



The Beatitudes, Christ's programme for evangelisation for all time and for every culture



XIV Plenary Session 20-22 June 2014 – Following the Academy's tradition of studying the topics that the Holy Father believes to be important for the individual moments of the Church's life, we decided we would focus on the evangelisation programme of Pope Francis and on the centrality of the Beatitudes in announcing the Good News. Besides the many references to them in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, the Holy Father suggested preparing for the next World Youth Day, to be held in Cracow in 2016, by reflecting with young people on the evangelic Beatitudes contained in the Gospel of St Mark.

St Thomas Aquinas thoroughly examines the Beatitudes in the wake of a long tradition, in particular the doctrine of St Augustine. His synthesis of the Gospel, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the theological and cardinal that were also studied by Aristotle, is very good and can certainly contribute to experiencing the peace and joy that only God can give. Thomas' comment to the Beatitudes is also a treasure-trove of fine considerations on the deepest desires of the human soul.

We are also encouraged in this study and debate by the considerable number of important quotes by Thomas Aquinas included in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, such as, for example, the crucial one that says, "the New Law consists chiefly in the grace of the Holy Ghost, which is shown forth by faith that worketh through love" (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 108, art. 1) or the one on mercy, "mercy takes precedence of other virtues, for it belongs to mercy to be bountiful to others, and, what is more, to succour others in their wants, which pertains chiefly to one who stands above. Hence mercy is accounted as being proper to God: and therein His omnipotence is declared to be chiefly manifested" (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 30, art. 4).

Since we are close to the beatification of the Venerable Paul VI, I would like to recall that, as a young priest, he graduated in Thomistic Philosophy from this Roman Academy of St Thomas Aquinas, as Pius XI had before him.