

The ANGELICVM

NEWSLETTER OF THE PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS



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The Mission of the Angelicum and the Era of Pope Leo



Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P.
Rector Magnificus

If you had come to visit the Angelicum when I was starting my term as rector five years ago, I would have spoken to you about how important evangelizing education is and about the new things we were doing. And we have done a great deal with the support of many generous benefactors, to whom we are very grateful. At this point, however, things are changing right before our eyes, even on a daily basis. There are two important highlights of our current moment, and they are both optimistic.

The first point relates to the renewal of the Order of Preachers. Our work is not just about the Dominicans, but I do think it is important, as Dominicans running a Dominican university, to mention this renewal, especially in the English-speaking world. We are seeing it in the United States and also in England and Ireland, France and Italy. Many young people are being drawn to join the Order. This is true for women joining the sisters as well as men joining the friars. There is a return to religious observance and a love for the doctrinal patrimony of the Church. There is a desire to evangelize, to wear the habit in public, to bring people into sacred liturgy, and to have an encounter with Christ that is Eucharistic and profound. There is a desire to catechize with mercy and patience.

I started teaching in 2008 at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., and I had a group of wonderful young men in my classes. At the time I thought it was a high point, but now they are all young priests, and they are bringing so many people into the Church, even in the secularized cities of the United States. And I think what is happening in the Order is definitely related to what is happening at the university, because we see so many young people coming to the Angelicum to study the great sources of theology: Augustine, Aquinas, John Henry Newman. They are deeply devoted to the doctrinal patrimony of the Church, but they are also missionaries...

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The academic community gathers for a break during an recent university conference. Fr. Thomas Joseph walks among them, preparing to sound the bell that will gather them once more as they continue their common intellectual pursuit. Photo: Peter Feng (also p. 3, 7 top 8, 12)

Eucharistic devotion at the Angelicum is celebrated with an annual Eucharistic procession that proceeds from the chapel and through the halls and central cloister of the university. This year's celebrant was Cardinal Dominique Mamberti, Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura.

Apostles of the Eucharist

A student reflection on the 25th anniversary of student-led Eucharistic Adoration at the Angelicum

I will begin with the honest admission that I am not the pious type ... so imagine my surprise at myself when one day I found myself praying the words, “Lord, make me an apostle of You in the Eucharist.” I had no idea what it even meant, although I suspect it had its roots in the excellent course on the Eucharist which I was taking that semester. A priest friend of mine suggested it had to do with Eucharistic Adoration: “Perhaps He wants you to go to Adoration more? Or lead more people to it?” ... I was alarmed when a general call went out among the Adoration guardians looking for people who would like to “help out” with the planning for the following year. This looked suspiciously like the kind of thing that would qualify one an “Apostle of Christ in the Eucharist,” whatever that mean ... So I responded to that call and ... inherited the role of coordinator for the student-led Eucharistic Adoration at the Angelicum.

The initial desire among the students of the Angelicum in 2001 to have the Blessed Sacrament exposed for Adoration throughout each day that school is in session, has led to 25 years of prayer and service in the heart of the Angelicum community.

Service as a guardian at Adoration is not an easy thing. It calls for courage to say yes when the Lord asks (and it is always the Lord who asks first), and to submit the self to the workings of a greater good. It calls for commitment in a world driven by commitment-phobia, to set aside

one’s own convenience and show up faithfully for an hour or two each week, so that others might have the ease of coming to pray whenever they have the chance. It calls for community, as those drawn together by the Lord will remain in Him when they come to one another’s assistance. But that first step, the step that starts the journey of a thousand miles, is always the smallest, quickest, hardest to take—that dangerous little word “yes,” full of potential and power in the hand of the Lord. And yet what marvels the Lord works for us through such a little word! So in a spirit of gratitude for the 25 years of blessings on the Angelicum that have come through its Adoration program, I humbly offer my own thanks: to all Angelicum guardians, past and present, whose little yeses have taken us on this thousand-mile journey and beyond; to the school community who supports us by proving the need for Adoration; to our current rector, Fr. Thomas Joseph White, and the rectors before him, whose strong support has made all the difference ... and to the One who sits enthroned in gold upon the altar, hidden in plain sight that love may send us looking for Him, whose greatest work in each of us is still unfolding; to Him be praise and glory and honor, forever.

