

THE PRIEST AND THE FRIEND: NOTES ON PRIESTLY FORMATION AND ON CHRISTIAN LIFE IN GENERAL¹

This essay is inspired by a recent Vatican instruction on priestly formation. However, the essay addresses a feature of Christian life in general. In contrast to some modern views on religious formation which stressed the individual and his or her pursuit of holiness, the Church today applies her relational ecclesiology to the spiritual development of her priests. In a word, the pursuit of Christian perfection transpires best when the believer enjoys the companionship of a friend. The essay examines several reasons for this emphasis drawn from classical sources.

Keywords: priestly life, Thomas Aquinas, Christian perfection, friendship, holiness, spiritual growth, community.

Introduction

Since the earliest days of Christianity, authors have composed works that instruct believers on how to achieve a state of Christian perfection. These guides to holiness have often reflected the personal experiences of their authors. Some of these instructions have been codified in rules of life that have been approved by the Church. The Rule of St. Benedict affords a good example. Throughout the Christian centuries, spiritual authors have provided guidance to Christians of all vocations in life. After the sixteenth-century Council of Trent, the period of Catholic Reform in Europe, this genre of document developed within the various schools of theology. Among the subspecies of this genre, there falls instructions given by the Church as well as by spiritual authors to those in charge of the formation of priests. The Seventeenth-century French School produced what many consider the most noteworthy examples of these prescriptions for priestly formation. With the evolution of Catholic life that takes place in the nineteenth century,

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the Holy See took on the charge of overseeing the seminaries of the world. The following essay provides a commentary of a salient feature of the most recent example of counsels that the Church gives for the formation of priests. By extension, however, these counsels can be understood to apply to the spiritual development of every Catholic.

Chapter of Faults

“Semel in hebdomada habeatur Capitulum, tum ad recitandas preces pro benefactoribus, tum ad audiendas culpas Fratrum, cui Fratres omnes, etiam graduati, interesse tenentur”². In 1964, the Novice Master faithfully carried out this prescription of the Dominican *Constitutions* once a week, on a Friday afternoon, as I recall, at Saint Joseph’s Priory in Somerset, Ohio. One by one, each novice would rise, confess his faults against the *Rule* or *Constitutions*, receive a penance, make the *venia*, and return to his place. The Chapter of Faults, as it was called, dealt with faults (*culpae*), not sins. Among the most common faults heard, “I broke Categories, x number of times”. Some of the Brethren would specify with whom they broke Categories, for example, with priests, with lay brothers (as cooperator brothers were then known), with the Dominican sisters who worked in the kitchen, or even with the good farm folk, like the Dittoes and the Ryans, who had inhabited the area near Somerset before Edward Dominic Fenwick first arrived there in 1808. What did breaking Categories mean? In short, the young Dominican communicated with one or another person (other than the Superiors) outside of his own group. In this example, that of novice. Why such a rule? The regnant theory, perhaps shaped by bad experiences, held that formation happens best when those being formed are kept away from all others, even fellow Dominicans³. Why? Spiritual authors of every period, but especially of the post-Tridentine period, taught that a religious learned best to establish communion with God when left alone. Father Cassidy, the Novice Master, also counseled his novices to keep to themselves so that each would be left alone to find God. Even within the same Category, then, interpersonal exchanges were not given in 1964 a premium place in Dominican life.

A Shift of Emphasis and a Vatican Document

In 1968, the Dominicans held a Most General Chapter in Chicago in response to an instruction from the Second Vatican Council. As a result, some older customs gave way to newer theories about how to observe religious life. The Class of 1971

² *Constitutiones Fratrum S. Ordinis Praedicatorum*. Romae 1932, no. 914.

³ For example, see: *Constitutiones*, no. 181, § I: “Nemo, praeter Superiores et Visitatores, adeat locum studentatus, neque ullus studentium e conclavi eius egrediatur, nisi ex rationabili causa et de expressa licentia Magistri Fratrum studentium aut eius Socii”.

arrived in Washington in fall 1968 to begin theology, and I do not recall a Chapter of Faults being held. Friendships, on the other hand, continued to figure in formation. Truth to tell, however, while the language of “Categories” fell into disuse, the values that the practice sought to enforce remained, if memory serves, a certain priority for those in charge of formation. Fast forward about fifty years. The Vatican’s *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* issued on 8 December 2016 and titled, “The Gift of a Priestly Vocation”, employs the word “accompaniment” or a form of the verb, “to accompany”, some forty–five times.⁴ Further, of the five times that the word, “friendship” appears in the text, three refer to the friendship of the seminarian with Christ and two, to his friendship with others. Today, then, formal provisions for the observance of Categories would seem difficult to resurrect in light of this Vatican document. At the same time, those in charge of formation and other Superiors may provide prudent directions as they deem necessary, as for example, The *Constitutions* of the Dominican Friars, no. 159, stipulates.

