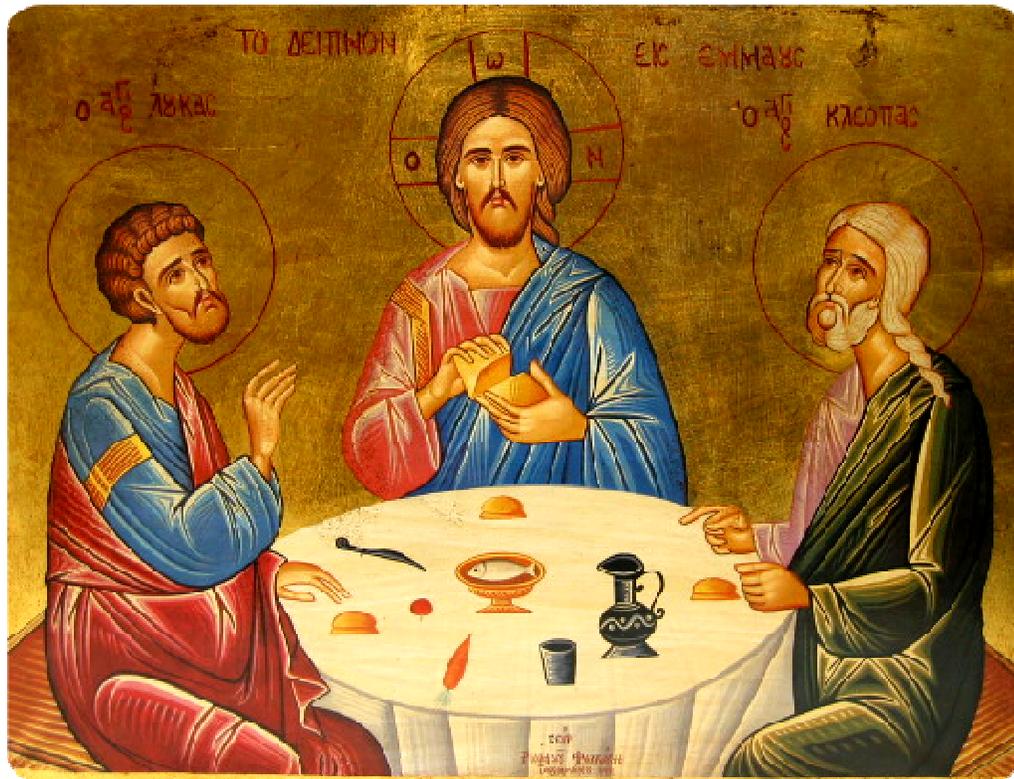


EUCCHARIST AND “DRAW”



The Commentary of John by St. Thomas Aquinas

**The Attraction of the Father:
onto the Cross - into the Resurrection**

[For private use]

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
The Incarnate Word	3
God is Light	3
[A] "DRAWN BY GOD"	4
1. Jews reject eating the "spiritual" food	4
2. The "Living Bread" contrasts with Jews' material realities	4
3. To accede to Jesus Christ, one needs to be <u>drawn by the Father</u>	5
4. No one can come to Jesus unless he/she is drawn from the Father	8
5. The Father attracts human beings to Jesus by making His Son known	9
6. The faithful have been attracted by the Son by sharing His own stupendous love and Will for the Truth	9
7. The God-given <u>interior instinct</u>	9
8. Christ draws the faithful toward the Father as the Way leads one to its <i>terminus</i>	10
9. God is simply disposed to bestow grace on each and every one, and to draw all to Himself	10
10. The Father must draw us if we are to have faith	10
[B] TAUGHT BY GOD	11
1. It is written in the prophets that all will be <u>taught by God</u>	11
2. All members of the Church are instructed in the faith not by the Apostles nor by the Prophets, but <u>by God Himself</u>	13
3. Whoever <u>comes to Jesus through knowledge of the faith needs to listen, to heed the inspirations of God and adhere to them out of love</u>	14
4. <u>To learn in a perfect manner means to come to some conclusion, a more sublime insight</u>	14
CONCLUSION	15
[1] Vision, or Knowledge, is based on similitude	15
[2] Christ's knowledge of God is immediate and open – while ours is always from our listening to the Son	15
[3] Christ's knowledge of God is immediate and open – while ours is always from our listening to the Son	15
EXCURSUS: THE PERFECT MODE OF BEING 'DRAWN' BY JESUS is BEING <u>RAISED UP</u> BY HIM	16

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A EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Drawn & Taught by God

The Incarnate Word

1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life — **2** and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— **3** what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. **4** These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

God Is Light

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; **7** but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ... [1 Jn]

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¹ Inos BIFFI, *L'Eucaristia in San Tommaso, Dottore Eucaristico. Teologia, mistica e poesia*. Siena: Cantagalli 2005, pp. 116-134.