Marcia Vanderstraaten is a laywoman from Singapore and student in the second cycle of theology. She serves as the coordinator for the Angelicum Adoration guardians. This essay originally appeared in the 2026 issue of the Angelicum’s student magazine, La Parola.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Gregory and Karina Robson get nostalgic smiles on their faces whenever they have the opportunity to share about this formative time in their early years as a married couple. They met in college at Vanderbilt University, and married soon after graduation. After masters work at Harvard, they spent two years together at the Angelicum (2008–2010) doing the Intensive Program in Philosophy and additional coursework in order to get a foundation in Catholic philosophy. During their time in Rome, they lived at The Lay Centre, an intentional Catholic community with an inter-religious dialogue mission, with people from six continents.



“And then we spent two years studying at the Angelicum in Rome.”

GREGORY AND KARINA ROBSON ('08-'10)

Please share a bit about yourselves.

Greg: At Vanderbilt I studied economics and business leadership, while playing American football. I later studied political science, philosophy, and ethics at Harvard University, Duke University, and the University of Arizona. I am now an Associate Research Professor at the University of Notre Dame. In my teaching and research in the Business Ethics and Society Program, I strive to

help students and scholars to reflect on how social institutions including businesses can better embody Catholic principles. I am currently discerning a vocation with the Lay Dominicans and aim, above all, to be a loving husband and father committed to living for Christ.

Karina: I completed an M.T.S. at Harvard as one of the university's Presidential Scholars before pausing my

theological studies to receive training in philosophy in Rome. After we returned to the States, I began further master's and doctoral studies in philosophical, historical, and systematic theology at Duke University. I received a Liebmann Fellowship to write my dissertation on a Thomistic anthropology of suffering (*Human Suffering and Relationality: A Thomistic Account*). Having been home with and educating our

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

children since our first was born, I decided to stop pulling double-duty after I finished my doctorate and instead to fully embrace the quieter life—or, rather, a life immersed in the joyful noise of several young children!

What are some highlights from your time at the Angelicum in Rome.

Greg and Karina: We remember how holy the Angelicum felt—the presence of people studying together, caring for each other, praying with and for each other. We remember inspiring professors such as Father (now Bishop) Charles Morerod (see photo above), who always sought to provide the strongest counterarguments before



providing his own Thomistic position in philosophy of religion. And we remember the wise and kind Fr. Alfred Wilder (†2025) teaching ethics by using examples like a gorilla entering the room and the simple goodness of spaghetti.

Greg: Our studies gave us a very special understanding of our lives in relation to God, the history of philosophy, and what an academic community devoted to holiness is, and what an academic

community devoted to holiness can be. The Angelicum is an inspired and special university that has profoundly shaped our lives and our life together.

Karina: I also recall the quiet bravery of others who hailed from regions where being a faithful Catholic was a serious liability, and also praying for my future children in front of the St. Joseph statue out back in the beautiful gardens overlooking *la bella Roma*.

What enduring impact has the Angelicum formation given?

Greg: Professionally, we received a thorough grounding in Catholic thought and in the history of philosophy. Personally, we saw daily what it looks like for a community of scholars to strive together to live for God. The Angelicum shaped who I am and what I do in my teaching. I am enduringly grateful to the Angelicum for playing a key role in acquainting me with the Truth Himself, and the venerable scholars and saints who have dedicated their lives to pursuing and promoting God's truth.

Karina: The Angelicum also provides an opportunity for the laity to witness the Dominican friars up-close in their life of prayer, sacraments, study, mundane work, community outreach, and joyful Christian recreation. It has provided for me a great point of reference over the years as I continually reflect on how I can foster a rich and integrated Catholic life for my own family—one that eschews the compartmentalization of religion, family life, external work, and community-building.

How do you see the mission and identity of the Angelicum today?

