

AQUINAS HOUSE

SUMMER 2023 - VOX CLAMANTIS IN DESERTO



A NOTE FROM THE CHAPLAIN

FR. TIMOTHY DANAHER, O.P.

My mom always asks me over the phone, "What's the latest news from Aquinas House?" It's always hard to put into words. Our ministry involves people's lives, all the academic work and developing friendships and prayer life happening all at once. Life is too full to summarize. St. Paul called the Thessalonians "my joy and my crown," and maybe it will sound overly sentimental but that's how I think of our students here. He meant that his greatest reward was to share his life with them, and as a priest here my joy is to share daily life with students. In my homily this June at the Baccalaureate Mass for seniors, I offered perhaps one of my most boring comments. Above all the unique experiences with students - learning harmonies in our choir, ping-pong and pool tournaments, journeys to far off cities and mission trips - above all those I just love talking with students. Talking is sacred, to sit down and speak from the heart. This is my daily life, and this is the heart of ministry at Aquinas House.

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I've thought about this in many moments of life recently. Right after graduation, I traveled home to Ohio for my sister's wedding. She married a calm, steady guy who makes her smile like none of us in the family could. It reminded me of the holiness of speaking, when a couple's life is changed by just a few words, calling each other husband and wife and suddenly it's true. Or I think of my little niece who is learning to talk, and when her sentences would get jumbled, she stops and smiles and says, "My talk doesn't work." We all grow up to learn the beautiful art of speaking with one another and with God. This is how St. Dominic was described in the earliest records: "he spoke always to God or about God."



A ski trip to Cannon Mountain in February



Opening reflections for our Spring Retreat

That's something difficult to quantify and report, another year at Aquinas House of conversations. They happen every day between students and me, in my office full of sunlight or walking around in Occom Pond. They happen with other campus ministers and between students themselves, shouting over boisterous meals or late at night in the library. Among all Ivy League schools, Dartmouth students pride themselves on "socializing while studying," as time in the library involves 100 study breaks and just as many times to refocus on work.

But some of life can be quantified. With students receiving sacraments this year, I began thumbing through our sacramental record books. Church records contain so much history. In a different example, I remember being inspired by Emiliano Zapata, who despite his many flaws fought the Mexican Revolution while guarding stacks of land deeds of so many poor families. On a more local note, since the present Aquinas House opened in April of 1962, our chapel has celebrated 364 baptisms, 281 weddings, and 218 confirmations for students converting to the faith or returning to it after many years. 33 of those confirmations have happened in the last ten years. This isn't counting the sacraments pre-1962 which were celebrated at St. Denis. It also isn't counting the funerals of local supporters or trustees, or the numbers of those who have received communion here or fallen in love within these walls. One alumnus, Fred Meier, visited with his wife this year for a renewal of wedding vows. She told me she was pregnant with their first and began to go into labor on a couch in our lower hall while he was upstairs at Mass! There are too many stories to capture for a newsletter, but they will be told in heaven. There all the details of God's work at Aquinas House will be known, not to mention his work in every corner of our world.

Be assured that God is at work here still, and He always will be.

Blessings,
Fr. Timothy, O.P.

SOME VIEWS FROM AQ...

Left:

Men's Group gathering for lunch and discussion on a Tuesday afternoon.

A fun moment after a Tuesday evening Women's Group.

Right:

A few moments from our Pilgrimage & Mission Trip to Mexico. The group visited and prayed at several sites throughout Mexico City, including the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and then spent several days serving with the Missionaries of Charity.





Clockwise from top left:

- A Tuesday evening women's group dinner**
- Students took a cooking class at King Arthur Flour**
- Some Nashville Dominican sisters joined our women's group for dinner and discussion**
- A group of students painted pottery on a rainy Saturday in the winter term**
- AQ hosted a Swing Dance Formal on the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas!**

SOME THOUGHTS FROM FR. JOHN

The plane had landed at JFK from Rome when I turned on my phone to find a text message at 3:27PM that I had been expecting for weeks from my Provincial, Fr. Kenneth Letoile: "Hi John, Give me a call when you have a chance. Thanks, Ken" I was burning with anticipation.

