

Our saint today is the patron of all universities and of students given his gifted intellect. In fact, his writings so clearly present the truths of our faith that the Second Vatican Council called for all seminary students to be trained under the guidance of St. Thomas.

Rather than try to cover all the highlights of his life – there are entire books that do this – I thought I would just share a few facts with you.

First, at the age of seventeen, rather than join an established order like the Augustinians or the Benedictines, Thomas joined the Dominicans – itinerant preachers. These were like the theological hippies of the day. His brothers kidnapped him and sentenced him to a room for over a year. At one point, they even sent a prostitute into the room to tempt him. Thomas grabbed a log from the fire and put it between him and the woman.

Dominicans often travelled from town to town. They typically used donkeys as a symbol of their poverty. St. Thomas, who may have weighed about 300 pounds, walked instead. He put the donkey's comfort above his own. He was a keen observer of the natural world, especially animals.

He studied in Cologne under St. Albert the Great. Some of the students called him a "dumb ox" because of his size and the fact that he didn't speak much. But Albert prophetically exclaimed, "*We call him the dumb ox, but in his teaching he will one day produce such a bellowing that it will one day be heard throughout the world.*" St. Thomas' voice certainly still bellows today.

Later in life, it's said that when he wanted to communicate his thoughts, he surrounded himself by four scribes. He would dictate one sentence to one, another sentence to another, and so forth. He spoke four times as fast as they wrote. By the time he finished the fourth sentence, he would dictate the first one to the first scribe. It is thought that if he had a computer, he probably would have written 100,000 pages.

Finally, and most telling of his character, his confessor swore he saw St. Thomas laying prostrate on the floor of the chapel conversing with Christ. A voice came from the crucifix asking him, "*Thomas, my son, you have written well of me. What will you have as your reward?*" Thomas answered, "*Only yourself, Lord.*" Peter Kreeft, a professor from Boston College, says nobody has ever captured the meaning of life in such few words.

For us, St. Thomas teaches us the gifts that God gives are meant for His glory and for building up His Church. May we have his same heart and desire, "All we want is you Lord." St. Thomas, doctor of the Church, pray for us.