CONTRIBUTED BY

Sister Grace Agatha,O.P.
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THEN CAME THE LIGHT WHEN---

Dear Public,

To begin at the beginning,there was a problem, a knotty sort of problem, to be solved. How was I to convince anyone else about this,if my own kith and kin failed to see eye to eye with me? You see I am part of a big family and what a family! There are three out of "The Cloth", and three have been wearing different colored habits for years now.

Granted that my older married sister,Ann,is still too busy with her brood to bother about my philosophic worries and that Dave is adding grey hairs daily to a head weary over a case now in court for months,even so my oldest brother, Father Bill,had every right to try to understand because he is an order priest and a teaching order at that! Of course we'll pass over(or around)our love-smitten youngest,Tommy,for he hasn't been able for months to do other than gaze at or dream about his June-bride-to-be! Why,he actually believed(at this point in the proceedings)that Providence is a divinely appointed place for a honey-moon!

This left me only my lovely little O.S.F. Sister,a Franciscan living in the Mid-West. We've so much in common(being not only Sisters in the flesh but first cousins in religion)that I just knew she could help me. Well,that is just where the problem became an intriguing family story.

The action really began with my Easter letter to my Sister Marianna. Lying beside the half-finished heading of the letter to her was a day-old letter from Father Bill. My temperature was up a bit as I began this letter.

Holy Thursday
April 4,1949

Dearest Sister Marianna,

There is a pressure point where things just give and mild explosions follow! Will you be my safety valve? You ought to understand my mental perturbation having

once been in the midst of this delightful family some years yourself. It's a nice family but a most disconcerting one at times. This, I fear, is one of those times and one that may make history.

What is at the source? Just read this letter of Father Bill's and be amazed, too, that our "beloved brother in Christ" has gone very practical on us. Oh, Sister, much as I would like to be in his classes this summer (and much more so would I be thrilled in being with you there) I'll take another summer at Providence without you, to have St. Thomas and his Summa!

Now, will you (like the good little Franciscan you are) take time off from your Easter vacation to tell me reassuringly that one member of our unique family still considers me normal and practical for wishing to return for a second summer to the School of Theology for Sisters at Providence College?

Never have I felt more normal in my life for in St. Thomas I have found the norm or mean to happiness. And practical! Why, when a course of studies makes one truly better spiritually in a way that makes one more efficient as a guide and teacher, what is impractical about it?

Then, Sister dear, will you read this brochure from the Providence School that our Mother General sent me with our summer appointments and pass it on in the hope that some of your Sisters who may not know about this may become interested and perhaps attend? Honestly, it is the most worth-while venture afoot in the whole field of summer school programs anywhere in the country. Personally, I know about 110 Sisters from numerous parts of this country and Canada representing many different communities of sisters who are thoroughly convinced that we need theology for ourselves in order the better to realize our personal spiritual powers and in order to wield a greater influence on others for Christ in our work.

Sister Marianna, to know Truth at St. Thomas' feet is to know God Himself better. After last summer's* study of 'Prima Pars' I feel like a human pebble dropped in the great ocean of Truth, confident that my little ripple will widen and widen as my own spiritual growth makes bigger circles under God's grace and then, in turn, it will spread its influence on to others. Everyone except my own family listens to me, takes me seriously on this matter of studying the Summa of St. Thomas. They call me the "Lady

Theologian of the family." What care I provided they permit me to pursue the Master of all the theologians in peace!

Could it be possible that your Superiors will send Sisters East to Providence? How I'll pray you may get the opportunity to be with me. Selfish, maybe; but it is a grand day dream anyway. Nothing would make me prouder than to be part of a 'study in brown and white' on the same campus with you for even six all-too-brief weeks. A bit of heaven to room with you in Aquinas Hall! We can dream, can't we?

Between scenes could you think up some convincing ideas to use on Father Bill? He's due to teach a class or two at St. Paul's. His big-brother attitude is still as 'throat-catching' as ever, but his personal attitude as a teacher-of-teaching-Sisters is a bit amusing and annoying; at the same time he challenges us to a refutation. You're in on this, too; so will you see what you can think up (or find) by way of sound argument that will straighten out our good professor-brother-priest as to what courses we can safely and profitably pursue.

On second thought, his letter should go on to you in order that you may see what he thinks of this educational venture--Sisters studying Theology!

May the Risen Christ bring His choicest blessings to you all through this blessed season.

Your loving,

Sister Marie Therese, O.P.

P.S. This calls for an extra prayer for prudence and mayhaps some extra postage! It resembles a Christmas gift squeezed into an envelope at Easter time!

Sr. M.T., O.P.

(Father Bill's letter raised the postage bill I'm sure, even as it had raised my blood pressure. From its contents you will see he doesn't yet realize I'm grown up, although I must admit the nick-name still applies.)

Palm Sunday, April 10, 1949

Dear Sister 'Tubby',

Easter Greetings from the priestly member of the clan to the budding lady theologian on the Dominican branch of our family tree....

Now, this isn't exactly my own reaction, sis, but there are many of my colleagues of the opinion that women in general just aren't bent toward

philosophical studies; and, therefore, we can scarcely expect them to be students of theology. Why, our seminarians struggle with St. Thomas yearly....

Why wouldn't it be more profitable for you and more practical for your community to sign you up for a course in Methods in Teaching Religion? After all, you've had a good solid foundation in Baltimore and DeHarbes Catechism in your day. You come from a fine Catholic home; you've always attended Catholic schools; you had the added advantage of a novitiate training and higher Catholic University training. With all this, sis, you've a logical set-up to be as good a teacher of Religion as you are--or ought to be--in your special field, science.