[A] "DRAWN BY GOD"

1. Because of their incredulity, the contemporary Jews of Jesus' time rejected the eating of the "spiritual" food:

892 Then (v 26), our Lord begins to mention a food that is spiritual. First, he states a truth about this spiritual food. In the second place, he clears up a misunderstanding (6:41). As to the first he does three things. First, he presents a truth about this spiritual food; secondly, he mentions its origin; and thirdly, he tells them how this spiritual food is to be acquired (6:34). He does two things about the first.

- First, he explains this spiritual food and its power; in the second place, he tells what this food is (v 28).

- As to the first, he does two things. First, he rebukes them for their disordered desires; in the second place, he urges them to accept the truth (v 27).

893 He says, Amen, amen, I say to you, that although you seem to be devout, you seek me not because you have seen miracles, but because you have eaten of the bread and have been filled. As if to say: You seek me, not for the sake of the spirit, but for the sake of the flesh, because you hope for more food. As Augustine says, these people represent those who seek Jesus not for himself, but in order to gain certain worldly advantages: as those engaged in some business call on clerics and prelates, not for the sake of Christ, but so that through their intervention they might be advanced into the ranks of those who are important; and like those who hurry to the churches, not for Christ, but because they have been urged to do so by those who are more powerful; and like those who approach our Lord for sacred orders not because they desire the merits of the virtues, but because they are looking for the satisfactions of this present life, as wealth and praise, as Gregory says in his *Moralia*. This is obvious: for to perform miracles is a work of divine power, but to eat loaves of bread which have been multiplied is temporal. Accordingly, those who do not come to Christ because of the power they see in him, but because they eat his bread, are not serving Christ but their own stomachs, as we see from Philippians (3:19); and again, "He will praise you when you are good to him," as we read in the Psalm (48:19).

2. This is Jesus Christ, this Living Bread who has come down from heaven. Jesus' statement here is truly definitive and this arouses murmuring, grumbling among them. It is made clear that there are those who do not have their intentions founded on spiritual realities, as was their earlier custom:

930 He continues that some of the people were grumbling over what Christ had said, that is, because Christ had said, I am the living bread that has come down from heaven, a spiritual bread they did not understand or desire. And so they grumbled because their minds were not fixed on spiritual things. They were following in this case the custom of

their ancestors: "They grumbled in their tents" (Ps 105:25); "Do not grumble, as some of them did" (1 Cor 10:10). As Chrysostom says, they had not complained till now because they still hoped to obtain material food; but as soon as they lost that hope, they began to grumble, although they pretended that it was for a different reason. Yet they did not contradict him openly due to the respect they had for him arising from his previous miracle.

931 He says those who complained said: Is he not the son of Joseph? For since they were earthly minded, they only considered Christ's physical generation, which hindered them from recognizing his spiritual and eternal generation. And so we see them speaking only of earthly things, "He who is of earth is earthly and speaks of earthly things" (above 3:3 1), and not understanding what is spiritual. Thus they said: How then can he say that he has come down from heaven? They called him the son of Joseph as this was the general opinion, for Joseph was his foster father: "the son of Joseph (as was supposed)" (Lk 3:23).

932 Next (v 43), the grumbling of the people is checked. First, Christ stops this complaining; secondly, he clears up their difficulty (v 47). As to the first he does two things. First, he checks their complaining, secondly, he tells why they were doing it (v 44).

933 Jesus noticed that they were grumbling and checked them, saying, Stop grumbling among yourselves. This was good advice, for those who complain show that their minds are not firmly fixed on God; and so we read in Wisdom (1:11): "Keep yourselves from grumbling, for it does no good."

934 The reason for their grumbling was their unbelief, and he shows this when he says, No one can come to me.... First, he shows that if one is to come to Christ, he has to be drawn by the Father. Secondly, he shows the way one is drawn (v 45). As to the first he does three things. First, he mentions that coming to Christ surpasses human ability; secondly, the divine help we receive for this; and thirdly, the end or fruit of this help.

3. To accede to Jesus Christ, one needs to be drawn by the Father:

935 He says first: It is not unexpected that you are grumbling, because my Father had not yet drawn you to me, for No one can come to me, by believing in me, unless the Father, who sent me, draws him.

