

**SEARCHING THE TRUTH IN THE EVERY DAY**  
***A course which teaches us to think***

***Given at the Institute of St John, London, by the Brothers of Community of St John***

The Curriculum for this day-time course is given below. The First Year modules are always studied first but the modules in the Second Year and the Third Year rotate.

So, depending upon the year in which a student begins the course, he or she could study Year 1 followed by Year 2, and then Year 3 or Year 1 followed by Year 3 and then Year 2.

**YEAR 1:**

Semester A, Module 1: **Why Philosophy?**

Semester A, Module 2: **Daring to love? Addressing the complexity of a loving relationship: Eros, Philia and Agape**

Semester B, Module 1: **Can we discover the soul? Life and the question of the soul**

Semester B, Module 2: **What can we know about ourselves and the way God governs us through knowing how God progressively revealed Himself to his People?**

**YEAR 2:**

Semester A, Module 1: **What does it mean to say: "I am": know yourself and delight in your uniqueness**

Semester A, Module 2: **What is Faith according to Saint Thomas and Saint John?**

Semester B, Module 1: **What is truth? Truth, good and the question of "God"**

Semester B, Module 2: **Why the Church? Why the Church is divinely prudent**

**YEAR 3:**

Semester A, Module 1: **The 'What' and the 'Why' of the Family**

Semester A, Module 2: **What is it to be transformed by grace?**

Semester B, Module 1: **Judgement and Choice**

Semester B, Module 2: **"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" - What is the Incarnation?**

## **1A1: Why Philosophy?**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Year, Semester A, 1<sup>st</sup> Module (1A1)**

#### **Summary:**

How does one enter into philosophy? What is the starting point and can one discern different parts in this search for truth?

#### **Various themes to be looked at:**

#### **Philosophy, the most natural search for truth:**

- The starting point for philosophical research
- Questioning reality
- Philosophy and the history of philosophy
- The great human questions, the first of which is work
- How are the parts of philosophy distinguishable?

#### **Philosophy of Work: the first great human question**

- Realisation of a work, a fundamental activity at the heart of all human activity
- The different elements in artistic activity
- Artistic experience
- Inspiration
- Artistic choice, a creative choice?

## **1A2: Daring to love? Addressing the complexity of a loving relationship: Eros, Philia and Agape**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Year, Semester A, 2<sup>nd</sup> Module (1A2)**

#### **Summary:**

Man's end, "that for which he exists": how the thinkers at the origins of our culture tried to respond. Aristotle developed an ethic of happiness: man was made to be happy! Happiness for him was the exercise of what is deepest and most spiritual in him. What is the sense of man's life? Through an analysis of the great human experience of love, discovery of what man is made for.

**Various themes to be looked at:**

**Greek Philosophy:**

- Happiness, love and the soul

**Philosophy of Ethics: of friendship, of happiness**

- The multi-faceted human experience of love and friendship
- Love and intelligence: the virtue of prudence
- Love, freedom and personal gift of self: education in virtue
- What are the virtues and how does one acquire them?
- Education: helping to be successful, teaching to be responsible and fair
- Cornerstone of society: the family where love is at the centre

***1B1: Can we discover the soul? Life and the question of the soul***

**1<sup>st</sup> Year, Semester B, 1<sup>st</sup> Module**

**Summary:**

Man is alive, I am alive, is this not surely one's own undeniable experience? How though can one better understand this fascinating experience of being alive? Has that which religious traditions call "soul" a place in the search for truth starting from human experience?

As we mature in age, we acknowledge how that which is most fundamental in human life, that which is most rooted in the body, has important repercussions upon that which is most elevated, the development of the human person in their capacities to know and to love. We need therefore to delve into this complexity, entering into the analysis of man in so far as he is alive and moves himself.

**Various themes to be looked at:**

- Practical philosophy and philosophy of the living being
- Human life most rooted in the organic body: vegetative life
- Sensitive life and the discovery of intentionality
- Intelligence and will: discovering the human spirit, at the origin of man's most immanent life

***1B2: What can we know about ourselves and the way God governs us through knowing how God progressively revealed Himself to his people?***

***1<sup>st</sup> Year, Semester B, 2<sup>nd</sup> Module (1B2)***

**Summary:**

In recent times, and especially with the Encyclical Letter *Faith and Reason* (1998), the Church has very specifically taught about the harmonious relationship between Divine Revelation and man's natural quest for truth. God uses many signs through which to reveal Himself to man, like human language, gestures and the Sacraments to name but only a few. We can say then that we enter more fully into his divine government when we seek to know better what these signs mean, what their significations are. Our intelligence is a gift to be developed at the service of our understanding of God's revelation. What is revealed to us by God in the Old Testament?

