(Slide # 1) before talk

(Slide # 2)

Welcome! This morning we will be talking about "Leadership and Literature," from our perspective as professors of English and Humanities, but perhaps more importantly, from our perspective as teachers at a college sponsored by the Dominicans, Albertus Magnus College. Both perspectives inform our understanding and our work.

At the heart of Literature lies a story that we will call the narrative. It creates a connection, a ligament that traverses disparate times and history and intersects with diverse peoples and cultures. We use the word ligament carefully: it is derived from the Latin "*ligare,*" to tie or bind. Narrative, as a ligament, is a verbal connective tissue that can bond and unite us as God's people.

Since the acquisition of language, it seems humans have always told stories, and we likely always will; indeed, humans might well be called *homo fabulator* as readily as *homo sapiens.*

It has been said that narrative is a distinctively human trait.

As the poet Matthew Arnold insisted while debating Thomas Henry Huxley, even man's remote ancestor, "the hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits ...carried hidden in his nature something destined to develop into a necessity for humane letters" (http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~ian/arnold.htm).

Today we will be:

1. Discussing narrative as it is formally structured in a curriculum, through the teaching of literature.
2. As we look at narrative, we will use a lens shaped by our sense of the Dominican perspective on truth—indeed, the Dominican insistence on truth—and its integration into daily life in a way that impacts us, and maybe even changes us.
3. We will argue that if literature and consequent reflection yield important truth, leadership, as we will define it, is one way of enacting, of living that truth—those truths; in fact, meaningful leadership in ways large and small can transform the world.

(Slide # 3)
Dominican Donald Goergon, in his 1997 article "The Pillars Revisited: A Fresh Look at Dominican Spirituality," pointed out, "Deep within the Dominican spirit lies an urge toward integration, balance. Dominican spirituality is an integrative, integrating, integral spirituality. We see this manifest in the life of Dominic himself. …He proposed a new and more effective approach to preaching in the south of France [that} was grounded in the awareness that what we proclaim cannot be separated from the witness of the lives we live, that who we are and what we do are integrally tied together" (Donald Goergen, OP. *Spirituality Magazine*; volume 13, July-August 1997).

Do we live what we say we believe?

We know that Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican tradition emphasize both *contemplare* **and** *aliis tradere* (to contemplate and give to others the fruits of one's contemplation). We have these words (in Latin) ringing the new Academic Center at our College.

Literature offers an excellent example of the "*contemplare*" and leadership offers an excellent example of the "*aliis tradere*" of Dominican spirituality.

(Slide # 4)
Timothy Radcliffe OP, in his book Sing A New Song: The Christian Vocation, observes, "every culture lives by stories, narratives that shape our perception of the world and of ourselves, which tell us what it means to be human" (Sing A New Song. Springfield: Templegate. 1999. p.13). Radcliffe's sense of narrative and its importance in the search for truth are clear. Part of his belief in (indeed his passion for) narrative comes from Radcliffe's belief in the critical impact of words themselves:

(Slide # 5)
"the words that human beings speak to each other offer life or death, build community or destroy it" (Radcliffe 31). Humans must use words with reverence, he argues, for this "implies a humility before the truth and the other person" (Radcliffe 20). Thus, "to use words is almost a divine vocation" (Radcliffe 18).

What Timothy Radcliff affirms in his writing coincides with what we have come to understand in our teaching of literature: the search for truth can

unfold directly through words—the use of words, the valuing of words, the listening to one's heart through words. When we read literature both with our minds and our hearts, we are indeed engaged in the search for truth. In short, we can search for the truth, and discover it, in the telling of stories through narrative. If words carry the power to transform because of the connections and insights they birth, it follows then that leadership can be the product of such transformative power. Leadership, in turn, gives rise to action, an action informed by compassion and values—the same values found in the Gospels.

(Slide # 6)
However, when we use the word "leadership," we need to point out that we are suggesting a new paradigm—a circular one—where the individual, let's call him the seeker, is at the center of a journey—and ***the leader*** is a facilitator who is a catalyst for discovery. In this circular model all hierarchal linearity is dissolved.