Why this emphasis on friendship as an integral part of clerical formation? One may reasonably assume that several difficulties with the lives of Catholic priests, especially those that have been brought to public attention since shortly after the new millennium, have moved Vatican officials and those they consult to encourage what one may call a heightened interpersonal approach to the formation of clerics. In any event, for the moment, “accompaniment” enjoys within Catholic circles a renewed place of prominence. I say renewed place because accompaniment once figured in the development of Christian life, and from a very early period. Think of the biographies of those many first millennium saints who sought spiritual instruction

⁴ This document marks the second time since the close of the Second Vatican Council that the Church has addressed at this level the project of forming priests for her service. See Congregation for Catholic Education. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (6 January 1970) // AAS 62 (1970) 321–384 (see: www.clerus.va). Other documents shed light on important aspects of priestly formation: *The Teaching of Philosophy* (1972); *The Ministries in the Church* (1972); *Priestly Celibacy* (1974); *Adult Vocations* (1976); *Priestly Identity* (1979); *Liturgical Formation* (1979); *Spiritual Formation* (1980); *Human Mobility and Formation* (1986); *Admission of seminarians expelled from other institutions* (1986); *Teaching the Fathers of the Church* (1989); and the *Propaedeutic Stage of Formation* (1987). The Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1990) marks a turning point in this history, because the Synod of Bishops considered the theme of priestly formation, now with an integral vision and a broad view of priestly ministry. At that time, for a variety of reasons, a new version of the Ratio was not made. The Church did continue to publish documents on particular topics related to priestly formation: *Pastoral Care of Vocations* (1992); *Training of Formators* (1993); *The Pastoral Care of Marriage and the Family* (1995); *Admission of seminarians expelled from other institutions* (1996); *The Scrutinies for Sacred Orders* (1997); *The Propaedeutic Stage* (1998); *Indigenous Vocations* (1999); *The Priestly Mission* (1999); *Popular Piety* (2001); *Migration and Vocations* (2004); *Homosexual Tendencies and Priestly Vocation* (2005); *Psychology and Formation* (2008); *Studies of Philosophy* (2011); *Priestly Vocations* (2012); and the *Directory for Priesthood* (2013).

from others more experienced than they. Think too of the written guidelines for the moral formation of Christians – a *ratio*, if you will – that enjoy a prominent place within the history of Christianity. From the early days of the Church, the formation of monks and nuns received the most articulated attention. Some of these rules, such as the sixth-century *Rule of Saint Benedict*, remain normative and fruitful for certain consecrated persons. Monastic life broadly construed continues to provide a controlled form of accompaniment within its institutional structures. The Dominican adoption of Categories, I would aver, reflects earlier monastic practices and – It must be admitted – a now largely defunct class stratification.

After the Council of Trent, however, some new developments emerge.⁵ Two observations seem pertinent. First, the Church began to regulate systematically the institutional formation of clerics. For their moral development, diocesan priests were encouraged to follow the injunctions of an approved author in mystical or ascetical theology. Seminary formation introduced them to one or another such author. These approved authors and their hefty volumes multiplied after the mid–sixteenth century. Take, for instance, the celebrated Dominican writer, Louis of Grenada (d. 1588) and his spiritual classic, *The Sinner's Guide*, published in 1555. Or recall an example close to our own period, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology* by the French Sulpician, Adolphe Tanqueray (1854–1932). In 1964, this was required reading for the novices in Somerset – including the Appendix on mystical odors. Of course, these two authors expose different approaches to the spiritual life.

Secondly, other great figures of the post-Tridentine period, the age of the Catholic Reform, took on the then novel task of supplying spiritual instruction for the laity. Foremost among these authors remains the Doctor of Geneva, Saint Francis de Sales (d. 1622), whose teaching did not shy away from discussing the benefits of true, good, and spiritual friendships⁶. De Sales remains an outlier, however. Philip Neri (d. 1595) may be another.

