

# SHARING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

## *St. Thomas Aquinas & Humility and Excellence*

This month's saint is Thomas Aquinas and our focus is both humility and excellence. This means humbly recognizing both our limitations and our strengths, and striving for excellence in all we do, while at the same time giving glory to God for our abilities and achievements.

### IN DEPTH

Humility and Excellence are important virtues. However, humility is often misunderstood as acting like you aren't good enough, and excellence is often misunderstood as having the best things or being the best at something. So these can seem like opposites, but Catholics understand them as connected virtues!

Humility is the recognition of God as the ultimate source of all goodness, truth, and power. So we shouldn't hide our gifts, but celebrate them as something that comes from Him. It is an honest awareness of our relationship to God, ourselves, and others. Excellence is the fulfillment of our God-given potential, which means growing in virtue and living in alignment with God's will. It is not success, but sanctity—becoming the best version of ourselves as He made us to be!

These virtues require honestly admitting our faults, sins, weakness, and limitations, as well as our talents and gifts that God has given us to use for the good of others. Our biggest challenge this month will be overcoming pride and self-sufficiency, so be sure to pray for each other as we face this challenge together!

### CONNECTION TO THE SAINT

St Thomas Aquinas is a Doctor of the Church, a title given to those who have made significant contributions to our understanding of the Scriptures. He is known for his great theological work, the *Summa Theologia*. It is a masterpiece of philosophical and theological study that helped form or support many of the Church's teachings. Many of the hymns he wrote in the 13th century are still sung in Catholic churches around the world, including at the beginning and end of Adoration. However, in speaking of his own work, he described it as nothing but straw compared to the reality of God, and he credited everything good he ever did to God working through him. He understood that God was the true source of his excellence and desired only to do His will and love Him through everything he did, especially his work, study, and interactions with others.



## WAYS STAFF CAN PRACTICE THE VIRTUE

- **Encourage Honest Feedback and Active Listening:** Create an environment where everyone feels comfortable giving and receiving constructive feedback. Humility as a group means being open to hearing each other's perspectives without defensiveness, allowing everyone to learn from one another.
- **Serve with Purpose:** Recognize that your role, no matter how small, contributes to the organization and others. Even routine work has purpose. Offer your efforts to God and approach each task with gratitude and care, knowing that meaningful work reflects God's plan for you.
- **Acknowledge Limits and Seek Help:** Encourage a culture where it's okay to admit when someone doesn't know something or needs assistance. Humility means being honest about areas for improvement and reaching out for support, whether within the team or through external resources.
- **Celebrate Others' Successes:** A humble team knows that everyone's success contributes to the group's mission. Make it a habit to celebrate individual and team accomplishments without fostering competition or envy. This builds a spirit of shared joy and mutual encouragement.
- **Encourage Responsibility and Accountability:** Excellence requires integrity and accountability. Encourage everyone on the team to own their responsibilities, follow through on commitments, and support one another in achieving goals. Establishing accountability systems can help everyone remain committed to high standards.
- **Evaluate and Reflect Regularly:** Create regular opportunities for the team to reflect on their performance, celebrate successes, and identify areas for improvement. Excellence requires continuous growth, and this can only happen through honest reflection and a willingness to adjust when necessary.
- **Cultivate an Environment for Growth:** Support each team member's professional and personal development. This might include providing training opportunities, offering mentorship, or sharing resources that help each person improve their skills. Everyone can improve in whatever role they fill.