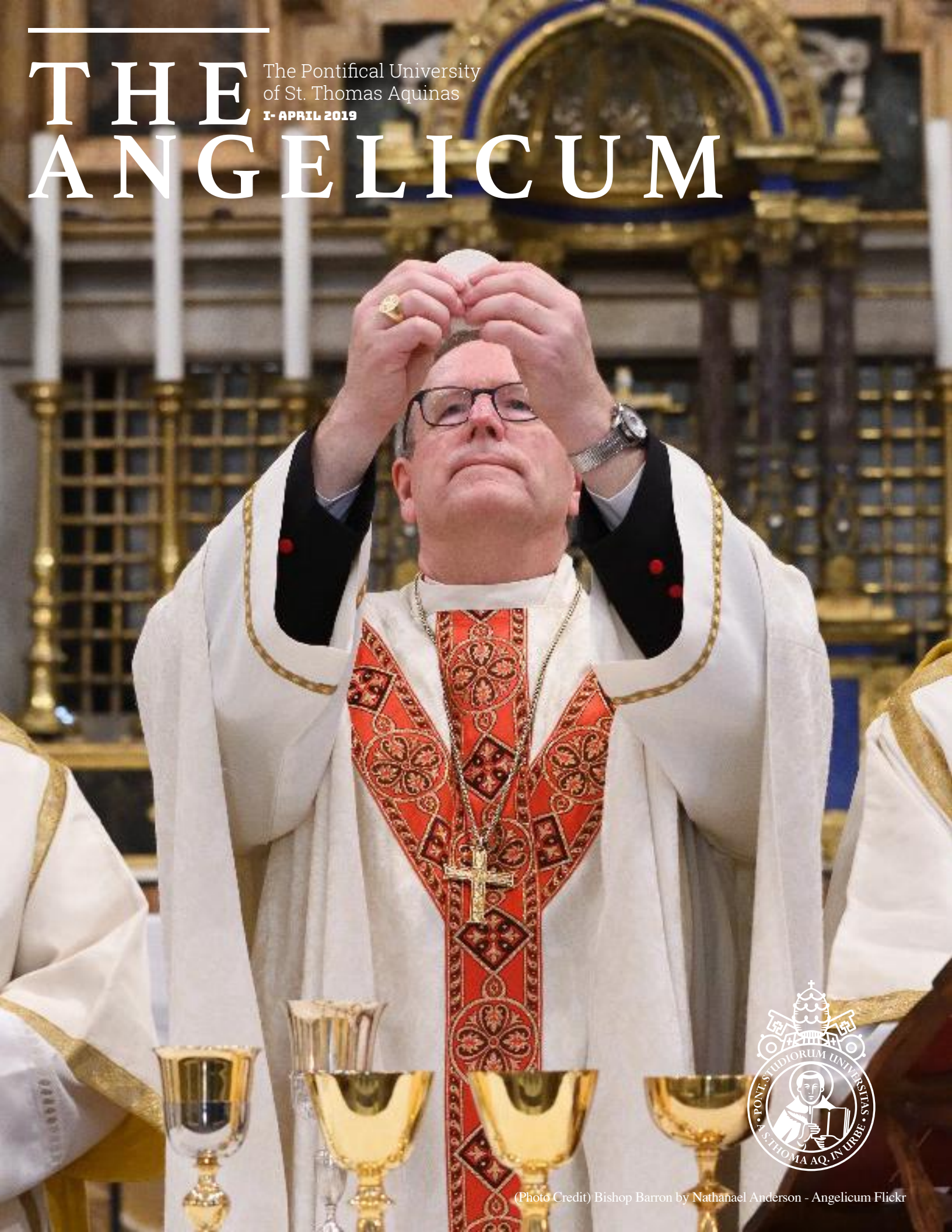


# THE ANGELICUM

The Pontifical University  
of St. Thomas Aquinas  
I - APRIL 2019



(Photo Credit) Bishop Barron by Nathanael Anderson - Angelicum Flickr

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ANGELICUM

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# ROME

## APRIL 2019

**T**he Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelicum is pleased to announce a new revised version of The Angelicum Newsletter, which will now be called The Angelicum. This new version will feature our university students' publication La Parola which will be written in English. La Parola is Italian for "The Word," and is authored by the students who attend the university for the students and faculty, whose work is showcased in a bilingual format (English and Italian) and is distributed exclusively in Rome. The publication will also include work by students from its university partners, such as John Cabot University, from which several Communications students are interning at the Angelicum. The Angelicum will feature different types of interviews and articles with a focus on the academic experience taking place at the university.

**I**t has been redesigned in order to be more readable and user-friendly, while showcasing modern colors with a classic feel, along with a fresh layout designed with the reader in mind. Our hope is that the rebranding of both will increase their visibility to international donors and friends both in Europe and the United States, increase engagement between active students and alumni, and above all learning about all the wonderful things happening in the Eternal City. Start planning your visit to Rome as we would like everyone to consider our university to be their Roman alma Mater!

Fr. Benedict Croell,  
O.P.



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# LET'S BE THOMISTS: SYNTHESIS, SYNTONY, SYNERGY

## THE INTERVIEW WITH THE RECTOR OF THE PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

BY MICHAŁ PALUCH O.P.



(PHOTO CREDIT: ANGELICUM FLICKR)

### **Let's start in a Thomistic way. What are your purposes?**

Let's answer in one sentence: we want to be the best Thomistic institution in the world.

However, sometimes it seem like we have so much to do that we are just surviving or, if you want, to keep the institution going, and that is demanding enough for us, taking into account the heavy burden of administration for which I have been tasked by the Master of the Order. But, obviously, this is not true.

### **Are you not exaggerating in saying that we should be the best Thomistic institution in the world?**

Well, not at all. If we are in the heart of Rome and we have the Dominican Order as the foundation of our mission, this should be an obvious plan for us; indeed, it is our destiny. But we must understand all this correctly. It does not mean that we will have all the interesting people here in Rome. We should have a very strong core team of professors on location, but we will also achieve our purpose through networking with many people and institutions throughout the world. We are already doing this in many respects.

