**“*My Inmost Being…*”: St. Thomas Aquinas on the Inner Workings of the Soul**

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**Session I handout: Virtue & The Spiritual Life**

**SOUL** = A “way of being alive.”  St. Thomas identifies five basic ways of being alive:  1) nutrition and growth, 2) self-movement, 3) the senses, 4) will, 5) intellect.  The soul is the life-giving form of any body.  Spiritually speaking, the soul is that principle which is made in the image and likeness of God that is capable of a relationship with Him after death.

**FORM**: A form is the nature or essence of a thing.  The form of a chair is "chair-ness."  A form is like the "pure idea" of something.

**INTELLECT**:  the ability to perceive new truths and the relationship between those truths.

**MATTER**: The metaphysical "stuff" out of which something is made.

**POWERS OF SOUL**:  Various ways in which the soul is able to be the source of its actions.  Basically, its powers are the same thing as its fundamental abilities.

**SUBSTANCE**: A complete being that exists in itself.  Every substance = form + matter

**VIRTUE**: A virtue is any excellence of character.  It is a strength of one of the powers of the soul.

**WILL**:  The power to incline to, desire, or tend towards what the intellect sees as *good*.  The will is a kind of rational desire or appetite.

**1806** *Prudence*is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going."65 "Keep sane and sober for your prayers."66 Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle.67 It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

**1807** *Justice*is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor."68 "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."69

**1808** *Fortitude*is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song."70 "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."71

**1809** *Temperance*is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion: "Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart."72 Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: "Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites."73 In the New Testament it is called "moderation" or "sobriety." We ought "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world."74

**Faith**

**1814** Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God."78 For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will. "The righteous shall live by faith." Living faith "work[s] through charity."79

**1815** The gift of faith remains in one who has not sinned against it.80 But "faith apart from works is dead":81 when it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body.

**Hope**

**1817** Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."84 "The Holy Spirit . . . he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."85

**1818** The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

**Charity**

**1822** Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.