



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



# AT A GLANCE

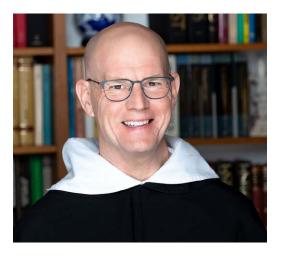
- Our Mission statement: Impelled by the Catholic faith and the Dominican mission, Aquinas Institute of Theology educates men and women to preach, to teach, to minister, and to lead
- Founded in 1925
- + Sponsored by the Dominican Central Province of St. Albert the Great
- + In partnership with the Dominican Southern Province of St. Martin de Porres
- + Designated as a Center for Institutional Studies by the Order of Preachers
- ✤ 12 full-time faculty
- ✤ 12 full-time administrative staff
- 100 students
- 14 Dominican student brothers
- + Up to twelve full and partial merit and/or need based scholarships awarded annually
- 1,900 graduates in a wide range of ministerial positions through the United States including Catholic healthcare mission leaders, parish leadership and pastoral associates, university campus ministers, non-profit executive leadership, social justice advocates, hospital chaplains, youth ministries, academic administration, college professors, high school theology teachers

The development staff have made a sincere effort to ensure information contained in the annual report is accurate and complete. If you were a contributor to Aquinas between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 and your name has been omitted, misspelled, or is listed incorrectly, please advise us by calling 314-256-8856 or email **give@ai.edu**.

# A Message from the President

#### Dear Friends of Aquinas Institute,

Amidst continued disruptions and challenging circumstances on many fronts through the world, Aquinas Institute has stood strong. As we continued to negotiate the rapidly changing landscape of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, its new variants, and the social and political chaos that mark our times, Aquinas Institute's Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni have demonstrated strength and perseverance and an enduring commitment to advancing our mission preparing the next generation of Church leaders to go forth into the world preaching the Gospel in word and deed.



The list of those to whom I am grateful to this year is quite long. I begin by recognizing work of our dedicated Board of Trustees who

have actively guided our institution through this challenging time with wisdom and steadfast morale and financial support. Our faculty have effectively worked to adjust to the challenges of remote and in-person learning while continuing their excellence in scholarly pursuits. In the 2020-2021 academic year, Aquinas was able to keep our building open and offer in-person classes. I am grateful to all the members of our community for carefully following the needed safety protocols measures that ensure the health and well-being of all members of our school community. Our staff has worked tirelessly in taking on extra duties to ensure the safety and success of our administrative operations. I am especially proud of our students who have admirably strived for excellence in both their studies and ministries, and our many alumni all over the country have worked on the frontlines in Catholic health care and ministries selflessly serving those most greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the following pages, you will see highlights of yet another remarkable year at Aquinas Institute followed by a long list of our many friends who have very generously supported our mission. We consider each one of you our partner in mission – the work that we are undertaking and the many successes you will see in the coming pages would not be possible without your support.

Aquinas Institute of Theology has an almost hundred-year tradition of offering excellent theological education and ministerial formation to the next generation of preachers, teachers, ministers, and leaders, and I have no doubt that thanks to your generosity, we will continue to build on our great tradition. I am humbled and honored to lead Aquinas Institute, and I am deeply grateful to all the members of our community. Your commitment, support, hard work, and love for our school gives me hope for its future.

Be assured of the prayers of the Dominicans and the Aquinas community and please keep the needs of Aquinas Institute in your prayers as well.

Fr. Mark E. Wedig, OP, PhD PRESIDENT

# 2020-2021: FAITH, FOCUS, AND FLEXIBILITY

### **COVID-19 Response**

Aquinas Institute has not escaped the upheaval caused by the global pandemic.

Aquinas Institute implemented a series of comprehensive protocols based on CDC recommendations and the best scientific information available to ensure the health and safety of our faculty, staff, students and all visitors to the campus. While continuing to follow the protocols and recommendations of government officials and medical experts for a safe school environment, we trust that God will watch over us to ensure our good health and safety.

We are committed to the principles that underlie the mission and identity of Aquinas Institute. This includes a search for truth that is carried out in a community dedicated to the service of the Church and the broader world through our preaching and teaching. As Dominicans and Catholics, we recognize the primacy of the common good over our individual desires or preferences. In a particular way, we strive to be good stewards of the gift of life and health that we have received graciously from our God. As part of this stewardship, we realize we must be responsible in keeping ourselves and others safe. Aquinas put into place many safeguards-mask requirements, social distancing, increased sanitizing of surfaces-in order to keep faculty, staff, and students safe.

