

# Thomas Aquinas



# Thomas Aquinas:

## *Teacher of Humanity*

Edited by

John P. Hittinger and Daniel C. Wagner

Proceedings from the First Conference  
of the Pontifical Academy  
of St. Thomas Aquinas  
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DEDICATION  
TO THE MEMORY OF REV. VICTOR BREZIK,  
C.S.B. 1913-2009  
TEXAN—BASILIAN—THOMIST

Father Victor Brezik, who joined the University of St. Thomas faculty in 1954, adopted as his personal motto, “Dare to do whatever you can,” from his favorite philosopher, St. Thomas Aquinas. Fr. Brezik’s philosophical attitude and vision inspired generations of students and colleagues. In addition to his many contributions to the University, Fr. Brezik co-founded with Hugh Roy Marshall the University of St. Thomas’ Center for Thomistic Studies in 1975. The Center for Thomistic Studies, where the wisdom of Thomas Aquinas could be brought to bear on the problems of the contemporary world, was Fr. Brezik’s great dream and he never stopped working for it. Father Brezik recruited Anton Pegis, recently retired from the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies to help plan the Center’s program and to become its first Director. Fr. Brezik taught the Center’s first graduate students and, when he retired, continued to write on philosophical and theological issues into the last year of his life. He met each new class of graduate students and attended colloquia and departmental parties up until a few months before his death.

Born in a Czech community in Hallettsville, Texas on May 2, 1913, Fr. Brezik attended St. Thomas High School in Houston, and graduated in the class of 1931. He went on to join the Basilian order in 1932, and was ordained as a priest in 1940. He studied in Toronto and received his Licentiate in Mediaeval Studies in 1943 at the Pontifical Institute, the center of the North American Renaissance in Thomistic philosophy, and his doctorate in 1944. Fr. Brezik returned to Houston in 1954 to join the faculty at the University of St. Thomas. He was named Basilian Superior in 1955. At the University of St. Thomas, he served as a professor of philosophy from 1954 to 1986, and his service to the University continued until his resignation from the board of directors in 2005. He served on the board of directors for a total of 24 years, from 1969-1979, and from 1992 to 2005. The University bestowed on Fr. Brezik an honorary doctorate at the 1989 Commencement Ceremony. Fr. Brezik and Marshall were

honored with the Order of St. Thomas Award in 2008. The Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies recently honored him at a ceremony celebrating their 80<sup>th</sup> year of existence.

Because of Father Brezik's legacy and vision, it was fitting that the Roman Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas join with the Houston based Center for Thomistic Studies and the Pope John Paul II Forum in sponsoring this conference. Imagine a long journey from Rome to Toronto and then on to Houston. That is the path for a century long migration of the seed brought forth by Leo XIII in Rome to renew the Church and society through the restoration of the Christian wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas. Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* inspired the Basilian Fathers to found the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto for the study of Aquinas, which became an oasis often visited by Maritain, Gilson, and other great teachers of the perennial philosophy. Fr. Brezik went up from Texas to Toronto in the 1930s and became a life-long disciple of the Angelic Doctor, Thomas Aquinas. While at the University of St. Thomas he brought forth a vision for a Center for Thomistic Studies in Houston. Now Rome, symbolically, comes to Houston, to celebrate the ongoing renewal of Christian philosophy through the thought of St. Thomas, celebrated by Saint John Paul II as the "Doctor of Humanity."

John P. Hittinger

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## FOREWORD

JOHN P. HITTINGER

This collection of papers is the result of a conference held in Houston in October 2013, cosponsored by the Center for Thomistic Studies, the John Paul II Forum, and the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas. It is the first time that the Pontifical Academy has sponsored such a conference in the United States. The idea for the conference came about in 2012, following the annual meeting of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas on John Paul II's mandate to the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas (*Inter Munera Academicarum*, 1999).<sup>1</sup> In this mandate he expressed his desire to see philosophy and theology serve the pastoral mission of the Pope and the Church. John Paul II bestowed upon St. Thomas Aquinas the accolade of *Doctor Humanitatis* because he was ready to affirm the good or value of culture wherever it is to be found. Thomas is a teacher for our time because of his "assertions on the dignity of the human person and the use of his reason" (§4). Bishop Sanchez Sorondo, the Prelate Secretary of the Academy, expressed interest in a fuller development of the Thomism of John Paul II, and my brother, Russell Hittinger, suggested that we hold a conference in the United States, where there is a growing interest in the thought of Aquinas as well as a deep devotion to Saint John Paul II. Given the synergy between the Center for Thomistic Studies and the Pope John Paul II Forum, Houston would prove to be a fitting place to bring people together to explore Pope John Paul II's proclamation of St. Thomas Aquinas as the "Teacher of Humanity." Daniel Cardinal Dinardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, a strong supporter of Catholic education, gave his endorsement for the Conference. This conference is the fruit of the intellectual exchange between the members of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas, the Center for Thomistic Studies, and the Pope John Paul II Forum.

The Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas was established in 1879 by Leo XIII. The Academy was confirmed by St. Pius X with his apostolic letter in 1904 and enlarged by Benedict XV in 1914. John Paul II reformed the Academy in 1999 by his apostolic letter *Inter Munera Academicarum*, issued shortly after the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. The

mission of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas is to carry out research into, to defend, and to disseminate the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor, and, taking due account of contemporary cultural traditions, “to develop further this part of Thomistic doctrine which deals with humanity, given that his assertions on the dignity of the human person and the use of his reason, in perfect harmony with the faith, make St. Thomas a teacher for our time” (*Inter Munera Academicarum*, n. 4). In this apostolic letter, John Paul II invites us to refer to the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* and seeks to gather the fruits of the large-scale movement, which, from the nineteenth century to the threshold of the third millennium, led philosophers to deepen metaphysical research into the ultimate questions regarding man and the mystery of the human person. Then, taking into account the importance of the human sciences, their contribution to knowledge regarding man, and the new questions generated by scientific research directed towards a deeper knowledge concerning the mystery of man, the Pontiff invites the Academicians to follow the indications on the subject proposed by Vatican II, as well as the guidelines that he himself has constantly proposed to the Church, ever since his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, the beginning of which made clear the chief direction of his pontificate.

The Center for Thomistic Studies was founded in 1975 at the University of St. Thomas, a Catholic University founded by members of the Congregation of St. Basil and located in the Diocese of Galveston-Houston. It offers the only graduate philosophy program (offering both MA and PhD) in the United States that uniquely focuses on the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. The Center is founded upon the notion of the perennial value of the thought of Aquinas for the new millennium, combined with a commitment to meet the challenges and realize the opportunities pointed out by Pope John Paul II at the dawn of a new age in philosophy and intellectual culture. At the Center, a living Thomism is pursued, both steeped in historical knowledge of tradition and engaged with contemporary culture in shaping the future.

The Pope John Paul II Forum for the Church in the Modern World was founded in 2003 in Orchard Lake, Michigan, the spiritual center of Polonia in the United States, where Cardinal Wojtyła visited many times prior to becoming Pope in 1978. The Forum is an educational venture that promotes the understanding of the thought of Saint Pope John Paul II through workshops, speakers, classes, website and publications. I brought the Forum to Houston in 2006, where its work continues in collaboration with the University of St. Thomas, the Center for Thomistic Studies, the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, and other schools, parishes and groups

in Houston who seek to gain a deeper understanding of the thought of John Paul II.

The conference and this volume of papers are the result of a fruitful collaboration of these institutions and many scholars and supporters of St. Thomas. The invited speakers were some of the outstanding proponents of the thought of St. Thomas in the world today. Rev. Lawrence Dewan, O.P., Sr. Prudence Allen, R.S.M., Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., Professor Rocco Buttiglione, Professor Steven Jensen, Professor Francis Hittinger, and Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo. We are saddened by the recent passing of Fr. Dewan (1932-2015). Many other scholars from the United States, Canada and other countries made presentations at the conference and some of them submitted papers for editorial review leading to this volume. This work will help to realize in its small way the hopes of Saint John Paul II concerning St. Thomas Aquinas:

It is to be hoped that now and in the future there will be those who continue to cultivate this great philosophical and theological tradition [of Aquinas] for the good of both the Church and humanity.<sup>2</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Papers at this meeting of the Academy were published in *Doctor Communis*, Vatican City, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> *Fides et ratio* §74.