### **What should such a purpose mean for our education in practice?**

—I like to translate our Thomistic mission into practice with the help of three “syns”: synthesis, syntony, synergy. Thomism gives us the “intellectual backbone” which allows us to put together all the crucial elements of our understanding of the world — this is the “synthesis”. It is very important to start with this backbone in our postmodern, post-liberal, “post-everything” world. But Thomism is also about looking for the part of our identity that we share with others — syntony. The place of philosophy in Thomistic reflection has always allowed us to have a meeting point with all those who do not fully agree with our understanding of the world. Finally, in spite of what we can sometimes imagine about the Dominican way of life (our German friends

sometimes jokingly translate O.P. as “ohne Praxis” – “without practice” indicating some friars are out of touch with the real world), the contemplative thought of Aquinas has a very concrete agenda – it invites us not only to look for syntony on a theoretical level but also for synergy with the others on a very practical level. Do not forget that the longest part of the *Summa Theologiae* is the *Secunda Pars*, with a very concrete translation into practice of the Christian life.

### **Shouldn't synthesis be enough? Do we really need three “syns”? The *Summa Theologiae* seems to be first a kind of synthesis...**

To continue playing with words, I would say that the first part of all three words—the “syn”—helps us to understand that, in the end, we are speaking about one ideal. The three “syns” each include each other. If we struggle for synthesis in a correct way, it will bring along syntony and synergy, and vice versa. But still, it is useful to articulate all those aspects in such a way to better understand the importance of the different parts of our common project. We need the Thomistic Institute to inspire our capacity for synthesis, but we also need the section for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue—in the future a new Institute for Ecumenical Studies and, who knows, maybe a future institute for interreligious studies as well—to develop our skills in syntony. Our Faculties of Canon Law and Social Sciences and the Institute *Mater Ecclesiae* should show us how to translate our coherent philosophical and theological vision into practice, finishing our endeavour with projects provoking synergy. If we keep in mind that the main mission of our institution is to prepare the future leaders for the Church and society, such an ideal—articulated in all those basic dimensions—may help us to accomplish our task in the best possible way.

### **What are the main challenges you see before us?**

I think with all the opportunities we have, we should not only be focused on teaching, although it is a very important part of our mission. We should also find the courage to tackle the crucial issues of our day together – working as a whole university community. This is why I am so happy that we had our *Dies Academicus*, to reflect together on our mission, and our first inter-faculty conference, “Com-Uni-Tas”, focused on the common good. I am very grateful to all the professors and students who invested their time in those projects. We are small enough (*sic!*), and varied enough, to work as a team from time to time, but we need to discover the strength and the beauty of such projects. It will always be tempting for us to prefer to organize conferences with external “star guests” whom we can invite to our University. Such projects are important too, and we should undertake

them as well. In the end we want to offer to our students the best we can, meaning, the best experts from around the world, and I am happy that the number of our events of this kind are increasing here. But I am also convinced that we will inspire a new dynamism in our academic life if we learn, as well, to use the resources we already have - if we learn how to listen to each other and how to learn from each other. In the end, our intellectual formation is not only, nor first of all, about an amount of knowledge that we want to load into the heads of our students; it is, rather, about attitudes to reality, and to each other, that we want them to discover. I hope that we can continue the inter-faculty conferences in the future, and that they will develop with time into inter-faculty research projects and friendships.

### **Any other challenges? Could you descend to a more practical level?**

Let's be honest, the rector's life happens on a very practical level... There is a hard part of it – the renovation projects. As you know, we are continuing to renovate our buildings. At this moment we are working on the part which is almost invisible to our students, although it is very important to our project; if we want to develop, we need decent conditions of life for the Dominican friars who are among our professors. We have just finished the renovation of the third wing of the priory; we now need to prepare the project for the fourth wing. In the future, the most urgent and complicated part of the renovation will be our library. The library team is currently working on a project for this. We were able to introduce some important improvements (projectors) to our classrooms during the last summer, but, as we all know, their integral renovation still needs to be done. There is a soft part of the Rector's work, too, the practical issues that we have to address. The General Secretary, with his team, is working hard to prepare an online registration system, and to improve our communication. I am sure that the first results of his endeavours are visible to you, but the decisive steps are still to be taken.

### **We need some nice thought for the conclusion...**

Well, Fr. Friedrich Bechina from the Vatican Congregation of Catholic Education told us in his initial address during our *Dies Academicus* that we should rediscover the deep joy of our mission. A very powerful idea in spite of its humble-obvious-appearances. Let's try to do it together.

# Interview with Thomas Joseph White, O.P. By Christian Huebner

(Photo Credit-Google Image Backer Publishing Group)



An American convert to the Catholic faith, graduate of Brown University and Oxford, author of widely-read works on dogmatic theology and sacred scripture, and renowned teacher and lecturer, Fr. Thomas Joseph White, OP has joined the Angelicum faculty this year as a professor of theology and the director of the Thomistic Institute. Recently, La Parola caught up with Fr. Thomas Joseph to learn more about his life, his work, and his thoughts on the future of Thomism.

**Father Thomas Joseph White, thanks for taking the time to visit today. You're a new professor at the Angelicum this year, but certainly not new to teaching theology. Can you tell us a little bit about how you became a Dominican and a theologian in the first place?**

In college I became interested in Christian mysticism and theology, and started reading thinkers like Barth, Balthasar, Newman, de Lubac and Ratzinger, often not understanding well what I was reading at first. This interest eventually led me to become Catholic and I went on to do graduate studies at Oxford, where I got to know the Dominicans. The decision to enter religious life came about through prayer, but it seemed like a life of study was part of this calling. As concerns the Dominican order, it is marked by a shared life of prayer, friendship, the search for the truth and evangelization. All of these elements mutually reinforce one another.

**One of your roles in Rome now is leading the Thomistic Institute. What is the Thomistic Institute and how did you become involved?**

For the past ten years (2008-2018) I was the director of the Thomistic Institute in Washington DC, which is a research and “think tank” branch of the Dominican House of Studies in DC. The Institute there sponsors and develops Catholic intellectual events in philosophy and theology, history and the arts, primarily on secular university campuses. It is currently on around 50 campuses in the US and sponsors over 200 events a year. In 2018, the Master of the Order asked me to come to Rome to be the new director of the Thomistic Institute at the Angelicum and to work on this project with Frs. Bernhard Blankenhorn and Emmanuel Durand. So, this is a new undertaking that entails new possibilities.