There are three questions here. The first is about his saying: unless the Father draws him. For since we come to Christ by believing, then, as we said above, to come to Christ is to believe in him. But no one can believe unless he wills to. Therefore, since to be drawn implies some kind of compulsion, one who comes to Christ by being drawn is compelled.

I answer that what we read here about the Father drawing us does not imply coercion, because there are some ways of being drawn that do not involve compulsion. Consequently, the Father draws men to the Son in many ways, using the different ways in which we can be drawn without compulsion:

- One person may draw another by persuading him with reason. The Father draws us to his Son in this way by showing us that he is his Son. He does this in two ways:

First, by an interior revelation, as in: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you (that is, that Christ is the Son of the living God), but it was done so by my Father" (Mt 16:17).

Secondly, it can be done through miracles, which the Son has the power to do from the Father: "The very works which my Father has given me to perform ... they bear witness to me" (above 5:36).

- Again, one person draws another by attracting or captivating him: "She captivated him with her flattery" (Prv 7:21). This is the way the Father draws those who are devoted to Jesus on account of the authority of the paternal greatness. For the Father, i.e., the paternal greatness draws those who believe in Christ because they believe that he is the Son of God. Arius—who did not believe that Christ was the true Son of God, nor begotten of the substance of the Father—was not drawn in this way. Neither was Photinus—who dogmatized that Christ was a mere man.

So, this is the way those who are captivated by his greatness are drawn by the Father.

- But they are also drawn by the Son, through a wonderful joy and love of the truth, which is the very Son of God himself. For if, as Augustine says, each of us is drawn by his own pleasure, how much more strongly ought we to be drawn to Christ if we find our pleasure in truth, happiness, justice, eternal life: all of which Christ is! Therefore, if we would be drawn by him, let us be drawn through love for the truth, according to: "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps 36:4). And so in the Song of Solomon, the bride says: "Draw me after you, and we will run to the fragrance of your perfume" (1:4).

- An external revelation or an object are not the only things that draw us. There is also an interior impulse that incites and moves us to believe. And so the Father draws many to the Son by the impulse of a divine action, moving a person's heart from within to believe: "It is God who is working in us, both to will and to accomplish" (Phil 2:13); "1 will draw them with the cords of Adam, with bands of love" (Hos 11:4); "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he wills" (Prv 2 1:1).

936 The second problem is this. We read that it is the Son who draws us to the Father: "No one knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (Mt 11:26); "1 have made your name known to those you have given

me" (below 17:6). So how can it say here that it is the Father who draws us to the Son? This can be answered in two ways:

- for we can speak of Christ either as a man, or as God. As man, Christ is the way: "I am the way" (below 14:6); and as the Christ, he leads us to the Father, as a way or road leads to its end. The Father draws us to Christ as man insofar as he gives us his own power so that we may believe in Christ: "You are saved by grace, through faith; and this is not due to yourself, for it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). Insofar as he is Christ, he is the Word of God and manifests the Father. It is in this way that the Son draws us to the Father. But the Father draws us to the Son insofar as he manifests the Son.

937 The third problem concerns his saying that no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him. For according to this, if one does not come to Christ, it is not because of himself, but is due to the one who does not draw him. I answer and say that, in truth, no one can come unless drawn by the Father. For just as a heavy object by its nature cannot rise up, but has to be lifted by someone else, so the human heart, which tends of itself to lower things, cannot rise to what is above unless it is drawn or lifted. And if it does not rise up, this is not due to the failure of the one lifting it, who, so far as lies in him, fails no one; rather, it is due to an obstacle in the one who is not drawn or lifted up.

In this matter we can distinguish between those in the state of integral nature, and those in the state of fallen nature. In the state of integral nature, there was no obstacle to being drawn up, and thus all could share in it. But in the state of fallen nature, all are equally held back from this drawing by the obstacle of sin; and so, all need to be drawn.

God, in so far as it depends on him, extends his hand to every one, to draw every one; and what is more, he not only draws those who receive him by the hand, but even converts those who are turned away from him, according to: "Convert us, O Lord, to yourself, and we will be converted" (Lam 5:21); and "You will turn, O God, and bring us to life," as one version of the Psalm (84:7) puts it. Therefore, since God is ready to give grace to all, and draw them to himself, it is not due to him if someone does not accept; rather, it is due to the person who does not accept.

938 A general reason can be given why God does not draw all who are turned away from him, but certain ones, even though all are equally turned away. The reason is so that the order of divine justice may appear and shine forth in those who are not drawn, while the immensity of the divine mercy may appear and shine in those who are drawn. But as to why in particular he draws this person and does not draw that person, there is no reason except the pleasure of the divine will. So Augustine says: "Whom he draws and whom he does not draw, why he draws one and does not draw another, do not desire to judge if you do not wish to err. But accept and understand: If you are not yet drawn, then pray that you may be drawn."

