

## In Loving Memory of John Ziegler

I have been asked to say just a few words about that part of John's life that involved his study and teaching of Philosophy. It was necessarily an interest that had to be fitted into a life already quite fully engaged in work and family life. Externally, therefore, it might appear to have been a mere interest, or hobby even, that absorbs many in what leisure hours they might have. It was, however, closely associated with his faith and John came quickly to realise its importance for faith and for its own sake also, not only for himself but also for the society in which we live. Only thus can we appreciate John's dedication in this regard.

In recent times this importance has been made abundantly clear by the late pope John Paul II in his encyclical "Faith and Reason". His insistence on the fundamental importance for the Faith of a sound philosophy has been strongly repeated by the present Pope, expressed most forcefully in his condemnation of modern Relativism. But this is something John learnt from the unforgettable Dr. Austin Woodbury when he first attended the Aquinas Academy in or about 1948, only a year or two after its foundation.

But one should not get the idea that the seriousness of the subject produced a sombreness in the students – quite the reverse. John Whitty, whom many will know as probably the most seriously funny person they have ever met, recalls the two Johns putting on skits at the Academy which had Dr. Woodbury practically falling off his chair when the jokes were directed at things he had been teaching in class.

John was obviously one of Dr. Woodbury's star pupils, for by the mid 50's he was asked to take on a teaching role. During the same time, he was finishing his studies at University, obtained his degree in Science, and had begun to work I believe as a physicist on transistors in AWA. He continued at the Academy until a few years after Dr. Woodbury was obliged to step down in or about 1975, often in the latter days being called upon to substitute for Dr. Woodbury at a moment's notice when he was sick. In 1985, when the study of philosophy was virtually discontinued at the Academy he helped to form the Centre for Thomistic Studies Inc. (CTS), which operates now from Polding Centre in Liverpool Street Sydney. He was the Vice-President and taught at that Centre, and at other places, continuously up to the date of his death – overall a teaching career spanning 50 years; no mean achievement.

John died on the feast day of St. Anthony of Padua, Wednesday 13 June 2007. As a man of deep faith he would have been happy to be so associated with such a great saint. But one could find many other real parallels between them. I mention only their common devotion to the teaching of the truth. In St. Anthony's case this was particularly in regard to Theology. It is not generally appreciated that besides his other wonderful attributes he was directed by St. Francis himself to “teach theology to the brethren”, thus being the first theologian of the Franciscans. In John's case it was more particularly in Philosophy, but what we might call the philosophical adjunct of Catholic Theology. For all truth, as St. Thomas notes, is from the Holy Spirit.

John, like St. Anthony, did not seek out a teaching career. I am sure that John would have been content to have remained a humble student, and not looked for any teaching position, had he not been called upon to help in the urgent task of the defence of Catholic truth.

Of John's many personal qualities, I single out for special mention his great generosity, which characterised all that he did but which came out particularly in the way he made himself available to all who sought his advice or help. Outside of class times he was always ready to give of his time to explain something, to solve some difficulty, no matter what. He was prepared to do this one on one, if asked; he would often have groups at his home taking them through some part of philosophy, whether or not it was connected with what he was teaching at the time. The depth and breadth of his knowledge and his evident love of all he came into contact with meant that he was able to enlighten all who sought his help and guidance.

His family will feel deeply his loss. And so will we all. May the perpetual light of Truth, of Jesus Christ his God, who he served so well and unsparingly, shine now forever upon him. Amen.