

Aquinas College Catholic Studies, Philosophy & Theology



Year in Review
for Academic Years 24/25 and 25/26

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The mission of Catholic Studies, in partnership with Philosophy & Theology, is to share “the rich experience of the Church’s own culture,” assist students in their spiritual as well as their intellectual development, and establish Aquinas College as the regional center for Catholic intellectual and creative life (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, §43).

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A Note from Our Director

Dr. Daniel C. Wagner

Dear Friends in Christ,

Aquinas College Catholic Studies and Philosophy & Theology were blessed with such an abundance of spiritual and intellectual gifts that, well, we could not find pause for just a one year review! Thus, we offer our two year review here, with highlights of our programs from 2024-2026. As always, we seek to fulfill that most important Dominican charge: *contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*: “to contemplate and to hand the fruits of contemplation on to others.” We are most thankful for the charity of our Donors, for the support and participation of our fine Students, Faculty, Staff, and Administration, and for the spiritual support of our Dominican Sisters and Fathers, and Bishop Walkowiak.



We announce with joy that Philosophy & Theology are now a single program with a major and minors focused on the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and the integration of faith and reason. To this end, we are thankful to welcome Aquinas alumnus and Thomist Seth Kreeger as Visiting Professor of Philosophy & Theology for the 2026-2027 Academic Year. In these past two years, our curriculum included courses treating the philosophy and theology of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Plato, Aristotle, Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), St. Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, the Bible as Story and Poetry, Sacraments, Christian Morality, Christology, and writers such as Flannery O'Connor, J.R. Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis.

We were blessed by lectures from preeminent scholars on topics in connection with revealed, systematic, and natural theology, philosophy, and Church history. We were given Hope—during the Jubilee year of Hope—by presentations illuminating a Catholic via to the true, good, and beautiful in the face of political ideology, environmental crises, human suffering in disability, and problematic uses of rapidly developing “AI” technology.

Special thanks are due to our friends in History, Campus Ministry, and the Writing Center.

We have been truly blessed with the rich and virtuous expression of Catholic culture and intellectual life. Let us offer thanks to our Lord for this blessing as we prepare for another year of contemplation and dialogue:

Deo gratias!



Events & Sponsorships

Aquinas Lecture Series

2024/25

We were pleased to welcome Fr. Donald Goergen, O.P., for his lecture on “The Body of Christ in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas and Teilhard de Chardin” on October 24, 2024.



2025 Jubilee Year of Hope

In coordination with the Diocese of Grand Rapids, we were graced to host several intellectual programs in celebration of the **2025 Jubilee Year of Hope**. Presentations included:

- Sr. Barbara E. Reid, O.P., Ph.D. - "Pilgrims of Hope: A Biblical Reflection" - January 16, 2025
- John Pinheiro, Ph.D. - “Church and State: Hope in an Age of Ideology” - January 30, 2025
- Dr. Benjamin G. Lockerd - “Hope in the Truth of Beauty” - February 28, 2025 (Symposium on the True, Good, and Beautiful Plenary Lecture)
- "Being A People of Hope" - Panel Discussion - March 19, 2025
- Fr. Vincent Davila, O.P., Ph.D. - “Despair or Confidence? Christ’s Cry of Abandonment from the Cross” - April 25, 2025
- James Matthew Wilson, Ph.D. - “Figuring the Kingdom: The Substance of Things Hoped For” - May 15, 2025



Events & Sponsorships (*cont.*)

2025/26

Continuing the celebration of the **2025 Jubilee Year of Hope**, we were proud to sponsor the following lectures in the 2025 Fall semester:

- Sr. Megan McElroy, O.P., Prioress, Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids, "Does Hope Really Have Feathers?" - September 11, 2025
- Fr. Robert Keller, O.P., Ph.D., Chaplain and Adjunct Professor of Theology, Aquinas College, "An Oasis of Hope in a Chaotic World" - October 23, 2025
- Sr. Damien Marie Savino, FSE, Ph.D., "The Hope of Integral Ecology" - November 13, 2025 (Gold Mass Lecture)



