



THE PONTIFICAL FACULTY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
Dominican House of Studies
Washington, D.C.

MASTER OF ARTS (THOMISTIC STUDIES)
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

1. Structure of the Examination

This is a three-hour long written examination in which the candidate for the M.A. (Thomistic Studies) will be asked to write on three theses. Three professors (two from the area of systematic theology and one from the area of moral theology) will each pose three possible questions. The candidate will choose one question from each professor on which to write a thesis.

2. Purpose of the Examination

The principal purpose of the examination is to test the candidate's ability to expose an understanding of Thomistic principles as he/she orders those principles toward a reasoned theological judgment or conclusion.

3. Grading of the Examination

a. The following grades may be assigned for each part of the written exam:

A (4.0); A- (3.75); B+ (3.5); B (3.0); B- (2.75); C+ (2.5); C (2.0); C- (1.75); F (0).

The grade for the examination is the average of the three grades submitted by the examiners. Each examiner will assign a grade evaluating only those sections of the examination which he or she administered. An average grade of 3.0 is needed to successfully pass the exam. No student will be admitted to the defense of the M.A. thesis without having passed the comprehensive examination. The grade received on the comprehensive examination will be available from the Office of the Registrar. Candidates may not continue candidacy after two failures of the comprehensive examination

b. Honor grades are computed according to the following method:

Coursework: 60%

Examination: 15%

Thesis & Defense Average: 25%

The honor grades are:

Summa cum laude (3.9-4.0)

Magna cum laude (3.7-3.89)

Cum laude (3.5-3.69)

Current Themes Approved by the Council of the Faculty: May 4, 2015

THEME 1: CREATION AND THE HUMAN PERSON

- I. The context and significance of Christian doctrines about creation and the human person
 - A. relationship of the subject matter to other theological domains
 - B. divine gratuity in its varied expressions of nature and grace
 - C. the peculiar difficulties of the subject matter arising from revelation and reason
 - D. *sacra doctrina* as an appropriate methodology for creation and the human person
 - E. the importance of a theocentric and cosmocentric theological anthropology

- II. The doctrine of creation
 - A. creation and cosmogonic myths
 - B. scriptural overview: creation in the Old and New Testaments
 - C. doctrinal summary of creation
 - D. creation *ex nihilo* (ST I, 44-45)
 - E. the Christian alternative to pantheism and panentheism

- III. The created order: creatures visible and invisible
 - A. the creation and nature of the angels
 - B. the material universe
 - 1. evaluation of the Genesis accounts
 - 2. the creation of the material universe (ST I, 65, 1-2)
 - C. the cosmos: creation, science and evolution
 - D. Divine Providence: governance, conservation and concurrence (ST I, 22; 103-04)

- IV. The problem of evil
 - A. the project of theodicy: defining the problem
 - B. monistic vs. dualistic accounts
 - C. two Christian theodicies: Augustinian and Irenaean
 - D. the nature of evil (ST I, 48)
 - E. the causality of evil (ST I, 49)

- V. The doctrine of the human person: human nature
 - A. outline of the theological anthropology of the *Summa Theologiae*
 - B. the difference between philosophical anthropology and theological anthropology
 - C. human nature: bodiliness, spirituality, historicity, immortality
 - D. the human soul: incorporeality, subsistence, immortality, unity with body (ST I, 75-76)
 - E. the powers of human nature and their theological relevance (ST I, 77-82)

- VI. The doctrine of the human person: human origins
 - A. the Genesis account of the creation of the human being
 - B. immediate creation of the human soul (ST I, 90)
 - C. evolution: issues and responses

- VII. The doctrine of the human person: image of God (ST I, 93)
 - A. patristic teaching
 - B. teaching of St. Thomas
 - C. teachings of John Paul II: bodiliness, sexuality and relationality