At this juncture, it seems proper to remark that generalizing about what today we would call the history of spirituality can be difficult. Indeed, the theme itself has become the subject matter for handbooks and dictionaries. One may cite most famously the Jesuit competition to the Dominican produced *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (1899–1950), namely, the Society's *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (1932–1955). Still, it is generally agreed that the authors of the modern classical treatises on how to live the Christian life adopted a formal approach to

⁵ For an illuminating account of the Church's efforts at renewal after the Council of Trent, see: Guy Bedouelle. *La Réforme du Catholicisme (1480–1620)*. Paris 2002.

⁶ See Bedouelle. *Réforme*, pp. 122–125. De Sales's *Introduction à la Vie Dévote* appeals to friendship throughout, especially in Part Three, chapter 19, where he refers to Aquinas's teaching on friendship and charity.

one's observing that commitment. This formal approach plainly appears throughout the pages of their guides and their manuals constructed around methods, rules, instructions, etc., which followed the casuists' insistence on commandments and precepts. Think only of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius (1522–1524) or the nineteenth-century Sulpician, Louis Bacuez (d. 1892), who composed a *Manuel des vacances à l'usage des séminaires* that ran some 600 pages of instructions that seminarians should observe during the summer vacation months⁷. Also, like the casuist moralists, these mystical and ascetical authors addressed their formal instructions to the individual Christian⁸. One does not find in the manuals of moral and mystical theology a great deal about accompaniment, personal or community, as an instrument for growth in virtue. As Servais Pinckaers has remarked aptly of casuist moral theology, “the theme of friendship was lost”⁹. In fact, many of these manuals and books of ascetical theology warned against too much personal involvement with other people, including fellow members of institutes of religious life, fellow seminarians, and even fellow Christians. All in all, Saint Alphonsus Liguori (d. 1787) summed up the ethos that informs most late post-Tridentine spiritual and moral instruction in his celebrated warning, *porro unum est necessarium* (Lk 10:42). “One thing is necessary”, he wrote, “the salvation of our souls. It is not necessary to be great, noble, or rich in this world, or to enjoy uninterrupted health; but it is necessary to save our souls”¹⁰.

Saint Alphonsus, of course, realized that Christians dwell in communities and that they enjoy friendships. Redemptorists (1749) still carry on his spirit. Alphonsus's evaluation, however, of how much accompaniment by friends can help a Christian to grow in virtue lacks, well, enthusiasm, to say the least. For example, in his popular, *The Way of Salvation and Perfection*, the patron saint of moral theologians expresses this spiritual counsel:

He [God] will not be displeased that in your desolations you should go to your friends to find some relief; but he wills you chiefly to have recourse to himself. At all events, therefore, after you have applied to creatures, and they have been unable to comfort your heart, have recourse to your Creator, and say to him, Lord, men have only words for me; my friends are full of words [“Verbosi amici mei” Job, xvi. 21]; they cannot comfort me, nor do I any more desire to be comforted

⁷ See L. Bacuez. *Manuel des vacances à l'usage des séminaires*, 18th edition. Paris 1927.

⁸ Servais Pinckaers. *Morality. The Catholic View* / trans. M. Sherwin. South Bend, IN 2001, p. 40, explains the individualism: “Obedience to law encroached upon charity and the virtues; the theme of friendship was lost; the social and ecclesial dimensions of the Christian life were neglected”. See also his further description of casuistry, pp. 32-34.

⁹ Pinckaers. *Morality*, p. 40.

¹⁰ Alphonsus Maria de Liguori. *The Way of Salvation and of Perfection*. New York, Cincinnati, Chicago – London – Dublin 1886, Part I: *Meditations, Suitable for all Times in the Year*, Meditation XVII: *The One Thing Necessary*, p. 42.

by them; Thou art all my hope, all my love. From Thee only will I receive comfort; and let my comfort be, on this occasion, to do what pleaseth Thee.¹¹

There are many other indications that persuade us to recognize that the spiritual authors of the modern period remained chary about how much friends could contribute to one another's spiritual maturity.