Spring 2026 Lectures:

- Dr. Catherine Peters, Loyola Marymount University - "The True, the Good, and the Beautiful of Disability" - February 26, 2026 (Symposium on the True, Good, and Beautiful Pleanry Lecture)
- Dr. Brian Kemple, Executive Director, Lyceum Institute - "Broken Minds: Artificial Intelligence, Digital Technology, and the Enslavement of Humankind" - January 29, 2026



The following events were co-sponsored in the 24/25 and 25/26 academic years:

- Hesburgh Lecture: Leonard DeLorenzo, Ph.D - "From the Edges of the Cosmos to the Altar: Notre Dame's Unique Union of Science and Religion" - May 1st, 2025, Co-sponsored with Notre Dame Club of Grand Rapids.

Events & Sponsorships (*cont.*)

- Hesburgh Lecture: John Deak, associate professor of History at the University of Notre Dame - “World War I and the Birth of the Twentieth Century” - Thursday, March 5th, 2026 , Co-sponsored with Notre Dame Club of Grand Rapids.
- “An Evening of Poetry Featuring Sarah Ashbach, George David Clark, John Poch, and James Matthew Wilson” - April 18th, 2026, Co-sponsored with the MFA program in Creative Writing at the University of Saint Thomas, Houston.

Symposium on the True, Good, and Beautiful

Spring 2025

The Symposium on the True, Good, and Beautiful offers presenters an opportunity to showcase work from all academic areas, highlighting, after our patron St. Thomas Aquinas, these transcendentals: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

Spring 2025, in line with the vision for our program, the annual Symposium grew both in number of attendants and days of celebration. For the first time, we hosted 70 high school students from Catholic Central High School, West Catholic High School, and Sacred Heart Academy to participate in a series of round table discussions learning about the various disciplines at the institution. Led by our very own faculty and students, the high schoolers learned about how Truth, Goodness, and Beauty transcend the various disciplines and enterprises of the modern world and how we as Christians ought to operate in those fields—how we ought to be In the world, not of the world. Sessions included presentations from the fields of Business and Economics, Philosophy and Theology, Math, Science, and Writing and Art.

Our second day of presentations were a wonderful success featuring artistic and academic presentations from faculty and students as well as an Artists Gallery.

Student presenters included Makayla Casarez, Ethan Barker, Maggie Hall, Logan License, Zoebelle Bean, J.T. Doudna II, Trista Cridler, Annalisa Maichelle, Anastasia Benstead, and Regina Mondro.

Community and faculty presenters included Michael McDaniel, PhD, Fr. Jordan DeGuire, OP, Fr. Bob Keller, OP, Joseph Fox, PhD, Terry Marshall, Annie Newton, M.A., Laurel Dugan, and Daniel C. Wagner, PhD.



Symposium on the True, Good, and Beautiful, Spring 2026

This Spring's Symposium followed the same tradition of student, faculty, and staff presentations, and featured a second installment of the high school student experience day. We hosted high school students from West Catholic High School and Sacred Heart Academy to participate in discussions from Art, Business & Economics, English, Music, Science, and Philosophy & Theology led by Aquinas College faculty. Faculty included: Michael Curry, MA, Chris LaPorte, MFA, Kelly Ford, Ed. D., Rebecca Flaherty, PhD, Daniel C. Wagner, PhD, and Fr. Jordan DeGuire, O.P.

Our Symposium main event featured student academic, musical, and artistic presentations from: Anastasia Benstead, Sarah Evon, Maria Hillary, Anna-Marie Comden, Emily Klein, Annalisa Maichele, Noah Morris, Marguerite Loeffler, Zoebelle Bean, Sawyer, Shank, and Trista Cridler.

