



THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

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And Dwelt Among Us

by Peter A. Huff

The Latin Mass that Dorothy Day loved and knew so well concludes with words of tremendous majesty and beauty. For some 15,000 days, from her per-conversion searching until the late 1960s when the post-Vatican II vernacular novus ordo became the ordinary form of the eucharistic liturgy, she heard the inimitable words of Christianity's first great literary triumph: In principio erat Verbum . . . et Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis. "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

The gospel of John, where these words appear as an unforgettable prologue, has long enjoyed unrivaled status in Catholic life. Early Christian writers such as Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr,

Irenaeus, and Athanasius marveled at its splendor. Latin commentators, building upon their Greek predecessors, envisioned John's gospel as the fullest communication of the mystery of Jesus. Augustine confirmed the association of John with the eagle of Revelation, picturing the evangelist soaring "above the dark mist of earth to gaze with steadier eyes upon the light of truth."

This elevation of John to preeminence became a fixture in the Christian imagination. Thomas Aquinas called the gospel the fulfillment of the scriptures. His teacher Albert the Great said John "taught us how to fly." Thomas's follower Meister Eckhart exhorted his hearers to "become John."

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Dewfall

by Venus Wozniak

Did you vote?

I did.

It felt like my life depended on it.

As a little girl, I could not wait to vote. But when the time came for me to vote in my first presidential election I was actually completely disillusioned. I have been given this right (and as a woman, not even that long ago) and duty. It is of great import that I exercise it. But I quickly realized that the beliefs that I espouse to do not actually align with any political party that I could find.

So for that first presidential election, I wrote in St Francis of Assisi. I was very proud of myself too. I exercised my duty *and* right and stood firm in my beliefs! I did that for a few election cycles until another election came around and the conversation of *who are you gonna vote for* came up. I proudly reported my plan to write in my favorite saint. Someone retorted back to me, "you know your write-in candidate has to be alive, right?" So, that year I wrote in Pope Francis. I know, I know; the candidate also must be a citizen of the United States. I wanted to prove a point. This system does not work for me and I am not represented. I had a grand scheme that if I could get even 5% of the 52 million Catholics in our country to also write in their favorite saint, we could really sound an alarm that our political system does not actually serve our needs. Spoiler alert. I did not

embark on this crusade. I chose another path.

Around the time that I voted in my first presidential election, I was also being introduced to Dorothy Day. I learned that she actually never voted. The irony is that she was one of the original suffragettes fighting for the right for women to vote! It is perplexing on the surface. It even seems paradoxical. Dorothy Day was confident that voting was a way for humanity to fulfill the need to let their voices be heard. Not only was she a suffragette but she also stood with Black Americans seeking the right to vote. It is a basic human right.

Dorothy Day's reluctance to participate in voting came from her notions on our responsibility and participation in the Mystical Body of Christ.

We are all members of the Mystical Body of Christ, and so we are closer to each other, by the tie of grace, than any blood brothers are. . . . We put off the old man and put on Christ. The same blood flows through our veins, Christ's. We are the same flesh, Christ's. But all men are members or potential members, as St. Augustine says, and there is no time with God, so who are we to know the degree of separation between us and the Communist, the unbaptized, the God-hater, who may tomorrow, like St. Paul, love Christ. (D. Day, On

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Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends of Nativity House

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We pray that your Christmas season is a joyful reminder of God's love for all of Creation. The Incarnation of our God is a rich history that roots us to the reality of a humble, servant Savior who knows our pain, trials, tribulations, joys, and triumphs. During Advent and Christmas I always marvel at the mystery of how and why our God would desire to become human. He came into the world a poor child, died a poor criminal's death, and told us the best way to know and serve him is through serving the poor. How truly wonder invoking and awe inspiring.

At the start of September we hosted our 10th annual Farm to Table Celebration. It was by far the largest and most successful event to date. We served over 200 guests with what we have surveyed as the best menu to date. The Farm to Table Celebration is a beautiful testament to the community life of Nativity House. This event involves 50+ volunteers, all of whom give of their heart and soul to serve our guest moms and one another. What a true gift!

