

THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS: HISTORY AND MISSION

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A presentation of one of the most important Thomistic institutions, the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas, founded by Pope Leo XIII in 1879, and renewed in 1999 by John Paul II. The article covers the origins of the project, its long history, and its recent reform.

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John of St Thomas once observed wisely that when one is dealing with St. Thomas, the horizon is not limited to his person, but goes far beyond him, and this is both because of his doctrine and because of the truth of things. Pope Leo XIII understood this very well, as he indicates in his *Motu Proprio* of the 4th of August, 1880: *De philosophia christiana in scholis*, wherein he named St. Thomas Patron of Catholic Schools with these words:

“We, for the glory of the omnipotent God and for the honor of the Angelic Doctor, for the increase of sciences and common utility of human society, declared by our supreme authority, the Angelic Doctor Patron of universities, academies, grammar schools and catholic schools, and desire that he be so held by all, venerated and followed.”

During this year of 2005 we mark the 125th anniversary of Thomas’s naming as Patron. This anniversary offers us an

excellent opportunity to locate ourselves with respect to him. With Thomas, something has happened which is unique, and contrary to the usual fate of mortals. Instead of a gradual and inevitable forgetfulness with the passage of the years, the memory of Thomas and his work has grown throughout history, and he has achieved a suprahistorical position. He has been acknowledged to be one of the creators of the culture of the second millenium, and the 20th century has recognized him and in a certain way discovered him, and it is hoped that the third millenium will know him and assimilate him even better. Even at eight centuries of distance, Thomas as much of today as of yesterday. There is in his work a “perennial newness,” as the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* has indicated. And for that reason he is perennially contemporary, in the same way that the truth is always contemporary. With Thomas, we are not speaking of being contemporary in the manner of fashion, nor of being immobile in the manner of the pyramids.

Together with a group of well-known Thomists, I have coordinated and edited in Edicep publishing house three volumes bearing the title “*El pensamiento de Sto. Tomás para el hombre de hoy [The Thought of St. Thomas for Contemporary Man]*.” Thomas is important for present-day culture as much for the values it possess as for those which it lacks. The “man of today” is the same as the man of yesterday and tomorrow, although he is situated differently.

My assignment is that of presenting one of the Thomistic institutions of greater prominence, the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas. As an approach to this illustrious institution which has achieved 126 years of existence, I think it opportune to recall its original purpose, its more than century-long history, and its recent reform. The PAST was founded by Pope Leo XIII in 1879, and was reformed in 1999 by Pope John Paul II. It is well-known that there are many analogies between these two papacies: both have closed one century and opened another one, both have surpassed 25 years of governance, both very thoroughly assume the mission of the Magisterium of the Church, and both resort to Thomas, the *Doctor Communis*.

1. ORIGIN: THE PAST IN THE MISSION OF LEO XIII

The Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas was created by Pope Pecci, Leo XIII, on August 4th, 1878. Chosen Pope the 20th of February, 1878, he quickly developed a program of governance for his Pontificate. During his years as nuncio in Belgium, he got to know the pathways of European culture, which was oscillating between a fideistic traditionalism and modernistic rationalism. In his long period as bishop of Perugia he followed the development of the school of Naples, which had as its master Gaetano Sanseverino, who proposed a return to Thomas, while at the same time the ontologism of Rosmini was spreading in influence. He felt himself responsible for the formation of the seminarians of his diocese, and chose Thomistic philosophy as the best basis for this formation. With the collaboration of his brother Giuseppe Pecci and the young Dominican Thomas Zigliara, he founded a Thomist academy, which initiated its activities on the 7th of March, 1859. As opposed to the ontologists who followed Rosmini, and who defended an *Italian* philosophy, this new Academy proposed the *Christian* philosophy of St. Thomas. Giuseppe Pecci wrote an accurate commentary of the *De ente et essentia* of St. Thomas, the work which he called the “breviary of Thomism.”