**Various themes to be looked at:**

- Faith and reason: being intelligent for God and the neighbour
- Dei Verbum: receiving both from Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition
- The Word of God: nourishment for the soul
- Book of Genesis: our beginnings!

***2A1: What does it mean to say: "I am"? Know yourself and delight in your uniqueness***

***2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Semester A, 1<sup>st</sup> Module (2A1)***

**Summary:**

The philosopher is interested in the different activities of man, but he also seeks to know man in his very being, that is to say above and beyond what he can do or can make and his life's orientation and commitments. In First Philosophy (or Metaphysics), the search is to know that which is most radical in the human person, what founds this particular person to be who they are, the discovery therefore of what is called "substance". This is what the intelligence is firstly made for: to know reality in its existence.

**Various themes to be looked at:**

- The birth of the metaphysical questions in the world of today
- What experience or intuition do I begin from in metaphysics? Do I have experience of being?
- The judgement of existence: so simple and yet so profound
- "This is" or "I am"?
- Questioning reality in its existence

## ***2A2: What is faith according to Saint Thomas and Saint John?***

### ***2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Semester A, 2<sup>nd</sup> Module (2A2)***

#### **Summary:**

Faith, Saint Thomas Aquinas would say, is a grace from God which enlightens and raises one's intelligence. The virtue of faith permits the human intelligence to receive Divine Revelation and to adhere to it. But faith is also the faith of the Church, the faith of the Christian community, and so it need be therefore simultaneously personal and ecclesial. How does one understand these differences? What distinctions need to be made?

A larger question, but an equally personal one, concerns one's motivation in faith: Why do I believe? Why do I make an act of faith? These questions need to be addressed both from the standpoint of the Church's understanding of the mystery of faith (and here Sacred Tradition gives Saint Thomas a unique place) and that of the bond between faith and love (concerning which Saint John's Gospel has most wonderful light to offer).

#### **Various themes to be looked at:**

- Faith as a theological virtue
- Faith as action of God and response of man
- Growth in faith
- Purity of faith: "rich soil"
- The Beatitude of faith: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe"
- "I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father"

## ***2B1: What is truth? Truth, good and the question of 'God'.***

### ***2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Semester B, 1<sup>st</sup> Module (2B1)***

#### **Summary:**

One of the great philosophical searches is that of man's finality. This question of his personal end is never fully posed other than in First Philosophy on the level of being and the human spirit. Aristotle was the first to explicitly enter into this search: what is truth, good, being-in-act?

The word "God" comes from religious traditions. What is both a personal and communal search has been assumed into human life and human traditions, but does it have any place in what is strictly a philosophical search? Can it be fully integrated into a search for truth from human experience? Can one be precise as to certain ways of access, if any, to the discovery of a "First Being"?

**Various themes to be looked at:**

- What is truth?
- What is love?
- Is there a strictly philosophical way to pose the question of “God”?
- Intelligence and love in the ascent to the “First Being”

***2B2 Why the Church? Why the Church is divinely prudent***

***2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Semester B, 2<sup>nd</sup> Module (2B2)***

**Summary:** Have Christians concretely grasped her specific role in their lives and do they know therefore how best to grow and flourish within her?

We can ask ourselves how we look to the Church in her proper mystery and whether we are able to precisely communicate what we know to others. This course will help us to better discover the mystery of the Church through focusing upon what is revealed, especially in Holy Scripture. The New Testament above all will enable us to face the great ecclesiological questions: *Why did God institute the Church? What is the Church and what is her mission?*

**Various themes to be looked at:**

- The Church as the Body of Christ: unity and diversity, one and multiple
- The Church as the Bride of Christ: “glorious, holy and faultless”
- The Church as the Vine: abundant fruitfulness through remaining in Jesus

***3A1 The ‘What’ and the ‘Why’ of the Family?***

***3<sup>rd</sup> Year, Semester A, 1<sup>st</sup> Module (3A1)***

**Summary:** The family is a complex community to understand, comprised as it is of many different elements! Yet, it is so important to do so given that it is the first experience man has of a natural (God-given) community in which to live. Is the family not also and always the place of man’s first education in the school of life?

