

The Divine Friend: Friendship and Human Flourishing

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We are able to engage God as a friend trusting in Jesus's words, "I have called you friends" (John 15:15c). By uttering this phrase, the Incarnate Word reveals that it is his mission to establish us as God's friends. But it is not just the human (or angelic) person that becomes a friend: God also becomes a friend. In fact, strange as it may sound, God considered in himself is not a divine friend; that is, the divine persons are not friends among themselves. St. Thomas Aquinas, who teaches at length both on the divine persons and on friendship, never refers to the relationship among them as one of friendship. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not each other's friends. They are much more than that. Before calling his disciples friends, Jesus had said to them: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:10–11a). Each divine person is *in* the others. The Gospel according to John refers to this relationship many times. For example, "believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (John 10:38). This is explained by St. Thomas and other theologians as referring to the fact that they have only one existing nature. This is different from us: all of us here have the same human nature but we each have our own existing nature, numerically distinct. A sure sign of this is that we each have our intellect and thoughts, as well as our own will and our own choices; the same applies to our other capacities and actions. But the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have one and the same intellect, it is numerically one: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit do not have different thoughts,

nor different loves, nor different joys. This is what the Gospel teaches, and Our Holy Mother the Church defined as much, almost seventeen centuries ago at Nicea: the divine persons are consubstantial. A second reason for the Father being in the Son and the Son in the Father—one that St. Thomas takes from St. Albert, his mentor—is that, just as we cannot conceive a father qua father without a son, nor a son qua son without a father, so, too, in God, the Son exists as a divine Son because he has a Father who is God, and the Father exists as a divine Father because he has a Son who is God, and the same applies to the Holy Spirit. Put another way, wherever the Son is, there too the Father is, because there is no Son without the Father, and there is no Father without the Son. The third reason for the Father being in the Son and the Son in the Father Aquinas takes from the way in which the Father gives birth to the Son. In the first page of the Gospel according to John, the Son is called Word or Logos. This is an inner word, an idea, a concept. Whenever we come up with an idea, this idea remains in our mind, whether we say something outwardly or not. When the Father begets the Son, he speaks his Word, and this Word remains as long as the Father conceives it and says it. The Word is in the speaker and the speaker is in the Word. If for an instant the Father were to stop conceiving the Word and speaking the Word, something which is obviously impossible, the Word would not exist, but neither would the Father be a speaker, nor a thinker, nor therefore a Father. This mystery of maximal union among the divine persons has come to be called “perichoresis” or interpenetration: these words try to define the fact that each person is in the other.¹

If the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not divine friends from all eternity, it is not because they do not get along or something is lacking in their life together; rather, it is because this life together is more than friendship. So, although friendship is the highest form of relationship we can aspire to attain, even it is inadequate to describe the fullness of the mutual interpenetration of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Friendship with God or divine friendship is an invitation Jesus extends to those who are not God. This calling is set in the midst of the revelation of the life of the Trinity. I propose that, when Jesus calls us friends, he is in fact inviting us to share in God’s own life in which one person is in the other. In fact, a few moments before calling them friends, he had told his disciples: “Abide in me as I abide in you” (John 15:4a), and this obviously echoes his words in the previous chapter: “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (John 14:10–11). The verb “abide” (μένω) used here occurs ten times in

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 42, a. 5.

the span of thirteen verses in chapter 15: nine before the calling to divine friendship and one immediately after. The verb “to be” is not employed here. The usage of “to abide” in this context signals that our relationship is similar to the relationship among the divine persons and, at the same time, that it is different: this suggests participation in something only God possesses perfectly. God becomes our friend by enabling us to share in some way in his very life: divine friendship is a participation in the interpenetration among the divine persons. The Gospel according to John certainly brings this to our attention by inserting this calling to be friends of God in the context of the life of the Trinity. Both before and after the disciples are called friends, there are phrases that reveal their association with divine perichoresis. What is remarkable here is that the same language used for the Trinity is also used to speak of the connection between the friends and the divine persons. For example: “On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” (John 14:20). This is astonishing: the mutual being in the other is extended to the disciples! Thus, when they hear Jesus call them “friends,” they can understand this to mean an incorporation into this life of the divine persons. In chapter 17, this is developed even further: “That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one” (John 17:21–23a). Here Jesus asks that the disciples participate in the unity or oneness of the Father and the Son. The attentive reader, who has not forgotten the words “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (John 14:11), can recognize the exact words with a striking addition: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us.” It is difficult to argue against the fact that Jesus is extending his relationship with the Father to incorporate the disciples, albeit in a participatory way.