**How do you see the Thomistic Institute's potential in Europe? Does the approach differ from the United States?**

The first thing to say is that the Thomistic Institute (TI) in Rome

is part of the Angelicum with its very distinctive and important teaching and research mission at the heart of the Church. The university educates around 1100 students from around 94 different nationalities, the majority of whom are diocesan seminarians and priests. Consequently, the Angelicum has a global impact on the universal Church. The work of the TI at the Angelicum fits modestly within this larger context: it is an institute that seeks to manifest the vitality and riches of Thomistic thought within a contemporary context. How does Thomism contribute to the contemporary theological and philosophical life of the Catholic Church? How should we respond to the challenges of secularism and skepticism and to the widespread (mistaken) view that science and religion are somehow opposed to one another? Why should a modern person choose to be religious anyway? Here Aquinas' philosophy and theology are of great help.

Outside of Rome it is also the case that modern universities in Europe sometimes are marked by a historical anti-clericalism. This can make it difficult to host Catholic intellectual events in these environments. However, there are also significant counter-trends: there are in Europe many professors and students in secular environments steeped in the classical Catholic tradition of European Christianity, with a sophisticated understanding of their faith. Also, young Europeans are less anti-clerical, more genuinely open to religious questions than their forebears, and in some ways genuinely naïve, in a helpful sense. Finally, globalization has not been all bad: many young Europeans have learned something about theology through the internet and the ways books can now be discovered and easily purchased, that allow people to begin to self-specialize. What is clear to me is that there is a widespread, genuine interest in the thought of Aquinas in

many locations in Europe among people in their 20's.

**The growth of the Thomistic Institute over the past several years—in podcast listeners and university chapters—has been remarkable. Why this sudden wellspring of interest in Thomism, which some might think surprising?**

There are about one million listeners now to the Thomistic Institute podcasts in the US. This is after only about 4 years. Why? Because the podcasts provide something that is not really available for free online anywhere else: sophisticated formation in Catholic theology and philosophy, that is conceptually accessible and readily available online for free. What it shows is that people naturally desire to think about Christianity intellectually, and not just emotivistically. There is also a site now for podcasts from the institute in

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**“This interest eventually led me to become Catholic and I went on to do graduate studies at Oxford, where I got to know the Dominicans.”**

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Rome. The two sites are here:

<https://soundcloud.com/thomisticinstitute>

<https://soundcloud.com/tiangelicum>

**One more question: Any truth to the rumor that your banjo has followed you to Rome?**

Yes. I play the banjo as a hobby and am also a member of the bluegrass band, The Hillbilly Thomists. You can find that on Spotify and YouTube. Bluegrass music is essentially music that celebrates life, but also acknowledges tragedy and places a central emphasis on hope in God. The great bluegrass artists are people like Bill Monroe, Doc Watson, Earl Scruggs, but also more recently Chris Thile, Tony Triscka and Gillian Welch. Music elevates the soul. And if the renaissance artists in Italy are right, then there is some metaphor to be found between the playing of stringed instruments and the angelic contemplation. It's a thesis worth debating.



PHOTO CREDIT: - ANGELICUM FLICKR

## Interview with Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas

# PRESIDENT BR. BENEDICT D'SOUZA, S.M.



(PHOTO CREDIT: ASPUST PRESIDENT BEN D'SOUZA – SR. KRISTEN GARDNER)

**BRO. BENEDICT, S.M. FROM NEW ZEALAND**

### Why did you choose to study at the Angelicum?

There are a couple of reasons why I chose the Angelicum. When the New Zealand (NZ) province of the Society of Mary used to have all its formation at home, we were affiliated with the Angelicum. Most of our priests used to get their baccalaureates through the Angelicum and I thought that this would be a good tradition to continue. The Thomistic approach of the Angelicum is something that I thought would be as helpful as it is practical, founded on sound philosophy, and has been tried and tested for centuries. Once I moved to Rome our senior students took us to the universities where they studied. It was this that confirmed my decision to study at the Angelicum, as we had Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during the opening hours as well as a beautiful garden.

### What interested you in becoming the president of ASPUST?

I've been studying at the Angelicum for just over two years and it has been a great experience. I have learned a great deal, made many new friends and matured a lot in this time. Becoming president of the student association is just a small way that I could serve the students of the Angelicum by representing them.

### What are some of the main things that the Angelicum already does well?

As we are a comparatively small university and have smaller class sizes, we have a more familial environment. This facilitates much closer-knit friendships and it is even possible to know the names of all the students in one's class. This family-like atmosphere is rarely found in tertiary institutions. The lecturers know the names of their students and greet them around the university. This, in turn, creates a warmer

atmosphere that I think is conducive to studying well. I'm more likely to study hard if I know that the lecturer cares enough to remember my name. When I joined the seminary, a friend advised me "Don't let Jesus become just a name." What he meant was that when studying theology there is the possibility of Jesus becoming just an idea or a concept. With so many facts, dates, and other things to memorize, Jesus can become just another idea and a topic of an essay rather than the God who loves and saves us. This is why I really like our Adoration Chapel; it really is the heart of the university. It is always full during our short 15-minute breaks between classes with students and lecturers making a quick visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

### **What are some things that you would like to improve about the Angelicum?**

Realistically there is probably just one thing that I would like to improve: communication. In a multicultural, multilingual, multidisciplinary university, communication is a real challenge. The same statement or comment can have different connotations in a different culture and can mean something completely different once translated. I'm well aware that this is not an issue that can be solved over night or even in one year, but I think that steps have been made in the right direction over the years. I would like to make sure that we keep moving forward and improving this over the next year.

### **What can the students do to help you with your role as president?**

This probably links directly to the

previous question: communication. There are a few things that I would like to do this year but being student president means that it is more about the students, and what they need/want rather than any ideas that I have. Each class or year has a representative and students are encouraged to go to them or email them their concerns, problems, and ideas of how we can improve the Angelicum. This is probably the most important thing. This year we will also send out an online student questionnaire which will be an anonymous way of students communicating to me what they think is needed at the Angelicum.

### **What is your favourite area of study?**

That is a hard one as I think that they all have their place. Scriptures are absolutely foundational and central to the life of a seminarian as I prepare to preach the word of God. Dogma is integrating our rich Magisterial Tradition into preaching and gives preaching its Catholic flavor. And Moral Theology is how we can put it all into practices, instead of just being abstract ideas. I guess what I really like is trying to weave the three areas together and making it available to people who have not heard the good news. If I did have to pick, I guess I would say that virtue-based ethics is probably the area that I enjoy. I am always amazed at how St. Thomas links and separates various virtues and vices as well as his use of the scriptures and the church fathers to support his reasoning.