INTRODUCTION:  
POPE JOHN PAUL II'S DESIGNATION  
OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS  
AS *DOCTOR HUMANITATIS*

JOHN P. HITTINGER

In his mandate for the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas (“Inter Munera Academicarum,” 1999),<sup>1</sup> John Paul II bestowed upon St. Thomas Aquinas the accolade of *Doctor Humanitatis* and esteemed him a teacher for our time because he was ready to affirm the good or value of culture wherever it is to be found and because of his “assertions on the dignity of the human person and the use of his reason” (§4). The dual concerns for culture and the human person are rooted deeply in the intellectual and spiritual formation of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II. He developed a philosophy based upon St. Thomas Aquinas, supplemented by the phenomenological method, as well as spiritual and poetic insight. Cardinal Ratzinger captured well the uniqueness of this philosophical approach in his reflection on the unity of the mission and purpose in the life of John Paul II. His philosophy is distinctive because it is

a way of thinking in dialogue with the concrete, founded on the great tradition, but always in search of confirmation in present reality. It is a form of thought that springs from an artist’s gaze and, at the same time, it is guided by a pastor’s care...This comprehension of man beginning not from abstractions and theoretical principles, but seeking to grasp his reality with love, was—and remains—decisive for the Pope’s thought.<sup>2</sup>

The turn to the concrete is his way of seeking to supplement Thomism and the abstract quality of the work; his approach gravitated towards the creative role of culture and the concrete existential plight of the human person. Commenting on the Pontificate of John Paul II, Cardinal Ratzinger could note, accordingly, that,

a ‘philosopher’ has risen to the See of Peter, a man who does not simply take his philosophy from a textbook, but exerts the effort necessary to meet the challenge of reality and of man's quest in questioning.<sup>3</sup>

The need for such an approach, Cardinal Ratzinger points out, arose from the fact that philosophy had come to be presented too often through a textbook Thomism. It was abstract and rote. Because of this fact,

the form of philosophy presented in the theological schools was lacking in perceptual richness; it lacked phenomenology, and the mystical dimension was missing.<sup>4</sup>

Wojtyła had a rare talent to combine the metaphysical, mystical, phenomenological, and aesthetic, and this combination would “open his eyes to the many dimensions of reality.”<sup>5</sup> The richness of his philosophy is the multidimensional approach to reality.

In a very important article summarizing his philosophical work on the human person, “The Person: Subject and Community,” written in 1976, Cardinal Wojtyła explained the reason why he took his distinctive approach to philosophy in *The Acting Person*, combining phenomenology and Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>6</sup> He said, “the subjectivity of the human person is a problem of paramount philosophical importance today.”<sup>7</sup> It is connected to the appreciation of human dignity:

The problem of the subjectivity of the person—particularly in relation to human community—imposes itself today as one of the central ideological issues that lie at the very basis of human praxis, morality (and thus also ethics), culture, civilization, and politics. Philosophy comes into play here in its essential function: philosophy as an expression of basic understandings and ultimate justifications. The need for such understandings and justifications always accompanies humankind in its sojourn on earth, but this need becomes especially intense in certain moments of history, namely, in moments of great crisis and confrontation.<sup>8</sup>

The search for “basic understandings and ultimate justifications” led Wojtyła to a keen interest in the cultural expression of thought and the question of whether culture could provide fundamental principles or points of reference for understanding human existence and the dignity of the person.

From the experience of Poland, Cardinal Wojtyła spoke about a crisis in terms of the confrontation of human existence with a materialistic interpretation of life, having at its disposal such powerful means of indoctrination and social and cultural control. At the root of the

controversy was the question of the human person: “the truth about the human being has a privileged place in the whole process.”<sup>9</sup> Neither cosmology nor philosophy of nature was as central to the cultural role of philosophy as was philosophical anthropology. His turn to phenomenology was motivated by his desire to enrich the truth of Thomistic philosophy so as to offer the best defense of the “irreducible” in man and to highlight the dignity of the person.<sup>10</sup> In the *Acting Person*, Wojtyła leads the reader to the rediscovery of conscience against the degradation of materialism of totalitarian ideology, and subsequently the degradation of liberal reductionism and cultural deformations of the West. Dedication to truth, i.e., moral truthfulness, is the highest achievement of the person. His concern for “the acting person,” as he says, equipped him to do battle with Marxism. His great insights were derived from a deep personal interest in man and his education in the philosophy of Aristotle and St. Thomas. This initial seed burgeoned into a personal “mission” when Wojtyła found his calling. “[W]hen I discovered my priestly vocation,” John Paul II writes, “man became the *central theme of my pastoral work*.”<sup>11</sup>