Even with coronavirus in our midst, Aquinas was able to host in person classes through the entire 2020-2021 academic year. Socially distanced and safe, we experienced no outbreaks or classroombased transmissions.

The Dominican friars and the Aquinas community continue to hold all those suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic in prayer within our own community and around the world, and to stand in solidarity with marginalized and disenfranchised people who disproportionately bear the effects of the pandemic.







### The 26th Annual Great Preacher Award

In November of 2020, in our first ever virtual event, Aquinas Institute of Theology presented the Great Preacher Award to Dominican friar, Fr. Harry M. Byrne, OP, Professor Emeritus of Aquinas Institute of Theology and Fr. Jude Siciliano, OP, Itinerant Preacher and Founder of the Preacher Exchange.

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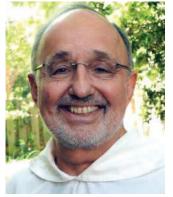
Over 500 people attended the event to honor Fr. Harry and Fr. Jude and to support Aquinas Institute. The funds raised at this event are used to support our internationally recognized preaching program and assists us in preparing the next generation of men and women who, like our esteemed honorees, will go forth and preach the Gospel in word and deed.

Aquinas Institute would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who attended and to our 30 event sponsors. This was our first ever virtual event and it was wonderful to see that half of our attendees were from outside of the St. Louis region. Creating and producing a virtual event in such a short amount of time could never have happened without the support of Bob Berkowitz and his team at Multivision. Over \$100,000 was raised at this event to support the Great Preacher Award. We would also like to give a special thank you to our Committee Chairs, Angie Doerr and Dr. Dan O'Brien, and to all of the Great Preacher committee members.

Our world desperately needs preachers who, like these two fine men, offer a word of hope by sharing the Good News of God's love and mercy, and Aquinas Institute works to form preachers to follow in their footsteps.



**Reverend Harry Byrne, OP** *Professor Emeritus, Aquinas Institute of Theology* 



**Reverend Jude Siciliano, OP** Itinerant Preacher & Founder of the Preacher Exchange



# **AQUINAS SCHOLARS PROGRAM LAUNCH**

"The laity are called to become a leaven on Christian living within society" - POPE FRANCIS

Aquinas Institute strives to be a catalyst for evangelization through lay formation and education. In the spirit of our patron, St. Thomas Aquinas, the Dominican saint and doctor of the church, Aquinas Institute of Theology is proud to offer the Aquinas Scholars Award. This award provides multiple full-tuition, merit-based scholarships for full-time, residential students in select masters programs. The Aquinas Scholar Award also provides a stipend for books and housing, as well as work-study opportunities. In the fall of 2020, we welcomed the following five new lay students as our inaugural class of Aquinas Scholars. All five students completed the first year of studies and are excited to welcome the next class of Aquinas Scholars into community life. They have regularly expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to study and for the benefactors of the Aquinas Scholars Program.

### **Inaugural Class of Aquinas Scholars**

**Peter Swindeman,** of Cincinnati, Ohio, received a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and theology from Purdue University and Marian University's joint program. At the Aquinas Institute of Theology, he is working toward a Master of Arts in Theology. Peter was drawn to Aquinas Institute because of its focus in Thomistic studies and reputation in health care ministry. He is interested in pursuing a PhD in healthcare ethics after he graduates from Aquinas.





**Olivia Walter** majored in Women's and Gender Studies and minored in Psychology and Middle East and North African Studies as an undergraduate at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania. She then continued her studies at Saint Louis University, where she earned a Master of Social Work degree. Olivia is pursuing a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies in order to gain greater theological perspective and a fuller understanding of how theology can be applied to the lived experience of people.

**Mary Raquel Schulenberg,** is originally from Los Angeles, California and graduated from Loyola Marymount University. After her time at LMU, Mary Raquel spent 10 years working as an administrative assistant before making her way to the Aquinas Institute of Theology to pursue a Masters of Arts in Pastoral Studies. She is excited to be a part of a community where she is able to deepen her relationship with God.



Andrew Morales is a recent graduate from Holy Cross College in Notre Dame, Indiana where he studied Theology. Andrew is excited to be at Aquinas in order to learn more about theology and dive deeper into his faith. "There can be a tendency to look at the world in a negative way but that Theology can bring a lot of things to light." Andrew is very excited to have the opportunity to become immersed in a community. During his time at Aquinas, Andrew hopes to use the time to discern the next steps in his journey and find the best way to live his faith.