To be sure, the priest-confessor and in circles influenced by the Jesuits, the spiritual director, occupied stipulated places within the formal structures that served personal growth. These clerics, however, were not encouraged to become overly familiar with their penitents or persons under their direction. Recall the casuist rules that governed a confessor's accepting gifts from one of his penitents as well as the strict penalties for seduction in the confessional. One may fairly assume, therefore, that the great spiritual authors upon whom many still rely for spiritual instruction would find it surprising to discover that the Holy See now considers it urgent to set in action within programs of priestly formation an element of personal accompaniment that extends well beyond those conversations that transpire within the boundaries of the confessional and spiritual counseling. It is difficult to imagine how the spiritual masters and superiors of another time would have reacted to this new direction.

Some Cultural Movements That Threaten Friendship

Let me summarize this section in which I borrow a thought from Mary Ann Glendon who in the mid 90s identified three movements that changed American and perhaps Western culture. The Civil Rights Movement, the Feminist Movement, and the Sexual Revolution. Broadly speaking, the Church joined the first, coopted certain elements of the second, in what has become known as Christian Feminism, and countered the third. From the hindsight of say fifty years, however, each has made Christian friendship more difficult to realize. C. S. Lewis foresaw this development as early as 1960, when he wrote in *The Four Loves*, "Friendship is something quite marginal; not a main course in life's banquet; a diversion; something that fills up the chunks of one's time"¹². I would add, by way of suggestion for further research, that the three movements have left human friendship confused, though my proposal lacks strict Durkheimian argument.

Catholic friendships, however, should not become "confused". In a word, charity ensures that friendships remain unconfused. The phrase "unconfused friendship" in fact appears in Aquinas's *expositio* of Pseudo-Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus*¹³.

¹¹ Liguori. *The Way of Salvation*, Part III: *Spiritual Treatises*, p. 400.

¹² C. S. Lewis. *The Four Loves*. London, 1960, p. 55.

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *In Dyonisium De divinis nominibus*, 41, 6: "et hoc est quod dicit: et *inconfusae amicitiae*, quia mutuum iuvamentum est absque praeiudicio distinctionis rerum" (see: Thomas

“Unconfused Friendship” in Six Images

Philosophy students discover early on that Aristotle introduces a discussion of friendship into his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Specifically, Aristotle devotes Books Eight and Nine to the subject, where he says that friendship “is a virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living”¹⁴. Earlier in the same text, in Book Four, Aristotle broaches the notion of friendship within a discussion of social interactions among men. Thus, Aquinas rightly observes that “in the *Ethics* Aristotle discusses two forms of *amicitia*”¹⁵. For his part, Aquinas likewise picks up on the notion of friendship in two principal places in the *secunda-secundae* of his *Summa theologiae*. The first treatment appears as one of the potential parts of the cardinal moral virtue of justice. Aquinas explains these potential parts in *secunda-secundae*, q. 80. Then, in question 114 of the *secunda-secundae*, Aquinas discusses “amicitia”, which the best translations render as friendliness. “One quality of goodness”, explains Aquinas, “is right order. In the ordinary dealings with others, people ought to be agreeable, both in word and in act, so that each one observes the decencies towards his fellow men”¹⁶. Virtue is required for a person to sustain this good disposition. This potential part of justice, Aquinas calls friendliness or affability (*amicitia* or *affabilitas*). Aristotle, on the other hand, refrained from naming such a virtue, which he nevertheless affirmed stands between obsequiousness and contentiousness, though he did admit that “it most resembles friendship”¹⁷. For our purposes, it seems that accompaniment would require on the part of both the one accompanying and the one being accompanied that each person should exhibit this virtue of affability. Affability may not exclude someone’s offering firm but loving correction. At the same time, this kind of virtuous comportment would exclude eruptions of harsh and abrasive words or deeds among one’s fellows. Friendliness belongs to those of good manners and the well-bred. Among such as these, accompaniment is most likely to succeed.

The friendship that properly belongs to accompaniment is that which Aristotle discusses in Books Eight and Nine of his *Ethics*. “Perfect friendship”, he writes, “is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well

Aquinas. *In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio* / ed. C. Pera, P. Caramello, C. Mazantini. Marietti 1950).

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 1 (1155a 3–4) (see: *The Basic Works of Aristotle* / ed. R. McKeon, intr. C. D. C. Reeve. New York 2001).

¹⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IIa-IIae q. 114, art. 1, ad 1 (see: Thomas Aquinas. *Summa theologiae*: Latin text and English translation, introductions, notes, appendices, and glossaries / ed. Th. Gilby, vol. 41. Cambridge (England) – New York 1971).

