



The truth about God, and its relevance for a good life in society



XI Plenary Session 17-19 June 2011 – After the ninth plenary session of the Academy, it was decided to dedicate two plenary sessions to the consideration of ST 1-2.94.2. The tenth plenary session (June, 2010) considered the ‘naturalness’ of the natural law, with a special attention to Ulpian’s definition of natural law as ‘quod natura omnia animalia docuit’.

For the eleventh plenary session, the idea is to consider (human) nature as connected more strictly with reason, with special attention to what Thomas says in ST 1-2.94.2 about man’s inclination to know the truth about God and to live peaceably in society.

It is hoped that the first day (afternoon/evening) of the eleventh session can set the tone for – and clarify the major theme of – the entire session.

Saturday’s discussion would first treat issues having to do with our knowledge of God; it would then move on to life in society. Regarding the first, it is important to understand that it is part of human rationality itself to seek to know the truth about God. The relationship, however, between our rational nature and our ultimate end has been a source of much controversy in twentieth century philosophy and theology, so it is imperative to address this issue, as well. A closely connected theme is the place in religion of the knowledge of God. For many contemporary thinkers, the serious study of religion concerns only religious experience, understood either as a personal or a sociological phenomenon. Regarding the second theme, an important issue in our contemporary pluralistic society is whether the proper organization of political society is a good connected in a direct manner with reason itself (and so with human nature) or whether it is instrumental to man’s achieving fulfillment in the attainment of other human goods. What is the role of government in promoting social virtue? The day would conclude with a panel discussion regarding these same themes.

The final day’s (morning’s) discussion would be about, not so much political society, but rather culture itself and religion’s historical role in it