### **What else do you enjoy doing in Rome?**

Rome has been quite an experience for me. It is very different from NZ in many ways and I do miss the greenery of New Zealand, but I have grown to really like Rome. While living in a four-story apartment in the suburbs of a large city, it seems like a strange hobby to develop, but I've started to do a bit of gardening over the last two years. What started as just watering the plants in the superior's office over the summer has grown into a relaxing hobby. I've enjoyed planting tomatoes, cucumbers, chiles, eggplant, and various herbs and flowering plants. The Italian sun and warmer weather do most of the work. But it is still rewarding to be able to eat the fruit that I have planted.

# THE LIGHT THAT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

BY NATALIA JUZYN

In the spring of 2016 I was asked to consider organizing Eucharistic Adoration at the Angelicum. Laurie Olsen, a doctoral candidate, started Adoration at the university in 2001 and had been in charge ever since. She was nearing the end of her stay in Rome and needed a replacement. I accepted, and as I became involved, I learned the story of how Adoration developed at the Angelicum. I also came to know the students who spend many hours praying before the Blessed Sacrament. I would like to share the story of our Adoration's uncertain beginnings, and some of the fruit it has borne since.

The transitory nature of a university environment may not seem conducive to the stability Adoration requires. Consider the logistics: we have over ten hours of Adoration per day, five days per week. That is over fifty hours per week—more than St. Peter's Basilica. To maintain daily Adoration, we must have approximately twenty people per day (two per hour), committed to their hours. Given the flux of an ever-changing student body and variable class schedules, how have we maintained this for almost eighteen years? Other pontifical universities have attempted Adoration programs, but only the program at the Angelicum has lasted for so long. This is not due simply to students' organizational abilities. Along with student commitment, we have had a Dominican response. This was the key, for without institutional support, it would not have been possible.

It all began with an inspiration. Laurie Olsen was moved to organize Adoration during the spring of 2001. Initially, the aim was to have Adoration only during Lent. This went very well, and students were given permission to maintain all-day Adoration for the Fall Semester.

The then-rector of the Church of Sts. Dominic and Sixtus, however, had some concerns. It did not seem fitting to have such a large space used for Adoration, where only one or two people would be present. Who would preside over Exposition and Benediction? Would students commit to Adoration hours? Was it worth the effort to initiate something unsustainable? These doubts led the rector to deny the previously granted permission to continue Adoration that fall.

PHOTO CREDIT: -- ANGELICUM FLICKR



**Before [Jesus'] Eucharistic Face, in the radiant love of God Himself, we come to praise and thank, to petition, adore, and even lament.**

Therefore, despite having all hours filled, Laurie was told they could not proceed. The chaplain tried to change the rector's mind, but to no avail. Things looked bleak, but God was about to shed some light on the situation. Laurie recounts the following:

The next morning, the rector of the church was the main celebrant for the O.P.

community Mass. The first reading that day was Joel 1:13-15, 2:1-2:

*Priests, put on sackcloth and lament. Ministers of the altar, wail. Come, pass the night in sackcloth, you ministers of my God. For the house of our God has been deprived of oblation and libation. Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly; elders call together all the inhabitants of the country to the house of the Lord your God. Cry out to the Lord, "Oh, what a day! For the day of the Lord is near, it comes as a devastation from Shaddai." Sound the trumpet in Zion, give the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the country tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, yes, it is near. Day of darkness and gloom, day of cloud and blackness. Like the dawn there spreads across the*

*mountains a vast and mighty host, such as has never been before, such as will never be again to the remotest ages.*

The rector did not hesitate. As he was processing out of the choir, he went straight up to Fr. Vandegrift (the chaplain) and said: “Tell them they can have Adoration!”

His heart was moved and the rest, as they say, is history. Laurie would go on to coordinate Adoration until 2016. During that first semester, Adoration was held in the Church of Sts. Dominic and Sixtus. Priests studying at the Angelicum, mostly from the North American College, were responsible for Exposition and Benediction. Guardians were responsible for supplies such as candles and oil lamps, oil, and incense. Later, these supplies were generously provided by the Dominican community.

Beginning in the spring semester of 2002, Adoration was moved to its present location. What had been an unused, flood-damaged room of the Dominican priory was renovated and made into a chapel thanks to donations from American benefactors. That year, Fr. Luke Buckles, O.P. was assigned as Adoration Chaplain, followed by Fr. Philippe-André Holzer, O.P. from 2003 to 2015, and Fr. Dominic Holtz, O.P. since 2015.

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What began as a temporary devotion has become a pillar of the Angelicum’s spiritual life. The Adoration Chapel is a great blessing for us students. The Dominican motto of Veritas succinctly expresses the reason for our studies: to learn the truth. We know by faith that a few short steps away from any aula and the library, is a haven where Truth Himself awaits us. Throughout the day students stop in, sometimes for short visits, often for an hour or more, abiding in The Presence. Before His Eucharistic Face, in the radiant love of God Himself, we come to praise and thank, to petition, adore, and even lament.

Here in our small Adoration chapel, students and professors at the Angelicum are silently changing the world for the better. This great gift is possible because one woman said yes to an inspiration, one Dominican friar (eventually!) said yes to her request eighteen years ago, and students and Dominican friars have continued saying yes. As the current Adoration Coordinator, I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to Laurie Olsen for beginning this work. It took faith,

courage, and tenacity to establish this ministry. I would also like to thank our Adoration Chaplain Fr. Dominic Holtz, O.P., and all the Dominican friars who faithfully assist with Exposition and Benediction throughout the year. And most of all, I thank all the students and professors who have committed precious free hours to be Guardians of the Blessed Sacrament. Together, we provide a place for the light of Christ to shine in a world that grows darker by the day. By doing so, we give witness to these words of the Beloved Disciple: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (Jn 1:5)

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**“The light  
shines in the  
darkness, and  
the darkness  
has not  
overcome it.”  
(Jn 1:5)**





PHOTO CREDIT: – GRAPHIC J.MONROE

By Domenico Di Cosmo

The Dominican Order, also known as the Order of Preachers, has been evangelizing through preaching the Gospel for the salvation of souls since the thirteenth century. During Lent of this year, three Dominican friars who live here in Europe traveled to the Diocese of Venice, Florida, to conduct and preach a Lenten parish mission. Fr. Glenn Morris, O.P., Prior of the Dominican community at the Angelicum, was joined by Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P., Director of Development and Mission Advancement and Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P., a Dominican friar from London, for the parish mission which took place from April 8-10.