Here at Nativity House, we have been doing all the winter prepping things on the farm: wood gathering, brush clearing, garden cleaning. We had an amazing fall harvest of butternut squash again this year. We are happy to start preserving the squash in the form of gnocchi dough. In other farm news, we have continued the farm work Saturdays into the winter. We are working on Saturdays from 9:30 AM til 11:30 AM with a warm-up break in the middle and a nice warm lunch at the end. We have found that there are volunteers that are eager to help on the farm all year round and we are happy to have the help. If you are interested in joining in, let us know.

We are still taking guest mom applications. We have had a few calls and interviews where the moms had multiple children or a full family of husband, wife, and multiple children. This tells us that it is getting harder and harder in our current societal climate to support a family. With the cost of living on the rise for the last many years, working class families are struggling. Many of them will continue to struggle without much support. Please pray for these struggling families and pray for Nativity House as we continue the application process for new guest moms.

In November we had a roundtable discussion A Dorothy Day Celebration. We welcomed Peter Huff as our discussion guide. We had some new friends join the conversation along with our tried and true community members. December brought a lovely gathering of community for an Advent Mass with Fr. Mario Quejadas. We ended the evening with cups of warm wassail and carolling led on piano and violin by Lydia Finney and Tom Tipton respectively. It was truly a blessed gathering of community. We look forward to a conversation in January with Br. Michael Phipps and a Mass in

February. We hope that you can join us.

As always, we are blessed and honored by your prayers, partnership and support. May the heart of the newborn Jesus find room at the inn of your heart.

Peace and all good,

Venus & Justin Wozniak

About The Visitation

This newspaper, The Visitation, is a publication on topics of social justice, spirituality, and theology. It is published four times a year by Nativity House. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

To contact us, email us at:

newspaper@nativity-house.org

Past issues are online at:

<http://www.nativity-house.org>

About Nativity House

Nativity House serves as a house of hospitality for first-time mothers in need of residence in the southwest Chicago suburbs. Nativity House operates an on-site community supported farm (CSA) that provides nourishment for the Nativity House and the greater community. Overall, we envision a healing environment focused on the dignity of each person, the dignity of work, and stewardship of the earth.

Nativity House is administered by a board of directors and an advisory committee of individuals with a broad range of experience. Nativity House has formed positive relationships with relevant local organizations that are extremely helpful in carrying out the mission of the house. Nativity House was recognized as a public charity in August, 2011.

To connect with us, please email Venus Wozniak at:

venusad@nativity-house.org

Postal mail should be addressed to:

Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL 60441

Donations may be made at paypal.me/nativityhouse

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

And Dwelt Among Us

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Throughout Catholic history, composition of a commentary or series of homilies on John has been perceived as the culmination of a theologian's career. The gospel's gravitas has attracted the greatest minds of the tradition. Today, the John interpretive apostolate remains strong in the global Catholic community. As Francis J. Moloney has observed, "No other book of the New Testament has attracted so much attention from commentators."

John's stature can be sensed especially in Catholic liturgy. For at least half a millennium, the daily recitation of John's prologue in the Latin rite, accompanied by a bow, made proclamation of the incarnation of the Word the operative summation of the Church's faith. Since Vatican II, the fourth gospel has continued to occupy a privileged place in the lectionary. The Bread of Life discourse, unique to John, figures prominently during Ordinary Time. The feast of Corpus Christi hinges on John 6, offering priests around the world prime opportunity to expound the

deepest truths of the Christian life. Gospel lessons for the Sundays of Easter come exclusively from John.

And on the solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, the gospel of the day is none other than John 1:1-18: "In the beginning was the Word"

After the Christmas Eve vigil and the early morning celebrations, ancient genealogies have run their course, shepherds have reverted to obscurity, and angelic choirs, so anticipated during Advent, have faded into faint echo. In the daylight of the Christmas liturgy, the focus is far beyond one nation's yearnings, one landscape's extraordinary visitation, and even one family's encounter with life-changing mystery.

