St. Thomas Aquinas

1225–1274

Feast Day:
January 28

St. Thomas Aquinas was born in Italy around the year 1224. His father was a count and he had three older brothers and several sisters. When he was nineteen years old he joined the Dominicans, but his family disapproved. So when Thomas was on the road, his brothers came with a troop of soldiers to kidnap him! They imprisoned him in a castle for two years. Thomas studied theology and memorized large sections of the bible until his family let him go.

Then Thomas studied at the University of Paris. He was smart, but never showed off. The other students nicknamed him the "Dumb Ox," because he was big and always quiet and humble. One of his classmates, thinking that Thomas was too slow to understand, offered to explain the day's lesson to him. Thomas gratefully accepted his help. Then his classmate became confused over a difficult part in the lesson. Thomas had to explain the lesson to his classmate because he had understood it all along!

Thomas wrote many books, the most famous being the *Summa theologia*, which explains a large part of the Catholic faith. Thomas also loved Jesus in the Eucharist very much. He wrote about the Eucharist with great prayer. After he had finished, Jesus appeared to him in a vision and told him, "You have written well of the sacrament of my Body." During his vision, Thomas' body levitated, floating off the ground. Thomas also wrote many beautiful Eucharistic hymns. We still sing two hymns that he wrote, "O salutaris" and "Tantum Ergo," during Benediction.

Near the end of his life, Thomas Aquinas 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.

Thomas died at about 50 years of age. He is the patron saint of Catholic schools, colleges, and universities.