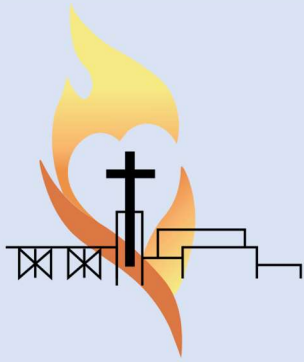


ST. AUGUSTINE'S  
ANGLICAN CHURCH  
LETHBRIDGE, AB



"A Church Family in  
the Heart of the City"



Photo courtesy of Songer Architecture Inc.

# THE HIPPO HERALD

MARCH 2020

Dear St. Augustine's Parishioner,

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1*

These words, which have brought comfort to millions of people for thousands of years continue to do their good work in our hearts in the age of COVID-19. Though we are not immune from the age-old diseases of fear and anxiety, we are blessed to be able to find refuge in God.

As a church we are working hard to stay connected with each other and with our faith. These connections are vital to us. We believe that as a parish we can not only weather this storm, but even thrive in the midst of it. For that to happen we must take seriously our calling. Every baptized Christian is called to minister the love of God. This has always been true, but it has never been more important. What does this mean? It means that each of us must lean into our responsibility to love God and to love our neighbors. We are limited only by our own creativity. Here are a few practical ideas to get us started: Lead your family in times of prayer each day (Wendy has already begun sending resources to Sunday School families and will be providing more in the days ahead). Phone, text, email or video chat with a few people each day that you think may be lonely. Look for opportunities to deliver groceries or other necessities (keeping hygiene and distancing guidelines in mind). Prayerfully seek out ways that you can make a difference for someone.

For now, in the absence of regular services, we have 3 main means of mass communication available to us:

Our website: [www.staug.org](http://www.staug.org)

For Facebook users, our Facebook page is “St. Augustine’s Anglican Church Lethbridge”

Our email list: please sign up at the bottom of the home page of our website

Please make use of these as you are able.

In addition, our church office remains open during business hours. Both of your priests are working regular hours and are available by phone for virtual appointments. These can be booked with Denise by calling 403 327-3970 or emailing office@staug.org. If you have relatives who are confined to care facilities or hospital who would like to see a Priest or other minister, consider scheduling a pastoral visit when you can help them use phone, FaceTime, Zoom, Skype or some other means.

Some have expressed a desire to keep up with their regular offerings. These can be dropped in the church mailbox (in the slot located to the right of the main doors) or cheques can be mailed to the church. Please do not mail cash. Contact the office if would like to start an automatic monthly bank transfer arrangement, or you may click on ‘Donate Now’ at the bottom of our website home page to make a payment using your credit card.

Here are some opportunities for connection that we are working on right now:

We will be livestreaming one weekend service per week beginning with a service of Morning Prayer on Sunday, March 29 at 10:00 AM. Please join us by clicking the link on our website (each week’s link will appear no later than Sunday Morning at 9:45 AM each Sunday). We will be using Facebook Live, but you do not need a Facebook account to join the service.

We will be livestreaming occasional Morning and Evening prayer services throughout the week as well. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for these opportunities.

We have purchased meeting software called ‘Zoom’ which will allow us to meet in virtual groups online. We expect to continue our Lenten Study Series, hopefully beginning March 31, and our Adult Confirmation class, hopefully beginning April 5. This format will also be appropriate for virtual pastoral conversations.

There are a variety of volunteer needs which have arisen. Including the need for people with skills in the area of digital communication. We are also working to organize additional ways to be a blessing to each other and to our larger community.

Thank you for reading this, and for your love and care for our St. Augustine’s Church community. We pray God’s blessing and peace upon you all.

Your Priests,

The Rev. Canon James Robinson

The Rev. Steve Bateman

## FROM THE RECTOR'S CHAIR



***"So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet full of joy, and ran to tell his disciples".  
Matthew 28:8***

I write this message early in the season of Lent, that great season

in which we, and Christians around the world, prepare for Holy Week and Easter. During Holy Week, ancient and powerful liturgies commemorate each day of the last week of our Lord's earthly ministry. These services of worship take us from our Lord's triumphal entry in Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), to his teaching and preaching in the temple courts on Holy Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, to his last supper, betrayal and arrest (Maundy Thursday), to his death on the cross (Good Friday) and to the darkness of his tomb (The Easter Vigil).

