastery in Regensburg, Germany, dressed in lay clothes for traveling, leaving *their*

homeland in 1853 to serve as teachers in the German parochial schools in the United States, where they would establish their first convent on Second Street in lower Manhattan. The other stained glass panel in the entrance way shows a group of Dominican Sisters from the Holy Cross Convent on Second Street in 1883 disembarking from the Hudson River Street at Newburgh Landing climbing to their new home, the white mansion of the McAlpine Family soon to be Mount St. Mary Academy. These two windows wonderfully symbolize the journey of faith that these Dominican women made to begin the ministry of teaching and service that flowed from lives that were dedicated to contemplating and sharing with others the truth of what they had contemplated that is the heritage which today is at the heart of Mount St. Mary College.

Set in the archway over the chapel doorway is the stained glass window depicting three scenes from the life of St. Dominic. In the center, Dominic gathers the nine converts from Albigensianism, who will form the first community of Dominican women. They symbolize *laudare*, to praise, which will be at the center of their lives of prayer as Dominicans. To the left, Dominic, the university student, sells his valuable books to be able to feed the hungry in a time of plague, which symbolizes *benedicere*, to bless, which indicates the mercy with which Dominic will seek to bless all in his later priestly ministry as a mendicant preacher. To the right, Dominic in the midst of a journey is engaged in all night discussion with an Albigensian innkeeper in the south of France. By morning, through Dominic's preaching, the man will return to the Catholic faith, which symbolizes *praedicare*, to preach the Gospel, which will be his life work.

In the sanctuary, on either side of the stained glass cross, are two windows which depict the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that are central in understanding the ways in which God's grace has transformed the eight Dominican saints portrayed in the chapel windows as models of Dominican life and service. The core values of the Dominican tradition, that the Dominican women who founded Mt. St. Mary Academy brought with them in their journey, come from St. Dominic and St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Dominican theologian, who lay out this vision clearly in his monumental work, the *Summa Theologica*.

For Aquinas God is truth, but that truth is also love and therefore above all things God is lovable. Because God is truth and truth breathes forth from love, so from God proceeds the Word of truth and the Holy Spirit of love. For no other reason than a love which seeks to share its joy with others, God has freely created the universe in all its variety and order. The crown of creation is persons endowed with intelligence and free will who can share in God's truth and love. However *Genesis* also tells us that human free will can choose to turn away from God's truth and love. Hence God's love has found a way not only to restore the creation and save humanity, but also to make the fall an opportunity to complete creation by the greater gift of God's becoming one with us in our humanity in Jesus Christ. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ there is a new creation in which the Holy Spirit transforms human beings. Through the Holy Spirit the grace of transformation is given to human beings by the gift of the infused theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the healing of the naturally acquired virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance so that they share in the transformative work

of the theological virtues. Moreover, the theological and moral virtues take on a new mode of action through the seven gifts of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, fortitude, counsel, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. For St. Thomas Aquinas, through the infused moral virtues, the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, human beings are not only enabled to journey to the fullness of eternal life after death but they already share in it in this life and are empowered to serve others in coming to the common goal of all human beings, eternal life together in the Kingdom of God.

St. Dominic de Guzman (1170-1221)

St. Dominic was born at Caleruega in Old Castile, Spain of parents of the lesser nobility. He received his early education for the clerical state from his archpriest uncle before going to Palencia to study arts and theology from 1186 until 1196. In the latter year he became a canon regular of the reformed cathedral of his home diocese of Osma, where he was ordained to the priesthood and spent the next seven years.

A diplomatic mission to Denmark in 1203 brought Dominic, as the traveling companion to his bishop, Diego d' Acebes, into contact with the Albigensian movement in Languedoc, southern France. This dualist heresy, which believed in a principle of light and a principle of darkness struggling for control of the world, had become a religious alternative for many men and women in southern France who had become disenchanted with the institutional church because of the wealth and moral behavior of some of the Catholic clergy. Confronted with this challenge, Pope Innocent III had enlisted the services of the Cistercian monks to serve as preachers among the Albigensians. When Dominic and Diego arrived at the papal court in 1205 on their way home to Spain after their trip to Denmark, Pope Innocent asked them to join the Cistercian preaching mission.