THEME 2: TRIUNE GOD

- I. The existence of God as a theological question (*ST I*, 2)
 - A. the possibility and nature of arguments for God's existence
 - 1. whether the proposition "God exists" is self-evident (a. 1)
 - 2. how God's existence can and cannot be demonstrated (a. 2)
 - 3. Aquinas' Five Ways of demonstrating that God exists (a. 3)
 - a) the context and purpose of these proofs
 - b) infinite series
 - c) the difference between the fifth way and the intelligent design argument

- II. Basic biblical affirmations about God's nature God as one
 - A. personal
 - B. transcendent in holiness and power
 - C. eternal
 - D. immutable

- III. The divine nature in systematic theology: fundamental affirmations
 - A. the nature of the cause of the world
 - B. essence and supposit in material and immaterial beings (*ST I*, 3.3)
 - C. essence and existence in God and creatures (*ST I*, 3.4)
 - D. God as the universal cause, who does not enter into composition with his effects (*ST I*, 3.8)

- IV. The essential attributes of God
 - A. their "negative" character
 - B. the attributes themselves
 - 1. simplicity (*ST I*, 3)
 - 2. perfection and goodness (*ST I*, 4-6)
 - 3. infinity and omnipresence (*ST I*, 7-8)
 - 4. immutability and eternity (*ST I*, 9-10)
 - 5. unity (*ST I*, 11)
 - C. their relation to the central biblical affirmations about God

- V. The operative attributes of God
 - A. the divine knowledge, truth, and life (*ST I*, 14-18)
 - 1. God's knowledge of the future (*ST I*, 14.13)
 - B. will and love in God (*ST I*, 19-20)
 - 1. freedom (q. 19)
 - 2. necessity vs. contingency (q. 19.6, 8)
 - 3. evil (q. 19.6, 9)
 - 4. justice and mercy (q. 21)
 - 5. providence and predestination (qq. 22-23)
 - 6. power and happiness (qq. 25-26)

THEME 2: TRIUNE GOD (con't)

- VI. The range and limits of human knowledge and discourse about God
 - A. human knowledge of God (*ST I*, 12)
 - 1. glory and vision: no similitude but a created light
 - 2. grace and faith
 - 3. natural knowledge of God
 - B. human speech about God (*ST I*, 13)
 - 1. analogy vs. metaphor
 - 2. negative, relational, and substantial naming

- VII. The Trinity as the focus of Christian faith and life
 - A. biblical revelation
 - B. Trinitarian confession as rule of faith
 - C. invitation to Trinitarian communion

- VIII. Key moments in the history of the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity
 - A. economic Trinitarianism and the emergence of modalism
 - B. subordinationism: Origen and Arius
 - C. the Council of Nicea and the doctrine of "*homoousios*"
 - D. I Constantinople and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit
 - E. the "*filioque*" controversy: historical background and doctrinal issue

- IX. Procession in the Trinity (*ST I*, 27)
 - A. the meaning and number of processions
 - B. the analogy of the Word and Love
 - 1. the procession of the Word by way of intellect/the generation of the Son
 - 2. the procession of Love by way of will/the spiration of the Spirit

- X. Relations and Persons in the Trinity (*ST I*, 28-29)
 - A. the real relations that arise on account of the processions
 - B. the question of mutually opposed relations
 - C. the three divine persons
 - 1. subsistent relation
 - 2. what "person" signifies, i.e. by way of substance

- XI. The persons considered in themselves
 - A. number in God (*ST I*, 30 and 31)
 - B. notions in God (*ST I*, 32)
 - C. the role of speculative theology (*ST I*, 32)
 - D. the persons' names and their signification (*ST I*, 33-37)
 - E. essential versus notional actions (*ST I*, 34)
 - F. the filioque (*ST I*, 36)

- XII. The persons considered in comparison to relations, properties, acts, one another (*ST I*, 39-43)
 - A. appropriation (*ST I*, 39)
 - B. the missions (*ST I*, 43)