Only one week after his election, he proposed founding in Rome an academy analogous to the one in Perugia, dedicated to understanding and spreading Thomistic doctrine. He instituted a Thomistic *professorial chair*, and imposed in the Roman seminaries the new manuals of Thomistic philosophy. In his first encyclical, published on the 21st of April, 1878, in which he presented the program of his pontificate, he dedicated an entire paragraph to Thomism, and highlighted the importance of philosophy. To the Jesuit P. Cornoldi he gave the responsibility of teaching a course in Thomism which would be open to all the students of the Roman schools. In that same month of April, in the following year of 1879, he named his brother Giuseppe and the Dominican Thomas Zigliara as cardinals. The doctrinal and operative decision to promote Thomism had been taken. At the

same time that he performed a “purge” of certain professors considered “insufficiently Thomistic” by moving them out of teaching, he named a commission to compose an encyclical. He ordered Prof. P. Kleutgen to direct the work of writing the base text, and he assigned Msgr. S. Talamo and P. Liberatore as collaborators, along with the cardinals Pecci and Zigliara.

The Pope personally followed the work of this team, and reviewed the text with great attention, even making observations about the Latin style, of which Pius XII said that it was worth being carved in stone: *potius sculpsit quam scripsit*.

On the 4th of August, 1879, the feast of Saint Dominic de Guzmán, he published the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. These two words which give the document its name are the same as those with which St. Thomas begins his *Compendium Theologiae*. This detail is a beautiful expression of gratitude to the Order of Preachers and to St. Thomas himself. Leo XIII gave great importance to this document of the Magisterium, of which he said that it was the best of the many that he wrote. *Aeterni Patris* was like a doctrinal quarry, which inspired all those who followed the 25 years of his exemplary pontificate. As a good governor, Leo XIII not only gives doctrinal principles, but he also takes care to indicate the necessary means for bringing these principles to fruition. The theoretical content is well known: It deals with Christian philosophy, which is necessary as one of the *praeambula fidei*, and which has been developed over the course of the history of Christian thought. In this history, the work of Thomas, proposing a harmony between reason and faith, occupies a unique position. He has assimilated the knowledge of the Fathers and teachers who came before him, those whom he venerated and those from whom he received his knowledge, and he has left a body of doctrine that the Church has made her own. Reason was never raised so high, never was the faith expounded with such clarity. This philosophy should be that of all Catholic schools.

In order to carry out this great cultural task Leo XIII created three institutions: An edition of the complete works of St. Thomas, the founding of Thomistic centers of study, and a Pontifical

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Academy. For the editing of Thomas's work, the "Leonine Commission" was created. The Thomistic centers of study would be the Catholic Universities. The Pope personally provided guidance for two centers that would serve as models: one in Rome, and another one in Louvain, entrusted to Cardinal Mercier. The Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas was to be a place of encounter with great Catholic thinkers, in dialogue with the culture of the present day.

The Academy of St. Thomas has its origin roots in the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. Leo XIII was demanding of himself and his collaborators. On the 15th of October of that same year of 1879, he wrote the *Motu Proprio* *Iam pridem*, directed to Cardinal Antonino de Luca, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, detailing his project for an Academy dedicated to the study and propagation of the doctrine of St. Thomas. The document contains an outline of the mission and structure of this institution, and also constituted an official mandate to bring it into being. The Cardinal Prefect charged three Thomistic experts with the development of the program: Msgr. G. Boccali, T. Zigliara and Msgr. S. Talamo. In a few months the Commission concluded its work, and on the 8th of May, 1880, the inaugural session took place in the Palazzo della Cancelleria, with all the splendor of a grand cultural event: Msgr. Boccali presided over the Eucharist, the Cardinal of Luca, Msgr. Talamo, was the secretary, and Cardinal G. Pecci was the first president. The number of members was fixed at 40, and all were named directly by the Pope. The first members were expert scholars of St. Thomas, coming from diverse nations. Liberatore, Cornoldi, Satolli, Signoriello were Italian; the Germans were Kleutgen, Stolen, Morgott; the French Bourquard and Sauv  ; the Spaniards Cardinal Ceferino Gonz  lez, and Ort   y Lara, among others.