Suddenly, the Easter Vigil changes from being the last day of Holy Week to the first celebration of Easter! The darkness of the tomb gives way to the light and joy of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The next morning, we celebrate the great feast of the Resurrection (Easter Day).

Just recently a young couple from our parish told me that last year was the first time they had attended every service of Holy Week and Easter. They couldn't say enough about how moving and powerful the whole experience was for them. They had promised each other that this year they

would do it again. As Christians who worship in the Anglican tradition, we are blessed with great and beautiful liturgies. The services of Holy Week and Easter are the most important of them all, and I encourage you to make the observance of Holy Week and Easter a priority.

And now on a more personal note, (as I announced on February 9 and at our Annual Meeting on March 3): After consultation and with the permission of the Archbishop, I will be retiring on June 1, 2020. On that day I will have served in ordained ministry in the Diocese of Calgary for 34 years and as Rector of St. Augustine's, Lethbridge for 23 years. I am profoundly blessed to have been able to serve here, in the parish where as a young child in 1956 I was baptized into Jesus Christ.

Judith and I love you all and thank you for the privilege of serving among you. Most of all, we give thanks to God for his faithfulness and for calling us to this beloved parish family.

I also want you to know that at the request of the Archbishop, the Rev. Steve Bateman has agreed to serve as interim priest in charge when my retirement comes into effect.

Tentative plans are being made for a celebration of ministry to take place at the church on Friday, May 29. I hope that you can come! Stay tuned for more information.

Your friend and Rector,

James





# PRIESTLY PONDERINGS

## Three Things I Love About Anglican Worship

By the Rev. Steve Bateman

Becoming Anglican was, for me, a happy surprise. I was raised Baptist and spent 23 years as a pastor in the Evangelical Free Church denomination which has Protestant and pietistic roots. I am grateful for these two denominations which helped me discover a love for Christ, the importance of the heart to vibrant faith, the power of Christian community, and the centrality of the Holy Scriptures to Christian faith and practice.

But I love being Anglican!

When I began worshipping at St. Augustine's there were 3 things about our worship which were very different and which deeply impacted my faith, beginning almost immediately.

1. **Anglican Worship is Participatory** – there is no way to hold an Anglican worship service without the participation of the gathered worshippers. In some traditions, modern worship services have come to resemble concerts, or lectures (or a combination of these). In an Anglican context something is demanded of each worshipper. We worship liturgically. The word 'liturgy' derives from a Greek word meaning 'the work of the people.' So we go to church to work. The primary purpose is not to be entertained, or even to have our minds filled with the ideas of the preacher, but to encounter God in word and in sacrament. Along the way, we will be asked to stand, to sit, to kneel (as we are able), to confess, to pray, to read, to affirm, to give offerings, and to give God glory. If

we are physically able, we will be asked to get out of our seats and go to the altar to receive communion. This is something very different for our consumerist society. We are used to being spectators. Anglican worship doesn't give us that option.

2. **Anglican Worship is Physical** - Anglican worship takes seriously the fact that we are created as physical beings. We are deeply and sometimes unconsciously affected by our own bodies and the spaces they inhabit. Furthermore, one of the central tenets of our faith is the incarnation - that God took on physical human flesh and dwelt among people. And so Anglican worship is embodied worship. During our services you will see some people making the sign of the cross. You will see others acknowledging the altar or stretching out their hands toward one another in greeting. We all turn to hear the gospel read from the center of the church. These sacred actions take place in a sacred space which has been thoughtfully constructed and consecrated to God for His use. We are blessed to be in a church where so much that is around us, from the carvings on the altar to the lampshades on the ceiling, have both physical and spiritual significance. This reminds us that worship is not only spiritual, rather we offer both our souls and bodies to God in worship.

