

Thomistic Theory of Friendship: Interpretation of Charity as Amicitia Hominis ad Deum

Ajith Wellington OMI

A person is justified in saying that St. Thomas' notion of friendship (*amicitia*) is a reworking of the classical Aristotelian notion of friendship in the light of Christian faith. In this process, he makes every possible effort to combine classical Aristotelian ideas with important and significant ideas of Christianity. This effort resulted in a theory of friendship which is more flexible and accommodating and has such wide parameters that it even accommodates real human differences and disagreements. Aristotle proposed a separate treatise on friendship. He, in fact, devoted one fifth of his Nicomachean Ethics to a discussion on friendship. Thus we see Aristotle expounding his ideas on friendship in the VIII and IX books of Nicomachean Ethics. However, St. Thomas, though an ardent follower and lover of Aristotle, did not develop a separate treatise on friendship. Rather, he places his discussion on friendship (*amicitia*) within the context of the passion of love (*amor*) and the theological virtue of charity (*caritas*). Even though the Aristotelian discussion is purely rationalistic and Thomistic discussion is a mixture of reason and faith, yet we can notice that St. Thomas who expended great efforts to construct a rationally coherent and humanly consistent understanding of friendship closely adheres to Aristotelian structure. A closer look at both Aristotelian and Thomistic discussions on friendship enables a person to infer with certainty that Humans are not only rational beings but they are also social and political beings. This very nature of the human being means that he/she naturally has the desire to belong and to form bonds of friendship. This rational and political/social being develops, flourishes and realizes his/her potentialities within and through interpersonal ties.

Keywords: Thomism, virtues, friendship.