

Rector's Address at Collegiate Dinner, 1st August 2021

Professor Christopher Symes, Chair of Council; Professor Jennie Shaw, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of Arts of the University of Adelaide; women and men of Aquinas.

We gather in this Dining Room every day, several times a day. So much happens here. So much of the fabric of Aquinas is woven here. Occasionally, but in all probability, quite rarely, would any of us give more than a passing glance to the portrait tucked away in the corner near the trophy cabinet. Perhaps some would recognise the name of its subject— David Hogarth – and may know that our dining hall is named in his honour, as was the old dining room that is now the Chapel of St Thomas. But I suspect that many, probably most, wouldn't have a clue as to who this distinguished-looking old judge was.

That's a pity. David Hogarth had an extraordinary life, and he left this College with an abiding legacy. It behoves us to know him.

It would be simple, but perhaps trite just to rattle off his positions and awards – Companion of the Order of Australia, Queens Counsel, degrees in arts and law (with honours) from the University of Adelaide and the University of London, Army Captain, President of the Law Society, Justice of the Supreme Court of South Australia, Chairman of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, President of the Offenders' Aid and Rehabilitation Service, inaugural Chairman of Council of Sturt College of Advanced Education which was to become one of the foundation institutions that formed the University of South Australia, Patron and Honorary Life Member of the South Australian Hockey Association, Vice-President of the Australia-Asia Society, long-time committee member of a range of organisations from the Australia-Japan Society to the Neurological Research Foundation. The list goes on. He was a contributor.

But what defines David Hogarth for me – and his significance for Aquinians – is sourced elsewhere.

I have in my hands a Minutes Book – a record of meetings – of the Aquinas Society of South Australia. Its first meeting was held on 23 April 1929. In that year, David Hogarth was a 19-year-old student at the University of Adelaide – a much smaller place back then. Bonython Hall and the Barr-Smith Library were yet to be built; the School of Law had just a single faculty member. A group of students, academics and professionals – about fifty of them according to the minutes – along with some Jesuit priests and Marist Brothers, had just formed a university club for people who were committed to their faith and values, to support one another in living them out, and to advance their ideas. They called it the Aquinas Society. We read that six years later, in 1935, by which time David was a young lawyer practising here in Adelaide, that he was active in the Aquinas Society, which had started to direct its energies to the establishment of a Catholic residential college for the University. That project was soon to be put on hold, however, as the Second World War hijacked everyone's normal lives – not unlike a pandemic.

David, still in his twenties, joined the Royal Australian Artillery and accepted a commission as Captain (having already spent some years as a reservist). He saw action in Egypt, Palestine, Libya and Greece. It was there that he was captured, after being left stranded with other Diggers on a beach in the Peloponnese in 1941 and was transported to Germany as a prisoner of war. He was to spend the next four years in a series of German POW camps, where he suffered great deprivation and almost died.

They say that a person's true character is revealed when under ordeal. Young Captain Hogarth's response was extraordinary. Somehow, against all odds and in an initiative that I find just amazing, he managed to organise through the Swiss Red Cross who visited the camp when they could, to enrol remotely in a Bachelor of Arts degree in law, literature and languages at the University of London. The Red Cross people organised for books to be delivered to the prison camp intermittently, along with

exam papers. Several times David was unable to take his exams because he was so malnourished, almost starving. But by 1945, he had completed and passed all but one subject for the BA. Just imagine if you can what his study conditions must have been like. It makes trying to study online during our COVID pandemic look rather lame in comparison.

But, while his studies gave David himself goals and purpose, he did not make it all about himself. Being fluent in French and German from school, and having taught himself elementary Japanese while at uni, he gathered a class of his fellow POWs and taught them German, so that they could converse with their guards, and also Japanese – the two languages of the enemy. Despite all that had happened, David did not lose his faith in the goodness of people, and he worked even in those darkest of years to try to bring people to understand one another better. He gave others hope, and the promise of a better future. He was to devote the rest of his life to the same endeavours. Later, as a senior judge, he had a reputation for showing compassion and understanding from the bench. As he was going to sentence someone, he never forgot what it meant to be a prisoner. He had seen people lose hope.

Back in Australia after the war, David took up again his membership of the Aquinas Society and within several years its committee had worked with Archbishop Beovich, and several major benefactors, notably Albert 'Tacky' Hannan, to begin this College. Aquinas exists because them. David Hogarth became a foundation member of the College Council and was to serve on it until just before his death in 1989 – the best part of six decades devoted to the Aquinas Society and then Aquinas College. He believed passionately in the power of education. In fact, in his seventies and in retirement, he again enrolled in an undergrad degree at the University of Adelaide, and graduated with another BA. If he were here with us tonight, he would be delighting in the academic success of our students this last semester – as do we all. He would, I imagine, relish an occasion such as this.

There was nothing especially privileged about the life of David Stirling Hogarth. Raised by a single mum during the First World War, at a time when there was next to no welfare support, he was someone who made his own luck. He was one of those people who, rather than bemoaning their fate, giving in to self-pity, and asking 'Why?', are able to see their circumstances as an opportunity and say, 'Why not?' And here's the thing – when they do succeed, they do not exploit position, power or privilege, but use them for the good of others and the betterment of the world.

That is the spirit that David Hogarth wanted to be the spirit of Aquinas. That is the legacy that has been passed to us.

As we give a passing glance to that small painting in the corner of this room, let us give a lot more than passing attention to what he calls us each of us to be – whatever our circumstances. That's what would make us worthy to follow in his footsteps and honour the hopes that David Hogarth had for Aquinas College.