John throws wide the horizon of our vision, recapitulates the grandeur of Genesis, and proclaims the message of Christmas — and Christianity itself — in cosmic proportions: The Word became flesh and dwelt

among us.

Sadly, our tendency while reflecting on these words is to float into abstractions. We may even lose our way and start quibbling over technical terms. Our thoughts about the Word, rightly linking Logos with India's Brahman and China's Dao, ascend so high we risk leaving "and dwelt with us" far behind. According to Augustine, the first three gospels instruct us on the active life. John, he said, "instructs us also on the contemplative life." Too often we forget the Bishop of Hippo's wise "also." We miss how action and contemplation complement each other. We confuse contemplative with otherworldly.

I was first warned against such abstractions during my undergraduate days, while still a Southern Baptist. The work of Clarence Jordan, founder of the interracial Koinonia community in rural Georgia, had a profound effect on my evolving theological consciousness. Preacher, farmer, and scholar, Jordan fused his prophetic outlook and remarkable

exegetical skills in his "Cotton Patch" New Testament translations, including Paul's Letters to the Christians in Atlanta (Corinthians) and the Letter to the Christians in Birmingham (Ephesians). When it came to the fourth gospel, Jordan reminded us that the Greek of John 1:14, *eskēnōsen*, usually rendered "dwelt," actually refers to pitching a tent. What appears to be the most metaphysical of verses has an unmistakably this-worldly relevance: "And the Word became flesh and parked his mobile home next to ours."

Dorothy Day, never so folksy, had her own way of bringing the mounting eagle of John down to its native planet. Consider her section on "Labor" in *The Long Loneliness*:

"The great mystery of the Incarnation, which meant that God became man that man might become God, was a joy that made us want to kiss the earth in worship, because His feet

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NATIVITY HOUSE - WINTER EVENTS

Gather Around the Hearth



FRIDAY, JANUARY 17

7:00 PM POTLUCK & ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Potluck dinner followed by a panel discussion: *Lifting up Fr. Augustine Tolton & Sr. Thea Bowman and the Black Catholic Experience* with Br. Michael Phipps, F.S.C.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7

7:00 PM MASS & POTLUCK

Join the Nativity House community for Mass followed by a potluck dinner.

All events are held at
Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL 60441

for more information follow us at
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or Facebook Events

Nativity House CSA & Abbot Hugh's Garden

by Krista Starasinich

One of our favorite ways to gather community here at Nativity House is through our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm. Whether you've been gardening your whole life or coming in with zero knowledge, there is a place for everyone, and what better way to learn than in community! We had 7 families join us this past year for another prolific growing season. Each Saturday morning starting in mid-March through October we spent a couple hours tending to the garden- planting, weeding, harvesting. We also added a new irrigation system this season to help with watering. We had a lot of fun coming up with new and exciting recipes to try out using the various fruits and veggies we grew. After each work day, we would all take some time to decompress and share the fruits of our labors while enjoying some of those yummy treats. There is something so very beautiful about being immersed in God's creation and watching the garden physically grow over the course of the season while we also take the time to grow in friendship with our wonderful community members.

Nativity House also embarked on a new venture this past year when we were asked to help with keeping up with the late Abbot Hugh's garden at St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, IL. We organized volunteers and worked in the garden every Wednesday evening, finishing up just in time to head over to the chapel to join the Monks for 7pm Vespers. We worked hard to amend the fence surrounding the garden to keep our forest friends out, set up a nifty irrigation system, and finally prepared the garden beds for planting. We grew a handful of

crops this year including tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, cucumbers, and a variety of potatoes which brought the most abundant harvest. Our friends at Sacred Tent Catholic Worker in Downers Grove also joined in on the fun and installed 5 beehives at the abbey, providing the opportunity to learn all things beekeeping. It has been an honor and blessing to keep Abbot Hugh's memory alive while working the land and bringing in new friends along the way.