The nine years of Dominic's preaching mission in Languedoc, (1206-1215) served as the germinating period for the development of a charismatic vision of a way of living the Gospel in accord with the Christian faith that would appeal to the deepest ideals and needs of the men and women of his time. Dominic was guided by the image of the early Christian community in Jerusalem in the opening chapters of the *Acts of the Apostles*, which was at the heart of the spirituality he had known as a Canon Regular in Spain. He believed that the renewal of society necessitated communities of men and women committed to living the apostolic life. The major component of this was to be the preaching of the Gospel by members of communities that lived in evangelical poverty, who were devoted to contemplative prayer and engaged in constant study of the word of God. In Dominic's understanding, preachers were called to be the living reflection of the gospel they proclaimed. Hence for him, the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience were meant to recreate and transform the preacher into an apostle, a living witness to the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

During his early years of preaching in Languedoc, Dominic gathered a group of Albigensian women, whom he had converted, to form the first community of Dominican nuns. Through a life of contemplative prayer lived in a community dedicated to poverty

and mutual service, these Dominican women would incarnate the apostolic life and preach the Gospel by their witness to prayer and service. Although the Order of Preachers did not yet have official status, the first community of Dominican women at Prouille in the south of France, the preaching nuns, initiated an evolutionary development in which countless women in the centuries to come in collaboration with their Dominican brothers would fully participate in and help to develop the life and ministry of the Order of Preachers, the Dominican Family.

After the establishment of Dominican nuns at Prouille, Dominic continued to implement his vision of communities of contemplative preachers living the apostolic life in service to the people of God. In the spring of 1215, at the invitation of Bishop Fulk of Toulouse in southern France, Dominic brought the men who his preaching companions in Languedoc to this important city so that they could establish a formal religious community there under the direction of the bishop. Later in 1215, when Bishop Fulk set out to attend the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome, Dominic accompanied him, hoping to obtain papal approval for his new community of contemplative preachers. In accord with the legislation of the council, Pope Innocent III promised Dominic that he would approve the founding of the new Order of Preachers after Dominic had chosen on the already existing Rules of religious life.

As a Canon Regular of Osma, Dominic was already following the *Rule of St. Augustine*. He supplemented this rule with legislation and customs borrowed from the Premonstratensians, an Order of canons regular founded by St. Norbert at Premontre in 1120, who supported his own vision of the apostolic life with liturgical prayer. The spirituality of the Canons Regular was that of a community of religious priests who dedicated themselves to carrying out the daily liturgy of the Church through the solemn celebration of Mass and the Divine Office and to caring for the sacramental needs of the faithful. Dominic joined these priestly ideals of the Canons Regular to a ministry of preaching in poverty (mendicancy) that flowed from a life of contemplation and study.

In a series of three Papal bulls between December, 1216 and February, 1217, Pope Honorius III, the successor of Innocent III, officially approved Dominic's plan for an order of contemplative preachers exercising the priestly ministry and living in mendicant poverty and addressed its members as the "Order of Preachers". In 1217 only four years remained of Dominic's life, but they were to be years of intense activity in which he set forth the basic design for the Order of Preachers with bold strokes. Since Dominic believed that doctrinal preaching was required to meet the spiritual needs of the men and women of his time in an increasingly urban and university culture, he saw study as essential to the universal preaching mission he envisioned for the Order. Upon his return from Rome in 1217, Dominic dispersed the first sixteen friars gathered in Toulouse throughout Europe, sending seven of them to establish a religious house at the University of Paris. From the dispersal of 1217 until the spring of 1220, Dominic was continually on the road, preaching, visiting the friars he had sent out, gathering new members for the Order, founding new houses and seeking continued papal support for the work of the Friars Preachers.

Under Dominic's direction, thirty representatives from the twelve priories in Europe then in existence gathered for General chapters in 1220 and 1221 at Bologna, the great university city, in Italy for the study of church law and civil law. The General Chapter of 1220 enacted legislation for preaching, formation of new members, studies, the observance of poverty and the procedures for general chapters. Dominic insisted that the Order's laws were not to bind under sin, and that the Priors, as heads of the local houses, had the power to dispense from the Order's laws when they thought it necessary for the sake of preaching or study. The General chapter of 1221 created provinces as subdivisions of the Order, which would gather the priories of a certain geographic area under the authority of a Provincial, who was responsible to the Master of the Order. The Provinces established by Dominic and the General Chapter were Spain, Provence, Tuscany, Germany, Hungary, England, Greece, Scandinavia, Poland and the Holy Land. However, the most significant work of the Chapter, which ended six weeks before Dominic's death, was the formulation of the basic constitutional legislation that would concretize his vision and provide the flexibility for the subsequent development of the preaching mission of the Order.

