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Recognizing a Leader of Faith and Character Who Also Lights the Way

I believe that there are shining examples of faithful leaders with good character in today's world. In fact, some also guide the people they meet on the path to heaven with their lives as examples of the Christian teachings. In my case, I believe that Father Albert Gaelens of Saint Thomas High School is a truly pure individual who goes out of his way to greet and learn about the people he meets. He is well known and loved by the entire Saint Thomas community, and will always have a place in my heart.

During my freshman year in high school, I often had to answer questions that were troubling me before [went home. One Wednesday afternoon during lunch, I went to confession, and it just so happened that Father Gaelens was serving that day. I had recently had a large argument with my parents, and I did not know where to turn. Father Gaelens and I went through the process of reconciliation, and he said something important to me that I will never forget. He reminded me that all of our brothers and sisters on earth and in heaven have faced their trials. Satan in the desert tested even Christ himself. Nevertheless, what I needed to remember was that "whatsoever you do to the least of my people, you do unto me." He stressed that I needed to learn to check my temper, and to be kind to my parents despite what happens to us. "Besides," he said, "Without their sacrifices, you wouldn't be here at Saint Thomas." Father Gaelens then gave me a selection from a daily prayer book that I have kept in my wallet ever since. I have never been affected in this manner by someone outside of my family in my entire life. He did not remind me of my transgressions, but rather taught me how to avoid them in the future. Thanks to Father Gaelens, I have much more fun with my family, especially my parents.

At Saint Thomas High school, Father Gaelens is currently in a state of semiretirement at the Basilian house on campus. He spent many years teaching at Saint Thomas, and got to know his students very well. Oftentimes, I would see him after school tutoring a student in Latin and helping him to understand difficult material. During my freshman year, he even ran the campus bookstore. He had an excellent eye for detail, and could guess your shirt size perfectly. If

you needed a book, he would make a copy appear as if by magic, or quickly replenish his stock so you could get what you needed the next day. No matter what happened, he was always ready to help you. Now, r must admit that it takes selfless devotion to do so much for an institution, but to do so with a cheery disposition is amazing. He always greeted students with a smile, and never spoke down to them when they needed a favor. Therefore, I believe that Father Gaelens is a perfect example of faith and character in my school community.

Few leaders can reach people on the same level as Father Gaelens. Be it in matters of academics or theology, he is able to aid all those who seek his help. It is through the work of leaders such as Father Gaelens that the way to heaven is illuminated for our journey to Christ.