The activities of the Academy began very soon in the Apollinare. An academic meeting took place every two months. At each meeting, one of the partners, designated by the Council, presented a paper on a contemporary philosophical argument, as treated from the Thomistic perspective. The presentation of the

paper was followed by a discussion between the members. The Academy had the privilege of being able to confer academic degrees in Thomistic philosophy upon those who, having attended during a two-year period the faculty of philosophy in one of the Roman *Athenea*, attending at the same time the Academy's own courses of *thomistica*, which were taught by some of the members of the Academy. In order to obtain the academic title they had to pass an oral examination, and another examination in writing, before a commission of five members of the Academy. This privilege lasted 50 years, from 1881 to 1931. It was both a coveted and accessible title. Throughout those years more than three thousand students from all the parts of the world gained the degree; among them the future Popes Pius XI, John XXIII and Paul VI.

In general, the PAST inherited an academic style of organization. In a sense, the Academies always have a certain Platonic inheritance: a teacher, a community of students in esoteric dialogue, and the communication of the fruit of its works to all students. The school that Plato initiated in the year 387 BC, after his failure in Syracuse, lasted, with variations in its cultural value, until 425 AD, when it was closed by Justinian. It reappeared in another guise in the 15th century under the sponsorship of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and obtained its apogee in the 17th century, when the Royal Academies flourished. The historian Maylander managed to count up to 2750 academies in that period. In the Church there was an Academy of Theology, founded by Pope Clement XI in 1718, but with little cultural projection.

The Academy of St. Thomas, as Mondin says, is without a doubt one of the most illustrious of the Pontifical Academies. As Gilson observes that it is true that the Church developed her cultural mission throughout her first 12 centuries without Thomas Aquinas, but after the 13th century, theology no longer can do without St. Thomas, who attained a synthesis which has not yet been surpassed. With its pros and cons, the intuition and the government policy of Leo XIII has given beginning to a new and fertile cultural stage in the Church, which is based on both tradition and perennial newness. The Academy has had influence in the past,

and is called to a greater contribution in the future. The process of accomplishing its mission is condensed in a happy expression in the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*: “vetera novis augere et perficere.”

2. HISTORY AND CULTURAL ITINERARY

To review the cultural itinerary of the PAST step by step over the course of more than a century is not a easy task. In fact, the course of the life of the Academy has been analogous to the river Guadiana, that suddenly hides itself from view and follows an underground path towards the sea, until it returns to the surface in the territories of la Mancha, as though it were opening its eyes upon waking up from a dream. It is not necessary, either, to trace the entirety of its history in this place. In fact, the life of institutions depends in good part on the men who direct them. God has decided to count on his creatures to further his mission in the government of the world in time and history.

The men who have contributed to maintain and develop the PAST in the last years of the 19th century and throughout all the 20th, they are in the first place the Popes, since it is a pontifical institution, and after the Pope, those designated by him at every moment to direct and to carry out its mission, that is to say, the directive council, president, secretary, and advisers. The clues to some of its more important activities are reflected in written documents, acts, magazines, and publications. I indicate here some of these clues which give faithful testimony to that which was lived and realized by the Academy.

Fortunately, the Popes who followed Leo XIII, all of them Italians, were men of a great personality, and all of them have given proofs of their sympathy with the thought of Pope Pecci, and have marked the life of the Academy. It would be a valuable aid to history to gather in a single volume all the pontifical documents directed by the various Popes to the Academy. Berthier has initiated this work via the publication of the various Bulls that

mention St. Thomas. The Academy of Sciences has published in a single volume the pontifical documents directed to it. Ramírez has proposed a study of the doctrinal synthesis, philosophical as much as theological, that underlies these diverse pontifical documents.