**Evan Bednarz**, originally from the Chicago area, received a bachelor's degree in rhetoric from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign in 2011. Following graduation, he did mental health social work at private and public agencies for individuals with chronic and severe mental illness. In 2016, he entered religious life, discerning a monastic vocation with the Trappists in Snowmass, Colorado. After three years there, he spent nine months volunteering at the Houston Catholic Worker, *Casa Juan Diego*, assisting in their ministry of hospitality for migrants and refugees from Central America and Africa. Having experienced both the contemplative and active elements of Catholic faith, Evan is drawn to the perennial Christian question of 'contemplation in a world of action,' inspired by the thought of John of the Cross, Søren Kierkegaard, Dorothy Day and Hans Urs von Balthasar.



"I can't stress enough the impact of their gifts and how truly grateful I am now and always. I hope they understand the scope of their gifts and how their help has changed the trajectory of our lives forever.

MARY RAQUEL SCHULENBERG

# Congratulations to our Graduates

On May 14, 2021 Aquinas Institute celebrated with our 25 new graduates. Baccalaureate and Commencement looked a bit different this year beyond masks and social distancing— the services were hosted at St. Pius V Church on South Grand. The graduates and a limited number of their wellwishers were invited to Aquinas Institute after Commencement for a small but lively reception. Of our newly graduated students, four were also ordained to the Priesthood. Our prayers are with our newly ordained and newly graduated alumni.





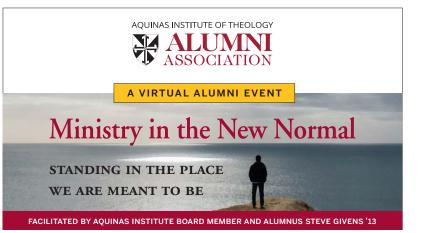


# Aquinas Alumni Association

Over the last year, a steering committee composed of eight alumni met to find the the best way for Aquinas Institute to support and engage the school's alumni. If you are an alumnus of Aquinas, we hope that you have made your way to ai.edu/alumni to update your contact information and share your story.

The Alumni Association hosted their first event in June 2021, a virtual retreat facilitated by Steve Givens, '13 (Spiritual Direction). Participants were led through a reflection on the Beatitudes and what it means to be 'standing in the place we are meant

to be' over the last year. Those in attendance welcomed the opportunity to quietly reflect on the experience of living through and ministering in a pandemic, and the chance to break into smaller groups for reflection and discussion on how to apply and integrate what we have learned this last year to upcoming ministerial planning and future challenges.



In June, the Alumni Association held two free virtual retreats titled "Ministry in the New Normal," facilitated by Aquinas Institute Board Member and alumnus Steve Givens '13.

# What Sets Us Apart from Other Theology and Ministry Schools?

Our mission statement — Impelled by the Catholic faith and the Dominican mission, Aquinas Institute of Theology educates men and women to preach, to teach, to minister, and to lead — identifies our school as an educational institution that is both Catholic and Dominican. Most people have a good sense of what it means to a Catholic school and Aquinas Institute is grateful and proud to be a part of the Catholic religious tradition and all it stands for and offers. However, what truly sets us apart from other fine Catholic schools is our Dominican identity. The following "Hallmarks of the Aquinas Way" describe what we believe sets Aquinas Institute apart from other schools of theology and ministry.

### Hallmarks of the Aquinas Way

- + Our engagement with and access to our Dominican heritage in the 800-year-old rich intellectual tradition of the Order of Preachers and its extraordinary contribution to the intellectual and pastoral life of the Catholic Church.
- At the heart of all our programs is the unique Dominican approach to education that holds as its primary purpose a search for Veritas, the One who is Truth himself, Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we seek to encounter in all of our programs, coursework and campus life, and whom we seek to share through our mission of evangelization, namely to be useful by preaching and teaching for the salvation of every person.
- Our theological orientation is informed and built upon the scholarship and intellectual legacy of the Dominicans of the River Forest School of Thomism and its interpretation of our great patron, St. Thomas of Aquinas whose study of the Word of God led him to engage the world positively in a pursuit of Truth that was expansive, comprehensive, and all-encompassing.