We can illustrate this by an example. One can give as the reason why a builder puts some stones at the bottom, and others at the top and sides, that it is the arrangement of the house, whose completion requires this. But why he puts these particular stones here, and those over there, this depends on his mere will. Thus it is that the prime reason for the arrangement is referred to the will of the builder. So God, for the completion of the universe, draws certain ones in order that his mercy may appear in them; and others he does not draw in order that his justice may be shown in them. But that he draws these and does not draw those, depends on the pleasure of his will.

In the same way, the reason why in his Church he made some apostles, some confessors, and others martyrs, is for the beauty and completion of the Church. But why he made Peter an apostle, and Stephen a martyr, and Nicholas a confessor, the only reason is his will. We are now clear on the limitations of our human ability, and the assistance given to us by divine help.

939 He follows with the end and fruit of this help when he says, And I will raise him up on the last day, even as man; for we obtain the fruit of the resurrection through those things which Christ did in his flesh: "For as death came through a man, so the resurrection of the dead has come through a man" (1 Cor 15:21). So I, as man, will raise him up, not only to a natural life, but even to the life of glory; and this on the last day. For the Catholic Faith teaches that the world will be made new: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth" (Rv 2 1:1), and that among the changes accompanying this renewal we believe that the motion of the heavens will stop, and consequently, time. "And the angel I saw standing on the sea and on the land, raised his hand to heaven" (Rv 10:5), and then it says that he swore that "time will be no more" (v 6). Since at the resurrection time will stop, so also will night and day, according to "There will be one day, known to the Lord, not day and night" (Zec 14:7). This is the reason he says, And I will raise him up on the last day.

4. These pages include an inspiring sublime development of the theology of grace by St. Thomas – this is coupled with a certain psychology of faith, describing perhaps existentially one's psychological itinerary toward God. These are texts of Thomas' own mysticism. There might be a glimpse in all this between the lines there is something of a type of emotional language, certainly in dependence on Augustine but maybe with Thomas' own lived experience. On his / her own, no human being has the possibility of acceding to Jesus Christ through faith. This is why Jesus states: *No one can come to me!* In order for this to happen, it is just necessary that each one receive the efficacious assistance of divine grace from the Father. No one can come unless he/she is drawn from the Father Who sent Him The ultimate attraction – is, of course, the resurrection on the last day! The next step would be to analyze the manner which the Father employs in "drawing" onto Jesus in faith.

5. The "draw" which the Father employs has nothing of **violence** to do with it. Just as a human being interested in a major cause [from marriage to banal business deals] would **strive to attract adherent[s]** - either by persuading the reason of others, or by trying to attract someone else toward an ideal or manner of future conduct. Thus, **the Father attracts human beings to Jesus by making His Son known** – and this is done in some instances, **by an internal revelation**. This is what happened in Peter's situation to whom the Father personally made known to Him His only-begotten, most beloved Divine Son: flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven! Through this faith, **generated through an internal revelation [flesh and blood have not revealed this to you...]**. Peter also received the power to perform miracles which would lead many others to the faith through his preaching – thousands would be converted just listening to Peter. **The Father can draw one to His Son by enticement, charm, persuasion** – He does this by His intrinsic quality of a **Paternal Majesty**. To draw human beings to these sublime ideals such as faith in Jesus Christ, or in Himself - both the Father and the Son [Who is the Way, Truth, Life] are enabled through all this to arouse love and peace of mind and heart.

6. Still following the teachings of the Great Augustine and his magisterial treatment of Divine Grace, Thomas points out that the Faithful have been **attracted by the Son by sharing His own stupendous love and Will for the Truth, which Jesus is incarnate**. To some extent, each person is **drawn** in all choices by one's perception of the good, by one's own desire. Admitting this is so, would it not also stand to reason that the more powerfully a rational being might be attracted toward Christ, especially so since by nature each human being has an inner yearning by nature for truth, Happiness, Justice, Eternal Life - and do not all these coincide with Jesus as revelation makes Him known to us. Since by an inner yearning, every believer needs to be drawn by Jesus Christ by allowing him / herself to be drawn by each one's innate love for Truth, echoed perhaps in the revealed Word of God: He finds in the Lord all His delights and **He will satisfy the desires of your heart** [cf. Ps 34:4] - 3

Draw me: we will run after thee to the odor of thy ointments. The king hath brought me into his storerooms: we will be glad and rejoice in thee ... the righteous love thee. [Sgs 1].