We finished out the season this past October and prepared the gardens for winter, but we are already thinking about next season as springtime will be here before we know it! We are always looking for new friends to join us in the Nativity House garden and we invite you to get involved over at Abbot Hugh's garden as well. More information concerning these opportunities will be available come the new year!



Krista Starasinich is a live-in intern at Nativity House. She loves spending time with community and finding joy in all the little things in life.



Nativity House garden community



Abbot Hugh's garden community

Farm to Table Celebration 2024



This year marked the 10th annual Farm to Table Celebration and it was our biggest and most successful yet. Thank you to all of the wonderful donors, volunteers, and guests that came together to make it such a beautiful and memorable milestone celebration!

Roundtable Roundup: Dorothy Day,
Preaching to the Remnant

by Kassidy Beane

On November 15th, Nativity House hosted a Roundtable discussing the life and legacy of Servant of God Dorothy Day. We asked one of our community members present to share a personal reflection from the night.

November is a month for artists and Dorothy Day. At least to me. Dorothy Day was introduced to me in 2020 while I lived in Chicago. Fast forward four years and she brought me to the Catholic Worker Movement.

Dorothy had an innate emotional intelligence that inspires me. She was disciplined in her empathy, even fasting for days to fight for causes she believed in. She fought for women's suffrage, though as an anarchist, she never voted. Dorothy Day had inherently contradictory beliefs that arrive in synthesis. I've learned to base my political philosophy off of her beliefs (though I don't know how much she'd like that; she hated when people wanted to be like her). Her beliefs challenge preconceived notions. And she most certainly should not be reduced to a watered-down "saint" to make us feel more comfortable with her. She is challenging. As she should be.

I had the honor of speaking to one of Dorothy's friends who spent time with her in jail. "Don't be afraid of going to jail," he told me, "there's books there." In that brief exchange, my perspective changed. I'm not saying everyone needs to feel comfortable being at risk of arrest. But I'm sharing this to illustrate how Catholic Worker

philosophies are meant to challenge previously held beliefs that are often given to us by social systems.

Something Venus from Nativity House shared at their Round Table Discussion about Dorothy Day is that from her lived experience, she noticed that there was a difference in the way people were served at the Catholic Worker as opposed to charity organizations. Dorothy was able to recognize people's gifts and recognize their dignity. This is something that is so needed in this age and every age. Dorothy had the courage to be countercultural, to be weird in the name of being kind.

This is something that has resonated with me deeply. Love the "unlovable". Let the spider outside instead of killing it. There's no need for senseless cruelty. Don't bow to the rotten system. Dorothy was inspired by St. Therese the Little Flower, as am I. Do small things with great love. This is beneficial spiritually but also practically. It is better to complete a small task well than attempt to bite off more than you can chew.

I'm very thankful for Nativity House. When I found Nativity House, the beauty of the community and the farm captured me. It felt like a safe place parallel to the drudgery of the hegemonic rotten system. The world will be saved by beauty, as Dostoevsky once said. The Catholic Worker is international but largely based in the United States, a country that is very hostile to anarchist

Easy Essays:

by Peter Maurin
(1877-1949)

Feeding the Poor at a Sacrifice

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. In the first centuries
of Christianity
the hungry were fed
at a personal sacrifice,
the naked were clothed
at a personal sacrifice,
the homeless were sheltered
at personal sacrifice. | the poor are no longer
fed, clothed, sheltered
at a personal sacrifice,
but at the expense
of the taxpayers. |
| 2. And because the poor
were fed, clothed and sheltered
at a personal sacrifice,
the pagans used to say
about the Christians
"See how they love each other." | 4. And because the poor
are no longer
fed, clothed and sheltered
the pagans say about the Christians
"See how they pass the buck." |
| 3. In our own day | |



movements. Yet, the Worker has thrived because it has never focused on preserving itself. Rather, it reinvents itself with the needs of the age.

