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*Saint*  
THOMAS  
AQUINAS



*THE ANGEL OF THE SCHOOLS*



BY RAÏSSA MARITAIN

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**INTRODUCTION**

Here is a book that will introduce you to a friend who will help you get to Heaven. Wouldn't you like to have such a friend? Of course you would, because a friend that wants to get your soul to Heaven is your best friend.

Who is this friend? This friend you will make is a great saint of the Catholic Church and his name is St. Thomas Aquinas.

He is so great that the Catholic Church calls him a "Doctor." And you know what a doctor does: he teaches you about your body and

how your body can be strong and healthy. Well, St. Thomas is a doctor, too, but he is a doctor that teaches you about your soul and how your soul can be strong and healthy. That way it can go to Heaven. That is where the angels live, you know, and that is part of the reason why St. Thomas Aquinas is called "the Angelic Doctor."

So, we should let him teach us, don't you think? But, let's first learn who St. Thomas Aquinas is.

# ✠ Saint Thomas Aquinas - The Angel of the Schools ✠



## I

### THE ANGEL OF THE SCHOOLS IS SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

**T**HIS book is written for those children who know a little about Saint Thomas and love him very much, and it is written also for those who will love him when they know him.

All the saints are lovable because of their goodness which touches God's heart and our own, but each has his particular beauty, just as all flowers are beautiful, but each in its own way.

I want to show you the beauty and holiness which belonged especially to Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church, Common Doctor, Angelic Doctor, Angel of the Schools.

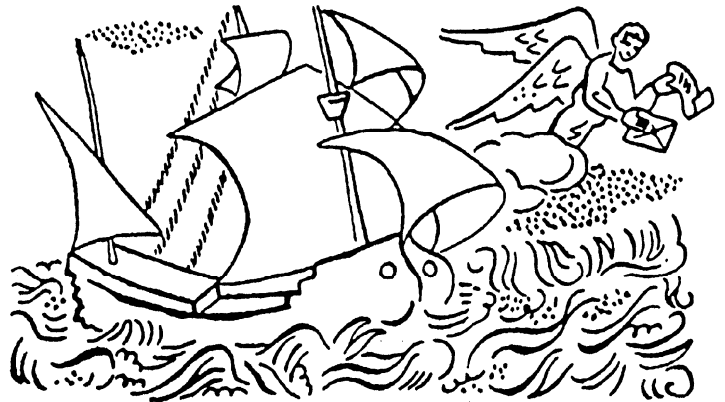
For he has been given all these names and many others, too, to signify his marvelous wisdom, a source of light for all men.

*Doctor*, here, does not mean the one who comes to see us when we are ill, but

a doctor who is charged with teaching. *Angel* means messenger of God.

Angels are not chubby-cheeked babies, nor knights armed with lances. They have neither bodies nor heads—they are pure spirits.

All the pictures of them that we see, simply mean that they are fine, pure, intelligent, strong, burning with the love of God, Whom they see face to face, and devoted to the welfare of man.



These pure spirits are invisible, but it is not only what we see that exists. You do not hear nor see the waves that pass silently in the air; and yet, if you have a radio, you hear at home a concert going on hundreds of miles away. All this music is in those places, and it is here at the same time. And a message sent from any point of the earth goes out into the air, and nothing seems to interfere with it until it reaches the middle of the ocean and the ship to which it is sent.

Nevertheless the waves are material—angels are immaterial, more invisible than the waves and more rapid than lightning, carrying to earth the messages

# ✠ Saint Thomas Aquinas - The Angel of the Schools ✠

of God.

Saint Thomas, to tell the truth, was not invisible. He was even very tall, and very big. But like an angel he was pure and strong and a messenger of divine light. He was charged with a special message for those who are studying, and for those who love the truth with all their hearts, who are looking for it everywhere, wishing to know it and to serve it.



His feast is not observed in parish churches with any particular ceremony, but in the seminaries and Catholic universities it is celebrated with great solemnity; in the morning a fine sermon is preached in honor of the Saint, and in the afternoon the rejoicing takes a very studious form: before an assembly of professors and their pupils, two students take part in a great combat of eloquence and learning, one supporting the affirmative and the other the negative; it is what is called a scholastic dispute, the only kind of a dispute in which each taking part in it is polite and kind to his enemy. And sometimes concerts and theatricals in honor of Saint Thomas are also given on this day.



## II

### SCHOOL

**I**N order to be wise and learned we have to begin in the kindergarten. Do you like school, children? I loved it—in winter I went every day in a sled—it was in Russia.

What a fine time we had! The sun shone, the snow dazzled our eyes, the cold burned our cheeks. And my heart beat with great hope.

I was going to learn how to read. And



all that was written was true. At least, that was what I thought. I know now that it is not so, but it ought to be.

The class was sacred. The teacher was a person apart, her head full of knowledge.

In school everything seemed to me either wonderful or terrible. It was terri-

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ble not to know one's lesson, not to be able to solve a problem. But how pleasant to understand the lesson, to have the fine books and notebooks with lines, the first page ornamented with a drawing—either a bouquet of roses or forget-me-nots, or the head of an angel between two wings.

The atlas with its large thin pages shows every part of the earth. It shows the countries of the world in many colors, and all bathed by the blue ocean. The names of countries and principal towns (Russia, Asia, France, Paris) are written with capital letters.

In most big towns children do not go to school in a sled. Between the house and school buildings there are often not even bits of vacant ground where in spring we can see the first blade of grass pushing through the snow. But everywhere the sense of things is the same. The schools draw us by the promise of truth, just as the spring by promise of fine days to come.

Schoolmasters and mistresses possess and give out knowledge. They know many fine and interesting things. They teach such things as the multiplication table, poetry and literature, and even songs and games.

When children grow up, the desire for knowledge grows too; they want to know about everything that exists, and the causes for it. Then they begin to go to college and to the university.



When Saint Thomas went to Paris for the first time, in 1245, the Sorbonne, which is the University of Paris, did not yet exist. University courses were given in different places; in the convents of the Dominicans, of the Franciscans, and even in the cloister of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. Saint Thomas studied, and later taught, at the Dominican convent of Saint Jacques.

But he came from a great distance, from the Kingdom of Sicily. There were many travelers in the thirteenth century, but they went on foot, on horses, or on



the back of a mule. Travel was not very fast in those times, but in going along one could meditate and pray; the mind and heart did not waste their time.



### III

#### CHILDHOOD

**S**AINT THOMAS was born in 1225 in the castle of Roccasecca near Naples, a real fortress perched on the top of a dry and rugged rock. His father, Count