These teachings, taken as a whole, imply that the very life of the Trinity—in which one person is in the other—is the setting for the friendship to which we are called. In other words, friendship with God is an extending, as it were, of God’s own perichoresis and an invitation to enter into divine interpenetration. In this regard, St. Thomas interprets Jesus’s words in John 17—the ones we just read—as a calling to participate in the unity that exists among the divine persons in a process that involves love and grace.² For Aquinas, grace and love are inseparable from friendship, as we will see.

² Aquinas, *Super Ioan* 17, lec. 3 [on 17:11], no. 2214; lec. 5 [on 17:21], no. 2240.

The three divine persons are more than friends among themselves. They become friends only to others, that is, when they create others who are capable of sharing in their life. From the perspective of the Trinity, friendship is the highest and fullest way to participate in the life of the Trinity. All of creation and salvation history, what we also call the divine economy or dispensation, culminates in this divine friendship. Everything God does outside the Trinity tends toward this: becoming a divine friend. This is his most perfect work and the fullest giving of himself. The doctrine of the modes of divine presence—mostly based on St. Augustine’s *Letter to Dardanus*³—teaches that God is intimately present to each and every thing that he creates because he sustains its existence, knows it better than it can know itself, and constantly guides it to work toward its natural end.⁴ However, only his friends are capable of knowing him as he knows himself, as a friend does, and only his friends are capable of loving him as he loves himself, as a friend does.⁵ God is a divine friend only from the moment when a creature heeds his call to friendship. On the first page of the Bible, we read that, in addition to his work of creating during six days, there is an extra day, an extra presence of God, a day in which he rested. Why not reserve this for his new presence in his friends? Do we not find true rest when we are among those who are our friends? Could this not be what divine Wisdom is referring to when beautifully saying: “I was beside him [the Lord], . . . rejoicing in his inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men” (Prov 8:30–31). And of this divine Wisdom the book of Baruch reveals: “Afterward she [Wisdom] appeared on earth and dwelled with men” (Baruch 3:37).

The possibility of us having a divine friend is not straightforward, and we should certainly not take it for granted. Doing so would be a grave mistake. Aristotle, who penned the best philosophical treatise on friendship in antiquity—and perhaps ever—excludes friendship with divine beings.⁶ He grounds this assumption on the unsurmountable difference in perfection between the nature of divine beings and human nature. Aristotle states that friends need to have something in common to be friends, and what we have in common with God is not enough. It is interesting to note that Aristotle does refer to a friendly feeling that humans have toward

³ St. Augustine, Letter 187 (to Dardanus, on the Presence of God), in *Letters*, vol. 4 (letters 165–203), trans. W. Parsons, The Fathers of the Church 30 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 221–55.

⁴ *ST I*, q. 8, a. 3.

⁵ *ST I*, q. 43, a. 2.

⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.9.

divine beings; he also suggests that divine beings delight in human beings and reward those who are more like them.⁷ But these mutual feelings do not establish, let alone develop, a true friendship. If we are honest with ourselves, we can sense what this Greek philosopher did: an intimate and impactful friendship with God, if we have it, is not a given. Perhaps our friendship with God does not compare favorably with the friendships we have with other human beings where each one is fully engaged; each one gives and receives. I have heard Christians complain about friendship with God as not being enough for a flourishing human existence. There have been moments in my life when this thought assailed me. To some degree, we are tempted by it every day.