One year earlier, almost to the day, I asked Fr. Ken if I could get a new assignment in 2022 because I was thoroughly exhausted doing hospital chaplaincy for the past seven years. He agreed and said he would let me know. In our vow of obedience you go where you are sent, although I did ask for something a little less intense. I called Fr. Ken right away and told him I just landed and let me get off the plane. He said "Oh, you call me tomorrow if that's easier." to which I replied, "No, give me five minutes." I got off the plane and waited until I was completely alone at the gate and then I dialed Fr. Ken. After a few moments of small talk he said, "Regarding your new assignment, I would like to send you to Hanover, NH to serve at Aquinas House. He asked if I could pray over for a few days and get back to him. To which my immediate response was, "I just spent 11 days running around Italy from Milan to Bologna to Rome praying at countless graves of saints and even having an audience with Pope Francis, I don't need to pray anymore, the answer is YES!"



I arrived at Aquinas House on August 27 of this past summer and could feel the hustle and bustle of the city melt away. However, this wasn't my first time at Aquinas House. During the summer of 2013 I had the privilege of having my stay at Aquinas House as a student brother. I was participating in Dartmouth-Hitchcock's Medical Center's summer CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) program for seminary students. The beauty of the New Hampshire summer I remember was such a contrast to the work with the suffering at the hospital but it was a very intense and rewarding part of my early chaplaincy formation. I left with many good memories of the Dartmouth community that year and a few friendships that have lasted. I was born and raised in New Jersey (where my family still lives) and I attended Emerson College in Boston where I majored in Communications with a concentration in radio. For a decade after graduation I worked as a disc jockey at WNTI 91.9FM in New Jersey and Kjazz 88.1FM in Los Angeles as well as producing a summer music festival in my hometown. I was happy working in the music business but around my 29th birthday, very close to the time of the death of Pope St. John Paul II, I began to sense an invitation from Jesus to become a priest. So after much prayer and openness to God's providential plan I met the Dominican Order in 2006, entered in 2008 and was ordained a priest in 2015. What a ride of grace and mercy it has been!

As this introduction is coming to you for our summer newsletter publication I have had the opportunity now to be with the Aquinas House community for three terms. The pace of campus life has been warmly welcomed and the opportunity to get to know students, faculty and visiting alumni is a joy. Of course as priests we are anchored in the sacramental care of souls but bringing our charism of the Order of Preachers and our life as friars to the AQ community for almost two decades now adds a greater depth. The highlights have been the encounters with students from our programming like the popular Monday night community dinners, trips, and bonfires to name just a few. The conversations, laughs and meaningful moments in the faith as I get to accompany those here at Aquinas House and in the Dartmouth community and beyond have been a precious occasion to rise up to the words of St. Paul: "But we have this treasure (the apostolate) in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us." (2 Cor.4:7) Amen! I look forward to my time at AQ and how God is calling me to serve and preach as a son of St. Dominic. Let us pray for each other!

-Fr. John, O.P.



Clockwise from top left:

-The courageous Winter Carnival Polar Plunge crew

-Working with the Missionaries of Charity in Boston during a spring break mission trip

-A very competitive game of Archery Tag on our Spring Retreat

-Group photo from Spring Retreat - our theme was "Friendship"

-AQ Trivia Night



Some views from the Triduum this year at AQ.



Congratulations, Class of 2023!



100 Years of Aquinas House

Next year marks a centenary for Aquinas House, and with the previous years' effort of weathering covid, it nearly passed by without notice. January of 2024 marks one hundred years of Catholic ministry at Dartmouth. It was then that the Newman Club was founded at St. Denis with the help of students and professors. The club would separate itself from the parish and be renamed Aquinas House in 1952, but the soul of it was the same.

Mark your calendars for **May 4** of next year, when our usual spring trustees and overseers meeting will be **open to all alumni!**

We are planning an Aquinas House reunion with Mass, cookouts, hiking, and presentations on our history. We are also planning mini-reunions on the east and west coast with gathering for drinks and appetizers, more historic essays and photos in our newsletters, and a possible pilgrimage.

More details to follow soon!