Greg: There is no other place like it: the mission and people make it truly special. I encourage all of my students to consider studying in Rome and specifically at the Angelicum, and I think it is an entirely fitting target of benefaction. Having Fr. Thomas Joseph White as rector now is wonderful for the Angelicum, even

“The education that the Angelicum fosters - intellectual and deeply grounded in tradition, yet eminently shareable with the next generation - is precisely what the Church should be aiming at.”

though we miss him back in the States! His expertise and example enhance its mission of training students to lead holy and reflective lives, and to take back to their home countries an organized body of knowledge that they can profitably share with their own communities.

Karina: The Angelicum has a unique role to play as a pontifical university located in the geographical heart of the Church and grounded in Aquinas's ever-relevant philosophical and theological perspectives. And, importantly, these are not just “Aquinas's views!” He masterfully gathered, analyzed, and synthesized the Church's best intellectual traditions of the first 1200 years, and put them in conversation with other contemporaneous and ancient traditions. I personally have found that a Thomistic approach has provided incisive insights and a breadth of understanding both in the context of doctoral studies and in answering the profound questions of young children in simple yet accurate ways. It seems to me that the type of education that the Angelicum fosters, which is intellectual and deeply grounded in the doctrinal tradition, yet eminently shareable with the next generation, is precisely what the Church should be aiming at.

The Angelicum is like a school of missionaries for every part of the world: for Europe, for the United States, for the Global South, for Africa and for Asia. We have many Chinese students, students from India, and from many other places that are not historically Christian but where Christianity is now growing. From this building in Rome, young missionaries go out—lay people, sisters, friars, seminarians, bishops, and priests—who are enlivened by the doctrinal patrimony of the Church and by love for the mystery of the Church. This is a very important responsibility we have as Dominicans. The next 20 years are vital, and what we do here will have an international effect, not just for the Order, but for the whole Church.

If this does not yet seem a compelling illustration of our impact, think of what it is to be waiting for the Pope to come out on the balcony of St. Peter's square to greet the faithful for the first time; imagine what it means to see a graduate of your institution and the first American Pope. It is remarkable, and it has impacted the energy and receptivity to what we are doing for the whole Church. That feeling is very significant, and that brings me to my second point.



New growth, 4 years in review

Fr. Thomas Joseph began his service as rector of the university in September 2021. Here are some of the highlights from the life and growth of the university during his tenure thus far:

New projects, institutes and major conferences

Angelicum Media - Preparing online content to reach those beyond the walls of the university (Fall 2023)

Project for the Theological Reception of Scripture "Understanding the Old Testament as Christian Scripture" An International Symposium (17-20 June 2024)

Institute for Interreligious Relations Inaugural Conference "Thomas, Thomism and Non-Christian Religions: Retrieving a Thomistic Approach to Interreligious Relations in the 21st Century" (27 March 2025)

"Nicaea and the Church of the Third Millennium: Towards Catholic-Orthodox Unity" International Conference (4-8 June 2025) Co-sponsored by the Angelicum Institute for Ecumenical Studies the International Orthodox Theological Association (IOTA)

Project for the Fine Arts and Humanities (coming Fall 2026)

Chairs established, bringing world-class professors to our faculty

- St. John Henry Newman Chair
- The Charles and Ellen Mulaney John Paul II Chair for Politics, Religion, and Culture
- Leo XIV Chair for Law and the Common Good
- William and Barbara Moran Chair in Early Christian Theology and Interreligious Relations

T There are some 23 pontifical institutions in Rome. We are one of the seven pontifical universities. All of them make a very significant international contribution to the life of the Church, each in its own way, and with its own irreplaceable charism.

God does not create multiplicity in vain and each institution represents a distinct gift for the Church. As for the Angelicum, currently we are the only institution and university that is bilingual. We are deeply committed to the teaching in Italian but our teaching in English also represents an enormous opportunity for the Church. Most of the internet today is in English, and also almost everything that is being developed in artificial intelligence. We can see that in international academia, as well as economics, science, and political diplomacy, conversations have moved into a predominantly English-speaking format.