The three friars went to preach the retreat at the invitation of the Most Rev. Frank Joseph Dewane, Bishop of Venice (Florida), an alumnus of the Angelicum. The mission, led by this band of brothers, sought to help families understand and learn how God is present in their everyday lives, especially during the holy season of Lent.

Fr. Croell said of the mission, “The Lord is always at work, but we frequently fail to see Him or notice Him.” Each day the mission was designed to filter this teaching through three main themes. On the first night, the focus was on Divine Providence. The next night, the friars preached on the theme of the Divine Indwelling, and on the last day, the Real Presence in the gift of the Eucharist.

Indeed, the point of a mission is more than just preaching and sanctifying the souls of a parish. It is a great example of faith put into action according to the Dominican motto, “Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare” — “to praise, to bless, and to preach.”

# A BAND OF BROTHERS EMBARK ON A NEW MISSION

# Alumnus Msgr. Roy Literski: A Gift to the Angelicum

Story recounted through the eyes of Fr. James Steffes and the Msgr.'s niece Ms. Liz Kaul.

**M**sgr. Roy Literski, beloved priest and pastor of souls, passed away at the age of 92 on Wednesday, January 3, 2018, at St. Anne Nursing Home in Winona, Minnesota.

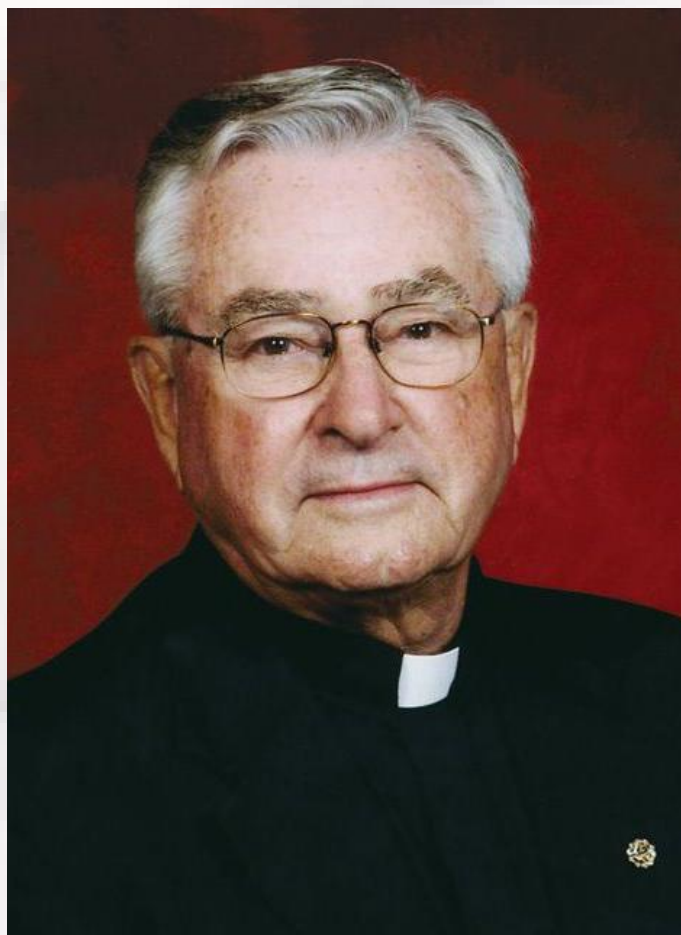
Msgr. Literski is remembered by his loved ones as a very sociable, generous, and positive man. He was always ready to listen to others with genuine interest. He loved to travel and immerse himself in different cultures. He particularly loved returning to Rome, especially to the Angelicum, where he earned his Ph.D. in Philosophy, Summa Cum Laude in 1959. After his time in Rome, Msgr. Literski served as chaplain and professor at Saint Mary's College, then rector at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Minnesota. He then was appointed vicar general of the Diocese of Winona, MN.

Out of his abundant generosity, Msgr. Literski left a bequest of \$50,000 to the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas via the International Dominican Foundation.

Msgr. Literski was considered an inspiration for many alumni and Dominican friars at the Angelicum. His dear friend Fr. James P. Steffes, rector of Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, described him as a beloved priest and a positive, joy-filled man of God. "I would observe him interacting with the people of God with great joy and an authentic interest. In this way, he was an inspiration," said Fr. Steffes, who recalled that the his friend truly had the heart of a pastor, like the Good Shepherd.

Msgr. Literski was not only an inspirational pastor but also a loving brother. Monsignor and his sister, Ms. Eileen Kaul, grew up on a farm in Rollingstone, Minnesota where they moved when she was four. Ms. Kaul describes the monsignor as the typical older brother—he would tease his sister and play jokes on her. They had a wonderful and close relationship.

Ms. Kaul remembers her uncle also by the infectious joy



he exuberated, and that he never hesitated to point out the reality that we are all God's children. It was often that he reminded people of their responsibility to care for and help each other by saying, "Their problems are your problems!"

The Angelicum community is grateful to God for the life of Monsignor Roy Literski, and will be forever grateful for his generosity to our university.

# FROM THE CITY OF ANGELS TO THE ANGELICUM

NATHANAEL ANDERSON,  
ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON



PHOTO CREDIT: – ANGELICUM FLICKR

One of the obvious questions that has probably dawned on everyone who has read the Church Fathers comes when you are forced to ask yourself how they found time to weigh such abstruse theological questions or master the most arcane verses of holy writ. Some of their greatest works seem to have been written between their last homily and their next letter to a troublesome cleric. His Excellency Robert Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, would be the last to compare himself to the giants on whose shoulders we all stand, but it is not an everyday occurrence to hear an episcopal lecture with a title like, “The One Who Is, The One Who Gives: Aquinas, Derrida, and the Dilemma of the Divine Generosity.”

Having received an honorary doctorate on March 7th—the traditional feast of St. Thomas—the bishop became an honored member of our Angelicum community. So, following a short video introducing his online evangelizing platform, “Word on Fire,” he proved that his theological analysis runs deeper than trendy but trenchant takes on everything from the quirky film *Ladybird* to that noisome band of New Atheists.