This model of leadership is one best defined by author Ken Blanchard's idea that true leaders are those who bring out the best in others—ones who lead others to realize—come to understand—themselves (cf. Blanchard and Hodges. The Servant Leader. Nashville: Countryman. pp. 21, 53).

Our model is obviously unlike the hierarchal, top-down, linear model in which a leader is someone in formal authority who tries to persuade others through motivation, or charisma, or force. Our circular model suggests a leadership that often inspires. Moreover, inward growth is a necessary outcome/by product of this leadership. And, perhaps most importantly, this leadership can be subtle but operative.

(Slide # 7)
This circular model of leadership is *animated by*, *enacted through,* literature, which, given its universality, is the touchstone of truth finding.
Literature leads us to self-discovery and enables us to come to grips with who we are and where we are. Insofar as it provides a pathway, we can use literature as a guide as we walk the long road to self-knowledge that, in turn, affects how we act, what we do.

(SLIDE #8)
The power of literature is that it is a rendering of life!

[Pause]

(SLIDE #9)
Its power rests in its ability to help us understand the world and our lives.

[Pause]

(SLIDE #10)
Literature has the ability to provoke our deepest desires and inspire reflection.

[Pause]

(SLIDE #11)
It reminds us of basic truths about our heartfelt longings.

[Pause]

(SLIDE #12)
Literature can offer views that change us. (Some would call it a *transformation*). We can learn truth though narrative which cannot be learned experientially. So often we assume that: "Because I can think <u>about</u> what others are thinking, I think others are thinking what I'm thinking!" Literature offers a powerful vantage point into not only others' lives, but into how others see the world.

(SLIDE #13)
Literature is the springboard for reflection that yields a different, sometimes more accurate viewpoint.

(SLIDE #14)

Literature can help us learn to act according to our highest values, to discover what is beyond "price."

(SLIDE #15)
Literature can ennoble us, calling us to a deeper sense of who we are and imbuing us with compassion for others.

The Dominican emphasis on truth is operative here as we discern what stories we will tell, share, and listen to. Truth must ultimately affect the way we live our life, the way we live what we as Catholics say we believe (Goergen 1). Truth rests in our choice of what stories will transform us.

In all cases, literature (we are using the term broadly to mean any genre, any literary account, including anything from the canon to contemporary writing, read for purpose or pleasure) is a means to encounter the world in order to understand it—and ourselves. Author Anna Quinlan says "all of [literature] is really only finding ways to name ourselves, and, perhaps, to name others around us so that they will no longer be seen as strangers" (How Reading Changed My Life. New York: Ballantine. 1998. p. 21). Created by living beings, literature (narrative) urges expansion of understanding, offers guiding principles (either explicitly or implicitly), and encourages self-discovery; it is a type of leadership that can promote action and moves us in the right direction.

Literature illustrates the dictum: "explore inner space; discovery is not only for far-flung stars" (author unknown).

(SLIDE #16)
For purposes of illustration, we decided to draw on elements of our own Albertus Magnus College curriculum with two Humanities General Education courses, *Reading Texts in Context I* and *II*. (They have been taught here at the College for many years.) As we do so, we need to keep in mind the definition of Humanities, derived from the Latin "*Humanitas,*" meaning a study of the human condition.

With each of the texts in these two Humanities courses, we focus on four basic questions:
Who am I?
Who am I in relation to others?
Who am I in relation to the world?
Who am I in relation to God?

These four questions touch on self, others, and God. They represent facets of being, being which is sometimes ugly, sometimes frightening, sometimes disappointing, sometimes breathtaking, sometimes beautiful─but necessary to truth in all its dimensions. We are reminded of when, after John Kennedy was assassinated, his brother, Robert, said that the words which sustained him the most (in fact he carried a copy of them in his breast pocket, and they are inscribed on his gravestone) were those of Aeschylus:
"In our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop, until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God" (Robert Kennedy, speech in Indianapolis, Indiana, on Martin Luther King's assassination, April 4, 1968).
http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89365887