Italian is a venerable and profound language, not only from a literary point of view, but also from the point of view of historical knowledge and even contemporary science and sociology. A great deal of good work happens in Italian, and we want our graduates to be immersed in Italian culture and language, and many of them study this language. But to have emissaries of the



Dedicated scholarships

established in each of the 4 faculties, and also targeting Italian sections

Outreach in the US

- Annual NYC Aquinas lecture, co-sponsored by *First Things*
- Fall Lecture in Washington, D.C. as a model for future lectures in other locations

New partnerships

- Study abroad program in collaboration with the Thomistic Institute (Washington, D.C.)
- Summer leadership program with Institute for Human Ecology (Catholic University of America)
- Affiliated status granted to St. Albert's Institute in Berkeley, California (USA), where students can obtain a canonical bachelor's degree in Theology

Personal milestones for Fr. Thomas Joseph:

- Title of Master of Theology awarded by the Order of Preachers
- Honorary Doctorate from Catholic University of America
- Personal audience with Holy Father Pope Leo XIV (April 2026)
- Two Hillbilly Thomist tours



Mission advancement and internal development

Started the “Renewal at the Heart of the Church” Capital Campaign

Cloister renovation completed, and plans in place for further renovation of all main areas of the university grounds

Increasing number of Dominicans—58 in 2021 to 72 in 2025, from all 5 continents

Added 10+ staff members to support the work of the Mission Advancement and Rectorate teams, as well as new institutes and academic departments

New publisher for the *Angelicum Journal* for increased visibility for this publication, which is over 100 years old



Church in Rome working in English, in an international context, represents an opportunity for evangelization on a very significant scale as well. We have a venue for the Church, open through the English-speaking language, in the light of Thomas Aquinas and other great doctors of the Church, to articulate the faith to peoples all over the world, located in a city where the Pope is representing the faith. We need to seek to serve this dawning pontificate with the wisdom of the tradition and an openness to a universal culture of communication to the world.

There is also a lot at stake for the future of Christianity in the US and in the English speaking world in particular. With the first American pontiff, it is significant that the *Angelicum* can seek to contribute modestly to the effusion of his teaching, in keeping with our Dominican charism of preaching. Also, the university serves as a venue for international events in Rome that welcome many from the English speaking world to discuss the importance of Catholic truth and teaching for the international order today. Our aim is to foster this educational opportunity in keeping with the signs of the times. In short, there is a great deal happening and a great deal that can still happen. As I look ahead to the coming three years of services as rector, I see many amazing opportunities for all that we can do for the evangelization of the United States and for global evangelization.

Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P.
Rector Magnificus

Books and Articles (selection)

*Contemplation and the Cross:
A Catholic Introduction to the Spiritual Life*

Principles of Catholic Theology, Books 3-5

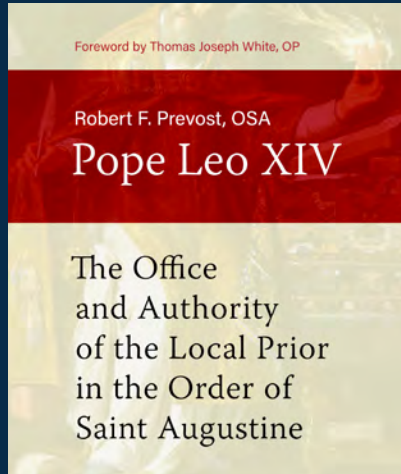
“A Leonine Revival”
(*First Things*, May 2025)

“The Future of Catholic Theology”
(*First Things*, June 2025)

UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCEMENTS



Fr. Raymund Snyder, O.P., professor incaricato in the Faculty of Philosophy, was awarded the **de Lubac Prize** for his English-language dissertation “*Reading Proclus with Aquinas: The reception of Proclus’s Elements of Theology in the works of St. Thomas.*” The annual prize is presented by the French Embassy to the Holy See and the Institut français-Centre Saint-Louis (IFCSL) to recognize outstanding doctoral dissertations from Pontifical Roman universities.