I will attempt to summarize his lecture with the same pithiness with which he has more successfully presented so many other topics. Ever engaged with contemporary philosophical and cultural currents, Bishop Barron presented an uncomfortable dilemma that I doubt any Hallmark card has yet had the audacity to admit to its recipient. It is the problem of gift-giving: namely, at the end of the day, don’t we all expect to get something in return from our gifts? And, if we do, is it quite right to call it a gift?

The 20th century French deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida gave a very decided “no” to that last question. And, there are many modern philosophers and all too eager “realists,” who will tell us the same. Linguistically, Bishop Barron noted, the roots of hospitality and enemy (in Latin *hostis*) are the same, which might tell you something about the reasons for hospitality. Hospitality is how you turn an enemy into your friend. Our Lord said something similar when he asked us what credit it is to love and lend to those from whom we expect repayment.

Bishop Barron concurred with Derrida’s discouraging conclusion; it is, he said, “virtually impossible” to conceive of giving a gift with perfect selflessness. But, he hastened to add, grace has the power to save us from our condition and elevate our possibilities. The Gospels present genuine charity to us. When we see it for what it is, the divine virtue of charity might appear even more radical and new to our world after waves of Hobbesian realism and radical deconstructionism than it did to the pagans living in the harsh conditions of the pre-Christian world. The ultimate giver is God, but by His grace we can imitate Him.

Our lecturer took the audience down one significant detour before

closing. Taking aim at a thesis from Jean-Luc Marion’s *God Without Being*, Bishop Barron argued that even though the possibility of genuine gift giving is a gift of Christ, His diffusive goodness is not his primary name. No, his first name is, as every good Thomist should agree, being itself. The great “I Am Who Am” echoes beyond the confines of the Old Testament to give grounding even to love itself. The reasons for this argument are more intricate than the shallowness of my inkwell permits record of, but suffice it to say that God plus creation is no greater than God alone. And, in reference to the Trinity, the reality of divine simplicity means that we cannot say inter-trinitarian relations come before being.

**“Ever engaged with contemporary philosophical and cultural currents, Bishop Barron presented an uncomfortable dilemma that I doubt any Hallmark card has yet had the audacity to admit to its recipient.”**

The divine names, I think, have consequences for how we understand and evangelize our age. It is worth recognizing the tendency to put an indiscriminate sort of goodness before all else. Indifferentism reigns, and many even think they can reinvent themselves like putty. What really matters is that someone is a “good,” or worse, a “nice” person. God, if he exists and is worthy of the name, must be the ultimate good guy. The problem is apparent. The good, lacking firm grounding in what is, becomes confused and confined to secular and narrowly ideological ends.

Calling on the name of the Lord is a tricky business, and it really does matter which name of God we call out first. When we hear God tell us, as he told St. Catherine of Siena, “You are she who is not; I Am He Who Is,” perhaps then we are on a safer path to goodness than by beginning with goodness itself. Perhaps the wisdom to discern the good begins with the fear of the Lord that this divine name inspires. Perhaps by this name we learn to appreciate God’s gifts as so far beyond repayment that we get past our mundane altruism and self-interested kindnesses to give God-given gifts ourselves.

The God who is before He is good might be the kind to help even the most perceptive cynic resolve the dilemma of gift-giving—not to mention the dilemma of how a bishop occupied with the practical good works of his office can find time to do his office credit by thinking clearly about God and being.

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# A WORD OF APPRECIATION FOR FR. WALTER SENNER, O.P.

**BY: REBECCA PIATTELLI**

On Tuesday, February 19, 2019, the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Angelicum bade farewell to one of its academic pillars and dear friars. Fr. Walter Senner, O.P. returned to Germany to help in the formation of pastors and laity. Fr. Senner has served in various capacities for the Order of Preachers. His academic life at the Angelicum began in 2007. He served as president of the St. Thomas Aquinas Institute and was a full-professor (straordinario) of the Faculty of Philosophy. Furthermore, in 2013, the Master of the Order and Grand Chancellor of the Angelicum, Fr. Bruno Cadoré, O.P., conferred upon Fr. Senner the degree of Master of Sacred Theology.

Fr. Senner is beloved by many of his Dominican brothers and students. Everyone at the Angelicum knows him and considers him a great scholar. When I arrived for the interview, I found Fr. Senner immersed in a reading, bent over a book and his glasses well-placed on his nose. The high ceiling, the long table, and the dark wood furnishings gave the meeting room a look that was at the same time majestic and intimidating to me. Despite his great wisdom and knowledge of Philosophy, Fr. Senner is always ready to be humble, while never losing the opportunity to grow and learn something new. In this regard, Fr. Senner has left us with a special message for his Dominican brothers, past alumni, and students: a life lesson inspired by St. Thomas Aquinas,

“[Saint Thomas] sometimes was attacked in quite unfair ways, but he never lost his objectivity, and he always tried to strengthen the arguments of those who criticized him in order to reach the Truth.”

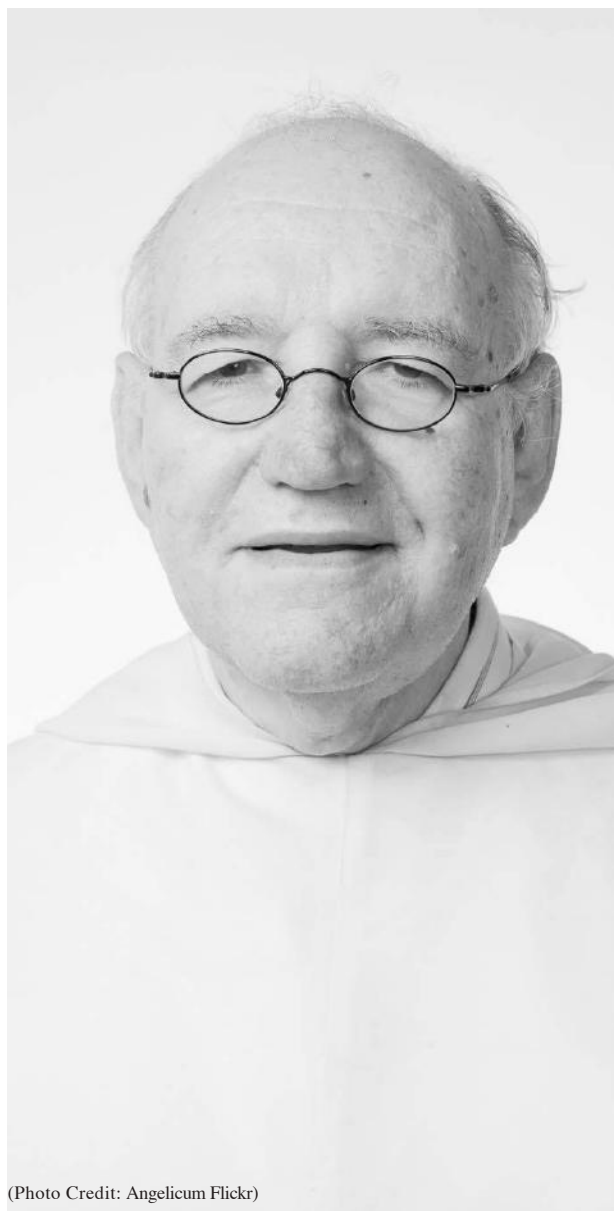
With his calm and slow-paced tone of voice, which conveys a sense of tranquility and security, Fr. Senner clearly articulates his thoughts, and invites his brothers and students to follow the model of St. Thomas.

