



THOMISTIC STUDIES GRADUATE STUDENT EARNS MARITAIN AWARD

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Francisco Plaza, a student from the University of St. Thomas Center for Thomistic Studies, was awarded the American Maritain Association Graduate Student Award at an annual conference held in San Francisco, Feb. 26–28. At least 50 people attended the conference.

The American Maritain Association is a not-for-profit organization that is dedicated to fostering an understanding and building upon the philosophy of Jacques Maritain and realist tradition in which he belonged.

The award is given to the graduate student who submits the best paper read and selected by the AMA board. In addition to their submission, students must have a faculty sponsor. Plaza selected Dr. John Hittinger, professor of philosophy, as his sponsor.

Plaza, a fourth-year graduate student and adjunct professor of philosophy, said it was an honor to receive the award and to be able to represent UST among previous students who received it.

“My studies here at St. Thomas have afforded me several opportunities to participate in a wide variety of academic endeavors like the American Maritain Association, given the unique tie that we have as an institution to the Catholic philosophical tradition here in the United States,” Plaza said. “The strength of the community at the Center for Thomistic Studies is very important as well, as I am surrounded by like-minded thinkers working toward similar goals.”

Others who presented papers at the conference included: John Deely, professor of philosophy and Rudman Chair, and Steve Jensen, professor of philosophy, along with Brian Kemple, a doctoral candidate and student of the Center for Thomistic Studies, Sr. Anne Frances Le, a doctoral recipient from CTS, and Hittinger presented papers at the conference. Paper topics included “Venial Sin and the Ultimate End,” “Subjectivity and the Prise de Conscience in Jacques Maritain” and “Maritain on the Significance of Joan of Arc.”

Plaza’s paper addressed human subjectivity as understood by Jacques Maritain, with particular emphasis on Maritain’s idea of self-awareness in relation to one’s own personhood. Plaza then compared Maritain’s writings to what St. John Paul II said on the same topic.

Plaza said his time at UST as a student has prepared him and given him the confidence he needs to make the transition toward the professional world beyond his graduate studies.

“The paper I presented is tied with my prospective dissertation topic, so receiving the AMA award for it certainly helped confirm to me that I am starting in the right direction with it,” Plaza said. “Moreover, graduate school can be quite a grueling process, so some kind of formal validation in this way always helps in giving a significant morale boost.”

The Center for Thomistic Studies is the only graduate philosophy program in the United States focused on the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. The Center specializes in areas that include bioethics, political philosophy, virtue theory and Islamic philosophy, and it is home to the national office of the American Catholic Philosophical Association.

For more information about the Center, call 713-525-3519 or email thomistic_center@stthom.edu.

By Elaine Rivera