In the *Acting Person*, Wojtyła explained that philosophers must do more than erect theories upon theories, meta-theories as we call them today, but rather the philosopher should “face the major issues themselves concerning life, nature, and the existence of the human being...directly as they present themselves to man.”<sup>12</sup> In opposition to Descartes and modern philosophy, he suggests that action is a better way into anthropology than reflective consciousness. The human act is the beginning of the experience of man, so it is right that it provide the methodological point of departure for the study of the person.<sup>13</sup> From this beginning, the consciousness, self-determination, and moral truthfulness or conscience that characterize the person can be philosophically apprehended. The prime objective of this study is “the understanding of the human person for the sake of the person himself; to respond to that challenge that is posed by the experience of man as well as by the existential problems of man in the contemporary world.”<sup>14</sup>

John Paul II utilizes the phenomenological method, emphasizing philosophical anthropology, in order to offer fresh discovery of the truth of Thomistic philosophy of the human person as a spiritual being with powers of intellect and will, fulfilled by truth and love. Through his study of St. Thomas, he opens a way for appreciation of conscience and the rediscovery of God in the modern world and he brings the Doctor of Humanity’s accomplishments to bear on that confrontation between materialism and person with a fully adequate philosophical anthropology. Subsequently, Pope John Paul II brought these themes into his encyclicals.



In *Redemptor hominis* he proclaims that man is the way of the Church. Thus, in *Fides et Ratio* he praises modern philosophy for “the great merit of focusing attention upon man.” From this starting-point, human reason with its many questions has developed further its yearning to know more and to know it ever more deeply.<sup>15</sup>

Pope John Paul II later reformulates the account of the crisis of our time as a “crisis of meaning,”<sup>16</sup> which runs deeper and is broader than Marxist materialism. It arises from the fragmentation of knowledge (§81), specialization (§56), the “wilting” of reason under the weight of infinite tasks and mind-numbing details (§5), and the constrictions of technological thinking (§15). In light of these factors, we must ask, how does one generate or recover the passion for truth? How do we call forth the desire for truth, for the whole truth, to dare to rise to truth of being? How do we activate or re-activate the desire to know the “whole truth about man?”<sup>17</sup>

We find a variety of strategies in the work of Saint John Paul II. First, there is the task to reconnect philosophy to everyday life and common human issues. As John Paul II indicates in the very opening sections of *Fides et ratio*, there is continuity between philosophy and the fundamental questions about human existence arising from everyday life and asked by common people in all cultures.<sup>18</sup>

Second, John Paul II shows an appreciation of tradition, community, and dialogue in the exercise of intellectual inquiry, suggesting an affinity with the work of Alisdair MacIntyre on the role of traditions in inquiry (*Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* and *Whose Justice, Which Rationality*). John Paul II makes the case in *Fides et Ratio* that a community also assists in forming the disposition to truth seeking. He writes here, for example, that truth is

attained not only by way of reason but also through trusting acquiescence to other persons who can guarantee the authenticity and certainty of the truth itself...It must not be forgotten that reason too needs to be sustained in all its searching by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship.<sup>19</sup>

Third, the need for an understanding of the human person in action explains his emphasis upon philosophical anthropology, and his use of phenomenological methodology, which leads to the fresh discovery and affirmation of the truth of Thomistic philosophy of the human person as a rational animal, with spiritual powers of intellect and will, fulfilled by truth and love. A full dedication to truth must lead to an awareness of the transcendent truth of God. In a speech given in New Orleans, in 1987, John Paul II explained that there is a mutual discovery of the person and God:

Today there exists an increasingly evident need for philosophical reflection concerning the truth about the human person. A metaphysical approach is needed as an antidote to intellectual and moral relativism. But what is required even more is fidelity to the word of God, to ensure that human progress takes into account the entire revealed truth of the eternal act of love in which the universe and especially the human person acquire ultimate meaning. The more one seeks to unravel the mystery of the human person, the more open one becomes to the mystery of transcendence. The more deeply one penetrates the divine mystery, the more one discovers the true greatness and dignity of human beings.<sup>20</sup>

