

LIM EXPRESS

LOYOLA INSTITUTE FOR MINISTRY

Loyola Institute for Ministry • Christmas 2011

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Message from the Director

Thomas Ryan, Ph.D.

I prefaced comments so often by saying “As Aquinas would say....” that colleagues at my former institution would roll their eyes and smile knowingly—there he goes again. LIMexpress readership, however, has been spared my Thomistic reflections up until now. So, what I have to say here about a practice of his I call “appreciative critique” and its implications for the Church and for Christmas should still be fresh.

First some background. The formatting of Thomas’s great work of theology, his *Summa theologiae*, is complex. It begins with God, moves to creation and humanity before concluding with the way back to God by way of the God-human Jesus Christ and the sacraments.

Thus, the *Summa* maps a cosmic journey of creation going forth from and returning back to God. It depicts us as on a quest or pilgrimage to our destiny of life with God. In the sacraments and the virtuous life, we get foretastes of that destiny.

The content of the *Summa* is organized fittingly enough into 512 quest-ions, each of which contains numerous articles that are themselves questions about various matters of faith and practice. Thus, what drives the *Summa* forward is, in the first place, openness not closure, wonder not certainty. The answers will come, but it is the questions that invite them.

We wait in hope and joy for the coming of our Savior. We remember he comes to us as a babe and gives light to our darkness. May we be light for others this Christmas.



Best Wishes for a Blessed Christmas and New Year!

The LIM faculty and staff

The articles that comprise the questions consist of several parts, including objections and replies. Each article begins with objections, which are positions that generally run counter to Thomas's own and that provide him with an opportunity to refine his thinking.

How he responds to the dissent conveyed in objections is striking. Rarely does he reject it out of hand and declare it utterly unacceptable. Instead, he often responds perspectively. From one perspective, it makes a certain amount of sense. But seen from another, wider or different perspective, it is problematic. In sum, Thomas often responds appreciatively by drawing out the goodness of even mistaken positions before pointing out their shortfalls.

St. Thomas's approach isn't novel; he's simply following the example set by the Incarnation whose feast we celebrate on December 25. There would be time enough for critique, but God's initial impulse for deigning to associate with humanity, for entering into human society with all its ambiguity was appreciative, "God so loved the world..." (Jn. 3:16).

As we celebrate the beginning of the new liturgical year, I have a prayer and a question. I wonder what difference these examples could make for us. What difference would it make to discourse in the Church or political sphere if our first impulse were not to press the advantage but to appreciate the truth, the goodness, and/or beauty of those we so quickly disagree with?

My prayer is for renewed vision in this season of hopeful watchfulness, that we may recognize God's presence in unexpected places and situations. As they say in south Louisiana, Joyeaux Noël!!



Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Ryan" followed by a horizontal line.

Thomas Ryan, Ph.D.

Director, Loyola Institute for Ministry

Webinars

Join us for our online webinars. You can read about our upcoming events at <http://www.lim.loyno.edu/online-events>. We also have begun to archive our webinars. So, if you miss one, you can view it at your leisure.

The Genius of Ignatian Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century

Loyola New Orleans along with four other Jesuit universities will sponsor "The Genius of Ignatian Spirituality for the 21st Century" from 2:30-5:00PM CDT on three Fridays—March 16, 23, and 30. We

encourage groups and individuals to participate. We have a limited number of “seats” available and a small charge will apply. For more information, please see <http://lim.loyno.edu/ignatiangenius>. If you’re interested, please alert Tom Ryan, tfryan@loyno.edu.

Summer Institute for Catholic School Leadership (SICSL)

The Catholic identity of Catholic schools was less a concern when school leaders were ordained or religious and so products of years of formation. In contrast, school presidents and principals today are more likely to be lay and have impressive education credentials; they are less likely to have formal training in Catholic identity. SICSL this year will help participants recognize what is distinctive about the Catholic worldview; articulate the implications of a school’s Catholic identity for students, teachers, faculty, staff, and parents; and develop some practical steps for infusing Catholic identity across schools. The dates this year are June 11-14 and the Summer Institute concludes with lunch at a nice New Orleans restaurant. The cost is \$400, and housing is available. For more information, visit the Summer Institute’s web page at <http://www.loyno.edu/lplc/catholic-school-leadership> or contact Eileen Chapoton chapoton@loyno.edu.

LIM in the News

Click on <http://bit.ly/ndYiJX> for an article about the Loyola extension program at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, LA.

Where Y@?

A common greeting in New Orleans is Where Ya’at? The actual spelling of this term is disputed, some spelling it as Y’at. Literally, it means, “Where are you?” But it’s real meaning is more existential—where are you theologically, politically, emotionally, etc. In other words, it means, “How ya doing and what’s goin’ on?”

Some wonder why New Orleanians don’t have a southern accent but more of a Brooklyn accent (“Howya dooin’ dawlin?” which translated means “How are you doing, darling?”) I suspect it’s because of the rich culture that results from being a major port city. Those from New Orleans who have this accent are called Yats. Even recent arrivals in the city have adopted this nickname for themselves.

In keeping with the colloquial nature of this query, we’d like to ask you, Where ya’at? Let us know if you’ve moved or have a new email address or if you know of a graduate who’s contact info we no longer have.

We’d also like to hear about your successes. In fact, on our home page (www.lim.loyno.edu), we have a link to student and graduate successes. So, drop Tom Ryan (tfryan@loyno.edu) an email with a few words about your successes. Send a photo as well, and we’ll post them in our LIIM Successes section.

LIM On the Road Again

We'll have a representative at a number of conferences this year. Drop by and say hello if you'll be there. If you don't normally attend such conferences, consider doing so as part of your ongoing professional development.

- January 13-14, Johannes Hofinger Catechetical Conference, New Orleans
- May 6-10 National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), San Diego
- May 31-June 2 National Association of Lay Ministry, Washington, D.C.
- November 2-4 Religious Education Association, Atlanta

Research Guides

Jennifer Shimek, M.F.A.

Every Theological Core Course now has an online Research Guide to assist students with locating source materials to use when writing their papers. Each Guide lists and contains live links to appropriate databases, ebooks, and websites. Each Guide also explains how to cite these sources, and full Works Cited entries for ebooks and websites can be viewed by clicking on the icon of a blue circle with an "i" in its center located next to a particular source's name. Research Guides for each Focus Area will be available in the Spring 2012 semester. The Research Guides are listed by course and can be accessed at <<http://researchguides.loyno.edu/ministry>>. The link for each course is listed in the course bibliography under Suggested Loyola University Library Resources.

Brian Sullivan, Online Learning Librarian at Loyola, developed these pages along with Jennifer Shimek, the LIM Writing Consultant and Materials Specialist, using the course bibliographies created by each course's Instructor of Record. If you have any questions about the resources or how to use them, tutorial links are available on the Research Guide page, as is contact information for Brian.

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