I cannot help but think of the life of Isaiah, a prophet a Catholic Worker named Erik spoke with me about at the Dorothy Day Roundtable discussion. Isaiah wasn't sent to preach to everyone, though he did preach to everyone. Most people didn't understand him and hated him. But God sent him to preach anyway to the remnant. The Catholic Worker is the remnant and speaks to the remnant. Always look for the remnant. Never discredit what your words can do. A whole room could not resonate with your preaching, but perhaps the person in the corner quietly listening may take what you say to heart.

Dorothy Day and her work has

been seen as the conscience of the Catholic Church by people who otherwise would entirely discard the Church for her crimes. In her canonization process, those who are interviewed by the Vatican are asked if her life helped the reputation of the Church. And a good answer to that is that she did among a certain group. She scandalized her bishop to the point where she was threatened to not call herself Catholic. Many groups today grasp at folk tales of her traditionalism to make more sense of her. But she spoke to the remnant.



Kassidy Beane is the founder of the HippyCatholic online ministry. She studied religion & philosophy at Columbia College Chicago and is a member of the Catholic Worker movement. She can be reached at hippie.catholic13@gmail.com

Dewfall

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Pilgrimage, May 1, 1948)

There is no degree of separation between us. If we truly act as though each person is a member or potential member of the Body of Christ we will indeed have this *new heaven* and *new earth* that Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day always lifted up. This is how to participate in the Kingdom of Heaven that is at hand. This is something I will vote for.

Over this last summer, with a little bit more time on my hands, I decided to change things up a bit and attend daily Mass at a friend's parish for a summer respite and treat. Many times during the course of Mass at this new place, I found myself mindlessly crossing myself during the Eucharistic prayer. It happened a few days in a row before I took notice of what was happening during the Mass at that time. What was being said? What gestures were being employed when I found myself instinctually making the sign of the cross over myself?

You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ. (*from Eucharistic Prayer II*)

As the priest recites this prayer, he is also making the sign of the cross over the gifts of the bread and the wine. This is the beauty of the usage of gestures in our faith. These gestures accompany prayers. The gestures are a sign of something remarkable happening between heaven and earth. In this particular moment, the Spirit is

indeed coming over the bread and the wine transforming it and therefore elevating it to its highest potential: The Body and Blood of Jesus.

Just before the Eucharistic Prayer begins we prepare the altar for the feast by presenting the gifts of the bread and wine, *fruit of the vine and work of human hands*. This is another beautiful gesture of a reality and exchange that is taking place between heaven and earth. Pope Benedict XVI wrote about this moment:

This humble and simple gesture is actually very significant: in the bread and wine that we bring to the altar, all creation is taken up by Christ the Redeemer to be transformed and presented to the Father. (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 47, 2007)

When the music starts up, the basket is getting passed, and the gifts are being brought forward, it is so much more than the half-time of Mass, or the intermission, or the bathroom break. It is the time when all that creation has to offer is brought forward and placed on the altar. If we believe that the bread and wine will be transformed into the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus, then all that is placed on the altar with it will also be transformed. The gesture of bringing forward gifts is a reminder that we too - our very lives: heart, mind, body, soul - are being placed on the altar and being transformed. All of creation - us included - is being elevated to our highest potential. This transformation can only take place here on the altar.

This is remarkable. Each

celebration of the Eucharistic Feast we are being drawn more and more closely to Jesus and to one another through the offering of our very selves on the altar. This is the Mystical Body of Christ.

We are in our tenth year of hospitality here at Nativity House. We have experienced the face of fear and trepidation that comes with the uncertainties of bringing a child into the world in tenuous circumstances. Much like the struggles of Mary and Joseph and the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit. Motherhood is not for the faint of heart. It requires a kind of ferocious courageousness and loving tenderness that at times seem contradictory.