Aristotle also refers to the challenge of establishing friendship between two very unequal human beings, such as a king and a commoner. As a solution, he proposes that the superior would need to raise up the inferior to make him his equal in some way.⁸ This is precisely what Christ does with us. The friendship to which he invites us requires that we receive something that raises us up in some way. As we already mentioned, the immediate context of John 15:15 (“I have called you friends”) is teeming with references to abiding. One in particular stands out: Jesus says, “I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5a). This is a personal way of teaching about grace: it is Christ’s abiding presence in us that enables us to bear fruit in him.⁹ The friendship he has in mind when he calls us his friends presupposes that he bestows something upon us and that he sets us up to bear fruit: “I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will abide” (John 15:15b–16a).

Grace is therefore required for divine friendship. St. Thomas explains that,

according to the common manner of speech, “grace” is customarily taken in three ways. First, for someone’s love: thus, we are accustomed to say that a soldier is in the good graces of the king, that is, the king considers him dear [*gratum*]. Second, it is taken for a gratuitously given gift: thus, we are accustomed to say: “I do

⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.9; 8.14; 10.9.

⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.16; 9.1.

⁹ This personal way of teaching about grace does not exclude, but rather calls for sanctifying grace as a created entity in us (a quality or entitative *habitus*); its presence in us is simultaneous with that of the divine persons (*ST* I, q. 43, a. 3).

you this favor” [*gratiam*]. Third, it is taken for the recompense of a gratuitously [*gratis*] given benefit: according to this [sense] we are said to give thanks [*gratias*] for benefits. Of these three the second depends on the first: indeed, from the love in view of which someone considers someone else dear, it follows that [the former] bestows something gratuitously on [the latter]. In turn, the third follows from the second, since from gratuitously offered benefits, thanksgiving arises.¹⁰

As he mentions at the end, there is a connection between these three meanings of grace: the former ones cause the latter ones; the latter ones participate in the former ones. Divine love gives rise to a gift in us that really transforms us, and both love and its effect enable us to act and give thanks. St. Thomas refers to this threefold action of God in us by means of the word “communication” (*communicatio*) when teaching on charity as friendship in the *Summa theologiae*, where the main article comments on John 15:15. I note in passing that Aquinas is the first theologian to consider charity to be a type of friendship, precisely because he defines friendship in terms of communication.¹¹ There are three communications or a threefold process of communication. First, there is the act of God who bestows something upon us: he gives us something. Second, there is the effect of that divine action in us: we now have something in common with God. Third, there is cooperation and living with God: we have an action and even a life in common with him.¹² In order to see how friendship with the divine friend results in human flourishing, let us analyze each one of these forms of communication, as well as grace, upon which friendship with Jesus is founded.

¹⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 1, corp.

¹¹ Aquinas, *In III sent.*, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2; *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1. We have written elsewhere on this topic: see “El concepto de *communicatio* y la amistad en Santo Tomás,” in *Imago Dei, Capax Dei: Ensayos en homenaje a Héctor Delbosco*, ed. Francisco O’Reilly and Álvaro Perpere Viñuales (Tucumán, Argentina: UNSTA, 2023), 53–85.

¹² *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1, corp.: “Given that there is some communication [*communicatio*] of man toward [*ad*] God inasmuch as He communicates [*communicat*] his beatitude to us, it is reasonable [*oportet*] that some manner of friendship be founded upon this communication. Indeed, it is said of this communication in 1 Cor 1:9, ‘God is faithful, by whom you have been called to association [*societatem*] with his Son.’ Now, the love that is founded upon this communication is charity. Hence, it is manifest that charity is a certain friendship of man toward God.” See also ad 1: “The other [life] is the spiritual life of human beings according to their spiritual soul [*mentem*], and according to this life there is fellowship [*conversatio*] between us and both God and the angels.”