I also had the pleasure of interviewing Fr. Benedict Croell, who describes Fr. Senner, “He is a man of great charity. He is the first to serve everyone. He has a generous heart and he

is a great Thomist. Fr. Senner is an example for all of us.”

Fr. Senner is known for his generosity and great heart. Talking about his experience as a professor, he describes the Angelicum as a “wonderful international community,” and remembers the time he spent here as “a great joy and a great challenge.”

Fr. Senner has returned to his country of birth, where he will keep sharing his knowledge, wise teaching, and pastoral care. After twelve years at the Angelicum, Fr. Senner has left a gaping hole, and will



(Photo Credit: Angelicum Flickr)

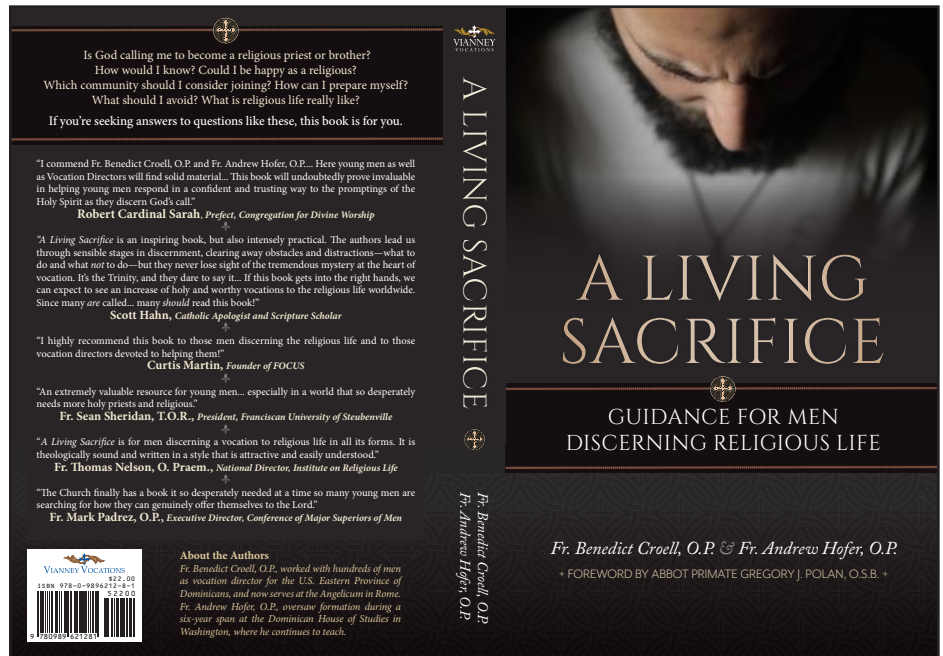
be sorely missed. Even though he is enthusiastic about his new journey, Fr. Senner departed the university with a heavy heart. Faculty, students and alumni have all expressed gratitude for having had the privilege of meeting this great man of charity and great Dominican friar.

After a moving hug with Fr. Croell, Fr. Senner headed for the exit of the room with the promise of returning to the Angelicum at the earliest opportunity to visit what has been his home for twelve years.

# A LIVING SACRIFICE OFFERS REAL ANSWERS FOR REAL MEN DISCERNING THEIR CALL TO SERVE

By Weronika Cichosz

A Living Sacrifice is a never-before-seen companion for young men discerning the religious life, written by Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P. from the Dominican House of Studies and Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P., Director of Development and Mission Advancement at the Angelicum. This new and comprehensive guide offers invaluable insight into



Is God calling me to become a religious priest or brother?  
How would I know? Could I be happy as a religious?  
Which community should I consider joining? How can I prepare myself?  
What should I avoid? What is religious life really like?  
If you're seeking answers to questions like these, this book is for you.

"I commend Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P. and Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P. Here young men as well as Vocation Directors will find solid material. This book will undoubtedly prove invaluable in helping young men respond in a confident and trusting way to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as they discern God's call."

**Robert Cardinal Sarah, Prefect, Congregation for Divine Worship**

"A Living Sacrifice is an inspiring book, but also intensely practical. The authors lead us through sensible stages in discernment, clearing away obstacles and distractions—what to do and what not to do—but they never lose sight of the tremendous mystery at the heart of vocation. It's the Trinity, and they dare to say it... If this book gets into the right hands, we can expect to see an increase of holy and worthy vocations to the religious life worldwide. Since many are called, many should read this book!"

**Scott Hahn, Catholic Apologist and Scripture Scholar**

"I highly recommend this book to those men discerning the religious life and to those vocation directors devoted to helping them!"

**Curtis Martin, Founder of FOCUS**

"An extremely valuable resource for young men... especially in a world that so desperately needs more holy priests and religious!"

**Fr. Sean Sheridan, T.O.R., President, Franciscan University of Steubenville**

"A Living Sacrifice is for men discerning a vocation to religious life in all its forms. It is theologically sound and written in a style that is attractive and easily understood."

**Fr. Thomas Nelson, O. Praem., National Director, Institute on Religious Life**

"The Church finally has a book it so desperately needed at a time so many young men are searching for how they can genuinely offer themselves to the Lord."

**Fr. Mark Padrez, O.P., Executive Director, Conference of Major Superiors of Men**



**About the Authors**  
Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P., worked with hundreds of men as vocation director for the U.S. Eastern Province of Dominicans, and now serves at the Angelicum in Rome.  
Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P., overtook formation during a six-year span at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, where he continues to teach.

Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P. & Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P.  
+ FOREWORD BY ABBOT PRIMATE GREGORY J. POLAN, O.S.B. +

rarely-addressed, real life questions of the discernment process, including: "Should I date while discerning?", "What should I expect from formation", "How do I know for sure if I'm being called?" and many more. In the uncertain world of today, where the truth is so obscured, this work is a must-read for anyone thinking about religious life, actively discerning, or just on the fence. A Living Sacrifice presents a holistic overview of various forms of religious life within the Catholic Church.

'A number of those religious communities we speak about in the book actually study at the Angelicum, so in some mysterious way, I see my new role here as Director of Development and Mission Advancement as a kind of continuation of my vocation ministry, but now at another level for the whole Church throughout the world.' – Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P.

The work has already been recommended by figures such as Dr. Scott Hahn and Curtis Martin, with a significant endorsement from His Eminence, Cardinal Robert Sarah, who commended Fr. Croell and Fr. Hofer on the publication, "This book will undoubtedly prove invaluable in helping young men respond in a confident and trusting way to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as they discern God's call."

Be among the first to access the unique content of A Living Sacrifice for yourself or a young man you know or for your home parish. Shipment opens mid-April; for more information, go to: [www.vianneyvocations.com/product/a-living-sacrifice/](http://www.vianneyvocations.com/product/a-living-sacrifice/)

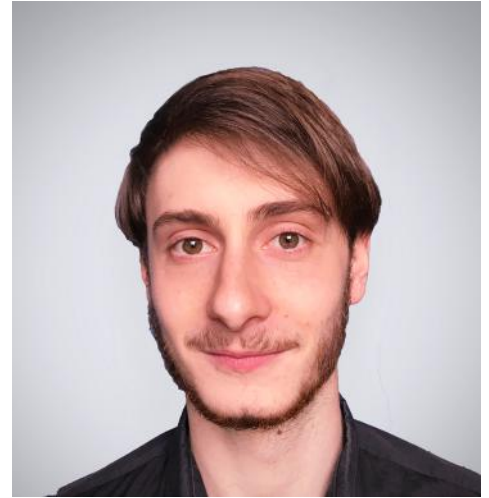


PHOTO CREDIT: – PROVIDED BY STUDENTS

## TO STUDY AND TO HAND ON THE FRUITS OF STUDY

**By Carmen Luisa Coya-van Duijn, O.P.**

John Cabot University, a U.S. based institution with a campus in Rome, has partnered with the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Angelicum, in order to offer Communications majors at John Cabot an opportunity to put their studies into action for a great cause. These two world-class learning institutions have found a mutual solution to provide a strong academic approach to formation and produce high quality communications collaterals that students can use in their portfolio and showcase their stories through the Angelicum. This practical approach uses contemporary and strategic communications tools to help form grounded professionals who can produce high-quality products and effective messaging. These students have a chance to learn from industry experts about the current standards of the industry as it is in countries like the U.S. and Italy.

Journalism student Rebecca Piattelli studies journalism at John Cabot and has worked on

several news packages on relevant stories taking place at the Angelicum. She has also sharpened her print journalistic skill by writing various articles and has even had an opportunity to practice Public Relations as a media specialist by writing her first media advisory and by serving as part of the media management team for the well-attended and highly-publicized event at the Angelicum honoring Most Rev. Robert Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, on March 7th of this year.

Domenico Di Cosmo will soon graduate from John Cabot with a degree in marketing. For his part in this new endeavor, he is put his training to the test by helping increase the foot traffic to the same event honoring Bishop Barron event. Di Cosmo is currently compiling data, analyzing it, and creating surveys for the students to answer about the event. This information will ultimately help him in the creation of a branded line of Angelicum products to be sold in the university

bookstore, as well as online. “I want students to share with me why they want to come to this school, so I can create products that they will share and use with pride!” says Di Cosmo.

Elisabetta Taurino is a broadcast videographer and award-winning graphic designer. She has put her creative behind-the-camera and editing skills for the Fr. Senner farewell piece featured on the Angelicum YouTube channel. She also has helped with the creative process and design of part of this issue of The Angelicum.

This combined effort is being led by the development office of the Angelicum which is headed by Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P. Carmen Luisa Coxa-van Duijn, chief media strategist of Effective Media Company, is also studying at the Angelicum, as well as leading the charge to help these students build solid careers. “Universities like John Cabot prepare students academically for the workforce, and this internship program at the Ange picks up on the formation process by providing them ‘real hands-on.’ We give them tangible experiences which could help launch their professional careers. The Angelicum benefits from their fresh ideas and creativity. We also challenge them to think through scenarios in order to make the right choices as they grapple with the ethical and moral questions that plague the industry today,” she concluded.

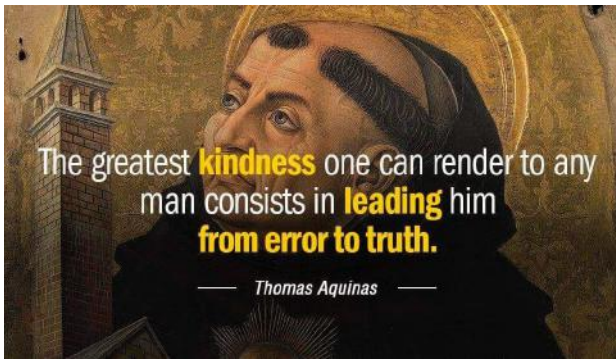
A new cycle of interns will grace the halls of the Angelicum in the fall of 2019 as the current graduating class takes their next step. Keep a close watch as these young professionals change the world with their effective ways of communicating and strong formation in leadership.

## ALUMNI EVENT CORNER

If you are a graduate of the Angelicum (and especially if you’re stationed in the midwestern region United States) this may be an event for you!

***The Angelicum will be hosting an opportunity for all alumni to come together in INDIANAPOLIS, IN on FRIDAY, JULY 19, 2019. If you would like to learn more about this evening of dining and fellowship with all alumni, please email us your street address and phone number to [development@pust.it](mailto:development@pust.it) . Space for this event is limited, so let us know of your possible interest before it’s too late!***

***\*Please note: Due to the limited space for this event, your email of interest does not reserve your space at this event, and it does not guarantee later invitation.***



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