3. **Anglican Worship is Cyclical** – it is in our nature to forget. This has become more common in our modern era in which most people experience time as almost purely linear. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor says of modern people: "We have constructed an environment in which we live in a uniform, univocal secular time, which we try to measure

and control in order to get things done.” (Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. p. 59). But as Taylor acknowledges, historically there has been another way to think about time. It can be experienced as a cycle which repeats itself. The Book of Common prayer and the Book of Alternative Services invite us into three kinds of cyclical rhythms:

First, the rhythm of our daily lives. We have services of morning and evening prayer which can be done on our own or in groups. We welcome each new day in prayer, and we entrust ourselves to God for each night.

Secondly, the rhythm of the liturgical year. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and the long season of Trinity. And then the cycle begins again. The church year invites us to step outside of linear time. To step back from seeing time as something to “..control in order to get things done.” The liturgical calendar invites us to relinquish control to God, as countless generations of Christians before us have done. Alongside the liturgical seasons, we also celebrate feast days and commemorations for Saints. This allows us to re-live their history, and to ask God to re-shape our future as we see His image in their faithfulness.

Finally, there are rites of passage that help us lean into the rhythm of our own lives and the lives of those in our parish community. We experience with each other: baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and funerals. Worshipping together through these three types of cycles, our lives are greatly enriched!

Because Anglican worship is purposefully repetitive, for some it can be easy to forget, take for granted, or just plain miss out on its power to form our lives. I pray that these few reflections from someone not raised Anglican might help us all to ‘lean in’ to worship with renewed intention and joy.



“No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally - and often far more - worth reading at the age of fifty and beyond.” - C.S. Lewis

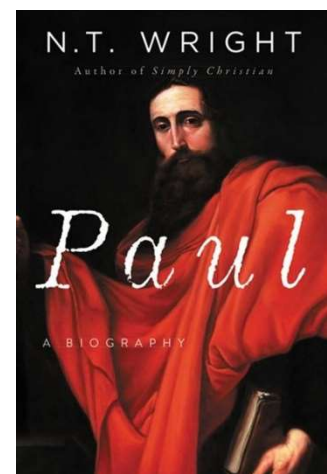
*Paul - A Biography*  
by N. T. Wright

Like dissertations, producing scrolls and books was and is a growth industry. Nevertheless, N. T. Wright, in his book *Paul - A Biography*, illuminates Christianity as the fulfillment of Jewish hope for their Messiah since Genesis 3:15 - the first reference to Christ as the Saviour of the Jews in the Torah.

He paints a scholarly readable picture of the apostle Paul's life with the reasoning that: the new is in the old concealed, while the old is in the new revealed.

For the Jews the edges of time are compressed by a single Hebrew word with the meaning of past present and future changed only by inflection.

Submitted by  
Bill Latimer





# faith and finances

## ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS - FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The 2019 financial statements and 2020 budget were presented and approved at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Below is a brief summary of the operating fund income and expenses for 2019 and the 2020 budget. Further details are available under Parish Finances in the Annual Report for 2019.

The operating fund accounts for most of the church's yearly income and expenses. Income includes contributions from parishioners and other, such as from the Endowment Fund and church rentals. Expenses cover staff salaries, support for our various ministries and programs, building operating costs, administration and the contribution to the Diocese.

	<u>2020 Budget</u>	<u>2019 Actual</u>
Parishioner givings	\$ 483,750	\$ 470,336
Other income	<u>38,400</u>	<u>35,732</u>
Total income	<u>522,150</u>	<u>506,068</u>
Staffing expenses	\$ 333,300	\$ 319,846
Administration & apportionment	115,700	113,302
Facility expenses	62,300	53,729
Christian education & outreach	<u>20,850</u>	<u>16,596</u>
Total expenses	<u>532,150</u>	<u>503,473</u>
Net surplus/(deficit)	\$ <u>(10,000)</u>	\$ <u>2,595</u>

We are pleased to have ended last year with a small surplus in the operating fund of \$2,595. The budget for 2020 is based on \$458,750 in parishioner regular givings, which is a 3% increase compared to 2019. Budgeted income is \$10,000 less than budgeted expenses, which, if needed, will be covered from the accumulated operating fund reserve.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this information. Stay tuned for further financial updates, which will be provided in the newsletters throughout the year.

