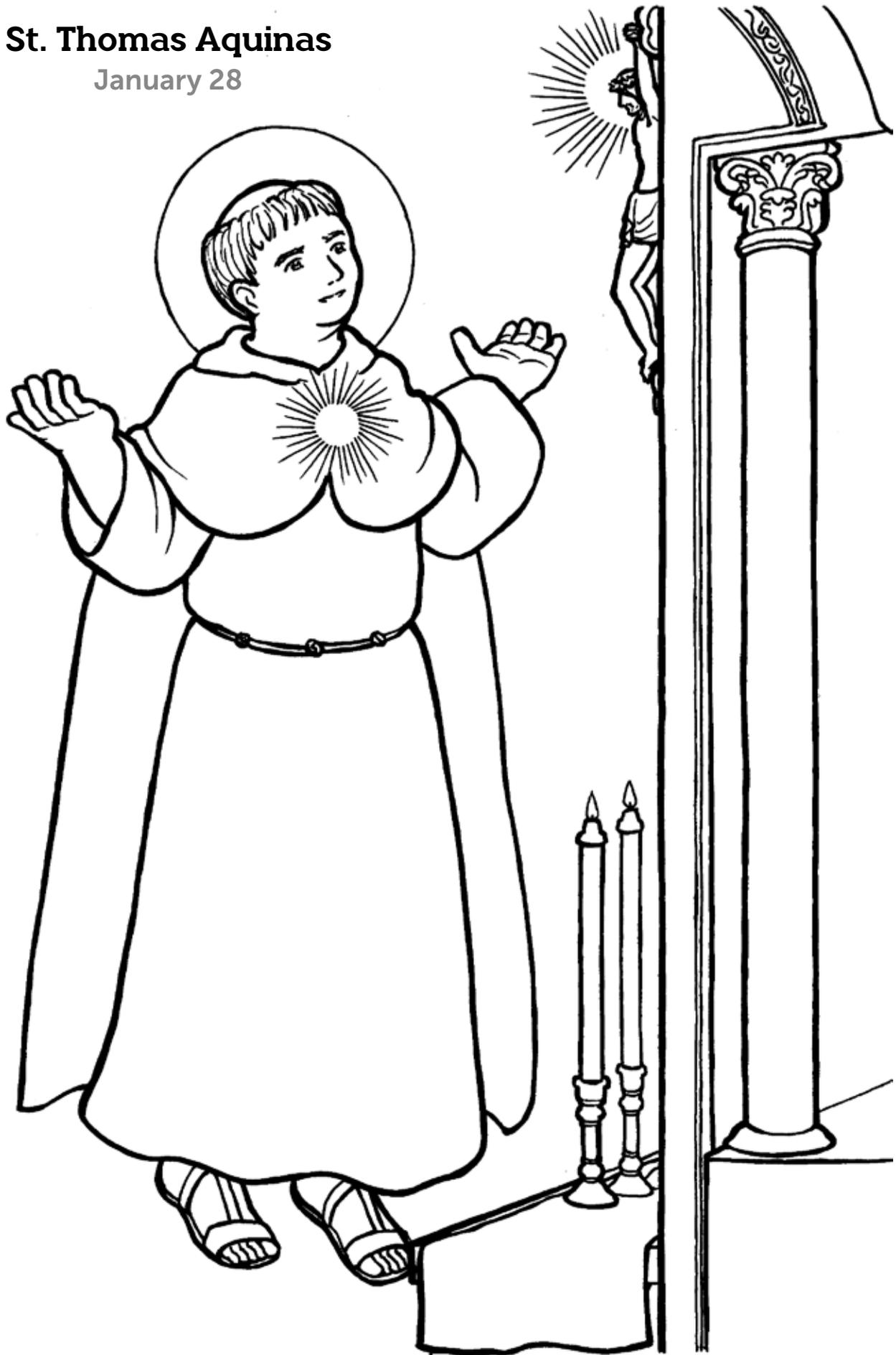


St. Thomas Aquinas
January 28



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1225–1274 • Italy

St. Thomas Aquinas's nickname was the "Dumb Ox." He was born into a noble Italian family, who wanted Thomas to have a high and important position in the Church. But Thomas was attracted to a life of poverty, study, and service. At nineteen years of age, he joined the Dominicans, much to his family's disapproval. Soon after he joined the Dominican order, Thomas's brothers came with a troop of soldiers and kidnapped him on the road while he was traveling by foot. His family kept him imprisoned in a castle for two years, but during that time Thomas studied theology and memorized large sections of the Bible. Seeing that they could not change Thomas's mind no matter how hard they tried, Thomas's family finally let him go.

Thomas became a student at the University of Paris. He was very smart, but he never showed off. The other students gave him the nickname the "Dumb Ox" because he was big and always quiet and humble. One of his classmates, thinking that Thomas had not understood the day's lesson, offered to explain it to him. Thomas gratefully accepted his help. But then his classmate stumbled over a particularly difficult part in the lesson and became confused. To help his classmate out, Thomas humbly explained the lesson to *him* because he had understood it all along!

Thomas wrote many books, the most famous being the *Summa Theologica*, a long and important work that explains the Catholic Faith. Thomas also loved Jesus in the Eucharist very much. He wrote about the Eucharist with great reverence, and after he was finished, Jesus appeared to him in a vision and told him, "You have written well of the sacrament of my Body." During this vision, Thomas's body miraculously levitated, floating off of the ground. Thomas also wrote many beautiful Eucharistic hymns. We sing two hymns that he wrote, "O Salutaris" and "Tantum Ergo," during benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Near the end of his life, Thomas had many mystical visions. These visions filled him with awe and wonder about the mystery of God. He stopped writing because he knew that nothing he wrote could ever compare to God. He said, "I can write no more. I have seen things that make my writings like straw." Thomas became ill, and when the pope summoned him to visit a council, a meeting of the Church, Thomas collapsed on the road and soon after died at about fifty years of age. St. Thomas Aquinas, help me to be a humble student of God!