

A MASTER TEACHER

St. Thomas had five principles of teaching, which he himself laid down: *clearness, brevity, utility, sweetness, and maturity*. He possessed a wonderful gift of communicating knowledge, so that more was learned from him in a few months than from others in several years. From the first, his success in teaching was so great that the vast halls of the classrooms were unable to contain his audience.

He was then raised to the priesthood, and from that time on, he seemed more closely united to God than ever. He used to spend many hours of the day, and a great part of the night, in the church.

He prepared for his daily Mass with a daily confession, and while offering the Holy Sacrifice, he shed abundant tears. The ardor of his devotion communicated itself to those who assisted at his Mass. For his thanksgiving, he became the altar server at a second Mass.

After teaching for four years at Cologne University, St. Thomas was ordered by the General Chapter to prepare to take his degree as doctor. This was a terrible blow to his humility, because he sincerely judged himself unfit for the dignity.

The University congratulated the Dominican Order on the acquisition of so great a treasure, and proposed at once to grant him the license preliminary to the act required for taking the degree of doctor (although he was nearly ten years under the required age).

Regarding his writings, remembering everything that he had ever *heard or read*, he could dictate to three or four secretaries *at once*, all upon *different topics!*

However, he did not rely on his own intelligence, but prayed earnestly before reading, writing, teaching, or entering into discussion. Later on, he was often consulted by Kings, Cardinals, and Popes on important matters of state. He was summoned to teach in the schools attached to the Papal Court, which followed the Pope when he traveled throughout Italy.

He synthesized all Catholic philosophy, theology, Scripture, and Tradition into the mightiest compendium of human thought ever penned, the *Summa Theologica*. Besides his perfect memory, he had an instinct for the truth... a sure judgment. On difficult questions, he was able to see through problems to the right answers. His judgment of the truth was unerring.

Pope Leo XIII repeated that: "Thomas is the most venerated of the ancient doctors of the Church, and in a certain way, seems to have inherited the intellect of all!"

Despite his brilliance, Thomas remained so admirable, so lovable, and so approachable, that even those who might never read his exalted writings, can still revere him and invoke him as the Patron Saint of Catholic Schools. Thank God for creating St. Thomas. May we all strive to imitate his holiness.

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A STUDENT'S PRAYER

by St. Thomas Aquinas

Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom, origin of all being,
graciously let a ray of your light penetrate the darkness of my understanding.

Take from me the double darkness in which I have been born,
an obscurity of sin and ignorance.

Give me a keen understanding, a retentive memory, and
the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally,

Grant me the talent of being exact in my explanations and
the ability to express myself with thoroughness and charm.

Point out the beginning, direct the progress,
and help in the completion.

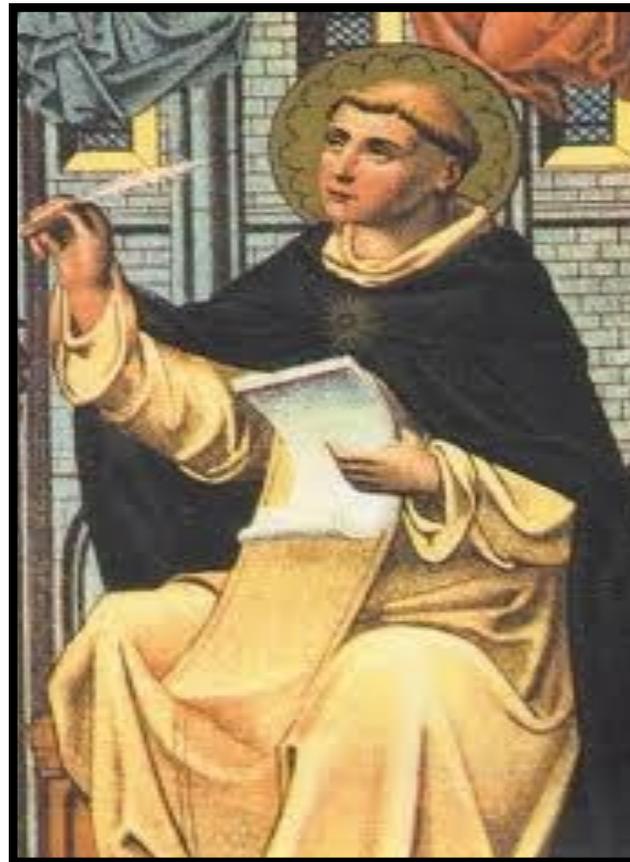
I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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LOVABLE THOMAS

St. Thomas Aquinas

Feast Day March 7



***" The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Love;
It signifies Love, It produces love.
The Eucharist is the consummation of the whole
Spiritual life."***

Saint Thomas Aquinas

LOVABLE THOMAS

by Thomas A. Neslon & R. Turton

Saint Thomas Aquinas was so sweet, so pure, so humble, so brilliant, and so in love with God, that of all of his nicknames, the one which may have suited him the best was, "*the Angelic Doctor.*"

Because of this sweetness and holiness, those who knew him loved him very much. He lived in the 13th century (1225-1274), and died at the age of 49.

He was born in the fortress of Rocca-Secca, near the neighboring little town of Aquino, to which he owed his surname of Aquinas.

Thomas was born into a noble family. His father was a Count, a nephew to the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and on his mother's side, he was descended from the Norman barons who had conquered Sicily some two centuries before. The Aquino family could claim a relationship with St. Gregory the Great, and was allied by blood to St. Louis of France and St. Ferdinand of Castille.

The future vocation and sanctity of little Thomas was predicted to his mother, the Countess Theodora, by a holy hermit named Bonus.