Submitted by: Cathy Gillespie, Treasurer

# Trivia Time: How Well Do You Know Your Hymns?

**1. Fill in the blank for the hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus".**

*Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our \_\_\_\_\_?*

- a. Burdens bear
- b. Troubles share
- c. Sorrows share
- d. Pain to bear

**2. Fill in the blank for the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy".**

*Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,  
though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*perfect in power, in love and purity.*

- a. Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!
- b. only Thou art holy; there is none beside thee
- c. Holy, Holy, Holy! merciful and mighty
- d. cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee

**3. Name this hymn.**

*When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
And take me home what joy shall fill my heart.*

- a. Safe in the Arms of Jesus
- b. How Great Thou Art
- c. To God Be the Glory
- d. Blessed Assurance

**4. Name this hymn.**

*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day,  
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.*

- a. Help of the Helpless
- b. Child of the King
- c. Abide With Me
- d. Thou Changest Not

**5. Name this modern hymn.**

*I will not boast in anything,  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,  
His death and resurrection.*

- a. In Christ Alone
- b. How Deep the Father's Love for Us
- c. Creation Sings the Father's Song
- d. The Power of the Cross

**6. Who wrote "All Creatures of Our God and King" in 1225?**

- a. Francis of Assisi
- b. Thomas a Kempis
- c. Augustine of Hippo
- d. Tertullian



**7. Which of the following is known as the “Father of English Hymnody?”**

- a. Thomas Chisholm
- b. William Cowper
- c. Philip Doddridge
- d. Isaac Watts

**8. Who authored “Amazing Grace”?**

- a. Horatious Bonar
- b. Johann Von Rist
- c. John Newton
- d. Joseph Haydn

**9. Which of these hymn writers said this?**

*“Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I was born blind? Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior.”*

- a. Fanny Crosby
- b. Percy Dreamer
- c. Alisha Hoffman
- d. Francis Ridley Havergal

**10. Horatio Spafford penned the words to this beloved hymn soon after discovering the tragic deaths of his four daughters onboard a ship.**

- a. Yesterday, Today, Forever
- b. Take My Life, and Let It Be
- c. Be Thou My Vision
- d. It Is Well with My Soul

**11. “I Vow to Thee, My Country” was sung at the funerals of two well-known British women. One woman was Diana, the Princess of Wales, and the other was known as 'The Iron Lady'. What is the name of the second woman?**

- a. Margaret Thatcher
- b. Jacqueline Wilson
- c. Jane Seymour
- d. Anne Boleyn

**12. “What's the missing word in the second line of the hymn 'Blessed Assurance'?**

*Oh, what a foretaste of \_\_\_\_\_ divine!*

- a. forever
- b. joy
- c. happiness
- d. glory

**Answers:**

1. C	2. B	3. B	4. C	5. B	6. A
7. D	8. C	9. A	10. D	11. A	12. D



## *A Note from Wendy's Desk*

With 2020 being the Year of the Sunday School at St. Augustine's, we are highlighting our amazing Sunday School teachers – Our Sunday School Heroes, in each installment of the Hippo Herald. Three of our beloved teachers are Miss Virginia (Faucet) and Miss Annette (Bright) who teach grade 5/6 and Miss Temi (Soboyejo) who teaches grade 3/4. We thought, who better to explain the impact these teachers have than their students. Enjoy!



Grade 1/2 Picture of Miss Temi, Miss Virginia and Miss Annette

Wendy: So, how long do you think Miss Annette, Miss Temi and Miss Virginia have been teaching Sunday school?

Josh: Hmmmm, I think Miss Virginia about two years.

Sophie: Miss Temi has been about the same, I think.

Lydia: Miss Annette.... About 50 or something like that.

Wendy: Oh, okay. That's a long time to be teaching. Why do you think they keep teaching at our Sunday School?

Mark: Because they love God and Jesus and the Bible and.... US! (All the kids nod in agreement)

Wendy: I agree 100%! So, what do you think Miss Annette, Miss Virginia and Miss Temi do when they aren't here at church?

Josh: I think Miss Annette just stays at home probably. And Miss Virginia plays with her guinea pig a lot.

Abbie: I think Miss Temi just hangs out with her friends.

Josh: I think that she reads the Bible lots.

Sophie: Yes, and she is probably researching and planning for what we will do the next Sunday.

