



## Charity and its relation to wisdom by Saint Thomas of Aquinas

Miłość *caritas* i jej związek z mądrością według Świętego Tomasza z Akwinu<sup>1</sup>  
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**Abstract:** Reflection on charity (*caritas*) and its relationship with wisdom requires an understanding and knowledge of the essence of Christian love; therefore, this paper presents an analysis of charity in the perspective of love in general and its connection with other gifts, especially the gift of wisdom. In order to fully accept and realise charity, one must first know the truth about man, who was created in the image of the One God, in the image of the whole Holy Trinity. The identity of man, according to Thomas, can only be recognised through the awareness of man's vocation to friendship with God, to be a friend of God (Galuszka, 2021, p. 82). Arriving at the essence of charity and its inseparable connection with wisdom required a reflection on the meaning of one of the theological virtues – the virtue of love. Since the theological virtues are God's endowment to man, it was also necessary to mention the gifts of the Holy Ghost in order to indicate the essence and fullness of charity and its relation to God and people. For this purpose, the reflections of Saint Thomas Aquinas were drawn upon, which seem to be increasingly relevant and interesting to people in search of truth and love. Charity is beautiful because it consists in loving another human being – not necessarily the one endowed with affection or sympathy – in God and with God. Such love can only be realised in an intimate encounter with God. The analysis of the texts of St. Thomas allowed us to confirm the thesis on the relationship between love and wisdom. Love is the principle of all virtues and the source of human action. Love enhances wisdom, creating it for itself. Love manifests itself to the highest degree in wisdom. The true union of love and wisdom bears fruit in the form of contemplation, which is the result of the cooperation of intellect and will.

**Keywords:** virtue, gift, wisdom, love, charity

**Abstrakt:** Refleksja nad miłością *caritas* i jej związku z mądrością wymaga zrozumienia i poznania istoty miłości chrześcijańskiej, dlatego w artykule podjęto analizę miłości *caritas* w perspektywie miłości w ogóle i jej łączności z innymi darami, szczególnie z darem mądrości. Aby w pełni zaakceptować i realizować miłość *caritas* trzeba najpierw poznać prawdę o człowieku, który został stworzony na obraz Jedyne Boga, na obraz całej Trójcy Świętej. Poznanie tożsamości człowieka, jak twierdzi Tomasz, to uświadomienie sobie jego powołania do przyjaźni z Bogiem, do bycia przyjacielem Boga (Galuszka, 2021, s. 82). Dojście do istoty miłości *caritas* i jej nierozrwalnego związku z mądrością wymagało podjęcia refleksji nad sensem jednej z cnót teologicznych – cnoty miłości. Ponieważ cnoty teologiczne są Bożym obdarowaniem człowieka, konieczne było też przybliżenie darów Ducha Świętego, aby wskazać na istotę i pełnię miłości *caritas* i jej odniesienia do Boga i ludzi. Do tego celu wykorzystano myśl Świętego Tomasza z Akwinu, która wydaje się być coraz bardziej aktualna i budząca coraz szersze zainteresowanie wśród ludzi poszukujących prawdy i miłości. Miłość *caritas* jest piękna, bo polega na kochaniu w Bogu i z Bogiem również innego człowieka, niekoniecznie tego obdarzonego uczuciem czy sympatią, ale każdego. Taka miłość może być urzeczywistniona tylko w dążeniu do intymnego spotkania z Bogiem. Podjęta analiza znanych tekstów Świętego Tomasza pozwoliła potwierdzić postawioną tezę o związku miłości z mądrością. Miłość jest zasadą wszystkich cnót i źródłem ludzkiego działania. Miłość potęguje mądrość, sama sobie stwarzając tę pomoc. Miłość w najwyższym stopniu przejawia się w mądrości. Prawdziwe zjednoczenie miłości i mądrości owocuje kontemplacją, która jest wynikiem współpracy intelektu i woli.