(SLIDE #17)
Reading Texts in Context—Humanities I starts with a study of the Bible as Literature, specifically, Genesis 1-11 Meaning beginning, Genesis portrays the evolving relationship between a dessert tribe and its God. The emphasis here is on covenant; mutual promises forged from a struggle to understand each another. In the stories we read in Genesis, some of which center on deception and betrayal, we also encounter forgiveness and hope. Conflicting emotions and ideas that are paradoxical, illustrate man's attempt to come to terms with his relationship with God and to know better himself and his place in the world.
As students move through the readings, they gain a sense of early man's concerns 3,000 years ago, but they are also encouraged to reflect on the similarities among searches then and now. Man is a questioning being: for *Homo Sapiens*, the need to know is integral to his existence. Learning the narrative of early man is an appropriate way to begin the Humanities course.

(SLIDE #18)
Moving along chronologically, we next read Medea, a Greek play from the 4th century B.C. Right away, we are presented with two contrasting value systems back to back: Hebraic and Greek. The ethical code of the Hebrews can be said to develop in stages and reaches its embodiment in the 10 commandments. This is very different from Greek society whose emphasis is on right conduct in the city-state—in the here and now. The story of Medea is a story of a woman scorned. This play resonates with readers because it concerns relationships, expectations, human pretension, and the motives behind behavior. Readers can understand the feelings that result

from deep betrayal. When she decides to kill their two sons—conceived in her marriage to Jason, Medea shows full recognition of her tragic flaw, which is that she will endure the guilt—no matter how horrible—but the laughter of her enemies she will not endure. Certainly *kindermord*, murder of one's own children, is antisocial and pathological.

But this play taps into humans' deepest fears and shows the consequences of succumbing to baser instincts. Our own strengths and demons are highlighted in the intense struggle of someone who allows emotions and pride rather than reason and duty to govern her behavior. This play asks that we consider the difference between justice and revenge. It eventually gives rise to a consideration of modern situations such as those of Susan Smith and Andrea Yates, as well as Eliot Spitzer and Bill Clinton.

(SLIDE #19)

The third work in Humanities I is Beowulf, an epic, although some teach the Iliad as an example of epic poetry—more about that in a moment. Central to this literature is the concept of the Anglo Saxon hero which was very much dependent on physical strength, complete loyalty to one's king and relationship with a band of fellow warriors (*comitatus*). Beowulf battles Grendel, the monster, then Grendel's evil mother, and finally, as an aging king, a fierce dragon. Beowulf offers a black and white portrayal of heroism: with no direct belief in an afterlife, but rather that man's destiny was ruled by the personification of fate called "*wyrd*," the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons relied on great deeds and resultant fame to sustain reputation and memory of one's greatness after death—to achieve a type of immortality. In its clear portrayal of the heroic, even in the face of overwhelming difficulty and imminent death, the hero goes forth with a sense of foreboding but with complete resolution. The monster, Grendel, is alienated from that society; the Anglo Saxons had a word for such a concept—they called it "wraecca" which meant wretchedness resulting from exile; isolation away from communal life, from support. Readers inevitably contemplate what life would be like lived in isolation alienated from family and community. Given our age of technology with ever-increasing globalization, Beowulf provides an interesting backdrop for a consideration of the notion of what alienation looks like in the 21st century.

What does heroism in our world mean concretely? How might a reading of Beowulf affect our decisions about which political candidates to support?

(SLIDE #20)

Humanities I may also include a reading of the Iliad. This is the story of Achilles, the hero of the Iliad, who epitomizes Greek manhood. His rage, his wrath, is provoked early on in this epic poem because he is dishonored by Agamemnon, the Commander of the Achaean forces. His anger and self-centeredness result in his withdrawing from the war. He eventually rejoins the battle, but at the expense of many lives lost—including his best friend, Patroclus. This story is about anger, but it's also about reconciliation. In Boston, the Iliad is used in a therapeutic program for disturbed Vietnam veterans suffering from post combat stress syndrome as a way of teaching forgiveness.