This line of Thomistic Popes begins with St. Pius X, from whom all expected a pastoral direction, but who quickly surprised his followers with his clear and highly Thomistic position on doctrine. No other Pontiff was so demanding in the doctrinal area. In 1904, he wrote the Motu Proprio *In praecipuis laudibus* to the Academy; in 1907 he published the Encyclical *Pascendi* against modernism, which motivated a session of the PAST dedicated to bringing the scholastic tradition into contact with the new currents. In 1910 he wrote the letter *Sacrorum Antistitum*, exhorting the bishops to assure a Thomistic formation in the centers under their jurisdiction. In 1914 he presented the document *Doctoris Angelici*, in which he orders that the doctrine of St. Thomas should be followed, and makes two important affirmations: first, that the Church has made her own the doctrine of St. Thomas, the “Doctor Ecclesiae” of greatest stature, whose central principles and affirmations are to be followed; second, that she approves of the doctrine of other Church Doctors in the degree to which they do not contradict what St. Thomas teaches. For these reasons, Piolanti does not hesitate to affirm that Pope St. Pius X is “il Papa più tomista dell’epoca moderna.”

Benedict XV maintained this line during the difficult times of the war. He paid attention to the PAST from the very beginning of his reign, and with the Motu Proprio *Non multo post* of 1914 introduced some changes in its statutes, elevating to three the number of cardinals in the presidency. In his Pontificate the “XXIV Thomistic theses” were published, which would be one of the points of greater contention in the centers of study. In 1917 the new code of canonical law was published, in which all are directed to follow the doctrine, principles and method of St. Thomas. He wove into this document praise of the Order of Preachers, not only because it has given Thomas to the Church, but because it has conserved his doctrine faithfully.

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Pius XI, from the beginning of his reign, demonstrated his predilection for St. Thomas and his esteem for the Academy, in which he had obtained an academic title in philosophy. On the occasion of the sixth centenary of the canonization of St. Thomas in 1923, he published the Encyclical *Studiorum ducem*. In this document he sets out the thought of St. Thomas in philosophy, theology and mysticism. This Pope originated the idea of reuniting students of St. Thomas from around the globe in an international Congress, an idea which came to fruition in April of 1925. In 1930, on the occasion of the 15th centenary of Saint Augustine, also the 50th anniversary of the PAST was celebrated, with an international week dedicated to both Thomism and Augustinianism.

Pius XII was very devoted to St. Thomas and Saint Albert, whom he frequently praised. He had excellent relations with the PAST, and he personally received the participants of both the International Congresses promoted by the Academy. In 1950 he published the Encyclical *Humani generis*, strongly affirming the doctrine of St. Thomas, as opposed to the modern currents of the philosophy and the “Nouvelle Théologie.”

John XXIII demonstrated his love for St. Thomas with an allocution in the Angelicum, in which he recalled his studies on Peter of Bergamo, the author of the *Tabula aurea*, which was the first *Index* of the work of St. Thomas, and that continues to be a valuable instrument of scholarship. This was on the 7th of March, 1963. During that visit he elevated the Angelicum to the rank of a Pontifical University.

Paul VI had also obtained an academic title in philosophy in the PAST, on the 20th of May, 1922. At his suggestion, Vatican II discussed Saint Thomas in two documents, *Optatam totius* and *Gravissimum educationis*. In both documents the Council proposed Thomas as a model and teacher of theologians, with the famous “nine words.” In the year of the 7th centenary of the death of St. Thomas, the Pope came to the Angelicum and spoke at the Congress of St. Thomas, describing him as a teacher of the art of thinking well. He wrote a beautiful letter, *Ecclesiae lumen*, in which he expounds the doctrine of Thomas and performs a

“reading” of the “nine words,” as an *hapax legomenon* in the history of the Councils: proposing a master, and proposing that this master be Thomas Aquinas.

The attitude of the Popes since the time of Leo XIII has been coherent and positive. John Paul II takes up that tradition and renews it with vigor.

The list of the Presidents of the Academy is as follows: The first was Cardinal Giuseppe Pecci, the brother of Leo XIII. In 1890 Cardinal Tommaso Zigliara succeeded him, and in 1893 Cardinal Mazella was named in his stead. In 1897, Cardinal Satolli succeeded him. In 1910 Cardinal Mariano Rampolla was named to the post. Benedict XV created a Presidency of three Cardinals: B. Lorenzelli, Billot and Lega. Pius XII appointed Cardinal M. Browne. Paul VI named Msgr. Antonio Piolanti as Vice President, and the President was Cardinal L. Ciappi. After him, Piolanti was named President: he was the first not to have the title of Cardinal.

