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Editor's Preface

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

In his second sermon for Lent 2024 for the Annual Retreat of the Roman Curia, Preacher of the Papal Household, Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM lamented an ongoing tendency in theology, especially in the West, to rely more on human wisdom than the power of the Holy Spirit. With this kind of approach, he said, God tends to be reduced to an object of study rather than a subject of relationship. At the same time, theological discourse becomes “more and more a dialogue with the academic elite of the moment and less and less nourishment for the faith of God’s people.” By way of advice, he recommends: “You only get out of this situation by prayer, by talking to God before you even talk about God.”

What timely counsel as the Church also marks three important milestones in the life of the great Doctor of the Church, Saint Thomas Aquinas, who was renowned both for his unparalleled scholarship as well as his mystical intimacy with God! We celebrated his 700th Canonization anniversary on July 18, 2023, and his 750th death anniversary on March 7, 2024. And while we do not know the exact date of his natal day, it would be the 800th anniversary of his birth around the year 2025. In launching the three-year jubilee in honor of the Angelic Doctor, Pope Francis lauded the eminent philosopher-theologian as a “faithful disciple of Incarnate wisdom” and “tireless seeker of the face of God.” Earlier in November 2022, during a meeting with the participants of an International Thomistic Congress held in Rome, he highlighted that “the passionate search for God is simultaneously prayer and contemplation so that Saint Thomas is a model of theology that is born and grows in the atmosphere of worship.” Thus, he called on theologians, first

to imitate the saint and then to follow and learn from the great Doctor and Master. In effect, he teaches us: first, pray, and let your prayer overflow into your theology.

Aquinas himself was quoted as saying that he learned more from the crucifix than from any other book. And having been granted a vision a few months before his death, he despised and gave up his scholarly work as “so much straw” in comparison to the union with God, of which he was granted a foretaste. How From this point onward, he would devote himself fully to prayer until his theological vision of God gave way at last to sight. His precocious question in childhood, “*Quid est Deus?*” reflecting his intellectual quest for God, had now become the ardent and impassioned “*Non aliam, Domine, nisi teipsum.*” I desire nothing else but You Yourself, Lord.

As the Church prepares for the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025, this is precisely the invitation of the Pope to all of us as he declared 2024 the Year of Prayer, dedicated to “rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer, prayer in personal life, in the life of the Church, prayer in the world.” To us theologians, this call resounds with particular earnestness and calls for reflection and self-examination. How much of our theology is born of prayer and a fruit of prayer? How much of our theology leads us and other people to prayer, and to a deeper and more intimate knowledge of God?

In this issue of *Loyola Papers*, we humbly present to you some articles that are hopefully the fruit, not only of serious study, but of authentic encounter with the Truth.

Kevin Stephon R. Centeno, SJ’s “Human Instrument United with God”: The Dynamic of Grace and Freedom in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus” explores the connection and relationship of divine initiative and human response as embodied in the Jesuit rule of life. The singular emphasis, which

can be traced back to Ignatius himself, on both the primacy of grace and cultivation of interior freedom, is the very foundation of Ignatian spirituality, if not all of Christian spirituality. In this article, Centeno reflects on this inextricable interplay of “cooperative grace” and how it is embodied in particular aspects of the Constitutions such as the general examen, the probation of formands, admission and incorporation into the Society, the personal life of Jesuits, their relationships with their mission collaborators and even the most desired trait in a superior general. The result is a humble but empowered understanding of ourselves as instruments in God’s hands through which his grace overflows.

Next, we have **Patrick Vance Nogoy, SJ**’s “Growing into *Kusang-Loob* and *Ka-Kristong Loob*: Some Implications of Exploring *Loob* as the Filipino’s Understanding of Conscience in Today’s Times.” Drawing on earlier attempts at inculturated theology by scholars such as Mercado, Miranda, and Alejo, Nogoy points to “loob” as a way to distill the moral concept of “conscience” as well as the unique nuances that the notion of “loob” can contribute to our understanding of conscience. Taking it a notch further, he proposes the idea of “kusang-loob” and “ka-Kristong loob” towards the formation and orientation of the “loob” towards Christ, emphasizing that the formation of one’s conscience is a task both personal and communal; one that requires “plenty of listening and dialogue” on the part of the Church in a maturation process that is markedly synodal.

Meanwhile, “Understanding *Karai Kasang* and *Nats*: A Basis for Dialogue Between Kachin Traditional Religion and Christianity” by **Than Naing Lin, SJ** studies the native theology of Kachin traditional religion and its interface with the Christian faith. In particular, it looks at the Kachin figure of the Creator, known as *Karai Kasang*, a name which has been appropriated early on by Christians to refer to the Christian

God in an attempt to inculturate the faith and make it accessible to the Kachin people. Boldly pointing out the historical and present inadequacies in the attempt to inculturate the Christian faith in the Kachin context, he points to the discernment of the work of the Spirit in other religions, not confined to Western criteria but in a truly Asian manner, as a promising doorway to a Kachin pneumatology.