7. There is in all this the theology of St. Thomas developed through his contemplation of these ideals – In addition to **outside influences that draw** the Faithful to believe, there is also the God-given **interior instinct**: salvation history shows that many are drawn by the Father to Jesus Christ, **under the instinct of the divine action which moves the heart from within to come to believe** in Christ and in His Father. Scripture seems to lend even its distant support here:

14 Therefore, behold I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart... [Ho 2]

5 For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: [Ph 2]

8. Now that it is clearly established that the Father draws the Son, it is likewise true that the Divine Son draws the Faithful toward the Father, in so far as He is both God and man. In so far as Christ is man, the Father draws believers to His Son as the unique **way** – St. Thomas notes that Christ draws the faithful toward the Father as the Way leads one to its *terminus*, or toward its end our purpose. The Father, on His part, leads humanity to turn toward Christ in His humanity, by bestowing on each that vigor, empowerment so that each and every one might come to believe in Christ. And Christ, in His divinity, on His part always draws the Faithful to the Father – as the Incarnate Word He reveals, manifests His Father – as the Father inclines each toward His Son, proclaiming: *This is my Beloved Son – Listen to Him!*

9. All this mutual, reciprocal activity, it is noted that both the Father and the Son “draw” the Faithful toward each Other. By this is meant **their Faith is generated** never removing from each person that innate freedom of choice by which all are inclined to reject incredulity. The truth of the matter is the following: **the human heart, particularly in the state of corrupted human nature by original sin, simply does not have the force, power, strength, to elevate this heavy weight.** As a result, all need to be **drawn – lifted up** - and so, God, noting the dependence upon Him by sinful humanity [cf. Ps 103: He knows what we are made of... dust!] - God ‘extends His creating/ redeeming/ sanctifying hand’. He not only extends His hand to one who would receive Him, but converts to Himself those who would refuse Him and remain distant from Him. **God is simply disposed to bestow grace on each and every one, and to draw all to Himself** [# 937, above].

10. Consequently, if anyone does not receive grace, the fault for this must not be imputed to God, but to the one who did not receive, accept it. There is always the great mystery of Predestination to which Thomas alludes in # 939 – but not in magisterial fashion here. But, this is the main point: **it is clear that the Father must draw us if we are to have faith.**

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[B] TAUGHT BY GOD

1. A further major theme is introduced here: it is written in the prophets that all will be taught by God. Whoever has learned from the Father comes to me [Jn 6:45]:

942 The manner in which we are drawn is appropriate, for God draws us by revealing and teaching; and this is what he says: It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Bede says that this comes from Joel. But it does not seem to be there explicitly, although there is something like it in: "O children of Zion, rejoice and be joyful in the Lord your God, because he will give you a teacher of justice" (Jl 2:23). Again, according to Bede, he says, in the prophets, so that we might understand that the same meaning can be gathered from various statements of the prophets. But it is Isaiah who seems to state this more explicitly: "All your children will be taught by the Lord" (Is 54:13). We also read: "I will give you shepherds after my own heart, and they will feed you with knowledge and doctrine" (Jer 3:15).

943 They shall all be taught by God, can be understood in three ways. In one way, so that all stands for all the people in the world; in another way, so that it stands for all who are in the Church of Christ, and in a third way, so it means all who will be in the kingdom of heaven.

If we understand it in the first way, it does not seem to be true, for he immediately adds Everyone who has heard the Father and has learned, comes to me. Therefore, if everyone in the world is taught [by God], then everyone will come to Christ. But this is false, for not everyone has faith. There are three answers to this.

- First, one could say, as Chrysostom does, that he is speaking of the majority: all, i.e., very many shall be taught, just as we find in Matthew: "Many will come from the East and the West" (Mt 8:11).

- Secondly, it could mean, all, so far as God is concerned, shall be taught, but if some are not taught, that is due to themselves. For the sun, on its part, shines on all, but some are unable to see it if they close their eyes, or are blind. From this point of view, the Apostle says: "He desires the salvation of all men, and that all come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).

- Thirdly, we could say, with Augustine, that we must make a restricted application, so that They shall all be taught by God, means that all who are taught, are taught by God. It is just as we might speak of a teacher of the liberal arts who is working in a city: he alone teaches all the boys of the city, because no one there is taught by anyone else. It is in this sense that it was said above: "He was the true light, which enlightens every man coming into this world" (1:9).

