

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

"Woe to me if I do not Thomisticize." On Raissa Maritain's testimony, such were the words chosen by her husband Jacques to express his intellectual vocation. Melodramatic? Perhaps. But the pair were sensational personages.

They met in 1900 as young intellectuals at the Sorbonne. Dismayed with the relativism offered by their professors, they considered suicide. The lectures of Henri Bergson convinced them that knowledge of the absolute was still possible. Yet, it was a chance encounter with the writing and person of Leon Bloy that led them to understand that true knowledge of the Absolute was to be found in the wisdom of the saints. They converted to Catholicism in 1905. Both were not sanguine about Catholicism fulfilling their philosophical desires. Hence, with great joy they discovered the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. Within Thomism, they perceived a metaphysics of being that perfected the natural capacities of the intellect.

As the above quote indicates, Maritain's introduction to Aquinas was not without responsibilities. In finding Aquinas, Maritain also found his vocation. He would "Thomisticize," i.e., effect an engagement of Aquinas with the 20th century. He would bring Thomism from beyond the seminary walls into the marketplace. Due in no small part to Maritain's witness, intellectuals still feel the call to "Thomisticize." By the publication of this volume, the American Maritain Association initiates a project that will continue to offer to the world men and women animated by Maritain's legacy. The Association also wishes to make itself more widely known as a fellowship that welcomes and engenders the Thomistic vocation.

The volume has three main parts. Articles by noted biographers of the Maritains comprise Part One. The occasion for Part Two is the 50th anniversary (1987) of Maritain's *Existence and the Existent*. The subsections of Part Two come from the chapters of Maritain's book. Articles of the subsections either critically discuss points of the chapter or creatively utilize them to address other issues. Finally, the appendix contains inspiring addresses by the Presidents of the American and Canadian Maritain societies.

On behalf of the American Maritain Association, I convey expressions of sincere gratitude to the following for their financial generosity: Prof. Raymond Dennehy, President, American Maritain Association; the Thomas More-Jacques Maritain Society; the Canadian Maritain Association with Prof. Jean-Louis Allard, President.\*

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John F. X. Knasas

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