THEME 3: BASIC ELEMENTS OF CHRISTOLOGY

- I. Structure and outline of the treatise on Christ the Savior in the *Summa Theologiae*
 - A. Where the Son is principally treated in the *Summa* outside the *Tertia Pars* and that significance
 - B. What the *Tertia Pars* covers and its plan within the *Summa*
 - C. The principal two divisions of the treatise on Christ the Savior in the *Tertia Pars*
 - D. The subdivisions and their interrelations
 - E. Aquinas's pedagogy in teaching about the Savior

- II. The mystery of the Incarnation itself
 - A. The fittingness
 - B. The mode of union: union, Person, nature assumed—things assumed and things co-assumed
 - C. The consequences of the union: concerning Christ, in relation to his Father, in relation to us

- III. The things done and suffered by our Savior
 - A. The entrance into the world (with special emphasis on the Virgin Mary)
 - B. The course of life in the world (with special emphasis on elements emphasized from Christ's life in living out the Dominican life)
 - C. The departure from the world (with special emphasis on the Passion)
 - D. The exaltation after this life (with special emphasis on the Resurrection)

- IV. The biblical witness and the development of Christological doctrine in the early Church
 - A. The New Testament on the person and work of Jesus Christ: unity and variety as well as the diversity of interpretations of key scriptural passages in history and today
 - B. The first six ancient ecumenical councils in their Christological teaching: their importance in their historical setting, Aquinas's appropriation, and our use today

- V. Contemporary challenges and responses
 - A. Challenges to teaching about Jesus Christ to students today
 - B. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's declaration *Dominus Iesus* (2000)

THEME 4: THEOLOGY OF GRACE

- I. The context and significance of Christian doctrines about grace
 - A. grace in its general and specific senses
 - B. relationship of the subject matter to other theological domains
 - C. grace as a theological subject spanning dogmatic theology and moral theology
 - D. backgrounds to grace: nature, freedom and law

- II. Scriptural foundations
 - A. Old Testament
 - 1. divine initiative and human response: creation, providence, covenant, salvation
 - 2. various terms expressing the reality of “grace”
 - B. New Testament
 - 1. Synoptic approaches
 - 2. St. Paul’s teachings, especially grace in terms of the New Law and freedom
 - 3. Johannine accents, especially divinization

- III. Patristic and conciliar developments
 - A. components of Augustine's theology of grace
 - B. the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies
 - C. the African councils and the Council of Orange

- IV. St. Thomas Aquinas’s Theology of Grace (*ST* I-II, 106-114)
 - A. the Old Law and the New Law
 - B. *gratia elevans*: human nature, preternatural gifts, human destiny, and the desire for God
 - C. the necessity of grace
 - D. the nature of grace
 - E. varieties of grace
 - F. God as cause of grace and predestination
 - G. the effects of grace: justification and merit

- V. Subsequent developments from the Reformation to the twentieth century
 - A. the teachings of Martin Luther
 - B. Trent and the doctrine of justification
 - C. the *De Auxiliis* controversy
 - D. Jansenism and Quietism
 - E. twentieth-Century controversies concerning the “supernatural”

THEME 5: ECCLESIOLOGY

- I. The history of ecclesiology
 - A. Patristic and medieval approaches, including that of St. Thomas Aquinas
 - B. Nineteenth-century developments (especially J. A. Mohler, J. H. Newman, Vatican I)
 - C. The doctrine of the Church at Vatican II

- II. Fundamental Scriptural affirmations of *Lumen gentium*
 - A. The Kingdom of God
 - B. The Body of Christ
 - C. The Bride of Christ
 - D. The Temple of the Holy Spirit
 - E. The People of God

- III. Dimensions of the Church
 - A. The Church as hierarchical
 - 1. The distinction between the clerical, lay, and religious states
 - B. The Church as a mystery
 - C. The Church as a sacrament
 - D. The Church as an institution
 - E. The Church as a communion
 - F. The Church as prophetic & missionary

