

## Friendship with Jesus Christ as the Path to Truth and Happiness

**"To know supernatural truth man needs grace."**

— Council of Trent, Sess. VI Canon 3

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that man has a "natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One alone who can fulfill it" (#1718). Indeed, in every human action man is seeking happiness. Even when sinning, he does so under the appearance of some good. Happiness is attained in proportion as human actions mirror what is "truly good." The human will being a blind faculty follows what the intellect presents as good. In this sense, a knowledge of the truth is the foundation of happiness.

Jesus informs us that he "came into the world to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37). Even more specifically, he says: "I have called you friends, for all I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn 15:15). In this article, we will examine friendship with Jesus Christ as the path to truth and happiness. Since "the Church has adopted his doctrine for her own", (Pius XI, Studiorum Ducem) We will follow St. Thomas Aquinas in defining the nature of friendship (Summa IIa IIae Q. 27 A 2).



Illustration: Maronite Monks

*"No words of mind can begin to explain the importance of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in order to obtain from our Eucharistic Lord the understanding of his revealed truth and to know how to share this truth with others....The one place on earth our minds are mainly enlightened by the mind of God is in the presence of God Incarnate in the Blessed Sacrament. No learned erudition, no reading of books, no years of academic scholarship-nothing under God will give the light and insight into God's truth as Christ!"*

Conference: *Christ the Miracle Worker in the Eucharist*, by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

### Friends Wish to Do What the Other Desires

St. Thomas teaches that "it is proper to friendship to consent to a friend in what he wills" (S.C.G. BK 4: 22). Since Jesus Christ is *Truth Incarnate*, man must be docile to his teachings to attain happiness. Hence, Jesus tells us, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Jn 15:14). Therefore, the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5) is a necessary human disposition for friendship with Jesus.

This attitude is exemplified by St. Therese of Lisieux who relates, "I've always said to God: Oh my God, I really want to listen to you; I beg you to answer me when I say humbly: What is truth? Make me see things as they really are. Let nothing cause me to be deceived." Shortly before death, she acknowledges, "Yes, it seems to me I am humble. God shows me the truth" (Last Conversations, p. 105,132). Pope John Paul II concurs declaring St. Therese a Doctor of the Church, despite her limited formal education.

### Friends Help and Give Counsel to Each Other

God is omnipotent and infinitely good which is "good news" for those close to Jesus for friends "wish and do good to [their] friends." Goodness naturally desires to

the communicate itself. St. Thomas assures us God “diffuses his goodness on all capable or willing to receive it...because of what he is, the Sovereign Good” (Comm. on The Divine Names). Moreover, Pope John Paul II identifies the Holy Eucharist as “the source of supernatural strength”; but, in addition, he specifies three modes of grace distribution: the Sacrifice, Holy Communion, and the “Real Presence” (Redeemer of Man 20:4). Therefore, our Eucharistic Lord has the power and the desire to communicate his divine light. Now “the good of the intellect is the truth.” Hence, Father John A. Hardon, S.J. can say that “The God who is divine — I don’t say can, — infallibly will provide [light to] those who are in his presence and ask him ‘Lord, that I may see.’”\*\*

There are two modes of divine enlightenment. Jesus can infuse knowledge bypassing the reason or he can speak to us through our reason. An example of the former is when he opened the minds of the Apostles “to understand the scriptures” (Lk 24:45). This type of enlightenment is usually associated with a mystical state of prayer called infused contemplation. However, since “grace perfects nature” the ordinary means of enlightenment is through the reasoning process. Hence, to the disciples on the road to Emmaus “he interpreted to them in all the scriptures things concerning himself” (Lk 24:27). Directly or through the ministry of angels, Jesus can order our thoughts so to see his teaching. St. John of the Cross confirms that “the Guardian angel does not always move the desire to act, though he ever illumines the reason” (Maxim #34).

### *Friends Spend Time Together Conversing*

St. Thomas explains, “It is especially proper to friendship...to converse with the friend. Now the conversation of man with God is by contemplation of him” (S.C.G. Bk 4:22). Those who pray and meditate (talk and listen) with our Eucharistic Lord converse with Jesus. When two spirits converse, they strongly influence each other. The effect is one of assimilation whereby one is made like the other. God cannot change, but we will!