We have celebrated with new mothers when they get the job that they set their hearts on. We are there when a few short months later the realization sets in that 40 hours per week at \$15 an hour is not enough for rent, food, gas money, and childcare. We have helped new moms navigate the affordable childcare subsidies offered by various local, state, and federal funding systems - all of which have varying criteria that seem to change by the week. Bringing a child into the world when the world seems to be against you takes guts.

The reality is, when our guest moms leave Nativity House, we have done what we can. We have helped them get jobs, further their education, and find the best affordable housing out there. We send them off and hope and pray that the rugged individualism of our country doesn't eat them up. Dorothy Day talks about this:

There are several families with us, destitute families, destitute to an unbelievable extent and there, too, is nothing to do but to love. What I mean is that there is no chance of rehabilitation, no chance, so far as we see, of changing them; certainly no chance of adjusting them to this abominable world about them, and who wants them adjusted anyway? (D.Day, *Love is the Measure*, June 1, 1946)

What is the silly system that we are helping them fit into anyway? The subsidies and safety nets set up by our government are a system of checks and balances put in place to ensure the worthiness of help. The checklist of criteria put in place is largely put there by people 2-3 degrees away from the actual person in need. When you are in need and your worthiness of help is denied because of someone else's check list, where do you turn to next?

Did you vote?

I did.

It felt like my life depended on it.

It felt like the life of the guest moms and their infants also depended on it.

Our culture has us stuck in a feedback loop between the lies of self-sufficiency and faith in a lofty bureaucracy aiming with a nerf gun toward something that loosely mimics an irregular capitalist democracy. Within this feedback loop there is little to no room for the *Spirit to fall like the dewfall*.

What I have come to understand

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Dewfall

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over these years of being a Catholic Worker is that Dorothy Day had a point. My voice is heard much more clearly here in my community, in my family, in my workplace than will ever be heard by casting a vote for a politician that will likely never know my name. The relationships that I nurture here in my local community will affect more change. This is the economy of grace. Trickle-down economics is a farce. But the economy of grace isn't a trickle at all. It's a force with an outward inertia toward the Kingdom of Heaven that is both here and now *and* the future.

I can't help but think of small beginnings and how the force of grace utilizes little moments, little gatherings, little happenings. Throughout history it has been small beginnings that have brought about revolutions of the heart leading to change within families, communities, cities, nations and the world.

I write during Advent when we are called to awakening, repentance, and reconciliation. We are invited to let the miracle of a young girl agreeing to be the mother of God incarnate take root in our very gut. May Mary's heart be our heart. We are asked to ponder the heart of a young man who turned away from the path of cowardice rooted in feigned betrayal and opened his heart and home to the Son of God. May Joseph's heart be our heart.

During Advent, Dorothy Day pondered:

...Mary, who presents us with the infant Christ... "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

When I go to the crib this year I will think, as I always do, that we are not dependent on the governments of this world for our safety, but "the government will be upon His shoulder." This baby cradled in a manger, this boy talking to the doctors in the temple, this youth working with St. Joseph as carpenter, this teacher walking the roads of Palestine, "Do whatever He tells you," Mary told us. (*Searching for Christ*, D. Day, November 26, 1966)

Cast your vote. Then, move on. Remember small beginnings. Remember the dewfall. Remember that it is through participating in the Mystical Body of Christ that we become the Body of Christ.

The Word became flesh to make us "partakers of the divine nature": "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God." "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." 80 "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods."

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 460



Venus Wozniak and her husband, Justin, are the founders of Nativity House. She also serves as the Associate Director of Mission & Ministry at Lewis University. She can be reached at venusad@nativity-house.org

And Dwelt Among Us

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once trod that same earth. It was a mystery that we as Catholics accepted, but there were also the facts of Christ's life, that He was born in a stable, that He did not come to be a temporal King, that He worked with His hands, spent the first years of His life in exile, and the rest of His early manhood in a crude carpenter shop in Nazareth . . . He trod the roads in His public life and the first men He called were fishermen, small owners of boats and nets. He was familiar with the migrant worker and the proletariat . . . And He directed His sublime words to the poorest of the poor . . ."