Jojo M. Fung, SJ's "Ethics of Alterity and Corporeal Pneumatology for a Climate-Stricken World" is a post-pandemic reflection on our world today from a Levinasian lens, with the philosopher's ethics of alterity as a vantage point. Applying his reflections to pneumatology in particular, Fung proposes an "alterity pneumatology" that emphasizes "pneumatic co-creativity" in the form of five crucial "alterity shifts." These alterity shifts take persons and societies from being turned in on themselves to turning to others, "alterizing them" to have a greater sense of interconnectedness with other creatures along with a deeper sense of responsibility for the planet. Read in tandem with Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and the more recent follow-up document, *Laudate Deum*, his proposal is an important contribution to address unbridled anthropocentrism and its ravaging effects on our global climate and human society.

"*Substitute Families and Suicidal Tendencies of the Adolescents and Youths of Kerala, India Today: Bowenian Model for Pastoral Approaches*" by **Antony Thomas Ittikunnath, OCD** analyzes the growing trend of suicide among young people in Kerala, India, using the theories of the American psychiatrist, Murray Bowen. According to him, the problem often begins in the family, leading young people to cut off ties and look for substitute families like peer groups, who, unfortunately, are negative influences for them. This is exacerbated by other factors such

as social media and gadget abuse, as well as the high incidence of failed relationships on the part of young couples who are themselves running away from problematic family situations. All this contributes to the increasing incidence of suicide, seen as the final stage of this complex problematic. As a response, Ittikunnath proposes a Bowenian family systems therapeutic approach to lower feelings of anxiety, starting from the level of the original family and the parents in particular, along with other applications of Bowen's family systems theory.

Yung Hongmin, BMC's "Genuine Christian Martyrdom in Balthasar's Theology" presents a new understanding of martyrdom in its more practical or bloodless dimension. Appropriating the Trinitarian, Christological and pneumatological approach of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Hongmin frames "Christian martyrdom as a manifestation of divine love and obedience" applicable to daily life as a profound participation in the Paschal mystery. Martyrdom is then conceived not only as a singular event that is achieved by the shedding of blood and offering of one's life for the faith but in continual imitation of Christ's kenosis and solidarity in the company of the Holy Spirit. Not only does this help to avoid the over-spiritualization of Christ's suffering, but it also opens up a practical path to living it out in fidelity, devotion, and self-surrender to God as a witness to God's Kingdom.

Last but not least, we have **Kelvin Ruel Novabos'** "A Review of Gerd Lüdemann's Methodology in 'The Resurrection of Christ: a Historical Inquiry.'" In his critical analysis of Lüdemann's book, Novabos tackles the German scholar's book, where he posits the highly controversial claim that Jesus did not really rise from the dead and that accounts in the Scripture of Jesus' resurrection are only the product of the disciples' mass delusion. Locating the claim in relation to the three quests for the

historical Jesus, he points out the strengths and weaknesses of Lüdemann's work, especially in terms of its attempt at an exclusively historical methodology. A more updated methodology that learns from the limitations of the first two quests and incorporates the helpful insights of the third quest, he argues, would have led to a more sound exegesis and conclusion.

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For our synthesis papers, we are very proud to present two excellent articles in this current issue: one by **Hugo Antonio Facio Hernandez, CS** titled "The Pilgrimage of Divine Love: A Theological Synthesis on the Relevance of Migration in God's Plan" and another by **Robert Rizzo SJ** on "Mystery as a Renewed Pathway to Relate with God in a Secular World." Both papers come from a profound personal experience of two realities that are of great pastoral relevance today: migration and secularization.

Hernandez is not only part of the Scalabrinian Missionaries, a congregation known for their charism of working with migrants, but was a migrant himself who experienced the struggles and pains of migration at a young age. In his paper, he reflects on the special love of God for migrants and expounds on important aspects of the mystery of faith from the lens of the phenomenon of migration. God is present in the journey of every migrant as he is in the journey of each one of us through life.

Meanwhile, Rizzo's paper embodies the human struggle with mystery, which in its very elusiveness, he ironically discovers as a potential bridge between spirituality and secularism. He then tackles important dogmas such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Holy Spirit as the fruits of this struggle to make sense of God's revelation. He sees in this

universal struggle an important opening for dialogue with the post-Catholic secular society in his native Malta, where he hopes that the fundamental experience of grappling with God, as opposed to simplifying the faith to what our minds could easily understand, can once again attract people who have learned to despise traditional religion but continue to search for meaning and transcendence. “The fundamental experience that facilitates an encounter with the Mystery is prayer,” he says. It is truly a great consolation to know from this that LST students do not just grapple with concepts for quizzes and oral exams but are hopefully opening themselves up to God in prayer.

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As the Angelic Doctor himself shows us, authentic theology is more than just acquiring competencies and skills, mastering concepts, or navigating their complex and subtle nuances. It is, above all, a disposition of the heart, a yearning from the depths of one’s soul, a posture of prayer before the God who reveals himself, not only to be known but to draw us to his communion of love. May he continue to intercede for us today before the throne of Mercy while we, in turn, strive to impart the fruits of what we contemplate: *contemplata aliis tradere*.

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo, OP