Faculty, staff, alumni, and community member presentations were featured by: Michael Ingram, Bethany Kilcrease, PhD, Caroline Jones, Julie Bevins, Fr. Jordan DeGuire, O.P., Laurel Dugan, Danielle Epkey, Regina Mondro, Annie Newton, M.A., and Sr. Maureen Geary, O.P., President of Aquinas College.



SEEK Conference, 2025

We had the delight of providing scholarships for six students to aid in their attendance at the annual SEEK conference, which was held in Salt Lake City, Utah in January 2025. The students experienced five days of impactful lectures, discussions, and fellowship with over 17,000 college students from across the country!



Annual March for Life

We were excited to sponsor twelve students over the 24/25 and 25/26 academic years to attend the annual March for Life, held in Washington, D.C. These were the 52nd and 53rd occurrence of this event, and featured a rally on the national mall and a march to the U.S. Capitol.



Events & Sponsorships (*cont.*)

34th and 35th Annual Acton Dinner

We were blessed to be able to sponsor tables for students and staff at the Annual Acton Dinner for 2024 and 2025. Our group was composed of faculty and their spouses, administrators, our Dominican Friars, and students.



Accomplishments & Awards

Faculty and Staff Accomplishments in the field of Catholic Studies

Dr. Daniel C. Wagner



Articles and Publications:

- *Thomistic Realism contra Ideology*, Chief-Editor with Francisco Plaza as co-editor, forthcoming (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2027).
- “The Two-Fold Task of Philosophy in Response to Ideology,” introduction chapter for *Thomistic Realism contra Ideology*, forthcoming (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2027).
- “Plato and Aristotle on the Good and the Beautiful (τό καλόν/to kalon) as Nature (φύσις): The Foundation of Thomistic Ethics & Aesthetics,” forthcoming in *Thomistic Realism contra Ideology* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2027).
- “On the Elegance of APo, II.19 as Platonic Division,” *Reality*, Issue 1, Vol. 3, 2024.

Scholarly Presentations:

- “On the Meaning of Being as God’s Revealed Name at Exodus 3:14,” two seminar style lectures co-presented with Fr. Jordan DeGuire, O.P., for the Fifth Annual Symposium on the True, Good, & Beautiful, Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, MI, Spring 2026.
- “Aquinas, Aristotle, & the Transcendentals,” the Fifth Annual Symposium on the True, Good, & Beautiful, Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, MI, Spring 2026.
- “Environmental Philosophy and Philosophy of Nature in Synthesis,” Society for Thomistic Natural Philosophy, National Meeting of the ACPA, Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, Fall 2025.
- “Philosophy of Nature & the Environment: A Thomistic Model,” Authenticum Lecture Series, Sacred Heart Parish & Academy, Grand Rapids, MI, Fall, 2025

- “Let us Suffer into the Truth,” songs with Philosophical & Theological Commentary, performed at the Cottage on Turner, Grand Rapids, MI, Fall 2025.
- “The Lungs of our Love,” a sung poem with commentary, performed with Annalee Wagner, for the Fourth Annual Symposium on the True, Good, & Beautiful, Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, MI, Spring 2025.
- “St. Thomas Aquinas on the Transcendentals,” the Fourth Annual Symposium on the True, Good, & Beautiful, Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, MI, Spring 2025.
- “On Knowledge & Truth in the Liberal Arts Tradition: The Origin in Aristotle’s Metaphysics I.1-2,” two seminar style lectures for the Fourth Annual Symposium on the True, Good, & Beautiful, Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, MI, Spring 2025.
- “Plato’s Meno,” a presentation for Ascend: The Great Books Podcast, Spring, 2025.
- “On Broken Parts and Being Whole: Three Songs Composed in Augustinian, Boethian, and Thomistic Form,” meeting of the Lyceum Institute Faculty Fellows at the National Meeting of the ACPA, Chicago, IL, Fall 2024.
- “Reason, Nature, & Creation: The Via to Maintaining Objectivity in Pluralist Society,” for the Interfaith Roundtable Discussion on Nurturing Stronger Religious Institutions: Upholding Objective Morality in a Pluralistic Society, Collins Center for Abrahamic Heritage, at Acton University, Grand Rapids, Summer 2024.