Fourth, the exploration of the ethical challenges of modern technology and social organization is crucial because, as John Pua II notes,

the immense expansion of humanity's technical capability demands a renewed and sharpened sense of ultimate values. If this technology is not ordered to something greater than a merely utilitarian end, then it could soon prove inhuman and even become a potential destroyer of the human race.<sup>21</sup>

We need the Doctor of Humanity to assist in the philosophical grounding of the culture of life. The need for the protection of the dignity of the person springs from the modern challenge of technology and can give rise to the earnest seeking of the whole truth about man.

Fifth, and finally, the embrace of faith and its integration with reason is central to a philosophy of the human person that can combat the modern crisis of meaning. It is a central claim of *Fides et Ratio* that a lively and well-formed faith is one of the best ways to generate and recover the original vocation of philosophy. So, John Paul II says that revelation “has set within history a point of reference.”<sup>22</sup> This reference point is absent from culture today. Although shrouded in mystery, the life and teaching of Christ represent a universal and ultimate truth. The intelligible mystery of human life and love “stirs the mind to ceaseless effort.” Revelation is a “lodestar” against the immanentist habit of mind, lifting up the heart and mind to something greater. The mutual influence, the cooperation of faith and reason in this enterprise is, of course, paramount to the teaching of the encyclical: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” The Truth of Christ “holds out to theology and philosophy alike the prospect of support, stimulation and increase.”<sup>23</sup>

The teaching of Vatican II provided Pope John Paul II with a confident and dynamic agenda for his pontificate.<sup>24</sup> In two of the passages in *Fides et ratio* (§§13 and 60) we find a reference to *Gaudium et spes* §22 as

providing a key to anthropology and the answer to human vocation or calling. John Paul II looks to Christ for the true measure of man and finds in his life and teaching a truth “profoundly significant for philosophy.” Confidence is lacking in the search for truth today and yet the searching, the “journey of discovery,” must harbor some hope of fulfillment to be intelligible. Thus, “faith comes to meet them offering the concrete possibility of reaching the goal.”<sup>25</sup> We are offered a call to the fullness of truth, which provides a hope for renewal for any particular culture.<sup>26</sup> The vocation of the human person is ultimately to know and to love God.<sup>27</sup>

Saint John Paul II’s mandate to the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas (*Inter Munera Academicarum*) takes on greater meaning and urgency when we consider his strategies for the renewal of humanity. Cardinal Wojtyła as a philosopher ceaselessly pondered the question: “what is man?” In his encyclical *Redemptor hominis* Pope John Paul II proclaimed that man is the way of the church. Therefore, his designation of St. Thomas Aquinas as doctor of humanity indicates his esteem and preference for the philosophy of St. Thomas in the renewal of philosophy in our day. The philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas seeks out the truth about the human person, the true human good, and the relationship to the divine. These papers from our conference entitled *Thomas Aquinas: Teacher of Humanity* explore the significance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century of Thomas Aquinas’ teaching on humanity. They explore such questions as “is it still meaningful to talk about ‘humanity’ or ‘inhumanity’?” “What challenges do evolution, eugenics, and the trans-humanist movement present for a concept of ‘humanity’?” “Is the ‘human’ a viable standard in a world with many cultures and traditions?” Throughout the explorations one finds the spirit of St. Thomas at work seeking to understand the full truth of being as well as the boldness of John Paul II seeking to understand the human in the concrete challenges of the modern age.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted on xxi-xxiv of this book.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *My Beloved Predecessor* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2007), 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> *My Beloved Predecessor*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> *My Beloved Predecessor*, 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> *My Beloved Predecessor*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, “The Person: Subject and Community,” *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, Catholic Thought from Lublin (New York: P. Lang, 1993), 219-261. See also *Gift and Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination* (New York: Doubleday Image, 1996), 93-95.

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<sup>7</sup> John Paul II, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 219.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 219-220.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-213.

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*.

<sup>12</sup> Karol Wojtyła and Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *The Acting Person in Analecta Husserliana* (Boston: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1979), vii.