The Oxford classicist Colin MacLeod, in an article from Boston College Monthly, Winter 2008, entitled "the Great Poem, Why the Iliad Matters," insists that ancient literature continues to be relevant. MacLeod wrote the following commentary on Book 24 of the Iliad:

(SLIDE #21)

"The Iliad is great not least because it can speak authentically for pity or kindness or civilization without showing them victorious in life. Its humanity does not float on shallow optimism; it is firmly and deeply rooted in an awareness of human reality and suffering….And so to enjoy or appreciate the Iliad is to understand and feel for human suffering…to feel whatever sorrows we have as part of a common lot, and so to endure them more bravely"
(http://bcm.bc.edu/issues/winter_2008/features/the-great-poem.html).

(SLIDE #22)

Colin MacLeod also quotes this observation by French writer and mystic Simone Weil, from Weil's essay "Iliad: Poem of Force":

"For the sense of human misery is a precondition of justice and love. He who does not realize to what extent shifting fortune and necessity hold in subjection every human spirit, cannot regard as fellow creatures nor love as he loves himself those whom chance has separated from him by an abyss…. Only he who has measured the dominion of violence, and knows how not to respect it, is capable of love and justice"
(http://bcm.bc.edu/issues/winter_2008/features/the-great-poem.html).

(SLIDE #23)
We should mention here that in both our Humanities courses, as we focus on these texts, we include a look at scholar and anthropologist Joseph Campbell who addresses the notion of the hero across time and cultures and expands upon it with the idea of the heroic journey, which is analogous to our own paradigm of circularity. He proposes that the hero is someone who has given his or her life to someone or something bigger than himself. Campbell emphasizes the importance of deeds in his insistence that there are two types of hero: one performs the physical deed in which the hero acts courageously in battle or saves a life, the other is the spiritual deed, in which the hero learns to experience the supernormal range of human spiritual life and thus returns home profoundly changed. Campbell called this the "heroic monomyth" (adapted from Joyce's Finnegan's Wake); it is *always a circular journey* (The Hero with a Thousand Faces. New York: Meridian. 1956 p. 30). We inevitably compare these notions of hero with contemporary heroes, which after 9/11 has shifted even more. Today, individuals regard public servants such as fire fighters and police officers as heroes. But always there is the compelling question of who is a hero and what is heroic in, and to, the modern world? In answering this and other complex questions, students reflect on their own value systems and cultural standards; Radcliffe's assertion that "every culture lives by stories, narratives, that shape our perception of the world and of ourselves" (Radcliffe 13) is especially relevant here.

(SLIDE #24)
Using Campbell's thesis, reflection on Heroism can result in transformation:

"Where we had thought to travel outward, we will come to the center of our own existence, and where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world" (Campbell 25).

(SLIDE #25)
In our fourth reading, the medieval romance Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the dilemma of maintaining integrity while fulfilling a promise is presented. This is not just the story of a promise, but an oath, one sworn publicly before one's king and before God. After bravely standing in for his King, Arthur, in accepting the challenge of the Green Knight, Sir Gawain

must embark on a journey leading to almost certain death, and he must do so because as a knight of the round table, his promise is his bond and his life. The virtues of a medieval knight include loyalty and bravery, but honesty is just as critical. In the face of fear and temptation, Gawain keeps his promise, but he eventually resorts to deception in order to save his life. He accepts the gift of a green garter that he believes will save his life, and then he lies to his host about the gift. What is the price of a promise kept but at the cost of a lie? In the end of the story, the Green Knight attempts to reassure Gawain by telling him that his "sin" was that he loved life too much. The Green Knight forgives him, but Gawain will not be consoled.

He believes he has failed in his quest because he has forsaken his oath.

In this literature, we are offered an example of the force of truth, and readers are likely to imagine the rest of Gawain's life after the poem ends, as he vows to wear a green garter as a public sign of his failing.

If literature contemplated yields action that is in the service of truth, what might that truth be? It lies as much in the questions as in the answers:

How does one redeem oneself from failure?
Where is the mantle of self-forgiveness?
How do we accept our own flaws and limitations?
How do we live our lives after a grievous sin?
Does failure on the quest mean failure of the quest?

These are issues Sir Gawain and the Green Knight asks the reader to examine in her own life. Questing and questioning: the role literature plays in helping shape our true self for "being" in the world.

