

Readings for Thursday, January 30, 2025

Thomas Aquinas – *Friar and Theologian, 1274*

Psalm 119:97-104

- 97 Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
- 98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
- 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.
- 100 I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.
- 101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
- 102 I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.
- 103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- 104 Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.

Wisdom 7:7-14

Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called on God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I preferred her to sceptres and thrones, and I accounted wealth as nothing in comparison with her. Neither did I liken to her any priceless gem, because all gold is but a little sand in her sight, and silver will be accounted as clay before her. I loved her more than health and beauty, and I chose to have her rather than light, because her radiance never ceases. All good things came to me along with her, and in her hands uncounted wealth. I rejoiced in them all, because wisdom leads them; but I did not know that she was their mother. I learned without guile and I impart without grudging; I do not hide her wealth, for it is an unfailing treasure for mortals; those who get it obtain friendship with God, commended for the gifts that come from instruction.

Matthew 13:24-30

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn." '

Collect:

Almighty God, who has enriched your church with the singular learning and holiness of your servant Thomas Aquinas: Enlighten us more and more, we pray, by the disciplined thinking and teaching of Christian scholars, and deepen our devotion by the example of saintly lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Thomas Aquinas

Friar and Theologian, 1274

Thomas Aquinas is one of the most influential theologians in the history of Western Christianity. Born into a noble Italian family, probably in 1225, he entered the new Dominican Order of Preachers as a young man, and soon became an outstanding teacher in an age of intellectual ferment.

Perceiving the challenges that the recent rediscovery of Aristotle's works might entail for traditional Christian doctrine, especially in their emphasis upon empirical knowledge derived from reason and sense perception independent of faith and revelation, Thomas asserted that reason and revelation are in basic harmony. "Grace," he said, "is not the denial of nature, but the perfection of it." This synthesis Thomas accomplished in his greatest works, the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, which even today continue to exercise profound influence on Christian thought and philosophy. Although his theology is now considered to be conventional by many Christians, especially among Roman Catholics, in his own day Thomas was considered a bold thinker, even a "radical," and certain aspects of his thought were condemned by the ecclesiastical authorities. His canonization on July 18, 1323, vindicated him.

Thomas understood God's disclosure of his Name, in Exodus 3:14, "I Am Who I Am," to mean that God is Being, the Ultimate Reality from which everything else derives its being. The difference between God and the world is that God's essence is to exist, whereas all other beings derive their being from him by the act of creation. Although God and the world are distinct, there is, nevertheless, an analogy of being between God and the world, since the Creator is reflected in his creation. It is therefore possible to have a limited knowledge of God by analogy from the created world. On this basis, human reason can demonstrate that God exists; that he created the world; and that he contains in himself, as their cause, all the perfections that exist in his creation. The distinctive truths of Christian faith, however, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, are known only by revelation.

In December 1273, after decades of churning out theological writings at an astonishing pace, Thomas suddenly stopped, leaving his great *Summa* unfinished. When pressed as to why, he could only say that he had experienced a mystical encounter so profound that all of his former words seemed empty to him now. "All that I have written seems to me like so much straw compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me!"

Thomas died in 1274, just under fifty years of age. In 1369, on January 28, his remains were transferred to Toulouse. In addition to his many theological writings, he composed several eucharistic hymns. They include "O saving Victim" (The Hymnal 1982, #310; #311) and "Now, my tongue, the mystery telling" (The Hymnal 1982, #329; #330; #331).