Invited Lectures:

- “St. Thomas Aquinas, Plato, & Aristotle on the True, Good, and Beautiful,” for Terry Marshall’s course, Catholic Vision, Aquinas College, Spring, 2025.
- “St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle on Education: Metaphysics, I.1-2,” for Dr. Briana Asmus’ course, Learners and Learning (grades 5-12), Aquinas College, Spring, 2025.

Directed Student Research Programs:

- Aquinas College, Summer, 2024: Aquinas College Catholic Studies Summer Scholars: “Nature, Philosophy, and Latin in St. Thomas Aquinas’ De Principiis Naturae.”, with Aquinas College student Christopher Curry

Honors:

- Sabbatical, Aquinas College, Spring 2025.

Dr. Jason Duncan



Book Reviews:

- *History’s Erratics: Irish Catholic Dissidents and the Transformation of American Capitalism, 1870-1930*, by David M. Emmons, *The Journal of American History*, June 2026.
- *Wisconsin For Kennedy: The Primary that Launched a President and Changed the Course of History* by B. J. Hollars, *Middlewest Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Fall 2024.
- “Another Look: *American Catholics and the Quest for Equality in the Civil War Era*,” by Emmett Curran, *Civil War Book Reviews*, Summer 2024.

- *The Imperial Church: Catholic Founding Fathers and United States Empire*, by Katherine D. Moran, *The Journal of American History*, March 2024.

Academic Conference Papers:

- "Catholics and the American Revolution: a Reflection" Dominican Colloquium, Molloy University, Rockville Centre NY, June 2026.
- "An Enemy of Western Interests?" Martin Van Buren, William Henry Harrison and the (Mid) West in the Presidential Election of 1836," Conference of the Midwestern History Association, Des Moines, Iowa, May 2025.
- "Mr. Van Buren: No Abolitionist": The 1836 Presidential Campaign in the South," 45th Annual Meeting of the Society of Historians of the Early American Republic, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 2024.

Seth Kreeger, M.A.



Articles and Publications:

- "Thomas Aquinas and J.L. Mackie: Atheism, Theism and the Intelligibility of Being" in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* Vol. 29:1 (2026), 122-143.
- "Quodlibet II.2.1: An Auvergnian Text in Aquinas" *European Journal for the Study of Thomas Aquinas*, Vol. 43 (2025), 86-109.
- "A Response to Claudio Testi on Tolkien and Aquinas," *Journal of Tolkien Research*: Vol. 20 (2024), Iss. 2, Article 5.

Book Reviews:

- Review: "Fragments of a World: William of Auvergne and his Medieval Life," *Mediterranea: International Journal on the Transfer of Knowledge*, Vol. 9 (2024): 539-543.

Scholarly Presentations:

- "Avicenna and Aquinas on Neutrally Immaterial Being and Form as a Principle of Esse," *Arabic and Western Philosophy in Dialogue*, 13th Annual Symposium on Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Saint Louis University, June 8, 2026.
- "Avicenna and Aquinas on Neutrally Immaterial Being and Form as a Principle of Esse," *Modern Readings of Medieval Thinkers*, 61st Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, May 14, 2026.
- "Aquinas' Avicennian-Auvergnian Understanding of Creation" competitively selected for inclusion in the main program of the 2025 ACPA Annual Meeting, Notre Dame, IN; October 31, 2025.
- "Two Proximate Sources of Aquinas' Actus Essendi: William of Auvergne and the Latin Avicenna," *Aquinas at 800*, University of Notre Dame, September 24, 2024.
- "Creation and Divine Being in the Avicennian Christian Platonism of William of Auvergne," *Arabic-Islamic Philosophy: East and West*, World Congress of Philosophy, August 2, 2024. Rome, Italy.

