

### **3. What is Happiness? Friendship with God**

We are called to be friends of God. There are three marks of friendship: benevolence (actively seeking the other person's good), reciprocity, and mutual indwelling. God created us to enter into intimate union with Him. Intimacy involves self-disclosure and loving attention. The saints are known as the "friends of God" because they share in this special intimacy with the divine. We are all called to be saints. Holiness is not the domain of a spiritual elite, but for all people. The way to holiness involves a process of purgation, illumination, and transforming union.

#### **I. The Meaning of Visio Dei: God Beholds Man (External, Objective Reality)**

Man Beholds God, Beatific Vision (Internal, Subjective Experience of Reality)

- Man is capax Dei (Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, III, q. 4, a. 1, ad 2)
- Soteriological Principle: "for the Son of God became man so that we might become God." (St. Athanasius of Alexandria, On the Incarnation(CCC 460))
- "Paradise for God is the human heart" (St. Alphonsus de Liguori, The Way to Converse with God Always and Familiarly, pp. 3-34 in Talking with God: Four Treatises on the Interior Life from St. Alphonsus Liguori. Mesa, AZ: Scriptoria Books, 2011, no. 1.)<sup>4</sup>.
- The Beatific Vision (visio Dei)
- Man's Ultimate Good: Friendship with God
- "...charity is the friendship of man for God." (Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, II-II, q. 23, a. 1, resp.)

**II. Man's Happiness: Friendship with God: The Marks of Human Friendship** (Aristotle, Aquinas) Benevolence: Actively Pursuing a Person's Wellbeing  
Reciprocity: It Must Be Two-Way; Mutual Indwelling: You Carry the Other Within Your heart: An In-depth Look at Aquinas's Model: Romanus Cessario, The Virtues, or The Examined Life, London/New York: Continuum, 2002 (pp. 66-67):

Six Qualities of Friendship according to Aquinas:

- Exchange of Personal Knowledge (Openness)
- Effective Sharing of Goods
- Pardon Every Offense
- Contemplation
- Interior Joy
- Harmony of Wills

The Elements of Intimacy (Pat Collins, Intimacy and the Hungers of the Heart Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1992.)

- Self-disclosure
- Loving Attention
- Grace Perfects Nature
- Man Can Become Like God
- The Saints are Known as the "Friends of God"
- The Universal Call to Holiness

**III. Because of Man's Weakened State:** The Danger of Mistaking Apparent Goods for the Ultimate Good (Aquinas, Summa theologiae, II, q. 2, aa. 1-8)

- Wealth
- Honors
- Fame or Glory
- Power
- Bodily Good
- Pleasure
- Some Good of the Soul
- Any Created Good

All Created Goods Must be Directed Toward the Ultimate Good: Man's Has the Inability to Do So; Man's Need for Grace? The Grace of the Spirit; Grace as the New Law; The Spirit Accompanies Us on Our Journey

**IV. Attaining Intimacy with God:** The Threefold Way: Different Levels of Intimacy

- Purgation: Detachment from Created Things
- Illumination: Enlightenment
- Union: Attainment of Our Final End

This Process Is Not Linear, but an Upward Spiral (Jacob's Ladder, Genesis 28:10-22) Conclusion: It's Not a Matter of Us Finding God, But of God Finding Us: "Our discovery of God is, in a way, God's discovery of us... We become contemplatives when God discovers Himself in us" (Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation, New York: New Directions, 1962.)

### **Reflection Questions**

1. What is happiness? Why do so many people seem to be unhappy?

2. What is friendship with God like? What is so good about it?

3. What role does the grace of the Spirit play in making us friends of God?