



UNIVERSITY  
ST. THOMAS

VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

July 2009

Dear students:

As part of your orientation to the University of St. Thomas, we ask you to prepare for discussion on Friday morning, August 21, 2009 the enclosed article, "**Handing Each Other Along: Moral Leadership in Everyday Life,**" from a book entitled *Lives of Moral Leadership* by Pulitzer-Prize winning author Robert Coles.

Besides providing a world-class academic formation, a University of St. Thomas education prepares you to become leaders of faith and character. The texts and professors you will encounter at St. Thomas are part of that preparation. In the attached article Coles prompts us to reflect on the important influences in our own lives, especially the educational and literary influences that help us learn how to live lives of integrity and service to others. To assist you in your reading, we have provided you with four questions to think about. You will have the opportunity to discuss your reflections and responses to these questions on August 21<sup>st</sup>.

#### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Robert Coles begins his discussion of moral leadership in our workaday lives with the question: "Who have been the leaders in your life—the people you really respected, the folks who stood for something?" Coles repeats this question on Page 169 of the reading, so we, as readers, know that we are to take this question to heart, just as Coles has done.
  - a. How would you answer this question?
  - b. Implicit in Coles's question are certain attributes of leadership. What are they, and what does Coles have to say about these attributes?
2. Robert Coles is a highly prolific writer. In his many books and articles he often encourages his readers to reflect on how great literature enriches our everyday experiences, and, in turn, how our life experiences inform our reading of great literature. An explicit example of this feature of Coles's writing is on page 178 in the article you are reading.
  - a. What does Coles say about literature and life?
  - b. What does he mean by, "Taking Aim at Complacent Consciences"?
3. Based on your reading of this article, what is the meaning of its title, especially the idea of "handing each other along"?
4. Name two new things you learned from this article. How have these new things changed or refined your ideas about being a leader?

We look forward eagerly to seeing you in person during orientation. Enjoy your summer.

Sincerely,

*Dominic A. Aquila*

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Vice President for Academic Affairs