The weight of the Academy falls on the shoulders of the Secretary. The list of the Presidents is lengthy; the list of the Secretaries, on the contrary, is very short. The first was Msgr. Salvatore Talamo, who held this office from 1880 until his death in 1932, more than 50 years. The second was Fr. Charles Boyer SJ, professor of the Gregorian, who held the position for 46 years, from 1932 to 1980. The third, and present, Secretary is the Salesian Fr. Luigi Bogliolo, who has served for 18 years.

The publications of the Academy began in 1934, with *Acta Academiae Sti. Thomae*. Beginning in 1948, the journal *Doctor Communis* has been published. During the years of the Presidency of Msgr. Piolanti, the Academy published a collection entitled *Studi tomistici*, and thus far 12 volumes have been published in the *Biblioteca per la Storia del Tomismo*.

The Proceedings of the International Congresses began to be published in 1925. Perhaps the best measure of the value of the contribution which the PAST has made to our culture is this collection, which gathers together the contributions of the

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Academy's members and other important Thomists. Here is the list of the Congresses, with the generic subject of each (all of them celebrated in Rome):

- I. 1925: St. Thomas, Theory of knowledge. Hylomorphism.
- II. 1936: Philosophy and the sciences. Christian philosophy.
- III. 1950: The existence of God.
- IV. 1955: Thomism and contemporary philosophy.
- V. 1960: The foundation of morality.
- VI. 1965: The Thomistic "ways" of proving the existence of God.
- VII. 1970: De homine.
- VIII. 1980: The Centennial of *Aeterni Patris*.
- IX. 1990: St. Thomas *Doctor Humanitatis*.
- X. 2003: Christian humanism (organized in conjunction with the SITA).

In order to complete this historical panorama, it would be opportune to add the list of the partners of the PAST during these years of first stage. It is an edifying and exemplary history. It demonstrates that Thomas Aquinas is present in the culture of the 20th century, and that he has been uniquely welcomed for his metaphysical and anthropological contribution.

3. MISSION. THE REFORM OF JOHN PAUL II

Beginning with the 28th of January, 1999, the feast day of St. Thomas, the PAST entered a second phase of its existence. It could be said that the Academy dressed itself in Easter garments in order to begin the third millenium. Pope John Paul II signed on that day a Motu Proprio which begins with these words: *Inter munera Academicarum*. This document, published in *Osservatore Romano* on the 25th of March, brings with it two innovations, one of a

general character which deals with the Pontifical Academies, and a second dealing specifically with the Academy of St. Thomas.

At the present moment two types of Pontifical Academies coexist in Rome, from the point of view of their autonomy. While the Pontifical Academies of Science, of Life, and of the Social Sciences enjoy autonomy and have their own management, another group of seven Academies is united and directed by the Pontifical Council for Culture. Among these are two which I will discuss here: that of St. Thomas and that of Theology. In fact, three distinct academies had been unified in practice, i.e. that of Theology, which was the oldest, founded by Clement XI in 1718, and that of Religion, which had been founded in 1901. All of these celebrated the "*accademica tornata*" together, and during the presidency of Msgr. Piolanti they shared their activities. Pius XI had already added the Academy of Religion to that of St. Thomas. The new arrangement suppresses the Academy of Religion and clearly separates the Academy of Theology from that of St. Thomas. Special statutes were written for each, and both have a *numerus clausus* of partners, 40 for the Academy of Theology, and 50 for that of Saint Thomas. It is worth paying close attention here to the reform of the PAST, its new statutes and its area of investigation.

