

# Joseph Owens (Redemptorist)

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Reverend **Joseph Owens** [C.Ss.R.](#) (April 17, 1908 – October 30, 2005) was a [Canadian Roman Catholic priest](#) and a philosopher specializing in the thought of [Aristotle](#), [Aquinas](#), and [medieval philosophy](#).

## Life and career

Owens received his PhD in 1951 from the [Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies](#), an affiliate of the [University of Toronto](#), and remained at the Institute as a teacher and distinguished researcher for the rest of his career. He authored nine books and almost 150 academic papers.

He was a Fellow of the [Royal Society of Canada](#) and served as president of the [Metaphysical Society of America](#) (1972), the [Canadian Philosophical Association](#), the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, and the [American Catholic Philosophical Association](#) (which also awarded him its Aquinas Medal).

## Bibliography

### Books (authored and edited)

- *The doctrine of being in the Aristotelian metaphysics: a study in the Greek background of mediaeval thought.* Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. 1951. 461 pages.
  - 2nd edition, revised. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. 1963. 535 pages.
  - 3rd edition, revised. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. 1978. 539 pages.
- *St. Thomas and the future of metaphysics.* Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press. 1957. 97 pages.
- *A history of ancient Western philosophy.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. 1959. 434 pages.
- *An elementary Christian metaphysics.* Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing. 1963. 384 pages.
- *The wisdom and ideas of Saint Thomas Aquinas.* edited by Eugene Freeman and Joseph Owens. Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications. 1968. 158 pages.
- *An interpretation of existence.* Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing. 1968. 153 pages.
  - (reissued). Houston, TX: Center for Thomistic Studies, University of St. Thomas. 1985. 153 pages. [ISBN 0-268-01157-5](#) (paper).
- *Human destiny: Some problems for Catholic philosophy.* Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press. 1985. 117 pages. [ISBN 0-8132-0604-9](#) (cloth), [ISBN 0-8132-0605-7](#) (paper).
- *Towards a Christian philosophy.* Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press. 1990. 332 pages. [ISBN 0-8132-0708-8](#).
- *Cognition: an epistemological inquiry.* Houston, TX: Center for Thomistic Studies, University of St. Thomas. 1992. 373 pages. [ISBN 0-268-00791-8](#).

### Collected papers

- *St. Thomas Aquinas on the existence of God: Collected papers of Joseph Owens.* edited by John R. Catan. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1980. 291 pages. [ISBN 0-87395-401-7](#).
- *Aristotle, the collected papers of Joseph Owens.* edited by John R. Catan. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1981. 264 pages. [ISBN 0-87395-534-X](#) (cloth), [ISBN 0-87395-535-8](#) (paper).
- *Some philosophical issues in moral matters: The collected ethical writings of Joseph Owens.* edited by Dennis J. Billy and Terence Kennedy. Rome: Editiones Academiae Alphonsianae. 1996. 500 pages. [ISBN 0-920980-68-6](#) (cloth).
- *Aristotle's gradations of Being in Metaphysics E-Z.* edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press. 2007. 256 pages. [ISBN 1-58731-028-7](#) (cloth).

### Secondary sources

- *Graceful reason: essays in ancient and medieval philosophy presented to Joseph Owens, on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday and the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination.* edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. 1983. 447 pages. [ISBN 0-88844-804-X](#).



## Fr. Joseph Owens, CSSR, dies in Toronto, Canada (Oct. 30, 2005)

 [thomistica.net/news/2005/11/9/fr-joseph-owens-cssr-dies-in-toronto-canada-oct-30-2005.html](http://thomistica.net/news/2005/11/9/fr-joseph-owens-cssr-dies-in-toronto-canada-oct-30-2005.html)

Some very sad news from Toronto. Fr. Joseph Owens, CSSR, one of the very first students at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, Canada, has died, at the age of 97 years old. I was blessed to have Fr Owens for two classes in Toronto, on Aristotle's *De anima* and on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He would come to class with only one thing: the small Oxford edition of the relevant work of Aristotle, in Greek. Nothing else. He would perch his reading glasses on his forehead (never on top of his head; how *did* those glasses stay put?), and explain some point, citing the book, chapter, and often even the Becker number, of Aristotle's text. He was gentle and clear, always a role-model of excellent scholarship and even better collegiality.



The good people at Owens's beloved Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies have posted an [obituary article](#) on their web site. Here is the obituary, from the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (November 2, 2005):

**REV. JOSEPH OWENS C.Ss.R.** At the Providence Health Centre, Toronto on Sunday, October 30, 2005, in his 98th year and the 77th year of his Religious Life. Father Owens was ordained in 1933. Born in Saint John, New Brunswick on April 17, 1908, son of Louis Owens and Josephine Quinn. Father Joseph is survived by two nieces, Anne (David) Cole, Katherine (Ralph) Furness and by his nephews, Bryson (Jacqueline) Eldridge, William (Trina) Eldridge, Robert Eldridge and Gerard (Susan) Eldridge. He served in parishes in Saskatchewan and British Columbia and did graduate studies in Toronto at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, and taught philosophy to younger members of his Community, until he received his Licentiate in Mediaeval Studies in 1946. Father Owens then continued to study at the Institute while also lecturing in philosophy in Redemptorist houses of study. In 1951 he received his Doctorate in Mediaeval Studies summa cum laude from the Institute and became a professor of philosophy at the Pontifical Institute in 1954. In medieval philosophy he taught and wrote extensively on the philosophy of St. Thomas, especially in the areas of metaphysics (the study of ultimate reality), the philosophy of the human person, the philosophy of knowledge, and ethics. Father Owens wrote nine philosophy books and almost a hundred and fifty articles and forty book reviews. In 1973, having passed the usual retirement age, he continued to publish and teach part-time for another twenty-five years. Friends may call at St. Patrick's Church, 141 McCaul Street, Toronto, on Thursday, November 3rd from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Mass of the Thanksgiving will be concelebrated on Thursday evening, November 3rd at 7 o'clock. Funeral Mass will be held at St. Peter's Church, Saint John, New Brunswick on Monday, November 7th followed by interment in Calvary Cemetery. Funeral arrangements entrusted to the Rosar-Morrison Funeral Home & Chapel (416) 924-1408.