

# Saint Thomas Aquinas

1224/25 - 1274

*Saint Thomas* of the counts of Aquino was born in Roccasecca in the area near Cassino.

At the age of five years, his parents sent him to be among the “child oblates” of Montecassino, with the intention of sending him into monastic life with the secret hope that he would become the Prior (head of the religious order) of that glorious monastery and increase the power of the family. Instead, because of the devastation that Montecassino underwent in 1239 on the part of Frederick II, Thomas returned to the family and proceeded with his studies at the University of Naples. Here his vocation matures and he decides to enter the Dominican Order, but the family opposed it not wanting Thomas to enter a poor order. While Thomas was traveling to Paris, seat of the most prestigious University

The first destination was the University of Paris, he then went to Cologne to follow the lessons of Saint Albert the Great, with whom he shared a close friendship. A few years later Thomas returned to Paris, where he quickly became a tenured professor, in spite of the bitter disputes fomented by the secular teachers. By then all of Thomas’ life had been absorbed by the scientific activity which was taking place alternatively between the University of Paris and Italy. The first Parisian magistrate was disturbed by the hostility of the secular teachers, guided by William of S. Amore, to impede the Mendicant Orders of beggars from being admitted to the University.



of that era, he was captured and made prisoner by family members who kept him secluded for a year. During his imprisonment the young Thomas studied and almost memorized the entire Bible.

In this period he also underwent a serious temptation at the hands of his brothers. Seeing that they did not succeed in making him desist with threats, they sought instead to derail him from his religious vocation with enticements. To accomplish this they introduced into the room in which he was locked-up a young woman to tempt him, but the young Thomas grabbed a firebrand from the hearth and fought off the temptress. Shortly thereafter Angels appeared and fastened around his hips a belt of perfect and perpetual chastity.

The resolute conduct of Thomas convinced his sister to become a religious and his brothers allowed him to leave convinced of the goodness of his vocation.

In the spring of 1272, Thomas receives from his superiors the duty to reorganize the teaching of Theology at the University of Naples, then in January of 1274 he was sent by Pope Gregory X to the Council of Lyons. En route together with his faithful secretary, Brother Reginald, he was struck by an illness which brought him to death on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1274 in the Cistercian monastery of Fossanova. He was canonized by Pope John XXII on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1323. In 1567, Saint Pius V declared him “Doctor Angelicus” which is his title of honor together with the official one of “Doctor Communis” or Doctor of the Church.