The reform, which has originated this second phase of the life of the PAST, pays attention to the origins of the Academy, and has been undertaken in view of giving it a new impulse. The PAST was one of the means of action which the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* proposed for the study and spread of the doctrine of St. Thomas. That famous encyclical, which gave origin to an authentic *svolta* in the study of philosophy in the centers of the Church, had a response in another similar Encyclical of John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, also dedicated to Christian philosophy, which makes its flight into the speculative realm using two wings, that of reason and that of faith. This famous document was published on the 14th of September, 1998. It describes the situation in which philosophy finds itself today, and affirms the necessity of giving an answer to the challenges that present themselves to Christian

thought. The Pope declares his mission of defending reason and truth. "A century after the promulgation of the Encyclical Letter *Aeterni Patris* by my predecessor Leo XIII, which marked the beginning of a new development in the renewal of philosophical and theological studies concerning the relations between faith and reason, I wish to give a new impulse to the Pontifical Academies working in this field, taking into consideration contemporary thought and directions, in addition to the pastoral necessities of the Church." (*Inter munera*, n° 3). Such was the orientation of *Fides et ratio*: "to give back to contemporary man an authentic confidence in his cognitive capacities and to offer to philosophy a stimulus so that it can recover and develop its full dignity." With this mission, the structure of the PAST is given its orientation, and its future activities are given a program. The PAST is asked to be a doctrinal "agora" which can penetrate to the core of reality, and which can engage in a dialogue with contemporary culture. The realization of these three characteristics will require a remarkable effort.

Because of its nature as an institution of culture, the PAST must be a central and international forum for scholars worldwide. The Academy must be composed of members who are competent both in the study of St. Thomas as well as in the problems arising within the culture of the present day. As Edith Stein confessed, the study of St. Thomas demands complete dedication and familiarity with his work. This type of specialist does not abound. When trying to welcome representatives of many countries and cultures as partners, one loses in intensity what one gains in extension. The contemporary technical-scientific culture requires ever more specialists, and these usually do not feel safe beyond the confines of their particular disciplines. Our age nourishes and forms technicians and scientists, but it does not forge wise people.

In order to understand and to promote the doctrine of St. Thomas, the PAST must be able to reach the core of reality, the truth of things. Thomas obtained a unique penetration into the act of being, and by his teachings, doors are opened into the very depths of beings. Thomism moves in the plane of the transcendence of being and its properties. From this perspective,

access to God in His existence and mystery is possible. The reality of the world is accessible. And this route, via the understanding of *esse*, is the only one which responds to the problem that continually resurfaces in modern culture, and which has been seen as a stumbling block since the *Who is man?* of Kant. *Fides et ratio* highlights clearly the confusion of the *pensiero debole* when it came time to give a response to the problem of man. For some thinkers, we have entered a *post-human* time. There are attempts on many fronts to threaten man and his humanness, and the Encyclical shows the danger of the “abolition of man” and seeks help in responding to this threat. This “SOS” requires an answer from the PAST.

In order that the PAST might achieve its objective, which is to communicate the truth that it has received, and to do it with the courage and boldness that the truth demands, it must be ready to sustain a *dialogue* with the cultures and the men of today. Authentic dialogue is difficult and very demanding. Today it is common to have recourse to opinion or to popular positions, but it is a rare achievement to penetrate to the shared base which is common to the various contrary positions, or to acquire the attitude of working together to achieve the totality of the truth. In the case of the recent dialogue within the commission appointed to investigate the causes of the terrorist attack on Madrid, the difficulty of a true dialogue with the other was graphically apparent. On the one hand, all claimed to be looking for the truth about what happened, and made reference to the facts, which coincide with the truth. Nevertheless, prior to any fact, an interpretation was present, and in a very Kantian sense it was treated as an *a priori*. Democritus long ago declared that the truth is hidden in a deep well, and if by chance it leaves its hiding place, it darts away from the eyes of those fortunate enough to catch a glimpse, never allowing itself to be caught. The PAST has an opportunity to engage in dialogue, but it is demonstrably a Herculean task.

The project of reforming the PAST requires a return to its origins. St. Thomas must be studied, but no longer as the only

Christian philosopher, as Leo XIII had proposed. In the context of Leo's times, it was an urgent necessity to find a doctrinal nucleus which could be used to form thinkers in the academic centers of the Church. Rather, Thomas must be studied as an integral thinker, who unifies in an exemplary way the three wisdoms: metaphysical, theological and mystical. When Thomas speaks of himself and of the task that the Church has entrusted to him, he defines himself as a theologian or preaching friar, who chooses to spread the Gospel by means of study and prayer. He converses with God in order to be able to speak of God. The PAST is oriented towards the study of this integral Christian thinker in order to imitate him, to understand him and to act with the same passion as he had in the search for the truth.