- Aquinas Institute likewise undertakes its intellectual mission in the same spirit of St. Thomas by following his example. We seek the Truth of Christ as it has been revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures and Tradition of the Church and we strive to understand it by our engagement with others, with men and women from various cultures, backgrounds, and social strata, which is the contemporary reality of the Church and the world in our own time and place.
- At Aquinas Institute, we place our theological study at the service of what Dominicans call the "Holy Preaching." The Holy Preaching is not a discrete experience confined to a few minutes from the pulpit; rather for Dominicans it is an expression of our shared life, where as a community we seek to make a comprehensive and dynamic response to God's presence in our lives and the world. Building on and from the Dominican preaching charism, we form men and women in a living community where professors and students learn from one another and where those who study with us are well-prepared to go forth into the world, preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

For more information about Aquinas Institute, please visit **ai.edu** 



# Cooperative Agreement between Aquinas and the Vincentians of the Western Province

Aquinas Institute of Theology and the Western Province of the Congregation of the Mission [the Vincentians] recently entered into a ministerial cooperation and facilities sharing agreement in order to further their respective educational and religious missions.

"This new venture represents most importantly a promising partnership between Aquinas Institute and the Vincentian priests and brothers for strengthening our respective missions by collaborating on projects where institutional and mission goals coincide, especially in the areas of education, formation, and evangelization" says Fr. Mark Wedig, OP, president of Aquinas Institute.

With Aquinas and the Vincentians sharing the same midtown building for their respective administrative, ministry, and academic offices, the two Catholic organizations plan to also share faculty and programming, as well as local and regional outreach for the initial and ongoing formation of ordained ministers in the Catholic Church. "The Vincentians have had a long mission tradition in the St. Louis Archdiocese and elsewhere in serving the formation and education needs of the clergy. This mission to the clergy is near and dear to the heart of our Holy Founder, St. Vincent DePaul. The partnership with Aquinas renews our mission and commitment of service to the clergy," says Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., the Provincial Superior of the Vincentians Western Province. A memorandum of understanding provides further direction for future collaboration between these two Catholic entities.

The Vincentian priests and brothers of the Western Province follow Jesus Christ, evangelizing the poor, in the spirit and after the manner of their founder, St. Vincent de Paul. In Word, Sacrament and Service they serve the poor, educate young people, form holy priests, and spread the Gospel to the world. The Vincentians of the Western Province sponsor DePaul University, the largest Catholic university in the United States, serve in more than twenty parishes, preach parish missions, work as hospital chaplains, assist with the formation of future priests in seminaries across the United States and lead a substantial mission in the Region of Kenya.

# With Gratitude to Dave Wenzel Outgoing Chair of the Aquinas Board of Trustees

When Dave Wenzel officially stepped down as Chair of the Board of Trustees at the 2021 May Board meeting, many people including his fellow trustees and members of the administrative leadership team, expressed their gratitude to Dave for his outstanding service to Aquinas Institute. Many spoke of the ways in which his commitment and vision has shaped Aquinas Institute at a critical time in its history. Others noted that his efforts leave a legacy that is evident in our strong administrative leadership, a greatly improved financial picture, and greater mission cohesiveness, and still others mentioned his integrity, generosity of spirit, and good judgement.

Thus, on behalf of the entire Aquinas community, it is with great gratitude that we recognize and thank Aquinas Alumnus, Dave Wenzel for his service to our school during his seven year tenure as the Chair of the Board of Trustees. It is hard to overstate the contributions that Mr. Wenzel has made to Aquinas Institute as he has generously shared his time, talent and treasure with our school. His love for the Dominican Order, and his unwavering commitment to the Aquinas mission has guided his every action and decision, and his business acumen, and deep experience in finance and strategy mark his service to Aquinas.

Dave began full time studies at Aquinas in the Fall of 2000 and saw it as merely a sabbatical from his business career, however, he claims that his time studying at Aquinas Institute remains the richest intellectual and spiritual experience of his adult life. He often remarks that his friends and colleagues are much more interested in his theological studies than his MBA at Harvard Business School!

Dave has invested countless hours and significant financial resources at Aquinas during his time as Board Chair and we would like to extend our thanks to Dave's family, his wife Jill Wenzel and their four children for supporting Dave during his years as Board Chair and so generously sharing him with our school.

Dave has enjoyed a successful career at Edward Jones and is set to retire at the end of 2021. We are told he has a full post-retirement agenda planned and are pleased to share that his plans include serving the last two years of his term at Aquinas Institute where he intends to focus on long-term strategic planning.

Thank you, Dave, we are forever in your debt.



