



Bulletin n. 32
September 2003

Editorial

What does the political reality of "Europe" have to do with the theological category of "salvation"? And what does "salvation" have to do with "Europe"? Looked at from the point of view of historical philosophy, the phenomenon of political salvation can already be found in the Greco-Roman tradition (*sōteria* and *salus* respectively); it stands here alongside individual salvation. In Hellenism, it is the cult of the ruler which bears the mark of salvation. Aristotle stresses that all people strive after "happiness". The Roman legal tradition speaks of "salus" in terms of the "salus publica", meaning order in house and state. In theology, the term "salvation" is used in a wider context, but the political tradition is not forgotten in doing this. Thomas Aquinas, for example, was convinced of the close link between individual and political salvation. An important element in this connection is the "bonum commune", the common good (cf. in this context the ESPACES conference "European common good between national and common interests" in Cracow, Poland in 2002).

And today? What does the talk about "salvation" mean in an increasingly secularised Europe? Is it at all appropriate to use the term "salvation" in the singular form, in the social context of post-modern differentiation? Do we not rather have more to do with a plurality of "salvations" – as well as of the opposite, disasters – at the beginning of the 21st century? So how does the dogmatically "strong" noun salvation relate to the practice of healing or salvation?

Last Autumn, 35 Dominican theologians, male and female, were concerned with this question, amongst others, in Huissen in the Netherlands. Conceptionally and organisationally responsible for this was the "Dominicaans Studiecentrum voor Theologie en Samenleving" (DSTS) in Nijmegen and the "Institut M.-Dominique Chenu – Espaces Berlin" (IMDC). We sought to approach the "theological question about salvation(s) and healing in Europe" – such was the title of the specialist conference.

The current newsletter presents a brief extract from the discussion. The contributions make it clear, however, that the theological question about salvation(s) / healing in Europe could not come up with a final answer (in the singular). (Not least for this reason, there will be a follow-up congress in 2004.) The two Spanish participants *Ricardo de Luis Carballada OP* (Madrid) and *Jesús Díaz Sariego OP* (Salamanca) formulated their conclusion thus (in: *Ciencia Tomista* 129 [2002], 627-630): the participants agreed that "salvation" must be understood as an open horizon which can never be reached. This transcendental horizon is realised historically in multifarious and different salvations. From this perspective, salvation is a fundamental-practical concept, which helps to open up the horizon of one's own reality towards all those who are the victims of suffering, slavery etc.

Thomas Eggensperger OP
Ulrich Engel OP
Institut M.-Dominique Chenu – ESPACES Berlin