944 If we explain these words as referring to those who are gathered into the Church, it says: They shall all, all who are in the Church, be taught by God. For we read: "All your children will be taught by the Lord" (Is 54:13). This shows the sublimity of the Christian faith, which does not depend on human teachings, but on the teaching of God. For the teaching of the Old Testament was given through the prophets; but the teaching of the New Testament is given through the Son of God himself. "In many and various ways (i.e., in the Old Testament) God spoke to our fathers through the prophets; in these days he has spoken to us in his Son" (Heb 1:1); and again in (2:3): "It was first announced by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard him."

Thus, all who are in the Church are taught, not by the apostles nor by the prophets, but by God himself. Further, according to Augustine, what we are taught by men is from God, who teaches from within: "You have one teacher, the Christ" (Mt 23:10). For understanding, which we especially need for such teaching, is from God.

945 If we explain these words as applying to those who are in the kingdom of heaven, then They shall all be taught by God, because they will see his essence without any intermediary: "We shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). 946 This drawing by the Father is most effective, because, Everyone who has heard the Father and has learned, comes to me. Here he mentions two things:

- first, what relates to a gift of God, when he says, has heard, that is, through God, who reveals;

- the other relates to a free judgment, when he says, and has learned, that is, by an assent. These two are necessary for every teaching of faith. Everyone who has heard the Father, teaching and making known, and has learned, by giving assent, comes to me.

He comes in three ways: through a knowledge of the truth; through the affection of love; and through imitative action. And in each way it is necessary that one hear and learn.

- The one who comes through a knowledge of the truth must hear, when God speaks within: "I will hear what the Lord God will speak within me" (Ps 84:9); and he must learn, through affection, as was said.

- The one who comes through love and desire—"If any one thirsts, let him come to me and drink" (below 7:37)—must hear the word of the Father and grasp it, in order to learn and be moved in his affections. For that person learns the word who grasps it according to the meaning of the speaker. But the Word of the Father breathes forth love. Therefore, the one who grasps it with eager love, learns. "Wisdom goes into holy souls, and makes them prophets and friends of God" (Wis 7:27).

- One comes to Christ through imitative action, according to: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Mt 11:28). And whoever learns even in this way comes to Christ: for as the conclusion is to things knowable, so is action to things performable. Now whoever learns perfectly in the sciences arrives at the conclusion; therefore, as regards things that are performable, whoever learns the words perfectly arrives at the right action: "The Lord has opened my ear; and I do not resist" (Is 50:5).

947 To correct the thought that some might have that every one will hear and learn from the Father through a vision, he adds: Not that any one has seen the Father, that is, a person living in this life does not see the Father in his essence, according to: "Man will not see me and live" (Ex 33:20), except the one, that is the Son, who is from God—he has seen the Father, through his essence. Or, Not that any one has seen the Father, with a comprehensive vision: neither man nor angel has ever seen or can see in this way; except the one who is from God, i.e., the Son: "No one knows the Father except the Son" (Mt 11:27).

The reason for this, of course, is that all vision or knowledge comes about through a likeness: creatures have a knowledge of God according to the way they have a likeness to him. Thus the philosophers say that the intelligences know the First Cause according to this likeness which they have to it. Now every creature possesses some likeness to God, but it is infinitely distant from a likeness to his nature, and so no creature can know him perfectly and totally, as he is in his own nature. The Son, however, because he has received the entire nature of the Father perfectly, through an eternal generation, sees and comprehends totally.

948 Note how the words used are appropriate: for above, when he was speaking of the knowledge others have, he used the word "heard"; but now, in speaking of the Son's knowledge, he uses the word "seen," for knowledge which comes through seeing is direct and open, while that which comes through hearing comes through one who has seen. And so we have received the knowledge we have about the Father from the Son, who saw him. Thus, no one can know the Father except through Christ, who makes him known; and no one can come to the Son unless he has heard from the Father, who makes the Son known.

2. The Father reveals by teaching - and teaches by revealing: all members of the Church are instructed in the faith not by the Apostles nor by the Prophets, but by God Himself. And the fact is that such teaching is accompanied, and preceded by interior teaching. Our intelligence that is needed in a particular rational manner in order to learn, is a gift of God, it all comes from Him. The Father 'draws' with the greatest efficacy – without preempting the free will of any human being. As a result, to be "taught" by God means a work in harmony: the gift of God of His message meted through our intelligence – and then our own free will to what the teaching asks of us – such is what is needed in every assent to the Faith. Therefore whoever will listen to the Father Who is teaching and manifesting, will learn from Him. In

offering a free assent to the word – **an oblation of intellect and will** [cf. DV 5] – in offering one's free assent, accedes to Jesus Christ in and through the Holy Spirit. This **access** occurs in three ways: through **knowledge** of the truth; through the **affection** of love; and by the **imitation** of His works. **Knowledge of God will lead to a chosen adherence to Him and His Plan out of love.**

3. As a result of all this, whoever **comes to Jesus Christ through knowledge of the faith – needs to listen, to hear, to heed the inspirations of God and adhere to them out of love.** The same is true of anyone who **comes to Jesus through love and desire:** it is necessary for such as these to listen to the divine Word in one's heart and mind, to accept it; this is so that each one might be able to grasp the sublime sense of the words and the elevated challenge of the Plan. The word must be penetrated, one must become immersed in it, make it his / her "own". – translated into the life of the Faithful. The word of God the Father, Who is Truth, inspires simultaneously love – and whatever is learned from Him must be accepted in love.