**Słowa kluczowe:** cnota, dar, mądrość, miłość, miłość *caritas*

### Introduction

For the reflection on the highest level of love – charity (*caritas*) and its relationship with the gift of wisdom - it becomes important to understand and know the essence of Christian love in the perspective of love

in general and in connection with other gifts, especially the gift of wisdom. This topic, therefore, was developed on the basis of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, mainly *Summa theologiae*. The fundamental option for the life of a Christian is to believe in the love of God. The words from the Gospel according

<sup>1</sup> Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-1Groch.pdf>

to St. John are a guarantee of charity: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). The Christian’s task is to recognise love as his main principle, as the form that shapes the virtues, the motor and root of all supernatural life (Przanowski, 2018, p. 217). *Caritas* is a key word in the New Testament, defining the identity of the first Christians. Recognition of the essence of charity is hindered by the influence of strong materialistic currents and sentimentalism and the presentation of it often only in the natural dimension. The lack of differentiation in the human psyche between activities of the will at the mental level and similar effects at the emotional level greatly confuses and hinders knowledge of the essence of love itself. Love in psychological terms began to be reduced to a purely affective (bodily) level and assessed according to a higher spiritual love (Woroniecki, 2013, p. 195). Distinguishing between sensual and spiritual love is not easy, as there are many similarities and common factors between these phenomena, which often intermingle. It is not possible to identify the meaning and essence of charity without its philosophical and theological analysis. Such a perspective is presented in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and this paper is an attempt to interpret it. In order to clearly see the difference between affective and spiritual love, we will focus on the fullness of Christian love, namely the supernatural friendship with God in the Holy Ghost called *caritas*. Knowing what God’s love is and what the gifts of the Holy Ghost are, especially the gift of wisdom, leads us to the acceptance and practice of true Christian love.

The order of our considerations was arranged in such a way as to clarify the very concept of love, its varieties and types as well as characterise as accurately as possible the thought of St. Thomas on charity. The starting point is the virtue of love and its sense, followed by the reflection on the gifts of the Holy Ghost in order to undertake the analysis of charity itself and to characterise its features in relation to God and people. It is important for the Christian to affirm Thomas’ conviction that love is the principle

and source of all the virtues and the first cause of all that man does, and thus its connection with the gift of wisdom.

## 1. On the passion and virtue of love

### 1.1. On love itself and the powers of the soul *potentiae animae*

The terms related to love have always been a difficult subject because, outside of academic fields such as philosophy, theology and literature at large, the terminology pertaining to love has been in common use, in different times and environments. For St. Thomas, love is the adherence of man to good. The good of any thing is its purpose, and the purpose of charity is supernatural friendship with God, orientation towards the Supreme Good (St. Thomas Aquinas, 2000, p. 131). St. Thomas defines love in general and presents it as the principle of the pursuit of the good, that is, according to him, love is simply a dilection for good (Sth, I-II, q. 24, a. 2, co). According to him, good itself which one pursues is the cause of love. Love, then, consists in a certain transformation of the appetitus under the influence of the appetible object itself. The appetible object, as good, is the cause of complacency in it (Sth, I-II, q. 26, a. 2, co). Consequently, the good which the object constitutes becomes the cause of love, since it is good which prompts yearning and gives pleasure and satisfaction (Sth, I-II, q. 25, a. 2, co).

Woroniecki enumerates three dispositions towards good and three dispositions towards evil. He divides the appetitive power into the concupiscible part and the irascible part, and ascribes the following potentialities to the concupiscible one:

1. love – hatred,
2. desire – aversion,
3. pleasure – sadness (Woroniecki, 2013, p. 196).

The absence of good arouses a desire to possess it; if this desire is satisfied, it gives pleasure, satisfaction, delight. Appetite (desire) or repose always precedes

the concupiscible tendency, which Thomas calls dilection. The tendency of passion or will to an object is the source of all passions and affections of will as a basis. The anthropological approach is important for Thomas; he presents the hierarchy of love against the background of the organisation of human being. Skilfully drawing on Aristotle's concepts and Augustine's inspiration, "Aquinas's great achievement was to show how a view of the human person as a soul-body unity was compatible with the religious view of the person as ordered to eternal life with God" (Shanley, 2017, p. 153). It is important to note that man does not have the fullness of being within himself and therefore cannot satisfy his desires by himself. He seeks fulfilment in the world in various dimensions: material, sensual, mental, cognitive. For him who seeks, dilections are the result of various objects and the desire to possess them (ibidem, p. 154). "Love is something pertaining to the appetite; since good is the object of both" (Sth, I-II, q. 26, a. 1, co). Hence love has different aspects following the differences of appetites. The human spirit is capable of performing different actions (the so-called *potentiae animae* or powers of the soul). Aquinas enumerates five of them:

1. vegetative powers that provide physiological functions (nutrition, growth, reproduction);
2. locomotive powers that enable the change of location in space;
3. sensitive powers – a. through the exterior senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, tactile senses (heat, cold, balance, pressure, etc.), b. through the four interior senses (common sense, memory, imagination and estimation);
4. intellectual cognitive powers, or reason;
5. appetitive powers (*appetitus*).

