



THE YOUTH

St. Thomas, known as the Angel of the Schools, was born in the fortress-castle of Rocca Secca, near Aquino, a town near Naples in southern Italy. When he was a child, a terrific thunderstorm killed his nurse and little sister in the very room in which he was soundly sleeping. The words Ave Maria were the first his baby lips were heard to utter. His education was begun at the age of five in the famous Ben-edictine abbey of Monte Cassino and continued in the University of Naples. He often visited the Dominican church in Naples and finally joined the Dominican Order. His brothers opposed his holy vocation and imprisoned him in a tower of the family castle. A woman of evil life was sent into his room to seduce him, but with a burning brand he drove her away and marked a cross upon the wall. Kneeling to pray he fell into an ecstasy during which two angels girded him with a miraculous cord and assured him that God granted him the gift of perpetual chastity. The "St. Thomas cord" is worn by members of the Confraternity of the Angelic Warfare for the preservation of personal purity. This Confraternity still flourishes especially among young students. Accompanied by a prayer to St. Thomas, the devout wearing of the cord is a sacramental recommended by the Church.

THE STUDENT

The angelic youth was eventually lowered from the castle tower in a basket and escaped to Cologne, Germany. Thomas' professor, St. Albert the Great, foretold the future greatness of his exceptional pupil. Albert and Thomas taught together at Paris and at Cologne. When Thomas received his doctoral degree in theology at the University of Paris, his companion and beloved friend was the illustrious Franciscan St. Bonaventure. When asked by Bonaventure the source of his heavenly knowledge, Aquinas pointed to the crucifix and said "There is my book." Once Thomas visited his Franciscan friend and found him deeply absorbed in writing a biography of Francis of Assisi. Thomas left in silence saying "Let us leave a saint to write the life of a saint."

THE THEOLOGIAN

The Church has praised the voluminous writings of St. Thomas as a treasure-house of sacred doctrine. His SUMMA THEOLOGICA was declared by one of the popes to contain as many miracles as articles. He purged the writings of Aristotle and established a complete system of Christian theology. He wrote the liturgical office for the feast of Corpus Christi and composed beautiful hymns in honor of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. His devotion to the hidden God in the tabernacle was at times ecstatic. On one occasion Our Lord spoke to him from a crucifix, saying "You have written well of me Thomas, what reward will you have?" To which the humble friar replied "None other than thyself, O Lord."

THE SAINT

Thomas loved three things especially - the Church, the Dominican Order and the poor. He never spoke an unkind word to anyone. He was accessible to rich and poor. His humility was no less admirable than his angelic purity. He refused the cardinalate offered to him by Clement IV and the abbacy of Monte Cassino offered by Innocent IV. His power of concentration was so great that he underwent a surgical operation without feeling any pain. He could dictate to four secretaries on different subjects at the same time without losing the thread of his reasoning. He was compassionate to the sick some of whom he cured miraculously. Our angelic Doctor left us many remarkable sayings. When his sister asked him how to become a saint, he replied "Will it!" While on a last visit to this sister, the Countess of San Severino, his raptures were so frequent that he had to be fed like a child. He was homesick for heaven. His deceased brother Raynold appeared to him bearing the palm of martyrdom and said "You are in good state, my brother. Hold fast what you have, and finish your course as you have begun. Know also for certain that none of your Order, or very few, will ever be lost." When urged to continue writing, the saint replied "The time of writing is past for me. My writings now seem as mere straw to me." St. Thomas died at the age of 49 in the Cistercian monastery at Fossa Nova on March 7, 1274.



THE GLORY

The death of St. Thomas was miraculously made known to several holy persons. Master Albert of Cologne said "My son in Christ, Thomas of Aquinas, the light of the Church is dead. God has revealed it to me. He was the flower and glory of the world!" Friar Albert of Brescia saw in a vision St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Thomas in glory. The Doctor of Hippo said "Thomas is my equal in glory but surpasses me by the aureola of virginity." After the death of Thomas, ninety-six miracles, mostly cures, were submitted as evidence for his canonization. A man who was totally blind placed his eyes on the body of the saint and gained his sight immediately. St. Thomas was canonized in Avignon on July 18, 1323 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1567. Pope Leo XIII issued the following Brief in 1880: "In virtue of our supreme authority, for the glory of Almighty God, and the honor of the Angelic Doctor, for the advancement of learning and the common welfare of human society, we declare the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, Patron of all Universities, Academies, Colleges and Catholic Schools; and we desire that he should be venerated by all."

PRAYER

Dear Saint Thomas, gentlest of saints, you loved Jesus so tenderly and wrote so well of him, that he made you the glory of the Church and a shining star in the order of St. Dominic. Encouraged by your kindness and charity, I beg you to obtain this favor I now ask Plead my cause with your beloved Jesus so that I may serve him faithfully in this life and enjoy him forever in heaven. Amen.

One Decade of the Rosary



Saint Thomas Offering His Writings to the Church.
by Ludwig Seitz
(Rome, Vatican)

(late nineteenth century German School)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS



Doctor of the Church
Patron of Schools