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IIa-IIae q. 114, art. 1.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IV, 6 (1126 b20).

alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves”¹⁸. The scholastics call this kind of loving, the love of friendship or benevolent loving. Why does Aquinas find reason to introduce Aristotle’s considerations on friendship into his theological discussion of the virtue of charity? The answer in short: he reads Saint John’s Gospel and there hears Christ assuring his disciples that he no longer calls them servants but friends (see Jn 15:15). In the *Summa theologiae*, question twenty-three of the *secunda-secundae* unfolds as a remarkable treatise on the main virtue of the Christian life, one in which sound pagan philosophy serves to illuminate the greatest Christian virtue. Thus, Saint Paul’s celebrated affirmation: “And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Cor 13:13 [Douay]).

The first article of question twenty-three asks whether charity is a friendship – “*utrum caritas sit amicitia*”. The English Thomist commentator, Father Thomas Gilby wrote this about the love of charity:

Charity is more than the loving of the good-for-you, and more than loving the good for another; it is loving shared by you and another, of such sort that the terms ‘egoism’ and ‘altruism’ are irrelevant. It is the whole-hearted love of God, but is no more self-denying at the deepest level than the object in the union of knowledge and love spells diminishment for the subject.¹⁹

The accompaniment that ensures proper moral development in cleric, consecrated person, and layperson springs from the *communicatio benevolentiae*, that is, the communication or exchange of benevolent love that is charity. As such, proper accompaniment diminishes neither the one who accompanies nor the one who is accompanied. Like creation, accompaniment should proceed as labor without toil.

The Latin word, *communicatio*, as you know, is not the equivalent of the modern English word, communication. Once the English liturgy translated the word as fellowship; now we say at the opening greeting of Mass, the communion of the Holy Spirit, the *communicatio Sancti Spiritus*. Two Corinthians 13:14 inspires this greeting found in the Roman Missal: “*Grátia Dómini nostri Iesu Christi, et caritas Dei, et comunicatio Sancti Spíritus*”. This sort of supernatural *communicatio* differs essentially from the commonwealth of being that all creatures share with the Creator. The communion of the Holy Spirit means that God’s own benevolence becomes ours by participation. Thus Christ’s words: “I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father” (Jn 15:15). Charity of course follows faith.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 3 (1156 b7–9).

¹⁹ Thomas Gilby. *Introduction* // Thomas Aquinas. *Summa theologiae* / ed. Th. Gilby, vol. 34. London – New York 1975, pp. xvii–xviii.

Charity implies reciprocity. Aquinas cryptically makes this point in the first article of question twenty-three: “Goodwill alone is not enough for friendship for this requires a mutual sharing; it is only with a friend that a friend is friendly”²⁰. “*Quia amicus est amico amicus*”. What does this mean? Aquinas spells out some of the implications that characterize the bond of charity-driven friendship. We find them not in the *Summa theologiae*, but in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book Four, chapters twenty-one and twenty-two. These chapters merit a thoughtful reading. There Aquinas identifies six features of friendship that illuminate the kind of accompaniment that aids moral development. In the *Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas divides these six features into the three things that God accomplishes in us (chapter twenty-one) and the three ways we are moved toward God (chapter twenty-two). For present purposes, we can take each feature as a quality that should undergird friendship and the accompaniment it entails.

First, Aquinas signals as characteristic of friendship the exchange of personal knowledge or openness. “Of course”, he says, “this is a proper mark of friendship that one reveals his secrets to his friend”²¹. Every confessor knows that the Sacrament of Reconciliation requires openness. In fact, hiding serious sin invalidates the confession. The reason for this provision arises from the need for an integral confession in order to accomplish full reconciliation.²² Put otherwise, to borrow an image from the *Rule of Saint Augustine*, chapter seven, the wound that the doctor cannot see cannot be healed. Even outside of the confessional and outside of those natural secrets that arise in spiritual counselling, openness supplies the first step for accompaniment in virtue development. Proper implementation of this first expression of friendship, of course, requires a refined discretion. Aquinas obviously does not counsel an indiscriminate sharing of one’s sins or temptations with whatsoever person. The openness that Aquinas has in mind concerns spiritual matters and perhaps trials. Effective accompaniment that leads to growth in virtue requires openness and the sharing of secrets. Attempts to bypass this sharing undermines the communication of friendship. In other words, to take one example, you cannot help a person grow in the virtues of purity and chastity, when he or she avoids disclosing the dangerous liaisons that threaten these virtues.