The words of St. Peter: “Lord, to whom do we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68)

are applicable to the Holy Eucharist today. Indeed Fr. Hardon notes that, “The single most fundamental reason why Christ is in the Holy Eucharist is that he might educate our minds to understand who he is, to penetrate into the mysteries we believe, to understand how he wants us to live our lives.” Pope Paul VI exclaims, “Anyone who approaches this August Sacrament with special devotion...will experience fully—not without spiritual joy and fruit—how precious is the life hidden with Christ in God and how great is the value of converse with Christ, for there is nothing more consoling on earth, nothing more efficacious for advancing along the road to holiness” (Mysterium Fidei p. 26).

### *“One Reveals His Secrets to His Friends”* (S.C.G. BK 4:21)

Fr. Hardon informs us that “the great masters of Christian Theology obtained their superhuman grasp of the mysteries revealed by God...from their meditation before Jesus Christ Incarnate Truth, present in the Holy Eucharist.” Of Theologians, “Thomas Aquinas stands eminently as the prince and master of them all” (Leo XIII, Aeterni Patris). Fr. Michael Muller, C.S.S.P. asks, “Whence did St. Thomas Aquinas draw that knowledge which enabled him to write so learnedly on every subject of our Holy Religion? Was it not in the fervent prayers which he used to pour out in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament whenever he had a difficulty in understanding or explaining a point?” (The Blessed Eucharist, P. 66) Even more explicitly, Fr. Hugh F. Blunt, C.C.D. explains, “His greatest love was the Blessed Sacrament of which he was to be the world’s greatest witness. He would spend hours at a time day and night before the altar in adoration and meditation. Here was his great school. The Eucharist himself was his master” (Witnesses to the Eucharist). Once labeled a *dumb ox* because of his apparent intellectual ineptitude, this friend of Christ came to be considered “the most brilliant light of the Church” (Pius V, Mirabilis Deus ).

Renowned Theologian Fr. Hardon was uniquely qualified to speak about the Holy Eucharist. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the Holy Eucharist and spent a lifetime of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Moreover, he was given the charism to speak powerfully and profoundly when John Paul II commissioned him to help

\*\* Note: Fr. Hardon quotes in this article are taken from conferences entitled *The Blessed Sacrament*

restore faith in the *Real Presence* in our country. Whence his enlightenment? He candidly admits, “*Only God knows how naturally dull and stupid this speaker is! That is why, over the years most of my writings of publications, most of my teachings of classes I’ve learned from our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.*”

### *Friends Become One in Thought and Affection for Love Desires Union*

St. Thomas explains “*The Godhead is the essence of truth. Now it is delightful to everyone to see the truth.*” The good is “*what all men desire*”; (1a Q5 A1) therefore, to see Infinite Goodness is infinitely attractive. Beatified souls who see God “*as he is*” (1 Jn 3:2) desire nothing apart from his will. That is why Pope St. Gregory the Great says that “*anyone who does not love the truth has not yet come to know it*” (Hom 14). Hence, the fruition of friendship with Jesus is a deepening union with God for “*harmony of will is the effect of love, for it is the mark of friendship*

*that friends should love and hate the same things*” (S.C.G. Bk. 3:151). Now, “*the more one will be united to God the happier will one be*” (Supp Q93 A3).

Many are deceived by seeking happiness in wealth, honor, glory, power, or a life of pleasure. St. Thomas shows clearly that these paths cannot lead to happiness (1a IIae Q2 A1-8). In fact, “*deception and error are a great part of unhappiness*” (S.C.G. Bk 3:39). When St. Augustine said “*you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you*”, (Confessions, Bk. 1:1) he penned a profound truth about reality. There is only one path to happiness. It isn’t a different spouse, a better job or a new home. It is friendship with Jesus Christ. This is the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church. It is the “*precious pearl*”, the reality that millions of Christians have died defending once discovered. Don’t make the only eternal grave mistake, viz., seeking truth and happiness without our divine friend Jesus leading us as “*the way, the truth and the life*” (Jn 14:16). ✠