Dominic fell ill during a preaching tour in Lombardy following the General Chapter of 1221 and died in Bologna, where he is buried, on August 6, 1221. He was canonized by Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) in 1234 and is commemorated in the Roman calendar on August 8. The influence of Dominic perdures in the shared vision of a religious family of women and men dedicated to preaching the Gospel to all people while living in a community that is committed to common prayer, simplicity of life, study and co-responsibility for their mission of service to the People of God.

St. Agnes of Montepulciano (1268-1317)

Although born of a wealthy family in Gracchiano, Italy, Agnes believed that charity is the only way to acquire the virtue of humility and there is no humility without charity; the one nourishes the other. Hence she first joined a Franciscan convent in Montepulciano whose members were called the Sisters of the Sack, (because of the poverty of the religious habits they wore). When a new foundation was established in Proceno, Agnes was sent there as the housekeeper, but she later served as superior. Because of her reputation as a woman of prayer and holiness, she was invited to return to Montepulciano to be the superior of a newly founded monastery. A few years later she placed the monastery under the direction of the Order of Preachers and she served as Prioress of this community of Dominican nuns for the last eleven years of her life.

The prayer of the liturgy for her feast day says "Merciful God, lead us to seek your face in prayer and to know the joy of your compassion." Among the moral virtues it is prudence that guides our actions in making the right decisions in our daily actions. Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit it is piety that gives us a deep respect for God's will and the desire to serve others as our brothers and sisters.

The life of St. Agnes of Montepulciano witnesses to the reality that our lives are filled with a series of choices that call us to decide not only what is best for us, but also what

our responsibilities to others may ask of us. Agnes offers us the model of a woman whose core values led her to make her decisions by the careful reflection, which is at the heart of the virtue of prudence, guiding us in making decision that will enable us to use our gifts well for the sake of our own good as well as the common good. Her decisions were also guided by prayer and openness to being led by the Holy Spirit's gift of piety to do God's will and thus not only to find personal fulfillment but also to manifest God's compassion for others in a life of joyful service.

St. Albert the Great (1207-1280)

A renowned theologian, bishop and doctor of the Church, Albert was born of a noble German family. While a student at the University of Pavia, he was attracted to the Order by Blessed Jordan of Saxony, St. Dominic's successor as Master of the Order. From 1242 until 1248 he taught at the University of Paris, where Thomas Aquinas was one of his students. The works of the Greek philosopher Aristotle were coming to the great university center from Muslim Spain. Albert helped to introduce Aristotelian philosophy as interpreted by Jewish and Muslim philosophers into the curriculum at a number of newly emerging universities. From 1248 he taught at Cologne and served as provincial of Germany (1254-1257). Because of his vast knowledge of science, philosophy and theology, he was asked to organize the program of studies within the Dominican Order. He was named bishop of Ratisbon in 1260, but he resigned after two years, believing that he could be more useful as a teacher. He continued his teaching at Wurzburg, Strasbourg and Cologne. In old age, he traveled halfway across Europe to defend the work of his brilliant pupil, Thomas Aquinas, who had died in 1274. St. Albert is honored as the patron of those involved in the natural sciences.

The prayer of the liturgy for his feast days says: "God of truth, may the pursuit of all human knowledge lead to a greater knowledge and love of you." Among the theological virtues, it is hope that gives us certitude of the attainment of eternal life and the means for reaching it. Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit it is knowledge that gives us the capacity to judge rightly concerning created things as ordained to the attainment of eternal life.

The life of St. Albert witnesses to the Dominican emphasis on the goodness of creation and the capacity of the human mind to come to a knowledge of the universe in which we live and the challenge to grow in that knowledge to achieve the development necessary for the common good of all. Albert offers us a model of one whose core values led him to study the sciences and the philosophy of Aristotle because he believed that grace builds on nature, and that knowledge of the world around us is meant to be the foundation for a faith vision of human destiny that hopes for a fullness of life with God that transcends our understanding. As a gift of the Holy Spirit, knowledge for Albert is a path that opens our horizons to the virtue of hope as a light that enables us to envision a future with God that gives us courage to live in the present because we believe that our lives have meaning and purpose.

St. Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419)

Born in the province of Valencia, Spain, Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419) joined the Dominican Order in 1367. He embraced strict spiritual life and he was later to write of it in his treatise *On the Spiritual Life*. Two problems within Christendom cried out for remedy during his lifetime: the moral laxity created by the bubonic plague that devastated Europe between 1347-1350 and the Great Western Schism that divided Europe between a pope in Rome and a pope in Avignon from 1378-1417. He sought to heal the moral laxity that followed the bubonic plague by devoting himself to itinerant preaching. In Spain, France and Italy, he drew huge crowds as he warned of the evils of the time and preached the need for penance and moral reform. During the Great Schism he worked tirelessly for the peace and unity of the Church. The key theme of his preaching was “Fear God and give honor to him for the hour of judgment is coming.” He is often picture with a trumpet as a sign of the last judgment. He preached to St. Colette and her Poor Clare nuns and she told him he would die in France. Too ill to return to Spain, he died in Brittany in 1419.

The prayer of the liturgy for his feast days says: “Ever-living God, at the coming of your Son may we be found preaching the Gospel of your kingdom, fervent in labor and in love.” Among the moral virtues, the virtue of temperance moderates the pleasures of the senses and keeps them within the limits of reason illumined by faith. Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of fear of the Lord is a sense of vigilance to avoid any occasion of offending God.

The life of St. Vincent Ferrer witnesses to the reality that in the midst of a world where pleasures can become all-consuming, we can lose our sense of what truly matters in human life and move away from a way of life that exemplifies the love and service that are central values in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Through his preaching and teaching, Vincent Ferrer offers us a model of one who sought to instruct his hearers by recalling the necessity of the moral virtue of temperance to provide a balance in their lives. He also sought to remind them of the need for the gift of fear of the Lord so that they would be conscious anew of the responsibilities that are incumbent upon human beings not only for their own personal physical, moral and spiritual well-being but also for the well-being of those entrusted to their care in the journey that we share together in the human family as a journey to eternal life with God.

St. Martin de Porres (1579-1639)

Known as the “Apostle of Charity,” Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru of John, a Spanish nobleman, and Anna Velsaquez, a freed black slave. As a boy he studied medicine under a barber, which was common at that time, and the knowledge he gained would be put to very good use in helping the poor when he later enter the Dominican Order. Martin was first received as a servant at the priory of the Holy Rosary in Lima, and he was later admitted to profession as a Dominican lay brother in 1603. Besides his ordinary work assignments, he spent long hours with the sick and the dying both inside and outside the priory. His care for the poor and slaves gave rise to many stories about his holiness and the miracles of healing attributed to his intercession. Daily he fed nearly two hundred people and weekly he distributed food, clothing and other necessities of life

among the Indians, Africans and Spaniards of the city. He died at Lima, Peru in 1639 and is the patron saint of work for interracial justice and harmony.

The prayer of the liturgy for his feast days says: “Loving God, you led our brother Martin by the path of humble service. Help us to follow his splendid example and come into your presence with him.” Among the moral virtue, the virtue of justice guides us in rendering to others what is rightly theirs. Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of counsel guides us in judging rightly what ought to be done in particular situations.

The life of St. Martin witnesses to the reality of poverty, sickness and the varied needs for care and love that others have in the complexity of their life journeys. Martin offers us a model of one who understood what it meant to be an outcast in society and who from that experience set out to do all in his power to help those in need whatever their race or social class. The virtue of justice in Martin led him to respect the dignity of each person that he encountered and to offer them whatever assistance he could to give them what he believed was rightfully theirs as his brothers and sisters in the human family, who were the living images of the mystery of God. By the gift of counsel, he was guided in judging what he needed to do to respond appropriately to the unique needs of each person in order to enable them to share experientially in God’s bountiful love and mercy.