The second feature of charity’s friendship requires a sharing of goods. “Now”, says Aquinas, “it is not only proper to love that one reveal his secrets to a friend

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IIa-IIae q. 23, art. 1.

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 21 [5] (see: Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra Gentiles* / trans. A. C. Pegis, J. F. Anderson, V. J. Bourke, C. J. O’Neil. Notre Dame, IN 1975).

²² See *Code of Canon Law*, can. 960: “Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary means by which a member of the faithful conscious of grave sin is reconciled with God and the Church” (see: *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition* / translation prepared under the auspices of the Canon Law Society of America. Washington 1983 (https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html)).

by reason of their unity in affection, but the same unity requires that what he has he have in common with the friend”²³. Aquinas explains that since the friend is another self, it follows that friends succor each other as if they were taking care of themselves. This feature of friendship finds easy realization among those who share a common life, especially one consecrated under a vow of poverty. In fact, moral development transpires more easily within a common or community life. Can a very rich man help a very poor man grow in virtue? Perhaps. However, a common life holds out much better prospects for one person’s helping another. When an actual sharing of goods is not possible, those who would accompany another in virtue development can at least profess a shared life *in praeparatione animae*. Like the poor widow who puts two small coins into the treasury, and who receives praise because one assumes that were she to become rich, she would act munificently.

The third feature of friendship figures in the Lord’s Prayer: pardon of every offense. “Of course”, writes Aquinas, “by the fact that one is established as the friend of another, every offense is removed, because friendship and offense are contraries”²⁴. It should be clear that one rightfully would hesitate before receiving personalized moral guidance from someone who remains an enemy. The category of enemy may refer to a broad range of persons, including those whose offenses though small reveal a deliberate failure in love. Christ himself places forgiveness at the heart of the *communicatio benevolentiae* when he teaches his disciples how to pray (see Mt 6:12).

The fourth feature of friendship that conduces to accompaniment in virtue Aquinas calls “contemplation”. He emphasizes this feature of friendship when he writes, again in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, “Indeed, this appears to be especially proper to friendship: really to converse with the friend”²⁵. It would be an odd friendship that entailed no communication or dealings between the friends. C. S. Lewis emphasizes the origin of friendships (which he distinguishes from clubbable companionship) in communication: “The typical expression”, he writes, “of opening Friendship would be something like, ‘What? You too? I thought I was the only one’”²⁶. The old friend is one with whom you have not spoken for many years, with whom you have nothing left to share. There may be some exceptions to this rule. However, generally friendship requires active “contemplation”, a mutual exchange of knowledge and love between the two friends. This personal exchange between friends, so Aquinas suggests, resembles the contemplation of God that the Holy Spirit enables when he makes us “lov-

²³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 21 [6].

²⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 21 [10].

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 22 [2].

²⁶ C. S. Lewis. *The Four Loves*. London 1960, p. 62.

ers of God”²⁷. There exists no intrinsic reason why a spiritual guide should not become friends with someone he or she may have helped to grow in virtue. This proposal would not have always met with approval by some religious authors or authorities. Those who still harbor such reservations should ask themselves, what truths did the spiritual guide share with the friend?

The fifth feature of friendship that should also characterize a virtuous accompaniment of another with a view toward moral development, Aquinas calls interior joy. “It is also a property of friendship”, writes Aquinas, “that one take delight in a friend’s presence, rejoice in his words and deeds, and find in him security against all anxieties; and so it is especially in our sorrows that we hasten to our friends for consolation”²⁸. Saint Thomas, in other words, finds nothing suspicious about being there for another. Father Pinckaers’ remark that the modern spiritual authors neglected friendship may lead one to inquire whether these authors grasped friendship’s joys²⁹. In any case, accompaniment should proceed from a joyful relationship not a dour one. Virtuous people may, on Aquinas’s view, rightfully expect to find godly consolation from their friends and mentors. All should learn from what Aquinas teaches about how other persons can be taken up into the love of God: “It is clear that it is specifically the same act which loves God and loves the neighbor”³⁰.