4. And it is likewise true whenever anyone approaches Christ **through an imitation of His life-style:** imitation leads to comprehension depending on the strength of the bond and union of the minds in this quest. There is **deep union and development in the terms** that St. Thomas employs: to listen [*audire*] – to comprehend [*capere*] - to learn [addiscere] – and to be taken over, **effected and affected.** Thus, the Teacher understands that **to learn in a perfect manner means to come to some conclusion, a more sublime insight.**

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CONCLUSION

[1] That listening to the Father that leads to Faith in Jesus does not happen thorough any immediate vision: it is only the Divine Son Who is from the Father has ever seen Him. As St. Thomas has put it: **Vision, or Knowledge, is based on similitude**. This holds true also for the Knowledge, Vision of God on the part of creatures: humanity has a limited similarity with Him, while remaining infinitely distant with respect to His nature. In every analogy of the Divinity with humanity, there is something similar, something distinct – and in this matter, there is an infinite distinction, more dissimilarity than similarity.

[2] As a result, **no creature** – not even the Blessed in heaven, who see Him as He is – **can ever comprehend Him** – God can never be known perfectly and totally, as regards His divine nature is concerned. The genesis of that unique knowledge which Jesus has of His Father is not from Vision, but from hearing - thus Christ's knowledge of God is immediate and open – while ours is always from our listening to the Son.

[3] **Thus no one knows the Father except through the means of Jesus Christ Who reveals Him, and no one can come to the Father unless through listening to the Father Who manifests Him**. For St. Thomas, faith is not arid intellectualism - but reaches full blossom through **innate human desire for the good, from each one's affection for God instilled ate creation and from the inner instinct of one's experience of God**.

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**EXCURSUS:
THE PERFECT MODE OF BEING 'DRAWN' BY JESUS IS
BEING RAISED UP BY HIM.**

[cf. St. Thomas' Commentary on John]

**55 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life;
and I will raise him up on the last day. [Jn 46:55]**

968 Jesus said: Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. As if to say: You think it is impossible and unbecoming to eat my flesh. But it is not only possible, but very necessary, so much so that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have, i.e., you will not be able to have, life in you, that is, spiritual life. For just as material food is so necessary for bodily life that without it you cannot exist—"They exchanged their precious belongings for food" (Lam 1:11); "Bread strengthens the heart of man" (Ps 103:15)—so spiritual food is necessary for the spiritual life to such an extent that without it the spiritual life cannot be sustained: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which comes from the mouth of God" (Dt 8:3).

969 We should note that this statement can refer either to eating in a spiritual way or in a sacramental way. If we understand it as referring to a spiritual eating, it does not cause any difficulty. For that person eats the flesh of Christ and drinks his blood in a spiritual way who shares in the unity of the Church; and this is accomplished by the love of charity: "You are one body, in Christ" (Rom 12:5). Thus, one who does not eat in this way is outside the Church, and consequently, without the love of charity. Accordingly, such a one does not have life in himself: "He, who does not love, remains in death" (1 Jn 3:14).

But if we refer this statement to eating in a sacramental way, a difficulty appears. For we read above: "Unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (3:5). Now this statement was given in the same form as the present one: Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man. Therefore, since baptism is a necessary sacrament, it seems that the Eucharist is also. In fact, the Greeks think it is; and so they give the Eucharist to newly baptized infants. For this opinion they have in their favor the rite of Denis, who says that the reception of each sacrament should culminate in the sharing of the Eucharist, which is the culmination of all the sacraments. This is true in the case of adults, but it is not so for infants, because receiving the Eucharist should be done with reverence and devotion, and those who do not have the use of reason, as infants and the insane, cannot have this. Consequently, it should not be given to them at all.

We should say, therefore, that the sacrament of baptism is necessary for everyone, and it must be really received, because without it no one is born again into life. And so it is necessary that it be received in reality, or by desire in the case of those who

are prevented from the former. For if the contempt within a person excludes a baptism by water, then neither a baptism of desire nor of blood will benefit him for eternal life. However, the sacrament of the Eucharist is necessary for adults only, so that it may be received in reality, or by desire, according to the practices of the Church.

