

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Although we would probably deny it, there is something of the control freak lurking in all of us. The desire to dominate and to have power over others, can disguise itself in all kinds of ways.

The need for power is at the root of every form of abuse; emotional, physical, sexual, even spiritual.

The determination to impose our will, to have our own way, to insist that things are done as we want, can play havoc with the lives of the people we live and work with. And havoc with our own lives too.

Friendships are ruined. communities break up, groups collapse, families are divided, and marriages can be destroyed, when we do not allow other people the freedom and space to be themselves.

All of us need space to be ourselves; to be who God calls us to be, and not who others expect us to be.

Happy indeed, are those who discover it. One such happy person was Saint Thomas Aquinas.

His mother was certainly a control freak. When he was five, she sent him to be educated by the monks of the famous Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino, near Naples. She had a plan!

She hoped that little Thomas would grow up and eventually join the community; and that one day he would be elected the Abbot of this rich and prestigious monastery - for God's glory, of course!

But vocations come from the Lord, not from over-ambitious mothers. And the Lord has his own way of dealing with over-ambitious mothers - especially when their ambitions appear so good, and so holy!

Thomas did grow up. But he did not join the Benedictines. He decided to join a new and slightly suspect Order, the Dominicans. The Dominicans were not yet respectable.

His mother was appalled. Her plan was thwarted. So, she had Thomas kidnapped. For a whole year he was kept prisoner in the family home, not far from Naples.

But she could not break his resolve. Nor could the attractive young girls sent to seduce him. Thomas joined the Dominicans. He was sent to study in Paris, and was ordained to the priesthood.

It soon became clear that he was a genius. He began teaching and writing theology. His out-put was prodigious. He could dictate to four secretaries at the same time.

Through lack of physical exercise, Thomas developed an enormous paunch, a huge belly! He grew so fat that his brethren had to cut away a semi-circular piece of the refectory table so that he could sit down to meals with them on the same bench! Yes, they made room for him, literally!

Making room for others is not always easy. Because it often means the loss of some of our own space. Do you make room for others? Do others make room for you?

There is one place where we can find all the room we need, and all the space we long for.

Where is it? It is at the HEART of the Church. But only at the heart. Other parts of the Church can be crowded, cramped, very restricting, suffocating even. As some people have discovered.

Do you feel that there is not enough room for you in the Church? Not enough believing room? Not enough doubting room, thinking room, moral room.... not enough room for you to, be YOU?

If that is how you feel, it may mean that you are too far away from the HEART of the Church. Journey to the heart. Make your way to the space at the center. Join Thomas and all the saints, enjoying the space and the freedom that is called LOVE. There is plenty of room for you!

We celebrate the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas this January 28th. Why not come and journey to the heart of the Church at Mass that day?

Fr. Sean