

Study Questions for Dominican Laity Candidates

Meeting 8 May

Murray, Paul. *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality*. Ch. 3 “Eat the Book: Study in the Dominican Tradition” (pp. 78-127).

Ashley, Benedict, OP. “The Life of a Teacher” in *Thomas Aquinas: The Gifts of the Spirit*. New York: New City Press, 1995, pp 7-13.

Excerpts from *Misericordia Veritatis*, “The Mercy of Truth.” Acts of the General Chapter of Providence, 2001, Chapter III: “The Intellectual Life” and the General Chapter of Trogir, 2013.

St. Albert the Great

<http://www.nashvilledominican.org/community/our-dominican-heritage/our-saints-and-blesseds/st-albert-great/> accessed Dec 2016.

St. Thomas Aquinas. Text slightly adapted from <http://www.nashvilledominican.org/community/our-dominican-heritage/our-saints-and-blesseds/st-thomas-aquinas/>, accessed Jan 2017

1. Whereas goodness may indeed be the holiness of the heart, how is truth “the holiness of the mind?” How do the mind and heart complement each other in preaching? Why does Fr. Murray insist on the holiness of serious study? (Murray p 80)

2. Jordan of Saxony relates that St. Dominic was ‘able to penetrate the mysteries of difficult theological questions with the humble understanding of his heart.’ How do love and piety ‘fertilize’ the mind? Why is a ‘humble heart’ so important when approaching theology? (Murray p 81)

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3. Murray uses passages from the Book of Ezekiel to point out the love St. Dominic had for Sacred Scripture. We see this in images of our Father St. Dominic in pictures and statues of him holding a book. Murray quotes passages from the Book of Ezekiel. Reflect and compare these passages:

“I opened my mouth; he gave me the scroll to eat and said, “Son of man, feed and be satisfied by the scroll I am giving you. I ate it, and it tasted sweet as honey.” p 83 (Ezek. 3:2-3)

And

“Son of man, eat what is given to you; eat this scroll, then go and speak to the house of Israel.” p 83 (Ezek. 3:1)

What is the symbolic significance of eating the scroll? How can we internalize the Word of God? (Murray p 83)

4. “The whole world is theology for us, because the heavens proclaim the glory of God.” - St Albertus Magnus. Fr. Murray relates that St. Albert’s “constant joy as a teacher... was to search for the truth together with his companions.” Discuss the legacy of the revolutionary orthodoxy left by St. Albert and St. Thomas. How did the joy of their communal life of study spark a spiritual and intellectual renaissance that reaches us today? (Murray p 95)

5. Fr. Murray points to a danger in study that comes from “inordinate curiosity” which “draws the mind to superficial distractions.” How can Dominicans avoid superficial curiosity and nurture the true purpose of study, the salvation of souls? Discuss in relation to modern technology. (Murray pp101-102)

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6. Concerning his decision to sell his books to feed the hungry, St Dominic famously said, 'I refuse to study dead skins while men are dying of hunger.' Father Murray extends this principle of solidarity, writing, "Our struggles, and even our failures in our studies, might in the end be more valuable than our achievements." How might spiritual study, including our failures, make us more merciful towards our neighbors? (Murray p 120)

7. St. Thomas wrote, "Let a book never be absent from your eyes and hand." While physical books were treasured by the Dominican saints, St. Dominic also said that the "book of charity" was the one he studied more often than any other, a "book" that finds its summation in the Cross of Christ according to Bl. Jordan of Saxony. Discuss how the Dominican pursuit of study can transcend mere 'information' and enter into 'true wonder' and praise'. (Murray p 125)

8. Compare and contrast the anthropologies of Plato and Aristotle and explain why St. Thomas favored Aristotle's. (Ashley p 10)

9. Describe the loyalty of St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas to the Church and how they helped to unite it more closely.