The first meaning of grace is love, since love is the first gift. Love impels communication: good diffuses itself. Love bridges the gap between two who are distant. The Fourth Lateran Council addresses this distance between God and humans: “Between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude.”¹³ Divine love makes friendship with God possible. Divine love makes him a friend to us. He holds the initiative. This is essential to friendship with him. Because Jesus knows this, he says, “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16a). This love of God abides in us, making us his friends. Everything else that this friendship involves and everything we do as friends—all of it flows from this love. In his first encyclical letter, Pope Benedict reminds us of this: “‘We have come to know God’s love and we have believed in it’ (1 John 4:16a): in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”¹⁴ St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus excelled at believing in this love through knowledge of the effects of this love in her, such as the fact that she continued to love God despite not feeling any spiritual consolation at all and suffering greatly in both mind and body.¹⁵ The words Pope Francis chose as his personal motto—written by an English monk, St. Bede—also rely on this love that has the initiative: *miserando atque eligendo*, “both by having mercy and by choosing.”¹⁶ Here mercy is a name for love that stresses the great distance between the lover and the beloved; a love that gives gratuitously, that bestows grace, ought to be called mercy.¹⁷ When Jesus calls us friends and says this is of his choosing, he is revealing the great love of God we call mercy. Few actions convey this more vividly than the washing of the feet of those he will call friends:

¹³ Fourth Lateran Council IV (Denzinger-Hünermann [DH] no. 806). See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) §42.

¹⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), §1.

¹⁵ This was a recurring theme during the month of July of 1897, three months before the end of her life. See, e.g., St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, *Last Conversations, Yellow Booklet* (July 6, 1897), in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1996), 1025; cited in Pope St. John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), §27: “In the Garden of Olives our Lord was blessed with all the joys of the Trinity, yet his dying was no less harsh. It is a mystery, but I assure you that, on the basis of what I myself am feeling, I can understand something of it.”

¹⁶ St. Bede the Venerable, Homily 21, in *The Liturgy of the Hours: According to the Roman Rite*, vol. 4 (New York: Catholic Book, 1975), 1418–19 (Feast of St. Matthew).

¹⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Titus* 2, lect. 3 (on 2:11), no. 68: “Grace brings mercy with it, because grace is of that which is gratuitously given; and what is given out of grace is given mercifully.”

it signifies the Passion itself, where not only water but also blood will be poured out to cleanse us from our sins. It is not a stretch to affirm that the memory of this symbolic action impacts the disciple's acceptance of this friendship that is offered to them: they are keenly aware that it is a gift that they can receive only thanks to Jesus's actions. In order to be a true friend of God, we too must not forget the love that makes us friends: "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16b). Being friends of God demands that we constantly come back to this original love and abide in it as in a source.

The second communication that founds the friendship of charity and also the second meaning of grace is the effect of divine love in us. As any true love, God's love is efficacious and fruitful: "Whatever the Lord pleases he does" (Ps 134[135]:6). Indeed, if he does not put something in us, if he does not work some manner of transformation within us, his calling us friends rings hollow. The first page of Scripture shows that, when God says something it is done. His word performs what it means. Just as the words "let there be light" (Gen 1:3) caused light to be, so, too, "I call you friends" causes something in the disciples. This new effect is gratuitous because it is not due to human nature; it is supernatural because it exceeds what any created nature can do on its own. This is grace as a created reality in the soul: what we call sanctifying grace. It brings with it a multitude of gifts, each of which is ordered to friendship with God.¹⁸ Its chief gifts are faith, hope, and charity. The first two are ordered to friendship: because we cannot love what we do not know, faith gives us knowledge of our supra-rational friend; because we cannot approach something we feel is unattainable, hope makes us trust this supra-natural friendship is possible.¹⁹ The virtue of charity, which is friendship, enables us to act with the divine friend as one.²⁰ More specifically—and from the vantage point of the divine missions—thanks to living faith we can act with the Word, whose likeness faith is; thanks to charity, we can act with the Holy Spirit, whose likeness charity is.²¹ St. Thomas does not specifically associate

¹⁸ See, e.g., Eph 6:13–17: "Take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

¹⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 62, a. 3, corp.

²⁰ *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 2.