Wendy: I wonder, we'll have to ask them. God has given us all gifts, right? So that we all don't have to be good at everything. And to make sure we have what we need to do His work. What gifts do you think He gave your teachers, so they can be good Sunday School teachers?

Abbie: He gave Miss Temi a good brain. She is smart.

Mark: Yes, and He made her really nice and kind, too.

Josh: Miss Annette is really creative. She makes Sunday school fun. And Miss Virginia is good at helping.

Wendy: Yes, God did such a good job with your teachers. We are so blessed by them!

What are some of your favourite things you have done with them in your classes?

Josh: I really like that Miss Annette helped us to make a spinning wheel to use as a game we play to choose what we learn about each week. It's fun.

Sophie: I like that Miss Temi gives us rewards when we do something good. Like listening to her.

Mark: I liked the play, at Christmas time.

Wendy: Oh those are all awesome! Speaking of awesome, let's talk super heroes. If your teachers were a super hero, which one would they be and why?

Lydia: Miss Temi would be Hermoine Granger from Harry Potter. Because she is super smart like her.

Sophie: I think she would be Super Fun Girl.

Lydia: That's weird.

Josh: Miss Annette would be Superman or Batman. Because they can handle our class of all boys! And Miss Virginia would be like a nice super hero. Like Super Nice Girl.

Wendy: What are some important things you have learned from your teachers?

Josh: We are learning about Jesus and the Resurrection. That's important, right?

Wendy: Yes, that is really important. You're right. What about your class?

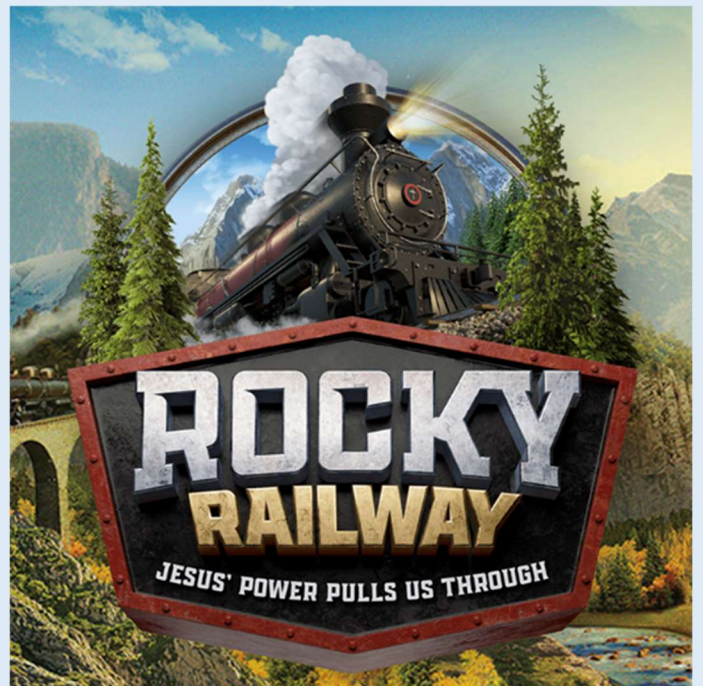
Sophie: Miss Temi has taught us to be good to one another.

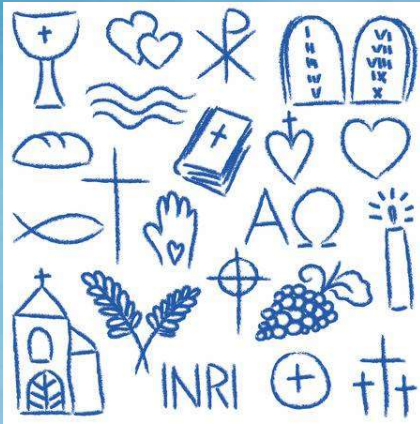
Mark: And about Jesus and God and the Bible.

Wendy: Well thank you so much for helping me out you guys! Make sure you say thank you to your teachers today for being so awesome!

## **Vacation Bible School Planning is Underway!**

This year's VBS will be taking place July 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> and we need lots of help to make it another successful week! Our theme this year is Rocky Railroad – Jesus' Power Pulls Us Through. If you are able to assist in planning, recruitment, decorating or anything else VBS please let Wendy Doherty know at [wendy@staug.org](mailto:wendy@staug.org) and we can get chugging along!