The full text of the doctoral dissertation of Pope Leo XIV is now available in an edition from Catholic University of America Press (forward by our rector, Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P.). His work, “The Office of Authority of the Local Prior in the Order of St. Augustine” was presented at the conclusion of his study of Canon Law at the Angelicum in 1987.



Sr. Raffaella Petrini, F.S.E. was invited to deliver the 181st commencement address at the **University of Notre Dame (USA)** and was also awarded an **honorary degree**. She is the president of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State and of the Governorate of Vatican City State. Sr. Raffaella is an alumna of the Angelicum and presently a professor in our faculty of Social Sciences.



Karin Öberg, the vice president of the Board of Directors of our University, has been named the **senior vice provost for faculty at Harvard University (USA)**. Professor Öberg, a leading figure in the field of astrochemistry, has worked for years with Dominicans, both at the Angelicum and at the Thomistic Institute in Washington, D.C. to develop a harmonious conception of the research fields of the modern sciences and the philosophical and theological traditions of the Catholic faith.

RECENT APPOINTMENTS:

- **Fr. Daniele Aucone, O.P.** (Roman Province) has been appointed to a three-year term as Director of ISSR Mater Ecclesiae.
- **Fr. Cezary Binkiewicz, O.P.** (Province of Poland) has been reappointed to an additional 5-year term as Director of the St. John Paul II Institute of Culture.
- **Fr. Tomasz Mikołajski, O.P.** (Province of Poland) has been appointed to a three-year term as Director of Institutional Collaboration.

ANGELICUM FELLOWSHIP

The Angelicum Fellowship is the University's newest initiative for benefactors, offering the opportunity to experience firsthand the University's mission and educational offerings here in Rome by a week of exclusive classes for the group of Fellows. This premier group was created for our most distinguished supporters, the leaders whose generosity and collaboration drives our mission at the highest level. Their support powers global outreach, advances academic innovation, and strengthens the University's commitment to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. More than donors, Fellows are cornerstones of a tradition that serves both the Church and the world.

SOME OTHER BENEFITS FOR FELLOWS:

- **An annual week of intensive study at the Angelicum** in a small group setting. The week will include several visits and events outside the university.
- **Guaranteed access to Angelicum events in the U.S.** in New York City and other stateside events.
- **Two virtual book club sessions per year** led by Angelicum faculty or distinguished guests.

INAUGURAL ANGELICUM FELLOWSHIP STUDY WEEK: OCTOBER 18 - 24, 2026

Interested in becoming a Fellow?

Reach out to Eduardo Andino, *Chief Advancement Officer*, at advancement@pust.it for more information.



HOW TO DONATE

To learn more or make a wire transfer online, visit:

[ANGELICUM.IT/GIVE](https://angelicum.it/give)

Donations made by US citizens via the Angelicum's 501(c)3 charitable arm are tax deductible:

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"The Angelicum supports world-class scholarship, with students from 99 countries. Help us strengthen this crucial educational mission for the Church. Please contact us for more information about giving options."

Eduardo Andino, Chief Advancement Officer



Become a member of the Torch-Bearers Circle

We invite you to become a member of the Torch-Bearers Circle by pledging a recurring monthly gift to the mission of the Angelicum.

A pledged monthly gift allows us to plan strategically with confidence as we seek to support the friars, faculty, and, most importantly, the students of the Angelicum.

To express our gratitude and draw you more deeply into this mission, we'll be sending you a small package in the coming weeks. Here's what to expect:

- *Torch-Bearers Circle*
- *Angelicum emblem sticker*
- *A Dominican Rosary, handmade in Siena, Italy*
- *Branded Rosary case*

Visit angelicum.it/give to begin your monthly gift and become a member of the Torch-Bearers Circle Today!



Imagine the joy of knowing your monthly gift helped form the next Saint John Paul II—or the next Pope Leo XIV.

That's the legacy you're building—starting today.

Be part of our renewal. Visit renewal.angelicum.it to learn more and contribute.



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The cloister restoration has been completed. Look for more information in our upcoming Summer edition. Learn more about renovations and other capital campaign projects at renewal.angelicum.it

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