St. Pius V (1504-1572)

Pope Pius V was born Antonio Ghislieri at Bosco in Piedmont, Italy in 1504. At the age of fourteen, he entered the Dominican Order and took the name of Michael. After his ordination to the priesthood, he taught philosophy and theology and also held the offices of master of novices and prior within the Order before being asked to serve in the Roman Curia. In 1556 he was named bishop of Sutri and was created a cardinal in 1557. He was elected pope in 1566 and took the name Pius. During his six years as pope he sought to implement the church reforms that had been legislated by the council of Trent that ended in 1563. He revised the Roman missal and the breviary, issued the *Roman Catechism*, reformed the Roman Curia, called for the establishment of seminaries in every diocese and appointed bishops whom he believed would be examples of authentic pastoral service to their people. He was also known for his compassion for the poor and destitute and after the papal election, instead of hosting the customary elaborate banquet, he ordered the food be given to the poor of the city of Rome. He exercised his leadership within Christendom through his role in offering his support to the Catholic leaders of Europe in their struggle with the Ottoman Turks for control of the Mediterranean at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. He died seven months later on May 5, 1572.

The prayer of the liturgy for his feast day says: Faithful God, you called our brother Pius to defend the faith and renew the worship of your Church. Guide us toward that worship in truth which is faithful to your Word.” Among the moral virtues, the virtue of fortitude strengthens our will so that we do not abandon the pursuit of what is morally right even when that may be arduous or difficult. Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of fortitude gives us confidence that we will be able to deal with the challenges and difficulties that may arise in our pursuit of what is morally right.

The life of St. Pius witnesses to the reality of the institutional Church in its human dimension, where it is ever in need of reform and the necessity for holiness of leadership that will have the vision and courage to lead the Church to ever greater fidelity to the values of the Gospel. Pius V offers us a model of a pastor who understood the challenges that faced him in renewing the worship life and the pastoral care within the Church of the sixteenth century. The virtue of fortitude enabled him in the midst of immense difficulties and resistance in many quarters of Christendom to have the confidence that the Holy Spirit would give him the courage necessary to move Church reform forward. Fortitude as a gift of the Holy Spirit gave St. Pius the confidence in the midst of formidable obstacles to the reform of the Church that God would give the graces necessary for the Christian people to accept and live out authentic renewal in accord with the values of the Gospel.

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)

Catherine Benincasa was born in Siena, Italy in 1347, the youngest of twenty-five children. Inspired by divine grace, she vowed her virginity to God while still a small girl. After overcoming the objections of her family, she pursued a life of prayer and penance as a Sister of Penance of St. Dominic, a Tertiary or a member of what was then known as the Third Order and now called the Dominican Laity. In 1370 she felt herself called by God to undertake an active apostolate by ministering to the sick and poor of Siena. Later she became involved in the complex political and religious reality that was life in fourteenth century Europe after the devastation of the bubonic plague of 1347-1350. Several times she was able to bring about peace among the warring Italian city states. While representing the Florentines at the Papal Court, then resident in Avignon, she was instrumental in persuading Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome.

On April 1, 1375, she received the stigmata, the marks of Jesus' five wounds imprinted on her hands, feet and side. In 1378 she wrote her Dialogue, a masterpiece of theological and spiritual doctrine, which has become a source of riches for the entire Dominican family. Catherine spent the final years of her life trying in vain to end the Great Schism, which had divided Europe between a Pope living in Rome and a Pope living in Avignon, both of whom claimed to be the authentic successor of St. Peter. She died in Rome on April 29, 1380 and was buried in the basilica of Saint Maria Sopra Minerva. In 1970 Pope Paul VI declared her a doctor of the Church.

The prayer of the liturgy for her feast days says: "Father, in meditating on the sufferings of your son, and in serving your church, our sister Catherine was filled with the fervor of your love. May we share in the mystery of Christ's death and rejoice in the revelation of his glory. Among the theological virtues, the virtue of charity enables us to love God above all things and ourselves and our neighbor for God. Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of understanding gives us a penetrating intuition of the revealed truths of faith as well as natural truths to help us understand our call to lives of holiness and service.

