

ROMAN JUBILEE

Angelus Walz, O.P.

The "Angelicum" Celebrates Its Fiftieth Anniversary

MORE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE, the present meets the past in Rome. The Pontifical Institute "Angelicum,"* which first opened its doors in 1909, succeeded the more than three-hundred year old College of St. Thomas. St. Thomas Aquinas taught in Rome from 1265 to 1267 at the Dominican House of Studies at Santa Sabina on the Aventine. When the priory of Santa Maria sopra Minerva was founded in the center of Rome the school was transferred there, and in 1380 when the Order's headquarters were moved there by Blessed Raymond of Capua, the school fell under the eye of the Master General himself. Deserving professors have always distinguished it, and among them in the 16th century, Father James Nacchianti was outstanding. Pope Paul III esteemed him highly and created him bishop of Chioggia, and he became a zealous member of the great Council at Trent.

In 1567, when St. Pius V, the great pope of the Reform numbered St. Thomas among the Doctors of the Church, the former bishop of Cuzco, Peru, Monsignor Juan Solano, O.P. was inspired to found the College of St. Thomas at the Minerva, which opened its doors on August 4, 1577. Pius V's nephew, Cardinal Michael Bonello gave the college his generous support, as did the Masters General of the Order of Preachers. Under the celebrated theologian, Diego Alvarez, who was its regent from 1603 to 1606, the new college gained an enviable reputation.

The Casanatense Library was joined to the College at the Mi-

* The "Angelicum" is a College that is equivalent to an American University and comprises three Faculties: Theology, Canon Law and Philosophy, as well as Institutes of Social Studies and Spirituality.

nerva in 1698. This was the library that Prospero Lambertini, scholar and later Pope Benedict XIV, preferred above all others. However, hard times came to the College under Napoleon's rule. In the period of the Restoration after his fall, Father General Angelus Ancarani, who clothed Lacordaire with the habit of St. Dominic, endowed the College with an institute of physics, and later an observatory was added. But the chief strength of the school lay in philosophy and theology.

St. Thomas' College has never gone unheralded. Franz Hettinger refers to it with high praise; the Westphalian scholar Ernst Plassmann recounted his impression of Thomistic schooling in his books *The School of St. Thomas* and *The Philosophy of St. Thomas* (1857-1862). He dedicated these to his teachers at the College. The Spaniard Carbó, the Italians Guidi (sometime professor at the University of Vienna and subsequently Cardinal-Archbishop of Bologna), Guglielmotti, Reali and Pellegrinetti, the Corsican Zigliara and others helped to mold many a scholar at the school. In 1870 the "St. Thomas Academy" was established, but it floundered in the political storms of the times. Soon the Italian government began to persecute the College itself and even secularized the Casanatense Library. But the College of St. Thomas continued its traditions uninterrupted in lodgings outside the Minerva.

Pope Benedict XIII had granted the College the right to confer degrees in theology, and Pope Leo XIII extended these rights to the philosophy and canon law faculties. During his years as Regent, the lectures of Father Albert Lepidi gained renown throughout the city, and drew many distinguished prelates from other parts of the world as well. His successor, Father Buonpensiere, was almost as well known, and among the prominent men appointed to the faculty by Father General Andreas Frühwirth were Fathers Esser, Wehofer, Walsh, Noval and Blat. Among those studying for degrees at St. Thomas' College at this time were the future Cardinal Verdier of Paris, the future Archbishop McNicholas of Cincinnati, Bishop Vogt of Aachen, Father Martin Grabmann, and Father Grendel, later general of the Divine Word Missionaries. Pope Pius X raised the College of St. Thomas to the status of a papal academy during this period.

It was Father General Hyacinth Cormier who took the next big step in the history of the "Angelicum," moving the College to No. 15 Via San Vitale. This was accomplished on November 4, 1909, the saintly Pope Pius X receiving the professors and students in audience and classes beginning on the following day. The first Regent of Studies in the new edifice was Father Sadoc Szabó, the ex-Provincial of Austria-Hungary, who served in this capacity until 1927. On June

29, 1923 in his encyclical "Studiorum Ducem" commemorating the 600th anniversary of the canonization of St. Thomas Aquinas, Pope Pius XI said of the "Angelicum" that St. Thomas lives there as in his own house. It was during this same jubilee that Father Szabó published the *Xenia Thomistica*, established the "Thomist Union," and founded the alumni publication *Angelicum*. It was he who began the series of pilgrimages to the cities around Rome where the Saint had lived: Aquino, Roccasecca, Monte Cassino, Orvieto, Fossanova etc.