<sup>13</sup> See Wojtyła’s Introduction to *The Acting Person*, 3-22.

<sup>14</sup> *The Acting Person*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §5.

<sup>16</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §81.

<sup>17</sup> See, John Paul II, *The Whole Truth About Man: John Paul II to University Faculties and Students*, ed. James V. Schall, S.J. (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981). Noteworthy, are the following two essays: “Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of Our Times,” 209-227; and, “Method and Doctrine of St. Thomas in Dialogue with Modern Culture,” 262-280.

<sup>18</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre pursues this theme in his analysis of *Fides et ratio*. See, “Philosophy recalled to its tasks: a Thomistic reading of *Fides et Ratio*,” in *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays* Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 179-196.

<sup>19</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §33.

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, “The Gospel Purifies Culture: Address to Representatives of Catholic Higher Education—Xavier University, New Orleans, September 12,” in *John Paul II in America*, ed. Daughters of St. Paul (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1987), 103.

<sup>21</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §81.

<sup>22</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §14.

<sup>23</sup> “Veritas, quae Christus est, ubique auctoritate universali se imponit quae gubernat, incitat et prosperat tum theologiam tum etiam philosophiam.” *Fides et Ratio* §92

<sup>24</sup> He said that “the Second Vatican Council has been a gift of the Spirit to his Church. For this reason it remains a fundamental event for understanding the Church’s history at this end of the century...and it was possible to note how the patrimony of 2,000 years of faith has been preserved in its original authenticity.” February 27, 2000.

<sup>25</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §33.

<sup>26</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §71.

<sup>27</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §107. See John Hittinger, *The Vocation of the Catholic Philosopher: From Maritain to John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: American Maritain Association, 2010).

APOSTOLIC LETTER:  
*INTER MUNERA ACADEMIARUM*

SAINT JOHN PAUL II

1. AMONG THE TASKS OF THE ACADEMIES founded over the centuries by the Roman Pontiffs, research in philosophy and theology holds pride of place.

In my recent Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, I put great importance on the dialogue between theology and philosophy and clearly expressed my appreciation of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, recognizing its enduring originality (cf. nn. 43-44).

St. Thomas can rightly be called “an apostle of the truth” (n. 44). In fact, the insight of the Angelic Doctor consists in the certainty that there is a basic harmony between faith and reason (cf. n. 43).

It is necessary therefore that the mind of the believer acquire a natural, consistent and true knowledge of created realities - the world and man himself - which are also the object of divine Revelation. Still more, reason must be able to articulate this knowledge in concept and argument (n. 66).

2. At the dawn of the third millennium, many cultural conditions have changed. Very significant progress has been made in the field of anthropology, but above all substantial changes have occurred in the very way of understanding the human being’s condition in relation to God, to other human beings and to all creation. First of all, the greatest challenge of our age comes from a growing separation between faith and reason, between the Gospel and culture. The studies dedicated to this immense area are increasing day by day in the context of the new evangelization. Indeed, the message of salvation encounters many obstacles stemming from erroneous concepts and a serious lack of adequate formation.

3. A century after the promulgation of the Encyclical Letter *Aeterni Patris* of my Predecessor Leo XIII, which marked the beginning of a new development in the renewal of philosophical and theological studies and in the relationship between faith and reason, I would like to give a new impetus to the Pontifical Academies working in this area, in accordance

with the thought and tendencies of the present day as well as the pastoral needs of the Church.

Therefore, recognizing the work carried out for centuries by the members of the Pontifical Roman Theological Academy and the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Catholic Religion, I have decided to renew the attached Statutes of these Pontifical Academies, so that with greater effectiveness they can increase their involvement in the philosophical and theological field, in order to further the pastoral mission of the Successor of Peter and of the universal Church.

## **The Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas**

4. “*Doctor Humanitatis*” is the name we give St. Thomas Aquinas because he was always ready to receive the values of all cultures (*Address to the Participants in the VIII International Thomistic Congress*, 13 September 1980; *Insegnamenti*, III, 2 [1980] 609). In the cultural conditions of our time, it seems truly appropriate to develop further this part of Thomistic doctrine which deals with humanity, given that his assertions on the dignity of the human person and the use of his reason, in perfect harmony with the faith, make St. Thomas a teacher for our time. Human beings, especially in the contemporary world, are concerned with this question: What is man? In employing this epithet, “*Doctor Humanitatis*,” I am following in the footsteps of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council regarding the use of the teaching of Aquinas’ writings, both in the philosophical and theological training of priests (Decree *Optatam totius*, n. 16), and in deepening the harmony and agreement between faith and reason in universities (Declaration *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 10).