# SIGNS AND SYMBOLS



## TREASURE #21

1. I'm richly adorned with sign and symbol  
so I'll start right away and not dissemble.  
Carved of fine wood, my role is reserved  
as the Bishop's or Rector's sole preserve.
2. To begin, look up as far as you can see  
to the topmost carving of my canopy.  
Here are clover, or shamrock, each bearing three  
leaves in one – apt symbol of the Trinity.
3. Grapevine, thistle and daisy you will see  
with rose and acorn round my canopy –  
itself a symbol of high Heaven above  
arching over all – God's dwelling of love.
4. The grapevine is a symbol of the Saviour,  
based on His words in Holy Scripture.  
John 15 is the Book, verse 1, is the line  
where He describes Himself as the True Vine.
5. The thistle points to sorrow and sin on earth  
as when God pronounced against Adam His curse,  
and, to the Passion of Christ Who meekly wore,  
for the sake of mankind, a crown of thorns.
6. The humble daisy, in its sweet simplicity,  
of the innocence of Jesus speaks so quietly.  
The rose, its thorn the symbol of martyrdom,  
its beauty and fragrance of the heavenly Kingdom.
7. The acorn, when grown to a tall mighty oak  
symbolizes the endurance of Christ's Holy Church,  
embodied by Christian strength in adversity,  
with virtue and faith it's foundational quality.



8. This acorn, of which you will discover three,  
contains the potential to become a great tree  
which, by tradition is said to have been riven  
and used for the Cross of the King of Heaven.
9. The aspen and holly are also said to be  
the trees for the Cross – tho' tis legend only.  
The leaves of the aspen are doomed to tremble  
for giving its wood to a use so terrible.
10. Of the trees, only the holly, in arrogance and pride,  
refused to bow down in sorrow when Christ died.  
With its thorny leaves, it became the symbol  
of Christ's Crown of thorns and His Passion.
11. A stylized fish you'll be able to see  
but only by searching most carefully.  
To early Christians 'twas a secret sign  
marked on wall, or in sand, in simple outline.
12. It was used in times of peril to identify  
a place of worship, or Christian ally.  
On the back of my structure – not far to seek,  
is the monogram of Jesus from the Greek.
13. Find now the grapes – Blood of Christ, wine of Communion,  
Vine for the nature of 'God with man' union,  
for you are the branches of the One True Vine  
and called to be holy as He is Divine.
14. Last of all, find the shield which tells of the fame  
of the first English martyr – St. Alban by name.  
Though some say 'twas Andrew whose life was snuffed out  
on a cross like an "x" – but there is some doubt.
15. Take heart now, your search is nearly over.  
No more signs or symbols to discover.  
There's one of me only – could I be called rare?  
Well, maybe not. Just call me the

— — — — — ' — — — — —

(Answer hidden elsewhere in newsletter)





**ST. THOMAS AQUINAS**

**1225-1274**

Thomas Aquinas, along with St. Paul and St. Augustine, perhaps, is arguably the most influential and important theologian in Christian history. Whether you are aware or not, his works influenced generations (literally) of philosophers, Christian theologians, and in turn pastors and the folks like you and I in the pew. Both Reformers and Catholics engaged his thought, and even secular philosophers continued to be influenced by him until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What is less known, however, is that Thomas was not just a philosopher and thinker, but was also a mystic and a monk. Indeed, that ascetic and mystical life in Christ was the foundation of his philosophy and thought.

Thomas was born in 1225 into a wealthy and aristocratic family from Aquino, Italy. His father was a knight in the service of the King of Sicily, and his uncle was the Abbot at the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino. Thomas's brothers were all soldiers and aristocrats, but as the youngest, he was set on the path to become the Abbot of Monte Cassino when his uncle died. He actually began his education at Monte Cassino, but as a teenager moved to attend the newly founded University of Naples,

where he was introduced to ancient philosophy, particularly Aristotle, but also to John of St. Julian, a Dominican preacher in Naples.

