

The Pessimism of Augustine vs. the optimism of Aquinas

Where do you fall on the Augustinian-Thomist (pessimistic-optimistic) spectrum?
Another way to ask the same question: When thinking about our relation to “the world,” do you first think of the common values and principles that we share “in our better moments,” or do you first think of the problems and errors that people fall into if they lack the truth of the Gospel (and, indeed, the constant need for repentance/conversion in the lives of believers)?

Has your position on the spectrum changed over time – i.e. at an earlier time in your life, were you more Augustinian (pessimistic) or Thomist (optimistic) than you are now?

Where do you see our most recent popes falling on this spectrum: John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis?

The Optimism of the Council

If you remember life in Church prior to the Second Vatican Council, did you experience the time after the Council as one of an “optimism” that came as a relief (after pre-conciliar “pessimism”)?

Did some of the optimism that you felt in the wake of the Council come to fruition in a happier situation after the Council?

Some would say that the optimism on social matters evident in *Gaudium et Spes* was also present in other aspects of the Second Vatican Council – either in the documents themselves or in how the documents were interpreted and implemented.

Do you see other aspects in the post-conciliar years in which there was an optimism that may have been extreme – expressed in preaching, sacramental life, discipline, or ecumenical relations?