Do we not all in some way live a form of family life and so need address the question of what is the good of the concrete community that is my very own family? Can’t we also add that we must take responsibility for this search, and this more than ever before, given that in today’s world there are new currents surging forward to redefine the very identity of the family. Are not the many attacks on the family aimed at seeking to make the fundamental natural character of the family disappear? Surely it will be only those families who are thoughtful before such confusion and disorder who will be able to safely navigate through the criss-crossing currents?

So, we are led to ask if there is a principle of understanding for man who seeks to know what it is to live in community? What role(s) do the parents have in family life? And the children, what is their role? What is the true structure of a family and how can one go about talking about an end-good to which all members of a given family are expected to act towards?

Lastly, we could also ask what light does Divine Revelation shed onto the “what” and the “why” of a family?

**Various themes to be looked at:**

- The Experience of a community
- The notion of the Common Good
- Nature and Culture, Nature and Nurture
- The Integration of Conditioning into community life – Political Prudence
- Cooperation in the family community: the place of Family Rules
- Differences and Complimentary Factors between a Father and a Mother
- The necessity of Authority in a community
- Political Discernment: “to survive”, “to live” or “to live well”?

***3A2 What is it to be transformed by grace?***

***3<sup>rd</sup> Year, Semester A, 2<sup>nd</sup> Module (3A2)***

**Summary:**

For centuries, the Church has taught that the understanding of the Christian life is that of a profound transformation: one is always moving from what is simply a natural way of life towards a supernatural receiving of what it is to truly live!

What is this transformation? What is the “water” of my nature that, to be respected and developed as such, should be brought to Jesus? Then, what does it mean that my nature itself is capable of becoming “wine” by the work of his grace?

The mystery of grace is itself a very great mystery and many theologians, down through the ages, have sought to say something by mode of analogy! What is grace and how do I bring who I am, and all that I am, to the desired transformation that it works?

Also, the philosopher in his search for truth rises to the rich discovery of man living a personalised life, a life marked by his/her personal choices (choices that remain in a real conformity with human nature). What is the human person and what can this further understanding bring to the long debated distinction of nature and grace?

**Various themes to be looked at:**

- Human and Divine
- Mystery of Grace
- Man's Cooperation with Grace
- Nature, Person and Grace
- Christian Grace is Trinitarian

***3B1: Judgement and Choice***

***3<sup>rd</sup> Year, Semester B, 1<sup>st</sup> Module (3B1)***

**Summary:**

Some people find it difficult to make good choices because of the challenges they meet when trying to make good judgements in the knotty and tangled situations that they find themselves. Others quickly choose because they quickly judge but, lacking a true appreciation of the inherent complexity, fall into a false simplification.

These two tendencies are surely better understood in the light of grasping the human judgement as being the most elevated operation of man's intellect (one could even say, the most perfect operation!) whilst being extensively present in all that is personal in his life.

Man strives through learning to judge and to judge well!

So, what is a judgement, what examples are there in our experience, and why is it so important to discover its key place in man's growth as a person?

**Various themes to be looked at:**

- Apprehension, Judgement and Reasoning
- Artistic judgement
- Prudential judgement
- Affective judgement
- Judgement for a Mathematician or a Scientist
- Judgements affirming proper principles in philosophy (scientific judgement)
- Scientific judgement in philosophy and the judgement of wisdom



### **3B2: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”. What is the Incarnation?**

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Year, Semester B, 2<sup>nd</sup> Module (3B2)**

**Summary:** St Peter’s beautiful response to Jesus’ question (“Who do you say I am?”) contains a wealth of meaning!

What then have I discovered about Jesus, revealed to me as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, my one and only Saviour? Where am I on the life-long journey of discovering Jesus Christ in his divinity and his humanity being sure not to diminish his boundless and immense mystery of being both true God and true man?

Indeed, how can God become man? Surely something is lost of God’s infinite mystery in his so doing? Can God truly be wholly present in a man conditioned by human nature’s inherent limits that are our everyday experience?

Drawing on Saint Thomas Aquinas, what analogies have we need of when put before the mystery of the Incarnation?

And what biblical verses in particular point to this great choice of God who, in the Word, became flesh?

#### **Various themes to be looked at:**

- Why did God become incarnate?
- Hypostatic union
- Sanctifying Grace and Capital Grace
- Christ’s Knowledge
- Christological Heresies