By the age of nineteen, Thomas decided to join the Dominicans, to the severe displeasure of his family, who expected him to become the Abbot of Monte Cassino. Instead, he embraced the Dominican life of apostolic poverty, and the contemplative life of a scholar. His family pressured him fiercely not to become a Dominican, and when that didn't work, they kidnapped him and held him captive for nearly two years. There is a legendary story that his brothers even locked him in a room with a prostitute to tempt him, but he rebuffed the temptation with angelic aid. His mother eventually helped him escape shortly after, and he made his way to Rome to meet with Master of the Dominican Order.

Thomas's career, from that point on, was a life of scholarship and asceticism in a number of the most prominent universities in Europe. He began, and then worked for the majority of his life, at the University of Paris, but also had stints in Cologne, Rome and Naples, as well as at the Vatican in special service to several different Popes. It was at the University of Paris, too, that Thomas sat at the feet of Albert the Great, the great Dominican theologian and Scholastic from Germany. Albert and Thomas worked together for nearly thirty years, though Albert happily acknowledged that Thomas had surpassed him in many ways. While Thomas's fellow students, who only saw his quiet demeanor, called him a "dumb ox", Albert said "You call him the dumb ox, but in his teaching

he will one day produce such a bellowing that it will be heard throughout the world."

In a sense, as well, calling Thomas an "ox" was quite appropriate. Like an ox, slowly and methodically plowing a field, so Thomas would think through the greatest of philosophical and theological questions. He relied heavily upon Aristotle to provide a rational philosophical matrix to interpret his questions, but always relied even more upon revelation as the primary means to reveal God. Indeed, for Aquinas, to say that "Grace perfects Nature", was to acknowledge that reason and science, which are formidable human means of understanding the world, can only know God as He reveals himself in Christ. A master of logic, reason, and philosophical argument, Aquinas set about to answer nearly every conceivable question about God, reality and the world, while always being humble enough to acknowledge that philosophy only provides us with a reasonable means to understand what God reveals.

In his life Thomas wrote prolifically, with over eighty works of philosophy, theology, political tracts, and biblical commentaries, plus numerous works of poetry in the form of hymns and prayers. He is, of course, most well known for the composition of the *Summa Theologica*, the massive systematic theology covering nearly every conceivable question or thought we have ever had about God. It is written as a series of questions and answers, and was intended by Aquinas to be a primer on theology for beginners, though the most learned and erudite of us struggle with its depth and breadth. It is written in three parts, and addresses, in detail, 512 questions about God. There is essentially no question in Christian thought that Aquinas did not consider, at least in the medieval context.

Yet, as much as Thomas is so well known for being a philosopher and theologian, less well known is how mystical and devout he was as a human being, or how much his devotion was a central and life giving element which laid the foundation for his philosophy and theology.

You can see this, not only in the life he chose as a Dominican, rejecting the wealth of life and power his family could provide, but also some of the mystical experiences he had, and the way they changed his perception of his work, particularly toward the end of his life.

For example, in 1273 while meditating before an icon of the crucified Christ, he was witnessed speaking tearfully with the Lord. Christ said to Thomas, "You have written well of me, Thomas. What reward would you have for your labor?" Thomas responded, "Nothing but you, Lord." Again, on St. Nicholas day in the same year, during mass he experienced an unusually long ecstasy, after which he would not speak or write about. Following this experience, he refused for some time to return to his work saying "I cannot, because all that I have written seems like straw to me."

You can also see his devotion in his hymns and poetry. In his hymn *Ad te devote*, the first two verses sing:

*I devoutly adore you, hidden deity,  
Who are truly hidden beneath these forms.  
My whole heart submits to You,  
And in contemplating You, it surrenders itself completely.*

*Sight, touch, taste are all deceived in their judgment of you,  
But hearing suffices firmly to believe.  
I believe all that the Son of God has spoken;  
There is nothing truer than this word of Truth.*

For Aquinas, as with so many other great thinkers and mystics in the Church, the simplest truth of all is that to know God you must love Him. Reading Aquinas is always a challenge, as his language is the language of Medieval theology. But his quest is no different than ours, he wants to know God, and he works from the foundation of a love for God that is so genuine, so true, that he sees everything he wrote as nothing but straw compared to the love he experienced in God.

- Br. Jason