(SLIDE #26)

The final literature we read in Humanities 111 is Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales. We focus on the General Prologue and several of the tales told by pilgrims journeying to Canterbury Cathedral to pay homage to the shrine of the martyred saint, Thomas a Beckett. Here the journey is a literal one, a frame narrative of stories told while traveling. Each story provides a glimpse into the society of 14th century England. Readers find in the Prologue portraits of pilgrims that are succinct character sketches, carefully revealed through physical details and descriptions. Each of the pilgrims is a

type, so from this literature there is recognition of the universality of mankind, but each is also an individual, so the uniqueness of every pilgrim is underscored. Readers come to interact with the text as they see the truths revealed in ourselves through our words and our stories, our dress and our habits. These are the subjects of Chaucer's gentle satire. Do we form impressions of others based on the same observations? How accurate are our perceptions?

(SLIDE #27)

Consider, for example, two of the pilgrims: the Parson who carefully guards his people, his flock, living in poverty as he responds to every parishioner's need; he is contrasted with the showy sanctimonious behavior of the Prioress, who wears a coral and green rosary on her arm and superficially weeps publicly and is preoccupied with eating daintily.

Hypocrisy, greed, lust, and selfishness—as well as devotion, duty, and constancy—these are but a few of the traits Chaucer includes in his pilgrims. Readers recognize these same traits today and the challenges they bring.

(SLIDE #28)

Humanities 112 begins with A Man For All Seasons, Robert Bolt's 20th century play about the 16th century humanist and Catholic martyr, Saint Thomas More. Bolt's interpretation of More, bolstered by the recently deceased Paul Scofield's memorable portrayal of More on stage and film, is one of rock solid faith. Bolt refers to More's "adamantine sense of self" (A Man For All Seasons. New York: Vintage. 1988. p. xii). Just as firm was the faith which guided More's conscience. In the play More reaches a line he will not—he cannot—cross: a denial of his Catholic belief in the face of King Henry VIII's insistence that he agree with Henry's right to divorce his queen. Ever the consummate lawyer, More does initially attempt to avoid his fate by hiding in what he calls the thickets of the law. His strategy is to remain silent on the issue (insisting that the legal maxim of *qui tacet consentire*, "in silence lies consent," should frame his stance as implied consent rather than opposition). But his strategy ultimately backfires. In addition, Richard Rich, More's n'eer do well friend eventually resorts to perjury—something More did not foresee. But when forced to take a stand, More will not forsake his faith, and he goes to his death willingly, giving up a life and family he dearly loves. More's final words were purported to be: "Friend [executioner], be not afraid of your office. You send me to God" (Bolt 162). An account of the execution in the *Paris News Letter* noted that

More said before he died he was the King's good servant, but God's first (Richard Marius. Thomas More. New York: Knopf. 1984. p. 514).
The ultimate test that Thomas More faces is a powerful one in modern terms, even if difficult choices today rarely include death as a consequence. Reading this play begs the question, How far would we go to protect our spiritual self? What are our limits of conscience? Do we regard, as did More, our pledged word to be so sacred that to break an oath would be akin to violating our own lives?

(SLIDE #29)
More tells his daughter, "When a man takes an oath, Meg, he's holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. . . . And if he opens his fingers *then*—he needn't hope to find himself again" (Bolt 140). Bolt observes that More found something within himself, without which life was valueless. When that was denied him, Thomas More was able to grasp his death (Bolt xiii).

(SLIDE #30)
Finally, More's insistence to the powerful and corrupt Cardinal Wolsey that "when statesmen forsake their own private conscience for the sake of their public duties . . . they lead their country by a short route to chaos" (Bolt 22), resonates strongly in contemporary society, especially in the ethically troubled areas of politics and business. Bolt argues that today the self is an equivocal commodity—there are fewer and fewer things we will not bring ourselves to do. More's unequivocal sense of self offers an important mirror to reflect upon our own conscience and actions.