- IV. The marks of the Church
 - A. One
 - 1. The Church and the churches
 - a) “Subsistit in”
 - 2. Ecumenism
 - B. Holy
 - 1. The universal call to holiness
 - 2. The communion of the saints
 - 3. The eschatological calling of the Church
 - C. Catholic
 - 1. Membership
 - 2. Salvation outside the Church
 - D. Apostolic
 - 1. The twelve Apostles
 - 2. Apostolic succession
 - 3. Episcopacy
 - 4. The papacy
 - 5. The Magisterium: indefectibility and infallibility

- V. Mary and the Church
 - A. Mary, model mother of the Church
 - B. The new Eve
 - C. Mary as the eschatological symbol of the Church

THEME 6: THE EUCHARIST

- I. The nature of the sacraments (*ST III*, 60)
 - A. Sacraments as efficacious signs
 - B. Sacramental matter and form
 - C. The tripartite structure of a sacrament: *sacramentum tantum, res et sacramentum, res tantum*

- II. Grace: the chief effect of the sacraments (*ST III*, 62)
 - A. Sacraments as instrumental causes of grace in virtue of Christ's passion

- III. Sacramental character (*ST III*, 63)
 - A. Sacramental character as spiritual power in the service of divine worship
 - B. Sacramental character and individual sacraments

- IV. Sacramental causality (*ST III*, 64)
 - A. The principal agent in institution and communication (*ST III*, 64.1–3)
 - B. Sacramental ministers
 - 1. Empowered by Christ (*ST III*, 64.4)
 - 2. Intention and faith in the minister (*ST III*, 64.8–10)
 - C. The Thomistic synthesis: perfective instrumental physical causality

- V. Foundations of Eucharist Life
 - A. Biblical foundations
 - 1. Old Testament prefigurations
 - 2. The Institution of the Eucharist
 - 3. New Testament presentations of Eucharistic life
 - B. Early liturgical witnesses concerning the celebration of the Mass
 - C. Early Patristic theology

- VI. Historical and theological development
 - A. Augustine: sacrifice and sacrament
 - B. Controversies of the ninth through eleventh centuries
 - 1. Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus: true or symbolic presence
 - 2. Berengarius and Lanfranc: transubstantiation & Lateran IV

- VII. The Thomistic Theological Synthesis on the Eucharist
 - A. Eucharistic signification (*ST III*, 73–74, 78)
 - B. Transubstantiation (*ST III*, 75)
 - C. The Real Presence (*ST III*, 76–77)
 - D. Eucharistic effects (*ST III*, 79–81)
 - E. The minister of the Eucharist (*ST III*, 82)

THEME 6: THE EUCHARIST (con't)

VIII. The Mass as a Sacrifice

- A. The Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent
- B. Aquinas's understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice (*ST* III, 83.1)
- C. Alternative explanations (e.g., Bellarmine, de la Taille)

IX. Some systematic issues in recent theology of the Eucharist

- A. Schillebeeckx: the challenge of transignification and transfinalization
- B. Rahner
- C. The critique of Eucharistic adoration

THEME 7: THE HISTORY OF MORAL THEOLOGY

- I. Contemporary Moral Disagreements as Resisting Resolution
 - A. G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*
 - B. Emotivism as a Reaction to Moore
 - C. Moore as Reaction to Utilitarianism
 - D. Hume and Reason as the Slave of Desire
 - E. Kantianism as Practical Reason Without Desire
 - F. Failures of Hume and Kant traced to joint rejection of Revelation and Metaphysics

- II. Moral Teaching in the Scripture
 - A. Protology: God and His Image in Genesis 1
 - B. The Covenant and the Torah
 - C. The Gospel of the Kingdom
 - D. St. Paul, the Crucified Messiah and the New Creation

