

WE WERE BORN FOR FRIENDSHIP

In the course of the discourse before his Passion, Our Lord Jesus Christ, said to his Apostles: 'You are no longer servants, but friends.' That message was directed to all his followers. Not only has God made us in his own image, but he has called us to the ineffable level of Divine friendship. The reader will be reminded of St Paul's reinforcement of the message: '[Y]ou are no longer aliens in a foreign land, but fellow-citizens with God's people, members of God's household.'¹

In the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae*, St Thomas deals with the question, *Whether sinners love themselves?* In the course of his answer, he repeats the teaching of Aristotle on the five marks of friendship.²

"Love of self is common to all men... For it is common to all for each one to love what he thinks himself to be. Now a man is said to *be* a thing in two ways: in one fashion, according to his substance and nature; and in this way all estimate themselves to be what they are—a compound of soul and body. In this way, too, all men, both good and wicked, love themselves, inasmuch as they love their own preservation.

"In another fashion a man is said to *be* something according to some principal characteristic, as the head of state is said to *be* the state, and so what the sovereign does the state is said to do. Now in this way all men do not think themselves to be what they are. For the reasoning mind is the predominant part of man, while the sensitive and corporeal nature takes the second place, the former which the Apostle calls *the inward man*, and the latter, *the outward man*. Now the good look upon their rational nature or the inward man as being the chief thing in them and so in this way they think themselves to be what they are. On the other hand, the wicked reckon their sensitive and corporeal nature, or the outward man, to hold the first place. And so, since they know not themselves correctly, they do not love themselves correctly, but love what they think themselves to be. But the good know themselves truly, and therefore they truly love themselves.

"The Philosopher proves this from five things that are proper to friendship. For in the **first** place, every friend wishes his friend to be and to live; **secondly**, he desires good things for him; **thirdly**, he does good things to him; **fourthly**, he takes pleasure in his company; **fifthly**, he is of one mind with him, rejoicing and being saddened in almost the same things.

"In this way the good love themselves as to the interior man because they wish the preservation thereof in its integrity; they desire good things for him, namely spiritual goods; indeed they do their best to obtain them; and they take pleasure in entering into their own hearts because they find there good thoughts in the present, the memory of past good, and the hope of future good, all of which are sources of pleasure. Likewise they experience no clashing of wills, since their whole soul tends to one thing.

¹ *Ephesians* 2: 19

² *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 25, a.7; emphases (both italic and bold) added. There are some matters in philosophy which every man should have off by heart. This teaching on the five marks of friendship is one of them.

“On the other hand the wicked have no wish to be preserved in the integrity of the interior man, nor do they desire spiritual goods for him, nor do they work for that end, nor do they take pleasure in their own company by entering into their own hearts, because whatever they find there, present, past and future, is evil and horrible; nor do they agree with themselves on account of the gnawings of conscience according to Psalm 49 v.21, *I will reprove thee and stand before thy face*.”³

We were made for friendship, not for enmity; made for love, not for hatred. In this is the follower of Christ distinct from the follower of every other religion, including those who profess to be Christians, but in truth are not. ‘Behold how these Christians love one another,’ the early pagans used to say. That distinctive characteristic remains the badge of those who follow Christ, of those who will be the heirs of his promises.

In his conferences *On the Creed*, St Thomas Aquinas deals with man and with his ultimate end.

“It is fitting that the last article of faith in the Creed should give expression to that which is the end of all our desires, eternal life, in the words, ‘and Life everlasting, Amen.’... The first thing to be noted is that in eternal life man is united to God, since God himself is our reward and the end of all our labours: ‘I am your shield and your very great reward.’ Now this union with God consists in seeing him perfectly. ‘Now we see as in a mirror darkly, but then, face to face.’ It consists in perfect praise. In the words of the prophet: ‘Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of praise.’

“Eternal life is the perfect fulfilment of desire, inasmuch as each of the blessed will have more than he desired or hoped for. The reason for this is that in this life no man can fulfil his desires, nor can any creature satisfy a man’s craving. For God alone satisfies and infinitely surpasses man’s desire, which for that reason is never at rest save in God. In the words of Augustine, ‘Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are not at rest until they rest in Thee...’

...

“Finally, eternal life consists in the joyful companionship of all the blessed, a companionship which is full of delight; since each one will possess all good things together with all the blessed, for they will all love one another as themselves, and therefore, will rejoice in one another’s happiness as if it were their own, and consequently the joy and gladness of one will be as great as the joy of all.”⁴

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³ The whole sentence in the Vulgate runs: *Haec fecisti et tacui existimasti inique quod ero tui similis arguam te et statuam contra faciem tuam. These things you have done and I have kept silent. You thought that I should be like you; but I will reprove you and stand before your face.*

⁴ *Collationes super Credo in Deum*. The full text is available in the EWTN library at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/SOURCES/TA-CAT-1.TXT> The relevant section is extracted in the Second Reading for Saturday, Week 33 of the Church’s *Office of Readings*.