The sixth and final feature of friendship that Aquinas notes in the *Contra Gentiles* involves harmony of wills. “It is proper to friendship to consent to a friend in what he wills”³¹. This feature follows from the five characteristics already mentioned. Moral accompaniment supposes that the one accompanying possesses some quality of soul that the one being accompanied does not. What else should result from this accompaniment other than a harmony of wills? Some persons in the Church look askance on influence. They seem to fear that active loving might undermine legitimate authority. Of course, bad examples of seduction exist. In the United States, one investigation after another has revealed the malfeasance of persons with some authority. Still, *Abusus non tollit usus*, as the casuist authors liked to remind us. Aquinas on the other hand makes it difficult for us to express skepticism about a harmony of wills that develops among friends as long as the bond of charity and the virtues it informs remain intact.

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 22 [2].

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 22 [3].

²⁹ Pinckaers. *Morality*, p. 40.

³⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IIa-IIae q. 25, art. 1.

³¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 22 [4].

The Thomist Tradition

So it seems that the accompaniment that the Church once again has put forward as an essential feature for the formation of clerics requires no further analysis than what Aquinas provides in his discussion of friendship and charity. To sum up, when the Catholic people love each other in charity, they form one another in Christian virtue. This message, as anyone who has read the New Testament realizes, is not groundbreaking. The spiritual authors of the modern period admittedly tried to communicate this truth when they stressed the *unum necessarium*. They all probably had read Saint Thomas who said all love based on fellowship with God is charity³². Aquinas cites Saint Paul: “God is faithful, and by him, you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (I Cor 1:9).

Some corollaries come quickly to mind. First, while professional psychological counseling may serve some useful purposes for certain persons, the psychological sciences cannot dictate the terms of accompaniment. Still less, should psychological theories replace the dynamics of charity. Second, faddish ideologies should not dominate the exercise of the theological virtues. In the United States at least, some Church leaders have begun to warn against power differentials, a Marxist concept, I think. In order to escape the risk of someone’s abusing power, they have even counseled caution in loving. Third, while the abuse of minors crisis has probably forestalled a recrudescence of Woodstock-inspired yoga practices, whirlpools, and half-clothed sensitivity sessions, there remains the temptation to equate the love of charity with sentimentalism and other comfortable modes of human congress. [I’ve met not a few young people who return from guitar accompanied “fellowship” retreats feeling as isolated as when they left.] Other challenges to our putting charity back into the center of moral development also exist. Those who are confused about how to accompany should read Aquinas on charity.

When reading Aquinas, the Thomist commentatorial tradition offers great help. The continuous commentatorial tradition that has carried on Aquinas’s instruction offers precious elaborations on and insights into the texts of Aquinas. One, of course, finds sound teaching among other of the Church’s teachers and doctors. Aquinas, however, offers the best approach to our understanding moral accompaniment as a work of charity. One period within the Thomist commentatorial tradition that may bring further insight to a discussion of charity and accompaniment finds its geographical center in seventeenth-century Toulouse. In particular, I propose the work of the Toulouse Dominican, Vincent de Contenson (d. 1674).³³ His sole composition, *Theologia mentis et cordis*, left incomplete at

³² See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* IIa-IIae q. 23, art. 1: “Amor autem super hac communicatione fundatus est caritas”.

³³ For further information, see: Romanus Cessario & Cajetan Cuddy. *Thomas and the Thomists: The Achievement of Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*. Minneapolis, MN 2017, pp. 106ff.

his early death, qualifies as a work of mystical or ascetical theology. What makes Contenson's *Theologia* (last published in Paris in 1886) unique lies in the solid infrastructure of dogma that undergirds its composition. He also was one of the first Thomist authors to take strong exception to moral probabilism. What better sign of authentic accompaniment for sound moral development may one demand?

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Романус Цессаріо

СВЯЩЕННИК І ДРУГ: НОТАТКИ ПРО СВЯЩЕННИЧУ ФОРМАЦІЮ ТА ХРИСТІЯНСЬКЕ ЖИТТЯ ЗАГАЛОМ

Цей нарис натхненний нещодавньою ватиканською інструкцією про священничу формацію. Однак в есеї розглядається особливість християнського життя в цілому. На відміну від деяких сучасних поглядів на релігійну формацію, які наголошують на особі та її прагненні до святості, Церква сьогодні застосовує свою реляційну еклезіологію до духовного розвитку своїх священників. Прагнення до християнської досконалості відбувається найкраще тоді, коли віруюча людина втішається товариством друга. У статті розглядається кілька причин такого акценту, почерпнутих із класичних джерел.

Ключові слова: священниче життя, Тома Аквінський, християнська досконалість, дружба, святість, духовне зростання, спільнота.