When the Italian government decided to dispose of the property of SS. Domenico and Sisto, which had belonged to a convent of Dominican nuns since the 16th century, a marvelous opportunity presented itself to enlarge the College, and the then Master General, Father Bonaventure Garcia de Paredes, took advantage of it. The "Angelicum" was now situated facing the Salita del Grillo and parallel to Villa Aldobrandini. Leading up to the noble façade of the church, on the north side, is a winged staircase enclosed by an elegant balustrade, and plots of green trees, courtyards, and a garden on the south side break the monotony of the massive stone buildings. On the east side stands a new half-circular building of vast proportions housing the library, lecture-hall, and other sections. The new buildings were inaugurated by Father Gillet, the Master General, on November 15, 1932, the very day on which the Church Universal was celebrating for the first time the feast of St. Albert the Great, Doctor of the Church. He was accordingly chosen co-patron of the "Angelicum," and the statues of the two holy doctors, Thomas and Albert, adorn the niches above the main entrance. Twelve Cardinals honored that remarkable celebration by their presence, among them Boggiani, Gasparri, Frühwirth and Pacelli.

So much for the exterior. Internally, the College proceeded under the rectorship of Fathers Michael Browne (1932-41), Emmanuel Suárez, Thomas Garde, Franz Ceuppens, the American Benedict Blank, and since 1955, Louis Gillon. In 1948 the International Seminary of St. Thomas was opened at the "Angelicum" for students who have no religious house of their own in Rome, and is under the able direction of Father Methodius Hudeczek of the Province of Cologne. The library, ever growing under Father Augustine Scherzer's care, has won considerable attention on the part of the Spanish, French and West German governments. In 1950, an Institute of Spirituality was joined to the faculty of Theology, and in the following year, one of Social Studies to that of Philosophy, which was later granted the right to confer degrees.

Among the professors on the staff is the jubilarian Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, world renowned teacher and author. Although he has relinquished his chair as regular professor, he continues to draw a large audience to his special lectures. There are more than fifty professors and instructors on the faculty, and among them, worthy of special mention, Fathers Lumbreras, Lavaud, Gillon, Muñiz, Bender, Alvarez, Morán, McNicholl and Spiazzi. And among the deceased are never to be forgotten Fathers Schultes, Anton and Anselm Rohner, Merkelbach, Horváth, Hugh Pope, Vosté, Cordovani, Pégues, Hugon, Arintero, Noval and Barbado.

Former students of the "Angelicum" are Cardinal Chiarlo, the archbishops of Prague, Quebec, Ottawa, Trinidad, Oristano, Catania and Clossi, many bishops among whom are several Americans and Canadians, and priests of every continent engaged in the apostolate and the government of the Church. The alumni also include laymen who are playing a leading role in science and Catholic action, and Father Dominique Pire, O.P., the 1958 Nobel Peace Prize winner, completed his theological studies at the College of St. Thomas.

Physically the Academy is impressive in its quiet, protected position right in the heart of bustling, downtown Rome. There are modern, well-lighted classrooms, and the great lecture hall is used not only for academic exercises, but is set aside for religious and cultural assemblies from time to time. In this way, the "Angelicum" acquires a broader sphere in which to operate in the service of truth.

The "Angelicum's" Golden Jubilee has merited it the recognition of two Popes. On February 14, 1958, Pius XII received Father General Michael Browne, chancellor of the College, along with the officials, professors and students of the Academy in special audience. Welcoming the group heartily, the Pontiff delivered in Latin a fine address which emphasized the high position that the "Angelicum" now enjoys. He stressed the good that the College has done in presenting and developing the doctrine of Aquinas. He repeatedly commended to the "Angelicum" the care of the theological teachings of St. Thomas, whose word and exemplary life are a duty and an ideal, whose zeal for the Church of Christ glows from all his writings.

On December 20, 1958, after a student from Venice had defended his doctorate thesis at the Vatican before "Angelicum" professors, Pope John XXIII received the entire Academy, faculty and student body, in audience. Because the Chancellor, Father Browne, was in Manila with Cardinal Agagianian, the privilege of expressing the homage of the "Angelicum" to the Holy Father, went to his Vicar-General, Father Stephen Gómez. The Pontiff replied in Italian with

all his characteristic spontaneity and cordiality. He recalled his student days in Rome, spoke of Pope John XXII who canonized St. Thomas, and of Leo XIII, that great reviver of Thomism. He said that the doctrine of St. Thomas stands as a towering monument of human thought and communicates the certitude of Christian philosophy and theology in ever expanding fields of endeavor.

The "Angelicum" can indeed look back upon its considerable successes in days gone by. So too it can look to the future with confidence in its mission of serving in a special way the spirit and the teaching of the Angelic Doctor.