In my recently published Letter *Fides et ratio*, I wished to recall the enthusiasm of my Predecessor Leo XIII in promulgating the Encyclical Letter which began with the words *Aeterni Patris* (4 August 1879; ASS 11 [1878-1879] 97115):

The great Pope revisited and developed the First Vatican Council’s teaching on the relationship between faith and reason, showing how philosophical thinking contributes in fundamental ways to faith and theological learning. More than a century later, many of the insights of his Encyclical Letter have lost none of their interest from either a practical or pedagogical point of view—most particularly, his insistence upon the incomparable value of the philosophy of St. Thomas. A renewed insistence upon the thought of the Angelic Doctor seemed to Pope Leo XIII the best way to recover the practice of a philosophy consonant with the demands of faith (*Fides et ratio*, n. 57).

This truly memorable Letter was entitled *Epistula Encyclica de Philosophia Christiana ad mentem Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici in Scholis Catholicis instauranda*.

The same Leo XIII created the Roman Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas (Apostolic Letter *Iam pridem ad Em.mum Card. Antoninum De Luca*, 15 October 1879), so that the recommendations of this Encyclical would be put into practice. The following year, delighted with the work begun, he wrote to the Cardinals responsible for the new Academy (Apost. Let., 21 November 1880). Fifteen years later he approved the Statutes and established further norms (Apost. Brief *Quod iam inde*, 9 May 1895). With the Apostolic Letter *In praecipuis laudibus*, 23 January 1904, St Pius X confirmed the Academy's privileges and regulations. The Statutes were amended and completed with the approval of the Roman Pontiffs Benedict XV (11 February 1916) and Pius XI, who on 10 January 1934 combined this Academy with the Pontifical Academy of the Catholic Religion, which, in circumstances that were then very different, had been founded in 1801 by Fr Giovanni Fortunato Zamboni. I am pleased to recall Achille Ratti (1882) and especially Giovanni Battista Montini (1922), who, as young priests, obtained their doctorates in Thomistic philosophy at this Roman Academy of St. Thomas and were later called to the Supreme Pontificate, taking the names of Pius XI and Paul VI.

To carry out the wishes expressed in my Encyclical Letter, I considered it opportune to revise the Statutes of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas, in order to make it an effective instrument for the Church and for all humanity. In the cultural circumstances of the present day described above, it seems appropriate, indeed necessary, for this Academy to serve as a central and international *forum* for studying St. Thomas' teaching better and more carefully, so that the metaphysical realism of the *actus essendi* which pervades all the Angelic Doctor's philosophy and theology can enter into dialogue with the many directions in today's research and doctrine.

Therefore, with knowledge and mature deliberation, and the fullness of my Apostolic authority, by virtue of this Letter I approve in perpetuum the Statutes of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, duly drawn up and newly revised, granting them the force of Apostolic approval.

## **The Pontifical Theological Academy**

5. The Church, teacher of truth, has ceaselessly encouraged the study of theology and seen that both the clergy and faithful, especially those called to the service of theology, have been properly trained. At the

