



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

January 2021

Dear students, faculty and staff of Aquinas College,

In recognition of St. Thomas Aquinas Week, January 28-February 4, and national Catholic Schools Week, January 31-February 6, I write to express my gratitude for your contributions to the blessing that is Catholic education in the Diocese of Grand Rapids. Families in our diocese have access to a lifetime of learning built upon the message and mission of Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of our Catholic faith.

As we celebrate the gift of Catholic school education, we can be proud of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From early childhood through higher education, our plans for safe instruction have protected our learning communities while still supporting students' academic success and formation as disciples of Christ. I congratulate the College on completing the fall semester with in-class instruction as safely as possible.

Aquinas College offers students a distinctively Catholic education in preparation for their future careers. It is notable that the College has again been recognized by U.S. News & World Report as one of the nation's top-performing liberal arts colleges in terms of social mobility, helping students who face economic challenges complete their degrees and get jobs after graduation. I also congratulate the College on raising more than \$1 million for a new scholarship fund named in honor of Sister Mary Aquinas Weber, O.P., which will create new opportunities for students to realize the value of an Aquinas College education. I look forward to continued collaboration with Dr. Kevin Quinn and his advisors as they build on the tradition of ensuring all students have the opportunity for Catholic education at the higher education level.

There is much to be proud of in our 31 Catholic diocesan elementary and secondary schools. This year, we are serving more than 6,000 students, including our largest kindergarten class in 11 years. We are prioritizing safe, in-person instruction and providing remote instruction in situations that require it. We have updated the mission statement for our alliance of Catholic schools: "We prepare students to seek and fulfill God's plan for learning and life."

I invite every Catholic in the diocese to support our Catholic schools. One way is by prayerfully participating in the livestream of our annual Catholic Schools Week Mass at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, February 2. I will celebrate this Mass. Please join on grdiocese.org or facebook.com/DioceseofGrandRapids.

May we continue to take inspiration from the "Angelic Doctor," St. Thomas Aquinas, as we work together to ensure that our Catholic schools are places where students learn, serve, lead, and succeed.

Know of my prayers for you and for success in your academic endeavors!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

Enero de 2021

Estimados estudiantes, profesores y personal de Aquinas College,

En reconocimiento a la Semana de Santo Tomás de Aquino, del 28 de enero al 4 de febrero, y a la Semana Nacional de las Escuelas Católicas, del 31 de enero al 6 de febrero, les escribo para expresar mi gratitud por sus contribuciones a la bendición que es la educación católica en la Diócesis de Grand Rapids. Las familias de nuestra diócesis tienen acceso a una vida de aprendizaje basada en el mensaje y la misión de Jesucristo, la piedra angular de nuestra fe católica.

Al celebrar el regalo de la educación escolar católica, podemos estar orgullosos de nuestra respuesta a la pandemia de COVID-19. Desde la primera infancia hasta la educación superior, nuestros planes para una instrucción segura han protegido nuestras comunidades educativas al tiempo que siguen apoyando el éxito académico y la formación de los estudiantes como discípulos de Cristo. Felicito a la Universidad por completar el semestre de otoño con instrucción en clase de la manera más segura posible.

Aquinas College ofrece a los estudiantes una educación distintivamente católica en preparación para sus futuras carreras. Es de destacar que U.S News & World Report ha reconocido nuevamente a la Universidad como una de las universidades de artes liberales con mejor desempeño del país en términos de movilidad social, ayudando a los estudiantes que enfrentan desafíos económicos a completar sus títulos y conseguir trabajos después de graduarse. También felicito a Aquinas College por recaudar más de \$1 millón para un nuevo fondo de becas nombrado en honor a la Hermana Mary Aquinas Weber, O.P., que creará nuevas oportunidades para que los estudiantes se den cuenta del valor de la educación de Aquinas College. Espero seguir colaborando con el Dr. Kevin Quinn y sus asesores a medida que se basan en la tradición de garantizar que todos los estudiantes tengan la oportunidad de recibir una educación católica a nivel de educación superior.

También hay mucho de qué estar orgulloso en nuestras 31 escuelas primarias y secundarias diocesanas católicas. Este año, estamos atendiendo a más de 6,000 estudiantes, incluida nuestra clase de Kinder más grande en 11 años. Estamos priorizando la instrucción segura en persona y brindando instrucción remota en situaciones que lo requieran. Hemos actualizado la declaración de misión de nuestra alianza de escuelas católicas: "Preparamos a los estudiantes para buscar y cumplir el plan de Dios para el aprendizaje y la vida".

Invito a todos los católicos de la diócesis a apoyar a nuestras escuelas católicas. Una forma es participar con oración en la transmisión en vivo de nuestra Misa anual de la Semana de las Escuelas Católicas el martes 2 de febrero a las 10 a.m. Celebraré esta Misa desde la Catedral de San Andrés. Únase con nosotros, haciendo click en: grdiocese.org o facebook.com/DioceseofGrandRapids.

Deseo que podamos seguir inspirándonos en el "Doctor Angélico", Santo Tomás de Aquino, mientras trabajamos juntos para asegurarnos de que nuestras escuelas católicas sean lugares donde los estudiantes aprendan, sirvan, lideren y triunfen.

¡Estoy en oración por ustedes y por el éxito en sus esfuerzos académicos!

Sinceramente suyo en Cristo,

Reverendísimo David J. Walkowiak
Obispo de Grand Rapids



Kevin G. Quinn, Ph.D.
President

January 2021

Dear Partners in Catholic Education,

This year, Aquinas College celebrates Catholic Schools Week (Jan. 31-Feb. 6) alongside Saint Thomas Aquinas Week (Jan. 28-Feb. 4), our annual celebration of our patron saint. It is fitting, as Thomas is considered the Church's greatest theologian and philosopher as well as the patron of Catholic School education.

The diocese's updated mission statement, "We prepare students to seek and fulfill God's plan for learning and life," emphasizes that students and God's plan for their learning and lives are at the core of the diocese's purpose. That is exemplified through the diocese's COVID-19 plan, "Living Our Mission in Today's Reality," which prioritizes safe and prudent in-person instruction as well as remote instruction when needed.

In addition, the updated theology curriculum framework for early childhood through 12th grade, the implementation of inquiry strategies in mathematics instruction, and the enrollment of the largest kindergarten class in 11 years demonstrate a vibrant and growing community.

Aquinas College is also growing. For the second year, U.S. News and World Report ranked Aquinas on its list of national liberal arts colleges and top performers in social mobility, acknowledging the College's support of students who face economic challenges. Another example of our efforts to fulfill the mission that the Dominican Sisters~Grand Rapids established for us is being realized in the more than \$1 million raised for a new scholarship fund named in honor of Sister Mary Aquinas Weber, O.P. The scholarship supports students with financial need from all areas of study, allowing them to realize the value of an Aquinas College education.

Saint Thomas Aquinas said, "Wonder is the desire for knowledge." I remain grateful to the students, families, clergy, faculty, staff, alumni and volunteers who embrace the gift of wonder in their commitment to provide academic excellence in a faith-filled environment.

We are honored to partner with Bishop Walkowiak and the 31 elementary and secondary schools in the diocese to engage students in a Catholic education from pre-K through masters programs and opportunities for lifelong learning.

To that end, I invite you to experience Aquinas College as an extension of your schools. We welcome you to our beautiful campus.

We celebrate you this week and beyond!

Sincerely,

Kevin Quinn, Ph.D.
President