Honors and Fellowships:

- Karen Chan Young Scholar's Award 2025, Award in honor of ACPA member, Karen Chan (1982-2019), recognizing exceptional scholarship under the age of 35.
- Cyril Smith Fellowship, Marquette University 2024-2025, For a Period of Research at Oxford University

Dr. Bethany Kilcrease



Articles and Publications:

- "The New Science and British Roman Catholicism Prior to the Modernist Controversy," intended for *British Catholic History*
- "On Having a Voice," in *Enough with "Enough": Letters of Encouragement for Women Struggling Under the Weight of a Christian Life*, Harrison Goodman, ed., Higher Things Publications, June, 2025.

Invited Lectures and Talks:

- "Exploring Lived Religions through Study and Community Engagement," The International Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching Association 2026 Conference, hosted by University of Montana Western via online modality, September 30 - October 1, 2026
- "WWI and the British Palestinian Mandate," The Wars in Ukraine and the Middle East Panel, Aquinas College, March 27, 2024.

Awards and Grants:

- NetVUE Community Engagement Fund Recipient, "Exploring Lived Religions: Bridging Academic Study and Community Engagement in Grand Rapids," Fall 2024

Relevant Faculty Mentorship

- Shaftesbury Fellowship, on the topic of post-Famine Irish Catholic immigration to Boston and Chicago, title TBD, Center for Religion, Culture & Democracy, Summer 2026

Recognitions & Special Thanks

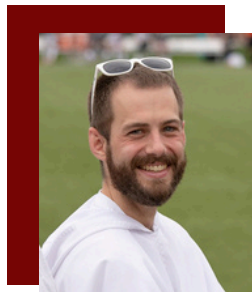
To conclude this review, we would like to thank all those who have supported the Catholic Studies and Philosophy & Theology departments these past two academic years. Our mission would not be possible without the generosity, commitment, and talent of our campus community and donors. We would like to especially recognize the work of:

Julie Bevins, the inspiration and muse of the Symposium on the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, as she retired from her position as the Aquinas College Writing Center Coordinator in the Fall of 2025.

Fr. Jordan DeGuire, O.P., as he commences his doctoral studies in liturgical studies at the University of Notre Dame this Fall, after serving the Aquinas College community as chaplain. We are so thankful for his charitable service in planning, executing, and participating in the Symposium on the True, the Good, and the Beautiful.

Annie Newton, as she pursues her masters in theological studies at Boston College Clough School of Theology and Ministry this Fall after serving the Aquinas College Community as Associate Director of Transfer Recruitment, Catholic Studies Department assistant, and teacher of Philosophy. We thank her for her commitment to creating, planning, and executing the High School Experience Day of the Symposium on the True, the Good, and the Beautiful and all her support as department assistant.

Christopher Curry, as he now teaches Philosophy, Debate, and Literature at the Chesterton Academy of our Lady of Guadalupe, having graduated from Aquinas College (2025), with a B.A. in Philosophy and a Catholic Studies Minor, and having given dedicated service as Student Assistant to Catholic Studies for several years.



Julie, Fr. Jordan, Annie, and Christopher; we thank you for all your fantastic work. You will be sorely missed!

We would also like to offer special thanks to the following persons, without whom our program could not function:

Bishop David Walkowiak

Sr. Maureen Geary, O.P., president of Aquinas College

Terry Keller, Ph. D., provost of Aquinas College

Fr. Robert Keller, O.P., chaplain of Aquinas College

Kelly Ford, Ed. D., director of the Aquinas College Choirs

Caroline Jones, Aquinas College Writing Center Coordinator

Anastasia Benstead, Aquinas College Writing Center Intern

Our Catholic Studies Department Assistant, Laura Krueger

Thank you for reading this edition of the Aquinas College Catholic Studies and Philosophy & Theology Year in Review.

Deo gratias!