(SLIDE #31)
Hamlet: Shakespeare's famous play about ambiguity and opposites: appearance vs. reality, certainty vs. uncertainty, madness vs. sanity, life vs. death. Here is a play Harold Bloom calls "unsurpassed in the West's imaginative literature" (Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human. New York: Riverhead. 1998. p. 384). He notes that it is very difficult to generalize about Hamlet, "because every observation will have to admit its opposite. He is the paradigm of grief, yet he expresses mourning by an extraordinary verve, and his continuous wit gives the pragmatic effect of making him seem endlessly high-spirited, even as he mourns" (Bloom 409). The play is a series of cruxes. (Dr Richard J. Schoeck in a lecture delivered on June 29, 1988 at the University of Trier, Germany, made the same

assertion about Shakespeare's King Lear). "Crux" in Latin means cross—a critical point or vital moment. This literature (albeit, it is a performance script meant to have completion of meaning take place with its performance, a living performance) provides an example of a man who is confronted with the sudden death of his father, the King, and the o'er hasty marriage of his mother to his uncle—who becomes King. It is a story of a young scholar, an intellectual, who promises to avenge the death of his father—who appears to him as a ghost. It is the story of missed opportunities and mistaken perceptions. Hamlet asks that we enter an imaginative world in which duty wrestles with ambition and corruption. There are no definitive answers given. This story of a young Prince offers questions upon questions, many of which are answered only to raise new ones; Yale's Maynard Mack calls it is a play of interrogatories: "Hamlet's world is preeminently in the interrogative mood" (Everybody's Shakespeare, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993 p.109), beginning with the opening words in Act I, scene I: "Who's there?" We live our lives mediating between disillusionment and idealism; we all move through the realm of unknowing.

(SLIDE #32) The use of words and stories can lessen human isolation as well as expand knowledge and self-awareness. C.S. Lewis insisted, "We read to know we are not alone."[1]
We have all been sons or daughters; while we may not have been commanded to avenge a slain father, we can readily respond to Hamlet's anguish about filial obligation and the demands of duty in a world riddled with deception and deceit. Reading and subsequently contemplating, lead us to a better understanding of ourselves. Every human interaction, every story, can lead to more knowledge, more empowerment, more transformation.

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[1] Lewis himself may not have said these exact words. They are voiced in the movie about Lewis, *Shadowlands*, written by William Nicholson. However, Lewis voiced similar sentiments at the end of his book An Experiment in Criticism: "Literature enlarges our being by admitting us to experiences not our own. They may be beautiful, terrible, awe-inspiring, exhilarating, pathetic, comic, or merely piquant. Literature gives the entrée to them all. Those of us who have been true readers all our life seldom realize the enormous extension of our being that we owe to authors. We realize it best when we talk with an unliterary friend. He may be full of goodness and good sense but he inhabits a tiny world. In it, we should be suffocated. My own eyes are not enough for me. Even the eyes of all humanity are not enough. Very gladly would I learn what face things present to a mouse or bee.

In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in a Greek poem, I see with a thousand eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself: and am never more myself than when I do." (Quoted in Jack: C.S. Lewis and His times. George Sayer. New York: Harper & Row. 1988. p. 244).

(SLIDE #33)

Candide, written by Voltaire in the eighteenth century, is a satirical piece of literature. Voltaire uses a biting lens as he scrutinizes events and characters and comments on religion, politics, social customs, and war. Known for his passionate belief in human justice, Voltaire's theme throughout much of his life was "*l'ecrassez l'infame*," that is, erase (or better, crush) infamy. Voltaire wrote Candide from a sense of outrage about the brutality, hypocrisy, and injustice of men and institutions, and he found much to advocate crushing! He managed to marshal his writing talent to underscore his anger and his belief in a deeper justice than was evident in his world. The story of Candide forces us to turn inward to examine what provokes our outrage, where does hypocrisy reside, and what our own sense of injustice is. In light of the vicissitudes of life, Voltaire offers the wise conclusion that "we must cultivate our garden." What does our garden look like? How do words feed that garden? Or, perhaps, are our words the implements with which we cultivate God's garden?