FEAR OF LIGHTNING

God's watchful providence over Thomas was manifested in a striking manner. When he was about three years old, a terrific thunderstorm burst over the Castle, and his nurse and baby sister were struck dead in the very chamber in which Thomas continued sleeping, unharmed.

This circumstance accounts for the great fear of thunder and lightning which the Saint is said to have had throughout his life, which caused him often to take refuge in the church during a thunderstorm... even leaning his head against the Tabernacle in order to place himself as closely as possible under the protection of Our Lord!

The words *Ave Maria* were the first which his baby lips were heard to utter. Long before he could read, when he was crying, they discovered that by placing *any good book* into his little hands, he would instantly stop crying, and he would take delight in turning the pages with infantile gravity!

HIS EARLY EDUCATION

When he was only five years old, Thomas' education was begun by the monks of the celebrated Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino, which was only a few miles distant from Rocca-Secca. The monks found that their new pupil was a brave, quiet child, who loved to spend much of his time in the church, and was never without a book in his hand.

He had considerable influence over his young companions, whom he was always ready to help, and to whom the sweetness of his disposition made him very dear; but he cared little for the sports of childhood, in which he seldom took part.

One day, when all the rest of them were playing in the woods, Thomas was standing apart in silent reflection. The monk in charge of the boys asked him about what he was thinking.

Thomas raised his head, and said, "*Tell me Master, what is God?*" This frequent question showed that the whole bent of his mind and heart was already directed heavenward.

At ten years old, he made such progress in his studies, that his parents sent him, under the care of a tutor, to the newly founded University of Naples. Thomas later acknowledged that perhaps God's greatest gift to him was to be given a photographic memory, and for his entire life, he was able *to recall and understand everything that he had ever read or seen!*

Upon his arrival in Naples, the extraordinary talents of which he had already given proof under his Benedictine teachers, became more and more manifest, while at the same time, he made rapid progress in the science of God and His saints.

He was continually held up as a model to his fellow students in a way most painful to his humility, but the modesty, sweetness, and gentleness of his character preserved him from envy, and gained for him universal affection. He shunned all occasions of evil, and devoted his leisure hours to prayer and good works.

The nearby Dominican church in Naples became a favorite visiting place for the young boy. As he poured forth his soul in prayer before the altar, bright rays of light were often seen shining from his face. One day, a holy friar named John of St. Julian, who had witnessed the wonderful sight, said to the pious boy, "*God has given you to our Order!*"

Thomas threw himself on his knees, saying that he had long and ardently desired to take the habit, but that he feared he was unworthy of so great a grace. The community joyfully admitted the young student, and while almost still a boy, he was publicly clothed in the white habit of St. Dominic.

In disapproval, his parents took him home and imprisoned him for some 18 months in one of the towers of the Castle. There he had to suffer cold, hunger, and every sort of privation. His loving sisters, however, cared for him and some of his needs.

It was here that he committed to memory *the entire Bible* and the four books of the *Sentences*, the theological textbook of the time. His earliest writings are said to belong to the same period.

His elder brothers sent into his chambers, a beautiful, but evil, woman. He reached into the fireplace for the flaming brand, and she quickly fled. With the brand still in his hand, Thomas burned a cross on the wall, and on his knees before it, he begged God to grant him the gift of *perpetual chastity*.

At that moment, two angels came and tied a cincture cord around his body, and said, "*The Lord has heard thy prayer, and that which human frailty can never merit is ensured to thee, by the irrevocable gift of God.*"

The angels girded him so tightly, that he uttered an involuntary cry of pain, which brought some servants to the spot, but Thomas kept his secret to himself, and only revealed it on his deathbed to his confessor, Father Reginald, declaring that from that day, the spirit of darkness had never been allowed to approach him. The cincture was worn by the Saint till his death, and is still preserved at the convent of Chieri in Piedmont.

"THE DUMB OX"

Finally, his loving family accepted Thomas' resolve to be a Dominican, and he was able to leave his home. He went to a convent in Cologne to become a disciple of St. Albert the Great, the renowned Dominican professor of the day.

Thomas' humility enabled him to conceal his vast powers of mind, and his absolute silence at all the scholastic disputations led his companions to call him, "*the Dumb Ox*" of Sicily.

One day, a fellow student offered to explain the daily lessons to him, and Thomas humbly and gratefully accepted. However, when the young teacher came to a difficult passage, which he had interpreted wrongly, Thomas' charity and love for truth triumphed over his humility, and Thomas explained the passage with the utmost clearness and precision.

His astonished friend begged that, in the future, he instead, be instructed by Thomas, to which Thomas consented, on condition that *his secret* should be kept. Shortly after this, a paper written by Saint Thomas, containing a masterly solution of a most abstruse question, fell accidentally into the hands of Saint Albert.

Astonished at the genius it displayed, St. Albert decided to put the learning of his saintly disciple to a very difficult public test. He did so, and afterwards, St. Albert exclaimed before the assembled students: "*We call Brother Thomas 'the Dumb Ox,' but I tell you, he will one day make his bellowing heard to the uttermost part of the earth!*"

Never was St. Thomas known to utter an idle word; when he did speak, the charm of his heavenly conversation filled all who heard him with spiritual consolation.

Thomas grew to be quite tall, with a handsome face, and although he ate only one meal a day, he was inclined to corpulence. He was refined, and his large gentle eyes beamed with benevolence.

On occasion, the celestial grace had continued to beam from his beautiful countenance, so that some said they had only to look at him to feel within themselves a renewal of fervor.

Later, Thomas studied at the university of Paris, where he met St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan, and they became knit in bonds of closest friendship. (In after ages, they became both honored and known as the *Seraphic and Angelic Doctors.*)