

St Thomas Aquinas

Feast day - 28th January

St Thomas Aquinas

St Thomas Aquinas was born in 1225, in Roccasecca, Italy. He was a talented child, who studied at university in Naples and wanted to join the Dominicans (a religious order of preachers, also known as the Black Friars). At first, his family were against this, but finally Thomas did join the Dominicans, studying in Paris and then Cologne. There, other students called Thomas 'dumb ox', because he hardly spoke, he was rather fat, and they found him hard to understand. Hearing this, his teacher said "One day this dumb ox will make a bellowing that will be heard throughout the world."

In 1250, Thomas Aquinas was ordained as a priest and began to make a name for himself as an interpreter. His fame as a theologian spread and in 1265 he was called to Rome to serve Pope Clement IV as papal theologian. Whilst there, he wrote some of his best known works of theology, before being sent back to Paris in 1268.

Thomas loved thinking: he would walk for hours around the monastery, working out a problem. He continued to write books, helped by a team of secretaries, as his own handwriting was unreadable. He wrote a great book interpreting twelve centuries of theology to explain Christian teaching. This work was never finished, but is considered to be his masterpiece.

In 1273, whilst saying Mass, Thomas had a profound spiritual experience, following which he stopped writing. In 1274, whilst travelling to a council meeting, Thomas fell ill and died in Italy, near the castle where he had been born.

Thomas Aquinas was quite a controversial figure during his lifetime, but by 1323 his ideas had been accepted and Pope John XXII made him a saint, taking Thomas' book 'Summa Theologiae' as the miracle necessary for sainthood. In 1567 Pope Pius V proclaimed Thomas to be a Doctor of the Church. The works of St Thomas Aquinas are still used by those studying theology and training for the priesthood.