(SLIDE #34)

The final two texts of Humanities 112 are nonfiction works, one from the mid nineteenth century and one from the end of the twentieth century. Frederick Douglass's Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave tells the story of, as Douglass terms it, his "career" as a slave. Born into slavery in Maryland, Douglass escaped to freedom as a young man. He did not write his Narrative merely to tell his own story, which he did with powerful descriptions and portraits. Fused with his personal memoir was an intentional attack on slavery, a practice which Douglass wanted to portray as evil to both slave owner and slave alike. Douglass wanted to demystify the institution of slavery by showing the calculated dehumanizing components of it. Thus, as both narrative and polemic, his autobiography insisted on being heard, and it became a key witness for the Abolitionist movement. The Narrative is a powerful statement against prejudice and human evil, whatever its shape or form.

Additionally, Douglass's portrayal of his painstaking efforts to learn to read and write, acquired virtually alone and secretly in the face of severe punishment if discovered, is inspiring. As we have maintained, books can be

the greatest purveyors of truth and truth shall make you free. This literature provides a call to the necessity, the power of words and education in the cause of individual transformation and heightened consciousness

For example, Douglass could not comprehend the implicit promise of freedom adequately until he could read about others' struggles for liberation. He knew about the horrors of slavery, he had experienced them directly, but he could not fully grasp the evil until he had the words to articulate it:

(SLIDE #35)

"They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder*"* (Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. p. 35).

Here words become anchors for thought and experience itself, giving necessary weight, context, and knowledge about human experience.

There may be no more powerful story that gives voice to the horrors of the human heart.

There may be no more powerful statement about the transformative power of reading (and writing) for individuals than to encounter than Frederick Douglass's own story.

(SLIDE #36)

The final text of Humanities 112 is Tuesdays with Morrie, Mitch Albom's portrayal of the final months and the death of his college teacher and mentor, Morrie Schwartz, who has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Morrie's mind remains clear and focused to the end, even as his body slowly wastes away. Every Tuesday Albom and Schwartz engage in a discussion on an important facet of life, from American culture to money, from family to forgiveness. This narrative tells of dying— but it is rich in life lessons, because it insists on staying focused on the most basic truths:

Morrie Schwartz lived by an adage he found in a W.H. Auden poem: "Love each other or perish" (Albom 49).

This literature is a good way to end the two Humanities courses, which began with Genesis, birth, and end with death—which according to Morrie Schwartz is really about life.

(SLIDE #37)
"The truth is, Mitch, once you learn how to die, you learn how to live" Albom 104).

(SLIDE #38)
CONCLUSION: There are additional works of literature that we sometimes use, such as Virgil's Aeneid and Viktor Frankl's Man's Search For Meaning. Aeneas is charged with building a new city from which Rome will eventually be founded, and in Virgil's epic, he is the embodiment of *pietas* (pius Aeneas). He has a sense of duty (reasoned judgment mindful of performing this duty, not only to the gods, but also to one's family and one's country—and to one's mission). Despite countless obstacles, amid good and evil, upon the background of war Aeneas presses on—committed to his cause. Virgil does, however, leave us with the overarching question: But at what price, peace? Obvious connections and lessons are glaringly apparent: 4,000 troops lost in Iraq.

(SLIDE #39)
Frankl's seminal work is based on his experience as a prisoner in German concentration camps. He describes the emotional *sturm und drang* of his life: hunger, humiliation, fear, anger existing alongside love, religion, a sense of humor. Frankl shares his belief in a central theme: If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and in dying—and no man can tell another what that purpose is. Frankl quotes Nietzsche: "He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how" (Man's Search For Meaning. New York: Washington Square Press, 1985. p. 126).

(SLIDE #40)
The answers we need for life often come to us from unpredictable moments and surprising sources. There is a children's book that we use interspersed with other readings: Antoine De Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince. In it, a young prince who has fallen from his star meets a pilot who's been downed in his plane—both are strangers in a strange land, but the little prince is able to rouse what was dormant in the pilot, teaching him to appreciate life's mysteries through the eyes of a child:

(SLIDE #41)
"All men have the stars, he answered, but they are not the same things for different people. For some, who are travelers, the stars are guides. For others they are no more than little lights in the sky. For others, who are scholars, they are problems. For my businessman they were wealth. But all these stars are silent. You—you alone—will have the stars as no one else has them" (The Little Prince. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1944. p. 85).