beginning of the 18th century, under the auspices of my Predecessor Clement XI, the Theological Academy was founded in Rome as a centre for the sacred disciplines and an enrichment for noble spirits, so that it might serve as a source of abundant fruits for the Catholic cause. Therefore, the above-mentioned Supreme Pontiff, with his Letter of 23 April 1718, canonically established a study centre and endowed it with privileges. Benedict XIII, another of my Predecessors, attended the meetings and activities of this Academy while he was a Cardinal, “with immense joy” (cf. Apost. Let., 6 May 1726), and reflected on how much splendour and prestige it would bring not only to the beloved city of Rome, but to the whole Christian world, if this same Academy were strengthened with new and more effective support, so that it might be consolidated and make ever greater progress (cf. *Ibid.*). Thus, not only did he approve the Academy which Clement XI had established, but also bestowed his favour and generosity upon it. Therefore, recognizing the satisfying and very abundant fruits produced by the Theological Academy, Clement XIV continued to assist it with no less favour and generosity. This work was taken up and completed by my Predecessor Gregory XVI, who, on 26 October 1838, approved the wisely drafted Statutes with his Apostolic authority. It has now seemed necessary to me to revise these laws so that they may be better suited to the requirements of our time. The principal mission of theology today consists in promoting dialogue between Revelation and the doctrine of the faith, and in offering an ever deeper understanding of it. Graciously acceding to the requests I received to approve these new laws, and desiring that this distinguished study centre continue to grow in stature, therefore, by virtue of this Letter, I approve in perpetuum the Statutes of the Pontifical Theological Academy, duly drawn up and newly revised, granting them the force of Apostolic approval.

6. Everything I have decreed in this Letter given *motu proprio* I order to be established and ratified, all things to the contrary notwithstanding.

*Given in Rome, at St Peter's, on 28 January, the memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas, in the year 1999, the twentyfirst of my Pontificate.*



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We thank the Basilian Fathers for their vision for the University of St. Thomas, and we are grateful to the administrators of the University of St. Thomas, the President, Dr. Robert Ivany, and the Provost, Dr. Dominic Aquila. I make a special acknowledgement to my colleague and co-sponsor Dr. Mary Catherine Sommers, the Director of the Center for Thomistic Studies. She and her assistant Valerie Hall deserve the lion's share of the credit for the conference's organization.

We thank the Pope John Paul II Forum, especially its supporters and donors who made the conference and this publication possible. Mr. George Strake and the Strake Foundation have provided a constant support for the venture of the Forum. Great friends of the John Paul II Forum contributing to the success of the conference and publication include Marcy and Robert Duncan, Dr. John Le and Dr. Tuyet Nguyen, Francis Dzeliski, Tom and Beth Kaczor, and Msgr. James Golasinski.

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who assisted in editing; and John Skalko, who assists me in the John Paul II Forum.

*“Doctor Humanitatis”* is the name we give St. Thomas Aquinas because he was always ready to receive the values of all cultures. In the cultural conditions of our time, it seems truly appropriate to develop further this part of Thomistic doctrine which deals with humanity, given that his assertions on the dignity of the human person and the use of his reason, in perfect harmony with the faith, make St. Thomas a teacher for our time.

POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II, *INTER MUNERA ACADEMIARUM*  
JANUARY 28, 1999



**PART I:**  
**KAROL WOJTYŁA**

# SAINT THOMAS: TIMELESS AND TIMELY

FRANCIS CARDINAL GEORGE, O.M.I.

## **Introduction**

I stand here somewhat diffidently, because my pretensions to scholarship have long evaporated. Staying with a discipline in which you have been trained when you are as involved in administration as Cardinal Dinardo and myself means that you read book reviews rather than books, and that, late at night after you've gone through the mail. I am grateful always for Bishop Sanchez's leadership as the secretary of the Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas Aquinas. And I think all of us are thankful for the Center for Thomistic Studies at the University of St. Thomas, especially blessed in its director, Dr. Mary Catherine Sommers, who is hosting this event. We are grateful as well for the John Paul II Forum, directed assiduously by Dr. John Hittinger. And the Basilian Fathers also have, in quiet but very important ways, promoted scientific and historical studies of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are not particularly noted for being university people. We generally are "bush missionaries" all over the world, but we have founded universities when nobody else was around to begin them. In its intellectual work, the Congregation has usually been faithful to the instructions of its founder, Eugene de Mazenod, who made it a matter of the rule that Oblates would follow Thomas Aquinas in doctrine and dogmatic theology. I studied theology at the University of Ottawa before it became St. Paul University, and all the professors had studied at the Angelicum. The textbook was simply the *Summa*, worked through in course after course along with many secondary sources. At the same time that we were doing theology in this classical mode, the drafts and the documents of Vatican II were being analyzed by our professors. The synthesis of historical revelation and personal and cultural religious experience, which came to the fore in some of the council documents, has yet to be fully worked out. The great advantage we had, however, was that the framework of the *Summa* remained strong in our spirit even as it was