My assignment for the summer is a couple of classes in "Methods for Teaching High School Religion". I envision orderly rows of Sisters in black, brown, grey and white (and with combinations of same) sitting before me whipping up ideas to use in their various classes in September. I'll even welcome you and Sister Marianna in my room (big of me, isn't it?). Thus, you can have a summer together here. You can catch up on your professional reading and maybe work out your plans for next year between times while you bask in the warm friendly sunshine of Sister Marianna's smile for six weeks! Enticing?

Maybe I could write to your Mothers-General and suggest the move. How about it? Just give me the go-ahead-sign and I'll try my pen in your behalf.

Your beloved brother-in-Christ,

Father Bill

(That, to my harried mind, is the best imaginable way to upset a couple of busy Superiors who have no doubt placed every Sister for the summer and winter as well. Leave it to my family to fix things up for us!)

These excerpts from the Providence College brochure were part of that bulk in the Easter to my sister. Here they are as she read them:

" A School of SAcred Theology was proposed at Providence College in 1948 to provide for the adequate education of the Sisters. In this School the Sisters would be given the best possible course in theology; course thatwould aim at full comformity with the theological requirements laid down in the Canon Law . The doctrine of the Angelic Doctor would be taught ,and from the Summa Theologica itself. The courses would be broad enough to include Sacred Scripture,Canon Law and Church History.

Today, more than ever, our Sisters are the teachers and molders of the future Catholic men and women of our country. With generous devotion they labor hours that would scandalize the trade unions to instill a knowledge of things divine and human into their precious charges.... from the freckle-face first grader to the sophisticated college senior. Then stepping down from the desk, they themselves toil during the sweltering heat of summer to master the ultimate in mathematics,natural science and literature.

Likewise the Sisters have sought ever opportunuty to deepen and broaden their theological knowledge for they are in the forefront of the battle where the truths of religion are challenged or misunderstood.

This summer both the FIRST and SECOND YEAR courses will be given, enabling a new group of student Sisters to begin the course. As a large enrollment is expected, those Sisters intending to begin the course this year are asked to submit their applications if possible before March 15,1949.

For all inquiries please address

Director,
Summer School of Theology,
Providence College
Providence 8,Rhode Island "

(Evidently she read them dutifully and passed them on. Anyhow she rose nobly to my defense as you see in her answer to my plea for help. It is a reply worthy of her and her ability. God bless her!)

Second Sunday After Easter

May 1,1949

My dearest Sister Marie Therese,

The delay in answering your letter merely means that it took more time than I ever dreamed it would to meet your challange. Never let it be said that a Franciscan can let her Dominican Sister-in-distress down for even a second. No,not even if it took almost a month to locate a certain Encyclical! I just knew Leo XIII had all the answers you want in his Encyclical "On The Restoration Of Christian Philosophy According To The Mind Of St. Thomas,The Angelic Doctor." Hence, I can't take a mite of credit for this ready refutation for our scholarly brother of the Methods Class. Indeed, I'm amazed he hasn't it on his desk(with all his professional reading ideas for others)!

Only those paragraphs and sentences most pertient to our cause are copied for you:

"...We give you this word of counsel: there is nothing which we have longer wished for and desired than that you should give largely and abundantly to youths engaged in study thepure streams of wisdom which flow from the Angelic Doctor as from a pernnial and copious spring... . All young men,therefore; .. ought to be fed with healtful and strong food of doctrine. Thus being mighty in strength and possessing an armory in which all needful weapons may be found, they will learn by experience to treat the cause of religion with power and wisdom... . Again, we all see the great dangers which threaten family life and even civil society itself... . The words of Thomas have the greatest strength, indeed a resistless strength to overthrow the principles of this new jurisprudence which is manifestly dangerous to the peaceful order of society and to public safety... . But lest the false be drunk instead of the true... take care that the wisdom of Thomas be drawn from his own

fountain... and that the minds of the young from streams which are said to have flowed from thence, but in reality have been fed by unhealthy waters from other springs".

Both of us realize that we cannot give what we do not have ourselves nor can we detect the error unless we know the source,St. Thomas. As the brochure pointed out and as you must have read from St. Thomas yourself e'er now:

> "Those to whom it pertains to instruct others are bound to a more complete knowledge of faith and to believe more explicitly."(Summa Theologica,11-11,6,A2)

Please,dear, don't answer Father Bill's question on summer school just yet, will you? Answer his difficulty on St. Thomas' Theology for Sisters. I'm making a novena and I'll let you know how it comes out first.

Keep me an a <u>big</u> intention in your prayers. St. Thomas can help this time I' m sure.

With love,

Sister Marianna,O.S.F.

( The letter to Father Bill left our convent on May 3 rd. well fortified with Leo XIII's ideas to support my desire to return for more of the course at Providence .
I believe it was May 15-my day as portress anyway- As I sat in the chapel thinking how very close to Divine Truth we in the convent are privileged to be,the door bell chimed. I genuflected and left off meditating at the front door for on opening it I accepted a telegram from the Western Union boy. It was addressed to me! Even though there were no visible signs of trouble labelling it,my feet fairly flew up the steps to the superiors door . Calmly she remarked , "Open it,Sister." I did and read.)

REJOICE- FATHER BILL WILL UNDERWRITE BILLS FOR TWO COPIES OF THE <u>SUMMA</u>
FOR I JOIN YOU AT PROVIDENCE ON JUNE 26th-

SISTER MARIANNA,O.S.F.