Against this historical background of continuity with *Aeterni Patris* and as the "spokesman" for *Fides et ratio* makes sense the reform of the statutes of PAST carried out by John Paul II. We highlight some points of greater importance here.

The purpose of the PAST finds its realization in the study, understanding, defense and propagation of the teachings of St. Thomas, in accordance with the tradition it receives from its foundation by Leo XIII, from the documents of Vatican II and from the direction given to it by John Paul II. The promotion of Christian philosophy is entrusted to it, taking into account the totality of its teaching, which includes philosophy. With the passage of time, the horizons of its mission have widened. At the outset, the recovery of philosophy was primarily seen as a way to face the challenges of modernity. In the documents of Vatican II, the authority of the teaching of Thomas in dogmatic theology is made clear. The documents of the pontificate of John Paul II talk about the totality of the work of Thomas, who, in addition to being *Doctor Humanitatis*, continues to be *Doctor Divinitatis*.

The ordinary members of the Academy have been raised from 40 to 50; all are appointed by the Holy See, and when reaching 80 years of age they are assigned the category of "emeriti." Among the activities undertaken by the Academy are its meetings, publications, and the various Congresses which it sponsors. All the

members have as one of their duties the participation in the annual Assembly, and the international Congresses. The task of doing philosophy and theology requires an active presence in the forums of contemporary culture, as well as collaboration with similar organizations. In addition to the ordinary members, there is also a category of “collaborating members,” who have the required qualifications and are admitted by the Council. This category does not have *numerus clausus*. At the present time they number 100, but this number can grow in order to allow creation of work groups or in order to prepare documents on contemporary topics. In addition, the statutes of the PAST take into account its administration, in the hope that a foundation can be obtained which is analogous to that which gave the Academy its impulse in its first years, thanks to the liberal assistance of Leo XIII.

In these first six years of its new phase, the PAST has given proof of its vitality and it has made itself present in the panorama of culture. It has once again started to publish the journal of the Academy, *Doctor Communis*. In these years it has also published the documents of the plenary Assemblies, beginning in 2001, when the Assembly took as its subject the relation between the new phase of the PAST and the Encyclical *Fides et ratio*. In 2001, the subject was the contemporary debate concerning truth. In 2002, the topic was the “good” from diverse perspectives. In 2003, the proposed subject was Christian humanism from the perspective of St. Thomas. In preparation for this current year 2005 we have the theme of the “sacred” in today’s culture.

The subject of Christian humanism from a Thomist perspective was addressed from diverse perspectives during the International Congress which took place from the 21st to the 25th of September 2003. The Academy in the second half of the 20th century decided to celebrate an International Congress every 10 years, in the first year of each decade. The last one was held in 1990 and another was due to be held in 2000. We felt it opportune to postpone it, given the abundance of Congresses in Rome during that jubilee year. It was requested of us that it not merely be a congress of the Academy, but that it also include SITA, the International Society

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of Thomas Aquinas. The Congress was a memorable and unique event, with great participation on the part of PAST members and of Thomists at an international level. The first volume of the Proceedings has already been published, an elegant volume of more than one thousand pages, and two more such volumes are on the verge of being published.

In order to complete the discussion of the mission of the PAST's new phase, I think it opportune to add two notes, one evoking the allocutions of the Pope on the occasion of our Assemblies, and a second discussing the list of the present members of the PAST.

In this time of the PAST's second phase we have had four pontifical documents which bear upon the Academy. The first was the Motu Proprio *Inter munera Academiarum* that we have already analyzed. In addition, on the occasion of our annual Assemblies, we have had the fortune to receive every year a greeting and a papal message.

