

Call for papers

Saint Thomas Aquinas, a Figure of Evangelical Renewal: Between Foolishness, Tradition, and Reason, the Uncomfortable Position

International interdisciplinary colloquium in honor of Saint Thomas Aquinas
on the occasion of his 800th birthday.

Luxembourg School of Religion & Society
March 13-14, 2025

In collaboration with
The Chair for Fundamental Philosophical Issues in Theology and Social Philosophy at the Catholic Theological Faculty in Bonn,
The École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem,
The European Association of Catholic Theology (ESCT),
The Pontifical Academy of Theology,
The European Academy of Sciences and Arts (EASA).

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Organizer

- Prof. Dr. Dr. Jean Ehret, Luxembourg School of Religion & Society, ESCT, EASA.

Scientific Advisory Board

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- Prof. Dr. Olivier-Thomas Venard OP, École biblique et archéologique française (Jérusalem).
- Prof. Dr. Michael Zichy, University of Bonn.

Topic

This symposium focuses on the upheaval that follows the irruption of Christ and his Gospel into the life of the believer. It examines the relationship that a person touched by grace develops with the Tradition in which this free manifestation of God finds its framework, and with the institution that guarantees the truth of this experience and its

various expressions. The conference is particularly interested in the intellectual appropriation of this irruption of God and the conversion that follows.

Therefore, we propose:

On the one hand, to study the experience of conversion to the Gospel, which is a fact, with the tensions and ruptures it provokes with institutionalized ways and forms of life and thought.

On the other hand, to appreciate the need for theologians to reappropriate this fact conceptually, both for their own personal and “professional” good, and for the good of the Church and mission. A theology that is committed to this task is truly a “spirituality factor” (Chenu), both for the person who engages in it and for those he teaches or preaches to with words and example.

To study these topics, we will focus on the person of St. Thomas Aquinas, of course his life, his experience as a member of a recent religious order, celebrating its own liturgy, practicing its devotions and asceticism; but also, his thought, in the social, political and cultural contexts of his century. The focus is on his work, with its various genres and styles, and on his influence as an exemplary case that achieved a certain break with the Christian way of life to which he had been initiated.

St. Thomas is a figure of evangelical renewal. Attracted by the preaching and the life of the young Dominican Order, he joined this mendicant order despite the opposition of his family, leaving the enclosure of the Abbey of Monte Cassino to evangelize the cities where he had met the Preachers. The Gospel was the inspiration and the measure of his work. St. Thomas’s “break” with his original environment testifies to an intrusion of Christ; in the eyes of the world, it was folly to leave the Benedictine Order and Monte Cassino. The whole theology of St. Thomas Aquinas is rooted in this irruption of Christ. He developed a way of thinking nourished by his desire for God (“Non nisi te”), open to all the knowledge at his disposal, such as historical sources and the Aristotelian corpus. The strength and breadth of his intelligence were such that he was called the “universal doctor.” This raises a number of questions:

- How can his theology be properly “evangelical” and mystical, without giving way to subjectivism? How did it become a “spirituality factor” through its genesis and writings? What are its forms of thought?
- How does Saint Thomas present God the Trinity, Jesus Christ, and the Church as realities from his point of view as an “evangelical” preacher? Where is he a man of Tradition who knows how to “innovate” on the basis of his experience and conversion, how does he do it and why?
- If evangelicalism is a radical choice to imitate Christ, how is it an expression of living “memory” rather than mere historicizing repetition?
- In particular, how will he present the Church as an institution and the State, without denying the charisms, but making a clear distinction between different types of responsibility?
- How will he consider the need for and implementation of reforms: personal reform, institutional reform (the religious order, Christianity), social reform and political reform?

Such a questioning will benefit from an interdisciplinary approach in which history – of the Church, spirituality, theology, institutions, mentalities, cultures, literature –, biblical studies, systematic theology, epistemology, religious studies and sociology could be represented.

These questions seek not only to better understand Saint Thomas and his work from their mystical and communitarian source, but also to show how a radical response with its lifestyle goes hand in hand with intellectual work linked to Tradition and respect for institutions as such. It seems important to us to understand these dynamics at a time when the Sovereign Pontiff not only calls the whole Church to missionary renewal in order to share the “joy of the Gospel,” but also invites the Curia to conversion and reforms the organization of the Church.

Program

The symposium begins on Thursday, March 13, 2025, at 2:00 pm and ends on Friday, March 14, 2025, at 6:00 pm.

Papers selected by the scientific committee will be grouped into sessions to allow sufficient time for debate and informal exchanges.

The program includes daily celebration of the Eucharist. During the week of March 11-18, 2025, the LSRS welcomes the relics of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Call for papers

Interested researchers are invited to send a draft paper in English or French (title, 1000-character presentation, short biography, academic affiliation) to jean.ehret@lsrs.lu by December 15, 2024. Response by January, 2025.

We also encourage doctoral students and young researchers to send in their proposals.

Publication

Papers that have been revised, incorporating input from the symposium and discussions, and selected by the scientific committee, will be published in peer-reviewed proceedings.