- III. The Moral Teaching of the Fathers
 - A. The Desert Fathers and the Seven Deadly Sins
 - B. Characteristics of Patristic Exegesis
 - C. Augustine's *Sermon of the Lord* as Patristic Moral Teaching

- IV. Aquinas
 - A. The Occasion of the Composition of the Summa
 - B. Outline of the Prima Secundae
 - C. Outline of the Secunda Secundae

- V. Late Medieval Moral Teaching
 - A. Ockham's Nominalism and Voluntarism
 - B. The Role of Law in Ockham's Moral Theology

- VI. The Manuals
 - A. Law, Conscience, and Freedom
 - B. The Displacement of Beatitude, Virtues and Gifts
 - C. The Dispute Over probabilism

- VII. The Dispute over *Humanae Vitae*
 - A. The Development of Proportionalism as a Development of the Principle of Double Effect
 - B. The Critique of Proportionalism
 - C. The Response of the Magisterium in *Veritatis Splendor*.

THEME 8: BASIC MORAL PRINCIPLES

- I. *Sacra Doctrina* and Happiness
 - A. The nature of *sacra doctrina* (*ST I*, 1)
 - B. Happiness (*ST I-II*, 1-4)
 - 1. True and Perfect Happiness – What it is and in what can it be found or not found.

- II. Voluntariness and the Movement of the Will (*ST I-II*, 6-8)
 - A. The Basic Movement of the Will (*ST I-II*, 8-15)
 - 1. Fonts of Morality: Object, End, Circumstances
 - 2. The interior object and the exterior object of the will
 - B. Good and Evil in the Acts of the Will (*ST I-II*, 17-21)
 - 1. Complex and Simple Human Action
 - 2. The role of intention in assessing the morality of an action
 - 3. Review *Veritatis Splendor* on human choice and the distinction between negative and positive precepts.

- III. The Passions – Concupiscible and Irascible (*ST I-II*, 22-24)
 - A. Passions in General:
 - 1. Voluntary and Involuntary
 - 2. The role of passion in human choice.
 - B. Love and Hatred (*ST I-II*, 25-29)
 - 1. Love as a Movement
 - 2. What is the distinction between the love of friendship and the love of concupiscence?
 - C. Pleasure, Pain and Sorrow (*ST I-II*, 34-38)
 - 1. Know the cause and operation of pleasure and sorrow.
 - 2. Know the effects of these passions
 - D. Fear and Anger (*ST I-II*, 41-48)
 - 1. Know various causes of these passions.

- IV. *Habitus* (*ST I-II*, 49-54)
 - A. *Habitus* as quality.
 - B. Virtues (*ST I-II*, 55-57)
 - 1. Acquired and Infused Virtues (*ST I-II*, 58-59, 61-65)
 - 2. The Relationship of Virtue to Freedom
 - 3. The Relationship of the Virtues and the Gifts of the Spirit (*ST I-II*, 66-68)
 - 4. The cause of virtue.
 - 5. The seat of the virtues: intellect, will, passions
 - C. Vice and Sin (*ST I-II*, 71, 74, 82, 85)
 - 1. The relationship of sin to vice and vice to freedom.
 - 2. The cause of vice.

THEME 8: BASIC MORAL PRINCIPLES (con't)

- V. Law (*ST I-II*, 90-92)
 - A. Eternal Law (*ST I-II*, 93)
 - 1. The eternal law as the *Ratio* and Providence of God.
 - B. Natural Law (*ST I-II*, 94)
 - 1. Precepts of the natural law and human appetite.
 - 2. The possibility of intrinsic evil action.
 - 3. The principle of Double Effect
 - C. Human Law (*ST I-II*, 95)
 - D. New Law (*ST I-II*, 95, 106-108)
 - 1. As a transition from a written law to an unwritten law.