The life of St. Catherine of Siena witnesses to the ever present need for men and women who open their hearts and minds to a love of God and a love of neighbor that reaches out to find ways to work for peace in our world and for unity among Christians. The theological virtue of charity so filled Catherine of Siena that she give herself unceasingly to the work of bringing peace to the Italian city states and to ending the Great Schism that was undermining the unity of the Church. Understanding as a gift of the Holy Spirit enabled Catherine to realize that the wounds of Christ had been imprinted upon her so that she might enter more deeply into the passion of Christ and offer her life in love in union with Him for the sake of His body the Church.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Thomas was born at Roccasecca, Italy in 1225 of the family of the Counts of Aquino. At the age of seventeen he received the habit of the Order in Naples. He was a disciple of St. Albert the Great, and at the early age of twenty-five he obtained the title of Doctor of Theology at the University of Paris. He spent his life teaching and writing, deriving as he said more light and help from the crucifix than from books. His immortal *Summa Theologiae* is the best known of his many books on theological topics. He devoted all of his energy to the service of truth, eagerly searching it out, lovingly contemplating it, and imparting it to others through his writing, his teaching and his preaching. His hymns on the Blessed Sacrament are among the greatest treasures of the liturgy. In his humility Thomas declined all worldly honors and ecclesiastical dignities. He died on March 7, 1274 at the Cistercian Monastery of Fossanova, while he was on his way to the council of Lyons. He was canonized in 1323 by Pope John XXII. Known as the “Angelic Doctor,” he was declared Doctor of the Church by Pope St. Pius V. Pope Leo XIII declared him Patron of Catholic Schools in 1880. Pope Pius XI declared him Doctor of the Most Holy Eucharist.

The prayer of the liturgy for his feast days says: “God of wisdom, you gave your church our brother Thomas, a wise and holy teacher who sought truth. As we seek you, help us and those we teach in our constant search for your truth.” Among the theological virtues, the virtue of faith enables the mind to assent to God as infinite truth and to believe the truths God has revealed. Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of wisdom enables us to judge rightly concerning God and the truths of faith with an ever deeper penetration of their meaning for our lives.

The life of St. Thomas Aquinas witnesses to the deeply held Dominican belief in the goodness of creation and the grace builds upon and transforms that goodness through faith. The theological virtue of faith enabled Thomas to penetrate the truths of faith ever more deeply, culminating in the mystical experience of December, 1273 when he stopped writing the *Summa Theologiae* saying “all that I have written is straw in comparison to what I now know.” Wisdom as a gift of the Holy Spirit gave Thomas a foretaste of the wonders of divine life and love that await us in the life to come and enabled him to understand profoundly what God has prepared for us as human beings in the fullness of eternal life that is the culmination of our earthly pilgrimage.

Conclusion

The eight Dominican saints whose lives, mission and values we have considered are symbols of the hundreds of beatified and canonized saints of the Dominican Family and the tens of thousands of Dominican women and men who have witnessed to the meaning of the Dominican charism by lives of faith and service over the past eight centuries. This beautiful Founders Chapel is a witness to them and especially to the Newburgh Dominican Sisters whose love, wisdom and care have reached out to numerous students, faculty colleagues and staff members as well as the broader community over the years.

At this important juncture in the history of the College, you are exploring together as a College community the role of the Dominican Tradition in fulfilling the College's mission and in helping you to develop ways of integrating into daily activity a deeper commitment to the values that call us to lives of human and grace-filled meaning in service to others. As part of this process I would suggest in closing some topics that you might want to explore that reflect the Dominican vision in the lives of the saints we have reflected upon this afternoon.

From St. Dominic:

1. The goodness of God in creation and the merciful love of God for all
2. Respect for every human person as the image of God

From St. Albert the Great:

1. Passion for seeking the truth by studying human experience and the sciences
2. Exploring the relationship between faith and reason

From St. Thomas Aquinas:

1. The vision of the meaning of human life as grace building upon nature
2. The understanding of the relationship that exists between the moral virtues, the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in human development

From St. Catherine Siena:

1. Ways of working for peace and religious harmony in the world around us
2. Ways of bringing hope for the future to others in difficult times

From St. Martin de Porres:

1. Ways of building communities that seek justice for all
2. Commitments to service that care for those most in need.

As Dominican Colleges and Universities in the United States, we share a vision of higher education that believes in the unity of the human family that comes from God our Creator. We therefore encourage the deepest respect for the essential dignity, freedom and equality of every person and welcome as students, faculty, staff and administration women and men from all religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds. We believe that each person brings gifts and diverse perspectives that will enrich the development of our educational communities and have an important role to play in developing our Dominican identity that is faithful to the past, life-giving in the present and open to new visions and possibilities for mission and service to the future.

As is said to each Dominican on the day of their profession, I say to you as the community of Mount Saint Mary College: “May God, who has begun this good work in you, bring it to completion.” Thank you and God bless you.

Rev. Thomas D. McGonigle, O.P.
Associate Professor of History
Providence College
Providence, Rhode Island
March 23, 2006