

Syllabus: Theology 60251

Aquinas: Spiritual Master

University of Notre Dame, Theology Department

Summer School, Second Module, July 7-25,2008

Areas: HC/ST/SS

Professor: Keith J. Egan

Description:

1. This course is an introduction to the texts and major themes in the theology of Thomas Aquinas. It is also an introduction to the development of those skills needed in the interpretation of the theology of this saint and doctor of the church. Special attention is paid to Aquinas' ability to integrate his theology and what, in modern times, we call spirituality. For Aquinas his theology is his spirituality, Walter Principe, CSB, has called this integrated doctrine Aquinas' "Theological Spirituality." Special attention is also given to the use of scripture by this Master of the Sacred Page.

2. This course is especially meant for those who have not had an opportunity to be introduced to the theology of Thomas Aquinas. There is an unfounded presumption that the theology of Aquinas is too complex for the non-expert. This hesitation to consult Thomas Aquinas, saint and doctor of the church, is unfortunate because it deprives one of contact with a theologian who has composed some of the great classics of Christian Theology. Only Saint Augustine (87 times) is cited more than Aquinas (61 times) in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. But, Thomas Aquinas' importance to the theological tradition goes well beyond numbers and titles. This Dominican theologian gathered up much of the theological tradition that preceded him, and he melded that tradition into a new synthesis that has created a genuine benchmark for Christian theology. The theology of Thomas Aquinas by no means has all the answers to great religious questions. Yet, the theology of Thomas Aquinas is a unique substantial theological resource that serves as a great storehouse of theological wisdom for the Christian community. Anyone interested in Christian theology should be able to consult with confidence the wisdom of this Dominican friar.

3. In addition, Thomas Aquinas has much to offer students for the Master's degree at Notre Dame University. To become an able conversation partner with Thomas Aquinas means that one is befriended by one Christianity's truly great minds, a mind with an uncommon gift for **order, clarity, precision, incisiveness and synthesis**, "virtues" that serve well anyone who seeks to practice *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding. As friar Thomas wrote: "...it is characteristic of the wise person to bring about order in all things." As Bernard Lonergan, SJ, has put it, I spent my whole life reaching up to the mind of Thomas Aquinas and what happened was that I was changed

by that reaching. Lonergan would call that change intellectual conversion. We shall try to reach up to the mind of Thomas Aquinas. Befriend that mind and you shall have a intellectual friend like no other.

4. The daily sessions of this course will be divided into two parts--A: background lectures on major themes in the study of Thomas Aquinas B: Working sessions in which short texts, e.g., articles from the *Summa theologiae* taken from the writings of Thomas Aquinas, will be prepared by students for discussion in class. Each student is responsible for bringing written notes on these assigned texts. These working sessions are meant to provide experiences that lead to confidence in the interpretation of Thomas Aquinas. This course is very brief—only fifteen sessions, so we can sample only some of the texts of Thomas Aquinas, but we shall attempt to choose sample texts judiciously so that, when we finish this course, each of us will have developed considerable confidence in consulting the theology of Thomas Aquinas.

Required Texts:

1. Benedict Ashley, OP. *Thomas Aquinas: The Gifts of the Spirit*. New City Press, 1995. ISBN: 1-56548-071-6.
2. Robert Barron, *Thomas Aquinas: Spiritual Master*. Crossroad, 1996. ISBN: 0-8245-2507-8
3. Marie-Dominique Chenu, OP, *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*. Trans. Paul Philibert, OP. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002. ISBN: 0-8146-5079-1.
4. Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP, *Aquinas' Summa: Background, Structure and Reception*. Trans. Benedict Guevin, OSB. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2005. ISBN: 978-0-8132-1398-9.
5. *Thomas Aquinas Prayer Book: The Prayers and Hymns of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Trans. R. Anderson and J. Moser. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2000. ISBN: 1-928832-14-8.
6. Thomas Aquinas, *Light of Faith/The Compendium of Theology*. Trans. Cyril Vollert, S.J. Manchester, NH: Sophia Press, 1993. ISBN: 0-918477-67-0.
7. Selections from the writings Thomas Aquinas especially from the *Summa theologiae* as well as from some secondary sources will be made available in electronic form (and some in hard copy) in the Reserve Book Room, the Hesburgh Library.

It is presumed that each member of the class has access to a reputable translation of the Bible.

If one has the opportunity to prepare some or all of the above texts ahead of time, I suggest reading them in the following order Chenu, Torrell, Barron, Ashley, *Aquinas Prayer Book* and *The Light of Faith*. However, selections from the last three books will occur at various times during the three weeks according to the theme under study.

Schedule—the Order of themes during the three weeks.

Week One: A. Lectures: An Initiation into the Study of the Theology of Thomas Aquinas. During this week the following topics will be addressed: The Contexts, historical and otherwise, of the theology of Thomas Aquinas, The Life of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas on the Nature of Theology. Aquinas as a Master of the Sacred Page, the Issue of the Relationship of Philosophy to the Theology of Aquinas. B. Working Sessions: How to Read Aquinas' articles and his other works. A study of selected articles from the *Summa theologiae* on Prudence and *Caritas* (Love/Friendship).

Week Two: A. Lectures: Aquinas' Use of Patristic Authors. The History of Thomism and the Contemporary Revival of Thomism. A Survey of the Contents of Aquinas' various works. Aquinas' Theological Spirituality: Aquinas as Spiritual Master. Special theme in Aquinas: Creation. The Use of Analogy. B. Working Sessions: Selections in the *Summa theologiae* on the **Mystery of the Incarnation** and on the **Deeds and Suffering of Jesus Christ**.

Week Three: A. Lectures: Aquinas on Christian Anthropology. The Contemplative Character of the Human Person. Nature, Sin, Grace and Glory and the Natural Desire for God. Aquinas on the Passions. Aquinas on Virtues and the Moral Life. Aquinas on the Sacraments. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit. B. Working sessions on an Introduction to the Sacraments with special emphasis on the **Sacrament of the Eucharist**, "Source and Summit of the Christian Life."

Course Evaluation: Evaluation will depend on a) On the character of participation in the daily working sessions for which students bring written commentary to the class conversations. B) and on the three papers due by noon on Saturday at the end of each week. Paper One: no more than 2 pages; Paper Two: no more than 3 pages; Paper Three: no more than 4 pages. Instructions for Paper One will be distributed on the first day; instructions for Paper Two on the Friday of the first week; for Paper Three on the Friday of the second week. The evaluation of these papers will take into account one's perceptive use of Thomas' primary texts within the contexts provided by the daily lectures and the assigned secondary resources.

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"We shall not cease from exploration/And the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time." T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*.