- VI. Grace (*ST I-II*, 109-114)
 - A. Grace as the capstone of Aquinas's moral theology
 - B. As elevating human nature

THEME 9: THEOLOGICAL AND CARDINAL VIRTUES

- I. The place of the theological virtues in the whole of theology
 - A. the doctrine of the *imago dei*
 - B. the grace of the New law
 - C. the capital grace of Christ
 - D. the indwelling of the divine persons by faith and charity

- II. The virtue of faith in itself (*ST* II-II, 1)
 - A. the distinction between formal and material objects
 - B. faith's object: first truth
 - C. faith's object: truth bearing statements
 - D. faith's object: the light of faith
 - E. why faith is both reasonable and yet truly supernatural

- III. The acts of faith
 - A. the inner act: belief (*ST* II-II, 2)
 - B. the outer act: confession (*ST* II-II, 3)
 - C. implicit and explicit faith

- IV. Faith as an infused virtue
 - A. why faith is a virtue (*ST* II-II, 4), a habitus (*ST* II-II, 5), and is infused by God (*ST* II-II, 6)
 - B. the difference between formed and unformed faith
 - C. kinds of sins against faith (*ST* II-II, 10-15)

- V. The Gifts of the Spirit related to faith
 - A. understanding (*ST* II-II, 8)
 - B. knowledge (*ST* II-II, 9)

- VI. The virtue of hope
 - A. the passion of hope
 - B. hope as a virtue (*ST* II-II, 17)
 - C. the certitude of hope (*ST* II-II, 18)
 - D. sins against hope: presumption and despair (*ST* II-II, 20, 21)
 - E. the gift: Fear of the Lord (*ST* II-II, 19)

- VII. Love as a passion: Conformity to the object loved

- VIII. Charity as friendship with God: beneficence, mutuality, *communio* (*ST* II-II, 23)
 - A. Charity and the other virtues
 - 1. without charity there is no authentic virtue
 - 2. charity as form of the virtues
 - B. The order of charity: God, self, neighbor, sinners, enemies (*ST* II-II, 26)
 - C. Charity's act and its fruits
 - D. Mercy, Fraternal Correction, and Sins against Charity (*ST* II-II, 33-34 et seq.)

THEME 9: THEOLOGICAL AND CARDINAL VIRTUES (con't)

IX. The Gift of Wisdom (*ST II-II*, 45)

X. Prudence

- A.** definition of prudence (*ST II-II*, 47-51)
- B.** the rank of prudence and its central role in moral action
- C.** the stages of human action: the three acts of prudence
- D.** The potential parts of prudence
- E.** Personal, domestic, and political prudence
- F.** the relationship of prudence to conscience
- G.** sins against prudence and dynamics of self deception
- H.** the gift of counsel (*ST II-II*, 52)

XI. Justice

- A.** the virtue of justice in itself (*ST II-II*, 58), including its definition, its measure and mean, its relation to the other virtues
- B.** commutative and distributive justice (*ST II-II*, 61)
- C.** legal justice (*ST II-II*, 58.5-7)
- D.** social justice
- E.** epikeia (*ST II-II*, 120)
- F.** restitution (*ST II-II* 62)
- G.** virtues adjoined to justice and their contrary vices
 - 1.** in speech: truth and lying (including reviling, backbiting, talebearing, and derision) (*ST II-II*, 68, 70-75, 109-113)
 - 2.** religion and its contrary vices (*ST II-II*, 81-90, 94).

XII. Fortitude

- A.** the virtue itself (*ST II-II*, 123)
- B.** endurance, attack, patience, and perseverance (*ST II-II*, 126, 127, 136, 137)
- C.** magnanimity (*ST II-II*, 129)

XIII. Temperance

- A.** selfless self-preservation (*ST II-II*, 141)
- B.** distinguished from continence, incontinence, and vice
- C.** marriage and virginity (*ST II-II*, 152)
- D.** fasting (*ST II-II*, 147)
- E.** wrath (*ST II-II*, 158)
- F.** the fruits of temperance