

On How To Be a Scholar

St. Thomas Aquinas, whose feast we celebrate today, was once asked by a student how to acquire learning. The Angelic Doctor replied:

"You have asked me, dear friend in Christ, how you must study to acquire the treasure of knowledge. My advice to you is based upon this principle: that you go through the rivulets and do not try at once to come to the sea, because we must necessarily go to the more difficult through the less difficult. This, then, is my advice to you:

"Be slow to speak; love purity of conscience; pray often; love to be in your room; be kind to everyone; do not inquire into the affairs of others; do not be too familiar with anyone, because too great familiarity breeds contempt and gives occasion for leaving off study; do not be interested in the sayings and doings of people in the world; avoid all needless running about; imitate the saints and the just; remember every good thing you hear and do not consider who says it; understand what you read and hear; labor to fill the storehouse of the mind; do not inquire into things above you.

"If you follow this advice you will bring forth good fruit in the vineyard of the Lord, you will be able to obtain what you desire."



—Sketch and text by John J. Bednar, C.S.C.