



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC LETTER
INTER MUNERA ACADEMIARUM

JOHN PAUL II
FOR PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE

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.

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

"*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.

5. *The Pontifical Theological Academy.*

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 XII, 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 *i. summa cum animi ... iucunditate*, (cf. Apost. Let., 6 May 1726), and reflected on in 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.

JOHN PAUL II

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