

CAPUT III

DE VITA INTELLECTUALI

Misericordia Veritatis

PROLOGUE

The Call to the Intellectual life of the Order Today

STUDY AS MISERICORDIA VERITATIS

(104) Thanks to St Dominic's innovative spirit, study ordered to the salvation of souls was involved intimately in the purpose and regular life of the Order. St Dominic himself led the brethren to places of learning in the largest cities so that they might prepare for their mission. "Our study must aim principally, ardently, and with the greatest care at what can be useful for the souls of our neighbors" (LCO 77,1). From then on, study would be linked essentially to the apostolic mission of the Order and to preaching the Word of God.

(105) Within the Order, study should not be considered in a pragmatic way, as if it were only an apprenticeship for a trade. Rather, study belongs to the contemplative dimension of our Dominican life, a vital part of its cognitive aspect. And yet, while drawn first toward contemplating God and God's works, theological wisdom comes to share with the Spirit's gift of wisdom the love of God and of God's works, a holy joy in the contemplation of their fullness as well as a holy sorrow at any wounding of their being.

(106) It is into a studious and concerned wisdom of this sort that Thomas Aquinas inscribes the Dominican vocation – *contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere* (cf. STh II-II 188, 6 as well as STh I 1, 4; II-II 45, 3 co). Wisdom of this kind tells us not only of what is eternal, but also of the "...*regulae contingentium, quae humanis actibus subsunt*" (STh II-II 45, 3 ad 2; vgl. 19, 7). "It belongs to the gift of wisdom not only to meditate on God but also to direct human actions. Such direction is concerned first and foremost with the elimination of evils, which contradict wisdom. That is why fear is called the beginning of wisdom, because fear moves us to move away from evils. Ultimately, it has to do with the aim of how

everything might be led back to the order justly due it: something which belongs to the idea of peace” (STh II-II 45, 6 ad 3). Sapiential study thus unfolds itself necessarily as intellectual compassion: a form of compassion which presupposes insight (intellectus) gained or developed by study; and a form of insight which leads to compassion. “For even as it is better to enlighten than merely to shine, so is it better to give to others the fruits of one’s contemplation than merely to contemplate” (STh II-II 188, 6 co.). Thus, even though God’s mercy and compassion are made available to the world in a multitude of ways, through the Dominican charism it is available through study and the consolation of truth.

(107) Our constitutions point out the contemplative dimension of study by calling it a meditation on the multiform wisdom of God. To dedicate oneself to study is to answer a call to “cultivate the human pursuit of truth” (LCO 77,2). One could say that our Order is born of this love for truth and of this conviction that men and women are capable of knowing the truth. From the start, the brethren were inspired by the innovative audacity of St Dominic who encouraged them to be useful to souls through intellectual compassion, by sharing with them the *misericordia veritatis*, the mercy of truth. Jordan of Saxony states that Dominic had the ability to pierce through to the hidden core of the many difficult questions of their day “thanks to a humble intelligence of the heart” (*humili cordis intelligentia*: Libellus, No. 7, MOPH XVI, Roma 1935, pg. 29).

(108) Study is thus linked with that *misericordia* which moves us to proclaim the Gospel of God’s love for the world and the dignity which results from such love. Our study helps us to perceive human crises, needs, longings, and sufferings as our own (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II 30, 2 co: “...*Quia autem tristitia seu dolor est de proprio malo, intantum aliquis de miseria aliena tristatur aut dolet inquantum miseriam alienam apprehendit ut suam*”).

(109) The intellectual mission of the Order calls us to share not just the “*gaudium et spes*”, but also the “*luctus et angor*” of our time, its tears and fears: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of just such people. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father,

and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every human being. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with humankind and its history by the deepest of bonds” (*Gaudium et spes* 1).

(110) The historical developments of recent times have been ambivalent. On the one hand, human rights have been declared more clearly than ever before, and technical and medical advances have done much to reduce useless toil and physical suffering. But by their many theoretical reductionisms and many of their political and social developments, especially those depriving whole categories of people of their human rights, the last two centuries have also intensified the self-doubt which was never far from human life, leaving a heritage which characterizes the beginning of our present century as well. No less urgently than St Augustine, each person in our time can say, “*Quaestio mihi factus sum*” (Conf. X 33).