<sup>44</sup> It has been my delight to serve on the Board and it is my hope that the legacy of that service is that Aquinas is here for another hundred years.<sup>99</sup>

DAVE WENZEL

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★ Alumnus

# And Welcome to the Incoming Chair

As one alumnus steps down as Board Chair, we are pleased to announce another alumnus will serve as Chair of the Board of Trustees, Dan O'Brien, Ph.D. Before his retirement, he served as Senior Vice President, Ethics, Discernment and Church Relations at Ascension. For nearly 28 years Dr. O'Brien served as the executive lead for the ethics department that serves Ascension's national health ministry. Dr. O'Brien was responsible for providing ethics and theological leadership, analysis and guidance for Executive Leadership throughout Ascension and its subsidiaries in support of the strategic decisions that promote the Mission of Ascension



as a ministry of the Catholic Church. Dr. O'Brien will bring his experience in Catholic health care and mission to his work leading Aquinas Institute.

Dr. O'Brien graduated with a Master of Arts in Theology from Aquinas in 1988. Following that, he attended the Pontifical University of St. Thomas in Rome before attending Saint Louis University where he completed the PhD in Health Care Ethics in 2000. Many in the Aquinas community have met Dr. O'Brien at any number of events through the years, Aquinas is fortunate that he will continue to be involved in life at Aquinas.



With gratitude to the following individuals and companies for their generous support of Aquinas Institute of Theology.

# **Aquinas Scholars**

We are grateful to the following friends of Aquinas Institute, each of whom have made a two- or threeyear commitment of \$25,000 to \$35,000 per year which makes it possible for Aquinas Institute to offer full-tuition merit scholarships with housing and book stipends to academically gifted lay men and women who desire to serve the Church.

#### Anonymous

Jennie Weiss Block, OP \*

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Windsor Wealth Management

### Word and Deed Annual Fund

With gratitude to our Annual Fund Committee and to our donors who helped us to meet our Annual Fund goal of \$155,000.

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### Great Preacher Award

Thank you to all those who supported the 2020 Great Preacher Award.

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Alliance of Catholic Health Care Ascension U Jennie Weiss Block, OP **\* U** Congregation of the Mission Western Province MAHCM Cohort 8 **\*** MAHCM Cohort 7, Bellow Fellows **\*** 

≭ Alumnus | ★ Both Alumni |

♥ Five Years of Consecutive Giving | ★ Deceased

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The development staff have made a sincere effort to ensure information contained in the annual report is accurate and complete. If you were a contributor to Aquinas between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 and your name has been omitted, misspelled, or is listed incorrectly, please advise us by calling 314-256-8856 or email **give@ai.edu**.

🗱 Board Member \mid ≭ Alumnus 📔 ★ Both Alumni 📔 🛡 Five Years of Consecutive Giving 📔 🗄 Deceased

# Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Financial Overview

(As of June 30, 2021)

of Funds	Source	Amount	Percent
	Tuition and Fees	\$880,316	27%
	Gifts (unrestricted)	\$274,800	9%
	Gifts (restricted)	\$251,000	8%
	Grants (includes PPP, HEERF/CARES, Employee Retention Credit	s) \$957,523	30%
	Contributed Services/ Subsidy	\$525,159	16%
	Investment Income	\$258,483	8%
	Shared Facilities Revenue	\$61,500	2%
	Total	\$2,626,614	100%
Funds	Source	Amount	Percent
	Education Programs	\$1,451,244	58%
	General Administrative	\$979,010	38%
	<ul> <li>Physical Plant and</li> <li>Depreciation</li> </ul>	\$93,488	4%
	Total	\$2,523,742	100%



# Ways to Support Aquinas Institute

We welcome your participation in The Aquinas Way and encourage you to consider the many ways to support Aquinas Institute:

Annual Fund Gifts Planned Giving Legacy Society Volunteer

### Become an Aquinas Volunteer

There are many volunteer opportunities at Aquinas Institute and we welcome your participation in our community. We look forward to the end of the pandemic when we can safely welcome you to campus. Our volunteer opportunities include:

Special Events Front Desk Development Office The Aquinas Library Building and Grounds

Please contact Erin Hammond to discuss how you can get more involved at Aquinas Institute: **hammond@ai.edu** 

### The Dominican Blessing

From an anonymous thirteenth century source

May God the Father bless us, May God the Son heal us, May the Holy Spirit enlighten us and give us eyes to see with, ears to hear with, and hands to do the work of God with, feet to walk with, and a mouth to preach the word of salvation with, and the angel of peace to watch over us and lead us at last, by our Lord's gift, to the kingdom.

Amen





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