The equally sublime words of John's exquisite prologue, properly understood, drive home these same radical truths. And the Church in its wisdom invites us to hear them precisely as we celebrate with Christmas joy. The Word of God, in eternity and time, has come to dwell with us and with all around us. Let us kiss Christ's good earth.



Peter Huff is Chief Mission Officer and Professor of Theology at Benedictine University.

St. Thomas Aquinas

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of God, fellowship with His Son, and the communion of His Spirit. Chastity, then, is not a passive virtue by which man avoids temptation, but an active one ordering his emotions and impulses to the attainment of the vision of God. Thus it pertains to the wise man to be eminently chaste, for the wise man is most eminent in order. St. Thomas, as the fount of wisdom from which the Church drinks the purest doctrine, attained his wisdom and holiness through the wisdom of his life, the ordering of all his actions to his ultimate love, God.

Through his example and by his intercession, may we come to see the value of chastity and live it faithfully in this life, that in the next we may come to see our hope attained and our love fulfilled, singing the praises of God with the great St. Thomas beyond even the end of time.



John Klisiewicz is a college student and an avid reader of theology with a particular love for the person and thought of St. Thomas Aquinas.



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Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
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St. Thomas Aquinas

Feast Day: January 28th

Patron of Catholic Colleges and Universities, Educators, Philosophers, Students

by John Klisiewicz

Chastity. A word that carries much baggage in days like these. Though poverty and obedience are similarly contrary to man's fallen will, there seems a vitriolic hatred for the second counsel today. Where does this hatred come from, and why? Interesting questions, and perhaps important to ponder, but we will not be addressing them here. Rather, our focus now lies in expounding one of the best exemplars of this counsel and virtue, and what we can learn therefrom.

St. Thomas Aquinas, known for his wonderful summary of theology, typically does not grace the minds of faithful Catholics as a great saint. A great man, perhaps; a great mind, hopefully; but not often a great saint. What did he do after all, if not live for a short time, think deeply, and die? He was, in fact, a great saint, and few stories epitomize his virtue and holiness quite like his encounter with the woman of the night. Herein we see, all in one,

his wisdom, fortitude, and mysticism on display, and a living explanation of the value of chastity.

As a young man, St. Thomas joined the new, fledgling Dominican order against his family's wishes. Furious, they held him captive and tried vehemently to dissuade him from his vocation. The stalwart saint refused. After long, his brothers grew tired of their failure and decided to destroy his innocence that he might do what they wanted. They hired a woman of the night to tempt the young Thomas. She entered into the room of his captivity and he, quickly deducing the danger they had placed him in, arose, took an iron from the fireplace, and chased the woman out of his room. He then, onto the now closed door, carved the sign of the cross, and entered into prayer. God deigned to bestow upon the young saint a mystical vision wherein angels girded him with a



cord, symbolizing the special grace that God had rewarded him to perpetually maintain his heroic chastity, which he won by this conquest over his passions. He cried out in pain, but when his family came to check up on his shout, he refused to disclose to them the vision. This cord has been preserved and can be found in Chieri, a town outside of Turin, Italy. All the makings of a heroic saint present themselves in this story, and through it can we see the man behind the mind.

But St. Thomas had a reputation throughout his life for being mild-mannered, so why react so strikingly, even threateningly, in this encounter? What about the preservation of purity moves the

wise man to rise and fight? God answers this question for us, saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8). St. Thomas' immediate turn to prayer after the encounter also hints at the answer. For St. Thomas, purity is not about arbitrarily following some repressive rule or suffering for the sake of suffering, but in laying low the mountains so as to clear the way for God. St. Thomas, then, is not an insensitive or hateful man, but one deeply in love. He fights not as the weak and timid defender emaciated by a long brutal siege of temptation, but a springtime soldier set on the attainment of his goal: the vision

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