(111) This questioning of human value is an intrinsic part of today's most pressing *quaestiones disputatae*. The self-doubt about human dignity colors the three ancient questions which since Kant have been said to constitute together the encompassing question, What is a human being? These three questions, What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope for? raising interrelated doubts about the capacity of human beings for truth, for freedom, and for eternal life, call for the intellectual compassion acquired in good part by the labor of study. Assiduous study of today's *quaestiones disputatae* should lead us to understand the pressures to doubt, without submitting to the despair about human dignity: “*Credidi, etiam cum locutus sum, ego humiliatus sum nimis; ego dixi in trepidatione mea: omnis homo mendax*” (Psalm 116/115, 10-11).

(112) Feeling the trepidation of our times, especially about our capacity for truth, and seeing the manifold humiliation of human life as our own, and yet bringing to the world the confidence of the Gospel together with its concomitant demand for justice and peace, Dominican study is to be marked by both a habit of humility and a confidence in the “paracletic” mission of the church, defending the dignity proclaimed in creation and redemption and helping to make faith believable in our day. In this way Dominican study can and must serve the *miserericordia veritatis*.

(113) The manifold crisis about human dignity is also a crisis about God. It belongs to Dominican study to grasp the link between the two, tracing

where our loss of God leads ultimately to our loss of human dignity and finding both with each other again. For this reason it is as impossible for Dominican study to neglect the fundamental questions of God, salvific history or the ultimate truths of creation as it is to neglect the questions of the peace, justice, and stewardship to which the Gospel leads us.

(114) Dominicans share with others the lot of our times. Consequently, Dominican study is marked by dialogue and cooperation in the pursuit of truth. In order to defend the dignity of creation in our own times and in our future, Dominican study seeks to be anamnestic (recollective), recalling the sufferings and injustices of the past along with the riches and achievements of those who have gone before us.

(115) Our confidence to take part in the *quaestiones disputatae* of our day must derive from our confidence that we are the heirs to an intellectual tradition which is not to be preserved in some intellectual deep-freeze. It is alive and has an important contribution to make today. It rests upon fundamental philosophical and theological intuitions: an understanding of morality in terms of the virtues and growth in the virtues; the goodness of all creation; a confidence in reason and the role of debate; happiness in the vision of God as our destiny; and a humility in the face of the mystery of God which draws us beyond ideology.

(116) This is a tradition of immense importance in a world that is often tempted by an intellectual pessimism, a lack of confidence that the truth can be attained, or by brutal fundamentalism. It is founded on the confidence that we have a *propensio ad veritatem* (LCO 77,2). It is of immense importance in the Church, which is often divided by ideological divisions with theologians sniping at one another from opposing trenches, and in which there is often a fear of real intellectual engagement with those who think differently.

(117) Like the *misericordia* that it cultivates, Dominican study is a permanent way of life, nourished by contemplative and communal resources. Aiming at the perception and alleviation of human need, Dominican study must value especially the resources offered by philosophy together with its neighboring human, social, and natural sciences. The future of our philosophic tradition belongs to the most urgent questions facing the intellectual mission of the Order.

ACTA
CAPITULI GENERALIS ELECTIVI
ORDINIS PRÆDICATORUM

PROVIDENTIÆ
IN CONVENTU SANCTI THOMÆ AQUINATIS

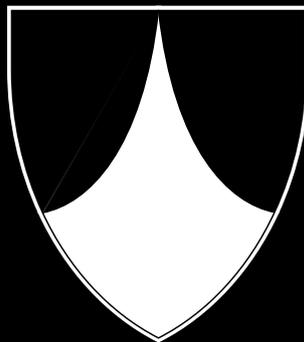
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SUB

FR. CARLOS ALFONSO AZPIROZ COSTA

SACRÆ THEOLOGIÆ PROFESSORE
TOTIUSQUE EIUSDEM ORDINIS MAGISTRO

CELEBRATI



ROMÆ
EX CURIA GENERALITIA AD S. SABINAM
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