

## **MASTER OF ARTS (THOMISTIC STUDIES) DEGREE**

The M.A. (Thomistic Studies) is a degree program offered by the Thomistic Institute of the PFIC specializing in the study of the theological synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas. Students receive an intensive formation in Aquinas's texts and ideas. Classical Thomistic thinking is presented in the areas of both dogmatic and moral theology. Modern topics are also considered with a view to seeing the relevance of Thomistic studies for contemporary theological discourse. This 36-credit degree program is designed to be taken over four consecutive summers with the possibility of a fifth summer for thesis development and defense. The degree is intended to prepare students for advanced degrees in the area of Thomistic thought and theology.

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon the successful completion of this degree students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a general and integrated foundational knowledge of Thomistic speculative and moral theology, grounded in Scripture and philosophy.
2. Give evidence of a basic familiarity with the primary texts of St. Thomas Aquinas.
3. Employ the knowledge and skills necessary to enter doctoral studies, especially in Thomistic theology.
4. Undertake Church-related work for which an M.A. is required or desirable, especially from a Thomistic point of view.
5. Pursue an ongoing personal integration of theological study and the living of the faith (morally, liturgically, and spiritually).

### **Degree Requirements**

#### **Admission**

The following prerequisites for admission will be evaluated by the Committee on Admissions which may, in individual cases, allow the student to remedy particular deficiencies during the first year of the program:

1. A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.
2. Superior achievement and the ability to pursue graduate work as indicated by the transcript of previous studies (with a minimum GPA of 3.0).
3. Three letters of recommendation by persons who are in a position to judge the applicant's ability in this academic area, along with a current

photo and a completed application form.

4. Results of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) indicating aptitude for graduate studies in theology if a candidate has not completed any previous graduate work. The PFIC is listed under Dominican House of Studies, code 2498.

5. An undergraduate foundation in philosophy, consisting of a minimum of 18 credit hours drawn from the following areas: history of philosophy, logic, metaphysics, ethics, philosophical anthropology, natural philosophy, and philosophy of knowledge.

6. A minimum of one Old Testament course and one New Testament course.

7. A reading knowledge of Latin and either French, German, Spanish, or Italian.

## Course Work

A minimum of 36 credit-hours of graduate coursework is required according to the following distribution:

**Dogmatic Theology (20 credits):** Triune God (4); Creation and the Human Person (4); Theology of Grace (4); Basic Elements of Christology (4); Eucharist & Ecclesiology (4);

**Moral Theology (12 credits):** Principles of Christian Moral Life I, II (8); Theological & Cardinal Virtues (4)

**Thesis Direction (4 credits)**

## Language Requirements

Reading proficiency in Latin and a modern language (e.g. French, German or Spanish) may be demonstrated either by successfully completing two semesters of graduate coursework in the language or by passing a written proficiency examination, offered prior to the beginning of the summer session. Since both languages are considered prerequisites, these requirements must be satisfied within the first year of study.

## Comprehensive Examination

To qualify for the comprehensive examination, the student must have satisfied the language requirements and have a grade point average of 3.00 or above. The student usually takes the comprehensive examination on the first day of the summer special exam week following the fourth or fifth summer of study, although the Academic Dean may allow students to take the exam at other times. The exam has a single written component and its subject matter includes material covered in the required courses in dogmatic theology and moral theology as well as topics indicated in a special

packet that the student will receive during his or her first summer in the program. In order to pass the comprehensive examination, a student must receive an average grade of 3.00 on the exam. During the exam, the student will have three hours to write on three themes (theses): two themes from the area of dogmatic theology and one from the area of moral theology. For each of them, the candidate will be able to choose from three possible questions. The student must pass the comprehensive examination before defending his or her M.A. thesis. Students who fail the first attempt of the comprehensive exam, the thesis, or the thesis defense will be able to make a second attempt. However, they will only be able to receive the minimum required passing average grade of 3.0 on their second attempt and will be ineligible for academic honors. Candidates may not continue in the program after two failures of the comprehensive examination.

### **Thesis**

Under the direction of a faculty member, the student must write a thesis between 60–75 pages in length. The purpose of the thesis is to demonstrate the student's ability to identify and investigate a theological question, to carry out research appropriate to the topic, and to organize and present this material in a critical and coherent manner. The form to be used is that prescribed by Kate Turabian in *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 8th Edition (University of Chicago Press). The entire thesis must be approved by the director before the final draft is submitted to the Academic Dean. The requirements outlined in Appendix D of this handbook in preparing the thesis must be followed exactly. Failure of a thesis normally results in a student's termination from the program.

### **Residency**

Normally the M.A. (Thomistic Studies) requires a minimum of four summer sessions or their equivalent. A fifth summer may be added for thesis writing and defense. The program may be taken on a part-time basis, but must be completed in no more than six years.

## Model Curriculum for the Master of Arts (Thomistic Studies)

### Summer I

Triune God  
Creation and the Human Person

### Summer II

Principles of Christian Moral Life I  
Basic Element of Christology

### Summer III

Principles of Christian Moral Life II  
Theology of Grace

### Summer IV

Theological & Cardinal Virtues  
Eucharist & Ecclesiology  
Thesis Direction

Latin Reading Comprehension Test (1st Year of Matriculation)  
Modern Language Reading Comprehension Test (1st Year of Matriculation)  
Comprehensive Exam (4th Year of Matriculation)  
Thesis and Thesis Defense (5th Year of Matriculation)

## Grade Point Average

The student must maintain a grade point average of 3.00 or above throughout the M.A. program. Students are also required to receive an average of 3.00 on both their written thesis and a 3.00 on their thesis defense in order to complete the degree program.

## Model Timeline for M.A. (Thomistic Studies) Thesis and Defense

**Nota Bene:** The timeline below presumes the candidate will spend a fifth summer completing the thesis and preparing for the comprehensive examination. If a student intends to complete the program in four summers, an alternate timeline can be proposed by the Academic Dean after consultation with a thesis director.

**Spring before the Fourth Summer:** Candidates should begin discussing possible areas and topics for their M.A. thesis with a chosen director. This can be done via email or telephone conversation.

### *After the Fourth Summer:*

**September 30:** Deadline for candidates' submission of a definitive proposal to the Academic Dean for approval, signed by the candidate and his or her director. The proposal should contain a brief description of the topic in one or two paragraphs and a brief select bibliography.

**October – June:** Candidate and director should be in frequent contact

regarding the chosen thesis. The thesis is to be between 60–75 pages in length, demonstrating the student's ability to identify and investigate a theological question, to carry out research appropriate to the topic, and to organize and present this material in a critical and coherent manner. The form to be used is that prescribed by Kate Turabian in *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 8th Edition (University of Chicago Press, 2013). The entire thesis must be approved by the director before the final draft is submitted to the Academic Dean.

**1 July:** Last day for submitting three unbound copies of the M.A. thesis to the Dean, as well as a written petition, signed by the director, for a defense. One copy of the thesis will be distributed to the director and two copies will be distributed to the two readers chosen by the Academic Dean.