²¹ Aquinas, *In I sent.*, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1, corp.; *ST* I, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2.

hope with the missions, but we can perhaps attribute it to their origin: thanks to living hope, we can act based on the Father's power, design, and initiative.²² When all three theological virtues are present in the soul, they bring with them a plethora of other virtues and gifts whose aim is to make divine friendship present in every ambit of human experience.²³ Put another way, this supernatural organism ensures that nothing that is human is excluded from friendship with God. *No act of ours is devoid of a specific excellence that allows us to experience it as an act of friendship.* For instance, patience enables me to suffer together with Christ, he in me and I in him. Obedience ensures that I fulfill the Father's plan, in a way that surpasses my own understanding of it. Humility is tantamount to being in the Holy Spirit's presence: everyone is humble when he or she is aware that someone greater is present. Even the experience of sin is touched by this friendship through the virtue of penance: my will submits to the will of my divine friend as it strives to repair the damage I inflicted upon our friendship.

The third form of communication is active sharing or living together. It is founded on the two previous forms of communication: God's generous and efficacious love first, and the transformative gifts he instills in us second. Likewise, the third meaning of grace as thanksgiving implies that we are aware of the previous two forms of grace—divine love and the effect of this love in us—and that we act on it by saying or doing something, since all that we perform with grace gives glory to God. We can interpret Jesus's invitation to abide in his love (John 15:9–11) as referring to (1) the love God has for us, whose initiative chose us and chooses us, which we appropriate to the Father as principle within the Trinity; or (2) to the love that follows his illumination, his teaching, and his new commandment, which we appropriate to the Word; or again (3) to the love that we have for him, which he works in us and with us, in joyful communion, which we appropriate to the Holy Spirit. This cooperation with the Holy Spirit follows his inspiration: charity makes us receptive to these movements of the Holy Spirit—that we also call actual graces—so that the resulting action is both our own and the Holy Spirit's. No other synergy available to man is as intimate.²⁴ No other act performed by two agents is as perfectly authored by both agents as this one. The more it belongs to one, the more it belongs to the other.

²² See Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae* II, chs. 4–5.

²³ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 4, ad 3.

²⁴ *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 2, ad 3; *Super Matt* 4, lec. 1 (on 4:1), no. 310.

If we appropriate movement to the Holy Spirit, because he is breathed forth as an impulse of love within the Trinity, we instead appropriate the other effect of this shared life, the transformative likeness it produces, to the Son, because his generation results in a perfect likeness and image of the Father.²⁵ St. Thomas repeatedly teaches that contemplating our divine friend makes us like him. This follows from St. John's teaching that we will be like God perfectly in heaven because we will see him perfectly (1 John 3:2), or from St. Paul's: "all of us . . . seeing the glory of the Lord . . . are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18). During this process, our acts of divine friendship become increasingly like the divine persons, as they grow in wisdom and charity; gradually this collaboration makes *us* more like the divine persons. As we become more receptive to the subtle nudges of the Holy Spirit, the coordination between friends is ever more refined. Our action becomes more about ensuring that we act with the divine friend than about the result of the action itself. A fitting though limited comparison is a sailboat: the sailor's activity is mainly invested in trying to harness the wind, not in paddling the boat forward. The gifts of the Holy Spirit extend this to many other aspects of our agency, enabling us to fine-tune the synergy between our manifold human complexities and our simple divine friend.²⁶ As we act more and more in unison with our divine friend and pay more attention to him than to the results, which are as mysterious as this whole process, something else begins to occur: it dawns on us, in a very deep sense, that we are not alone even if we cannot see or feel anything, because we become delicately aware of the presence of the friend in our common actions. Prayer is the place to tend to our friendship: it is "nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us," as St. Teresa teaches.²⁷ Friendship as sharing and cooperation is something we cannot do alone: "'Without Christ we can do nothing' (cf. John 15:5). It is prayer which roots us in this truth," as Pope St. John Paul II asserts.²⁸

²⁵ *ST* I, qq. 35–36. We have written elsewhere on this topic: see "Toward a Friendship Spirituality of the Divine Missions," in *Une théologie à l'école de saint Thomas d'Aquin: Hommage au prof. Gilles Emery op à l'occasion de ses 60 ans*, ed. Nicole Awaïs, Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole, and Doris Rey-Meier, *Studia Friburgensia* (Paris: Cerf, 2022), 227–60.

²⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 4, corp.; a. 7, corp.

²⁷ St. Teresa of Jesus, *Book of Her Life* 8.5 in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. K. Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and O. Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1976), 1:67, quoted in CCC §2709.

²⁸ Pope St. John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, §38.

A friend is interested in benefitting his or her friend: we benefit the divine friend by benefitting those he loves.²⁹ In this way we work for his glory, which we love more than ourselves.³⁰ According to St. Thomas, there are two main activities that allow us to do this: teaching and praying. Neither of these depends exclusively on human action. When we teach, the most we can aspire to is to assist the process of self-learning in someone else; we cannot think for them, nor imprint our ideas in their minds.³¹ When we pray, we do not manipulate God into doing what we want; at most, we ask him to do what he wants to do.³² However, something extraordinary occurs: the result of something prayed for in perfect communion with the Holy Spirit, and in perfect conformation with the wisdom of the Son, is something that is not only God's but also ours. Jesus set an example for us by teaching and praying.³³ He also suffered for us. And so, doing penance for our past sins and for the sins of others, as St. Dominic did, is also a way of acting as one with the divine friend.³⁴ Nothing unites us more with the divine friend than suffering together out of love. This can be surmised from St. Rose of Lima's teaching: "On behalf of Christ and with words of his own mouth I warn you that grace is not received without suffering afflictions."³⁵ Grace is not just the result of this suffering, but also suffering itself, if it is endured with the divine friend: "If any man will come after me—and be my friend, we might add—let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt 16:24). It is here that friendship, and the love it requires, is truly developed, since "greater love has no other than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13).

To conclude, as with any friendship, there are moments that are full of gifts and common friends, and also moments we spend alone with our divine friend. He looks for a place in which to abide: "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our abode with them" (John 14:23). We too are called to make our abode in him. The deepest part of our heart yearns to abide in

²⁹ St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), ch. 7 (35–38) and ch. 89 (161–66).

³⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Question on Charity*, a. 2, corp.

³¹ *ST I*, q. 117, a. 1.

³² *ST II-II*, q. 83, a. 2.

³³ For St. Thomas Aquinas's presentation, see *ST III*, qq. 21, 42.

³⁴ Anonymous Author, "The Nine Ways of Prayer," in *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, ed. Simon Tugwell (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 94–103; see especially "The Third Way of Prayer."

³⁵ St. Rose of Lima, *Writings to Doctor Castillo*, in *Liturgy of the Hours*, 4:1342–43 (Feast of St. Rose of Lima).

him, whether we are aware of this desire or not. How Elijah finds the divine friend for whom he had been zealous with zeal says a lot: “Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence” (1 Kgs 19:11b–12). The cliché “less is more” rings true here. The gifts of our divine friend are extremely powerful and gratifying, and yet he is more powerful and gratifying than all of them put together. Even the risen Christ is very discrete when he appears: he knows that his bodily presence can divert our attention while we are still on the way. Mary Magdalen is told not to touch him, not to cling to him (John 20:17). He does not wish to draw us outside because he wishes to meet us within. Jesus disappears when the disciples at Emmaus believe, hope, and love—but he does not leave: his external and real presence in the broken bread of life lying before them is such that it fosters the inner encounter with him (Luke 24:30–31). When we process accompanying the Eucharist, we can see so little, feel so little, though just enough that we know that there is a presence, that someone is there. The beauty of the Eucharist is that there is little there to distract us from our divine friend, to hinder our attachment to him alone. Oftentimes, as St. Augustine confessed, we look for him outside: “Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you.”³⁶ But, regardless of where and how we look for him, the divine friend will find a way to direct our attention to his presence within us, where he abides: it is there that he knocks on the door and comes in and eats with us and we with him (Rev 3:20). N.V

³⁶ St. Augustine, *Confessions* 10.27, quoted *The Liturgy of the Hours*, 4:1355–57 (Feast of St. Augustine).