When it's time for the Little Prince to depart, he tells his new friend, "I shall look as if I were dead; and that will not be true…you understand…It is too far. I cannot carry this body with me. It is too heavy . . . But it will be like an old abandoned shell. There is nothing sad about old shells" (De Saint-Exupery 87).

The Little Prince's Final advice is: "And when your sorrow is comforted (time soothes all sorrows) you will be content that you have known me" (De Saint-Exupery 85).

This story always impacts the reader in both an emotional and a philosophical way with its fundamental truths about the importance of caring and about living with knowledge of what really matters, of truth.

(SLIDE #42)
We have said that Literature is a teacher; it offers a type of subtle leadership that rests in its ability to invite personal growth in a way that is represented by a circular model. As we read, we interact personally with the story, and then we move on, always in a position of equality: discovering potential, sharing truths, learning, and growing. Each of us, in our own way, is somewhere in that timeless circle of possibility and the journey of becoming. Each time we come to literature, as Sister Nancy Malone points out in her book Walking a Literary Labyrinth, we don't bring a completed finished self. Rather, we continue to complete ourselves in the reading itself (Walking a Literary Labyrinth: A Spirituality of Reading. New York: Riverhead. 2003. p. 2). A wise mentor once told me that the essence of teaching is to "love them (students) into being." That is what literature also does. It leads us further and deeper into ***being***. And in the spirit of Dominicanism, as we come to know the truth of who we are, we share our being and act to shape a just and compassionate world. Such is our transformation.

We might say it is part of God's transformation as well. The great Dominican medievalist Meister Eckhart, in a remarkable vision, saw God as a continual part of a transformative birth:

(SLIDE #43)
"I have been asked what God is doing in heaven. I answer; He has been giving his Son birth eternally, is giving him birth now and will go on giving him birth forever. The Father being in labor, as a woman giving birth to a child, in every virtuous soul. Blessed, three times blessed, is the person within whose soul the heavenly Father is brought to bed in this manner. All she surrenders to him here she shall enjoy from him in life eternal. God made the soul on purpose for her to bear his one-begotten Son. His birth in Mary through the Spirit was better pleasing to God than his nativity of her in flesh. When this birth happens nowadays in the good loving soul, it gives God greater pleasure than his creation of the heavens and earth" (http://members.wwisp.com/~srshanks/Meister_Eckhart/Sayings.html).

(SLIDE #44)
In "Little Gidding," (the final of his Four Quartets) T.S. Eliot wrote:

We shall not cease from exploration
And at the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time"
(quoted in Elizabeth Drew. T.S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry. New York: Scribner's. 1949. p. 198).

The power of Literature rests in its ability to help us comprehend the world and understand our lives and one another, to look deep within ourselves, to come to know truths, to act, to move in the direction of a behavior that calls up the best in all of us. This power of Literature helps in the expansion of a consciousness beyond acquired beliefs and attitudes. It helps us "know" our place. For the first time.

Timothy Radcliffe maintains we do not tell stories only to amuse or inform ourselves. Most importantly, we tell stories to transform us. With our words, he insists, we can offer resurrection or crucifixion (Radcliffe 73).

And so we may be transformed by the word. And when we find our truth in this transformation, Dominican spirituality insists that we act and share our truth with those around us. These are the seeds of leadership, and we shall continue to turn to Literature to nurture the soil where those seeds can flourish. We do not, then, just cultivate our own gardens: we must share the fruits of our gardens with the world.

This morning, in the Dominican prayer service, we heard the call to "open our eyes to Your words / Open our ears to Your words of truth." Literature can help us do this. Donald Goergen told us in his talk during the plenary session that mercy [also translated from the Greek as "loving kindness"] is a hallmark of Dominican spirituality, infused by wisdom and contemplation. We envision a leadership based on mercy, strengthened by Literature, characterized by evolving and opening hearts and minds, and dedicated to "a just and compassionate world."

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