970 But even this causes difficulty: because by these words of Our Lord, it is necessary for salvation not only to eat his body, but also to drink his blood, especially since a repast of food is not complete without drink. Therefore, since it is the custom in certain Churches for only the priest to receive Christ's blood, while the rest receive only his body, they would seem to be acting against this.

I answer that it was the custom of the early Church for all to receive both the body and blood of Christ; and certain Churches have still retained this practice, where even those assisting at the altar always receive the body and blood. But in some Churches, due to the danger of spilling the blood, the custom is for it to be received only by the priest, while the rest receive Christ's body. Even so, this is not acting against our Lord's command, because whoever receives Christ's body receives his blood also, since the entire Christ is present under each species, even his body and blood. But under the species of bread, Christ's body is present in virtue of the conversion, and his blood is present by natural concomitance; while under the species of wine, his blood is present in virtue of the conversion, and his body by natural concomitance.

It is now clear why it is necessary to receive this spiritual food.

971 Next, the usefulness of this food is shown: first, for the spirit or soul; secondly, for the body, and I will raise him up on the last day.

972 There is great usefulness in eating this sacrament, for it gives eternal life; thus he says, Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. For this spiritual food is similar to material food in the fact that without it there can be no spiritual life, just as there cannot be bodily life without bodily food, as was said above. But this food has more than the other, because it produces in the one who receives it an unending life, which material food does not do: for not all who eat material food continue to live. For, as Augustine says, it can happen that many who do take it die because of old age or sickness, or some other reason.

But one who takes this food and drink of the body and blood of our Lord has eternal life. For this reason it is compared to the tree of life: "She is the tree of life for those who take her" (Prv 3:18); and so it is called the bread of life: "He fed him with the bread of life and understanding" (Sir 15:3). Accordingly, he says, eternal life, because one who eats this bread has within himself Christ, who is "the true God and eternal life," as John says (1 Jn 5:20).

Now one has eternal life who eats and drinks, as it is said, not only in a sacramental way, but also in a spiritual way. One eats and drinks sacramentally or in a sacramental way, if he receives the sacrament; and one eats and drinks spiritually or in a spiritual way, if he attains to the reality of the sacrament. This reality of the sacrament is twofold: one is contained and signified, and this is the whole Christ, who is contained under the species of bread and wine.

The other reality is signified but not contained, and this is the mystical body of Christ, which is in the predestined, the called, and the justified. Thus, in reference to Christ as contained and signified, one eats his flesh and drinks his blood in a spiritual way if he is united to him through faith and love, so that one is transformed into him and becomes his member: for this food is not changed into the one who eats it, but it turns the one who takes it into itself, as we see in Augustine, when he says: "I am the food of the robust. Grow and you will eat me. Yet you will not change me into yourself, but you will be transformed into me."

And so this is a food capable of making man divine and inebriating him with divinity. The same is true in reference to the mystical body of Christ, which is only signified [and not contained], if one shares in the unity of the Church. Therefore, one who eats in these ways has eternal life. That this is true of the first way, in reference to Christ, is clear enough. In the same way, in reference to the mystical body of Christ, one will necessarily have eternal life if he perseveres: for the unity of the Church is brought about by the Holy Spirit: "One body, one Spirit ... the pledge of our eternal inheritance" (Eph 4:4; 1:14). So this bread is very profitable, because it gives eternal life to the soul; but it is so also because it gives eternal life to the body.

973 And therefore he adds, and I will raise him up on the last day. For as was said, one who eats and drinks in a spiritual way shares in the Holy Spirit, through whom we are united to Christ by a union of faith and love, and through him we become members of the Church. But the Holy Spirit also merits the resurrection: "He, who raised Jesus Christ our Lord from the dead, will raise our mortal bodies because of his Spirit, who dwells in us" (Rom 8:11). And so our Lord says that he will raise up to glory whoever eats and drinks; to glory, and not to condemnation, as this would not be for their benefit.

Such an effect is fittingly attributed to this sacrament of the Eucharist because, as Augustine says and as was said above, it is the Word who raises up souls, and it is the Word made flesh who gives life to bodies. Now in this sacrament the Word is present not only in his divinity, but also in the reality of his flesh; and so he is the cause of the resurrection not just of souls, but of bodies as well: "For as death came through a man, so the resurrection of the dead has come through a man" (1 Cor 15:21). It is now clear how profitable it is to take this sacrament.

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