On the 21st of June, 2001, when we were discussing the topic of truth, John Paul II expressed to us his lively esteem for the activities of the Academy, which are directed towards answering the questions which present-day culture raises. The search for and encounter with the truth is more difficult in our time, because of the widespread skepticism, relativism, agnosticism and nihilism, which are obstinate in denying the capacity of the human mind to know truth, especially the absolute and definitive truth. The PAST has an answer to this situation of the *pensiero debole*, and must imitate St. Thomas, who is the "apostle of the truth" and the model for all of those who seek truth.

On the 21st of June, 2002, the PAST received a papal message on the subject of the plenary session, which was to create a dialogue concerning the good, from a transcendental perspective that explores the relation which the good bears to being, and for that reason also to God. Thomas has been proposed by the Church as a teacher of how to think and a model of the correct way to perform theology. In our time there is a radical forgetfulness of being, of God and of the soul. The great thinkers feel the anguish of not having the solution to the problems that they encounter. For

that reason it has become necessary to return to metaphysics. In Thomas there is a circularity between being, truth and the good. And for that reason there is an answer to the problem of evil, which has once again become a central question for thinkers and for contemporary culture, which asks like Saint Augustine: *Unde malum?* Only in the mystery of Christ can a radical solution be found to the mystery of the man.

In 2003, the plenary session was moved to the month of September, in order to coincide with the International Congress dedicated to the subject of Christian humanism from a Thomist perspective. Pope John Paul II sent a Papal discourse on the 21st of September, which was read in the opening session in the Palazzo della Cancelleria. The subject is a constant of his thought, which was already revealed in his first Encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, when he reminded the world that man is the primary road that the Church travels in order to announce salvation in Jesus Christ. Christ is the true way of man. At the beginning of the third millenium, it is necessary to remember the contribution of St. Thomas to an integral Christian humanism. This humanism has the capacity to understand the being and the purpose of man, as well as his dignity. The doctrine of St. Thomas took root deeply in the cultural history of the Middle Ages, but it also surpasses that age, helping us in this hour to save man, who knows more and more things about human beings, but is ignorant as never before about who he is. St. Thomas helps us in the task of making our way through this night, with his radical orientation towards the harmony between nature and grace. Grace does not destroy man, but perfects him and brings humanity to its fullness.

In the *Yearbook* of the PAST we have the list of the 50 ordinary members of the PAST.

Gathering together these three moments of the PAST which I have evoked, its origin, history and mission, I believe that we have

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a vision of the PAST, as an element of the present-day panorama of
St. Thomas, Patron of the Catholic Schools.¹

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1. I have preferred to do without notes corresponding to the treated points, in order not to overload the text. For the interested reader, I indicate in this note some sources and some of my other studies on the subject: A. PIOLANTI, *La Pontificia Accademia Romana di San Tommaso d'Aquino*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 1980, 40 pp.; B. MONDIN, "Memoria storica dell'Accademia", *Doctor Communis*, 1 (2001), pp. 38-46; SOCIETÀ INTERNAZIONALE TOMMASO D'AQUINO (ed.), *Tommaso d'Aquino nel I centenario dell'enciclica 'Aeterni Patris'. Atti del convegno organizzato a Roma dalla Società Internazionale Tommaso d'Aquino e dalla Pontificia Università S. Tommaso d'Aquino, Roma 15-16-17 novembre 1979*, Società Internazionale Tommaso d'Aquino, Roma, 1981, 319 pp.; S. M. RAMÍREZ, *De auctoritate doctrinali S. Thomae Aquinatis*, Apud Sanctum Stephanum, Salmanticae, 1952, 330 pp.; A. LOBATO, "Santo Tomás de Aquino en el Magisterio de la Iglesia, desde la *Aeterni Patris* a Juan Pablo II". PONTIFICIA ACCADEMIA ROMANA DI SAN TOMMASO D'AQUINO (ed.), *L'enciclica 'Aeterni Patris' nell'arco di un secolo. Atti dell'VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale (Roma, 1980)*, t. 3, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 1981, pp. 7-28; A. LOBATO, "La nuova fase [della Pontificia Accademia Romana di San Tommaso d'Aquino]. Anno 2000", *Doctor Communis*, 1 (2001), pp. 17-37.