

Saint Thomas Aquinas 28 January



About Saint Thomas Aquinas

Saint Thomas Aquinas was born of a noble family in Southern Italy in the year 1225 and was educated by the Benedictines. If he followed the normal course of events, he would have joined the Benedictines and taken up a position suitable to his rank. However, he decided that he would become a Dominican instead. Thomas' family were not impressed by his decision, so they kidnapped him and kept him prisoner for over a year. Their plan failed because Thomas dug his heels in and eventually got his way.

Thomas lived in a time of great philosophical turmoil. He studied in Paris and Cologne under Saint Albert the Great. Aristotle's writings had become available to people in Europe for the first time in a thousand years. Many thought that what Aristotle wrote was completely contradictory to Christianity and as such Aristotle's writings were banned in many universities at this time. It did not help the cause that the translations of Aristotle's writings had been produced by Muslim scholars.

Thomas Aquinas however had a way of solving problems with simple common sense. He said that truth cannot contradict truth. Therefore, either Aristotle is wrong, or the contradiction is illusory. Thomas studied, taught, and argued to resolve the philosophical confusion that pervaded in his day.

Out of his work came many writings on philosophy and theology, including the *Summa Theologiae*, which develops the truths of the Catholic faith by demonstrating the intimate relationship between reason and revelation. This work has been a standard textbook for many centuries and still a seminal work today. Out of his learning we have been gifted with the prayers and hymns for the solemnity of Corpus Christi. These include the Collect, the Pange Lingua (Sing my tongue the Saviour's glory) and Tantum Ergo (Down in Adoration in falling). Both these hymns are also used for the procession when the Blessed Sacrament is transferred to the Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday.

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What can we learn from Saint Thomas Aquinas?

Saint Thomas Aquinas had a sense of conviction and direction and was not going to deviate from his plan. His sense of conviction and direction was guided by Christ. We too, must look to the Lord for guidance in all that we do.

As a young Dominican, Saint Thomas' reserved manner made his classmates concluded that he was unintelligent and so they named him the "dumb ox". How ill-informed was their conclusion, since he wrote the great Summa Theologica. We should never write people off, but rather nurture their gifts and talents.

He also possessed that wonderful virtue of humility and although he wrote the texts for the liturgy of Corpus Christi and other associated Eucharistic feasts, he never let himself become proud or boastful. He knew that the work he did was to give glory back to God and to help people in their worship and prayer. An interesting story about Saint Thomas Aquinas is that one day while saying Mass he had a vision that he said made all his writings seem like so much straw, so he decided to put the pen to bed.

Like Saint Thomas Aquinas, each of us has been blessed by God with gifts, talents, wisdom and knowledge and experience. We must always remember that the Lord has blessed us with all these good things, we did not give them to ourselves. We are however supposed to use and nurture them so that we grow in all that we do in life. Let us always find opportunities to use what the Lord has blessed us to give glory back to Him and to serve our neighbour.

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Collect

O God, who made Saint Thomas Aquinas
outstanding in his zeal for holiness
and his study of sacred doctrine,
grant us, we pray,
that we may understand what he taught
and imitate what he accomplished.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel

Matthew 23:8-12

The greatest among you must be your servant

Jesus said to his disciples,
'You must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi,
since you have only one master, and you are all brothers.
You must call no one on earth your father,
since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven.
Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers,
for you have only one Teacher, the Christ.
The greatest among you must be your servant.
Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled,
and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted.'

Antiphon

Behold a faithful and prudent steward to give
them their allowance of food at the proper time.

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Hymn for the Memorial of Saint Thomas Aquinas

O Saints Gregory and Basil,
Saint Thomas Aquinas,
with holiness and zeal,
you pondered on God's Word
for you knew it was real.
You did defend
the faith from all those who
taught false philosophy.

You always taught the truth,
so God would always reign.
That none would go astray
you taught them in ways plain.
You did defend,
the faith from all those
who taught false philosophy.

A humble, quiet, man,
you taught by written word
the bread and wine become
the Body of the Lord.
You did defend,
the faith from all those
who taught false philosophy.

Like you may we always
live in humility
and share our knowledge with
those unable to see.
You did defend,
the faith from all those
who taught false philosophy.

Text: Chris deSilva and Alessio Loiacono
Tune: Darwall's 148th, 66.66.44.44

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