For further analysis of love, appetite needs to be discussed. Thomas divides the appetitive faculties into three categories:

Natural appetite, inherent appetite (*appetitus naturalis*), does not result from what the desiring being apprehends, but from nature. Each being naturally desires what corresponds to its nature. The object (love) is pursued if it shares nature with the desiring being. Six characteristics of natural appetite can be found in the texts of Thomas:

1. Natural appetite is not a separate power of the soul separated from the others (Sth, I, q. 6, a.1, ad. 2),
2. Each power of the soul has a natural inclination and tendency to the something extrinsic (Sth, I, q. 78, a. 1, ad. 2.),
3. Natural appetite is irremovable (Sth, I, q. 83, a. 1, ad. 5., Sth, II-II, q. 148, a. 1, ad. 3),
4. Natural appetite does not obey the judgement of reason (Sth, I, q. 83, a. 1, ad. 5),
5. "Natural appetite tends to good existing in a thing" (Sth, I-II, q. 8, a. 1, co),
6. Natural appetite is given to things by the Creator of nature (Sth, I, q. 6, a. 1).

According to this characterisation, natural appetite may be said to be the essence of things taken as the principium of its action. Natural appetite serves the most basic good of beings, i.e. the preservation of individual life and the life of the species (Sth, I-II, q. 28, a. 1).

Sensitive appetite, also called the passion of love (*appetitus sensitivus*), arises from the cognition of the desiring being himself and results from necessity and not from free choice. This power is characteristic of animals, whereas it is voluntary in humans and obeys the reason. The subject of sensitive love is the concupiscence power.

The cognitive or intellectual appetite or will (*appetitus intellectualis seu voluntas*) results from the cognition of the desiring being according to his free choice. The will is the subject of mental love.

In each of these three kinds of appetite, "the name 'love' is given to the principle movement towards the end loved" (Sth I-II, q. 26, a. 1, co).

In the rest of the article, intellectual appetite will be highlighted, since it is embedded in the will and leads to charity and the Holy Ghost. On the occasion of discussing *amor* there will also be the need to mention the sensitive appetite<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.2. On the varieties of love

The differentiation of appetites presented in the previous section allows us to assign the appropriate types of love.

- Natural (inherent) love characterises all beings and is an inclination towards the proper good. Both human emotionality and spirituality are connected with the will.
- Sensitive love is contained and compliant with sensitive appetite.
- Intellectual (mental) love is contained in intellectual appetite.

Saint Thomas presents the order of love resulting from the fact that everything that has a beginning strives to reach an end in a specific order; he presents its division according to various conditions. Analysing the order, he mentions respectful love, to which he gives priority, and affectionate love, which is stronger. St Thomas also explains love in general terms, dividing it into rational, animal and innate (natural) love (Sth, I-II, q. 28, a. 6). The term 'love' thus covers a wide range of meanings. St. Thomas also orders the ranges of superior and inferior kinds of love and gives names to particular kinds of love, distinguishing four of them: dilection – preference with the verb 'to like', love – loving with the verb 'to love', charity with the verb 'to love with benevolence', and friendship (*amicita*). Andrzejuk (2012, p. 267) presented Thomas's levels of love in the following order, with comments to clarify the Latin names:

- *amor* as a desire,
- *dilectio* as a choice,
- *amicita* as friendship,
- *caritas* as loving something higher, more perfect, more precious,
- *caritas Dei* as the love of God. St. Thomas defines it as a kind of friendship between man and God, which is included in *amicita*.

*Amor* of the widest scope includes both *caritas*, *amicita*, and *dilectio*. Thomas calls the acts of these loves *amare* (to love). He also points to *dilectio* as a conscious choice of persons, which also includes friendship. *Amor* thus includes love at all levels of appetite, while the other kinds of love concern only personal love.

St. Thomas speaks of four dimensions of love (Sth, I-II, q. 26, a. 3, co). He begins with *amor* (dilection) as *passio*<sup>3</sup>; for him, this kind of love has a broad meaning, it includes not only love in the broadest sense, but also any dilection to good things or inclination towards things that correspond to it. *Amor* is the activity of the concupiscible appetite in the sensual sphere. Dilection is the common love for *amor* and charity. *Amor/Eros* includes *dilectio*, *caritas* and *amicita*, but not the other way round. Dilection has a very wide scope, *amor* and charity also belong to dilection. Dilection implies a choice, which is why Thomas does not qualify dilection as the concupiscible power but situates it in the will of rational beings. Charity implies a certain perfection; what is loved is also valued, according to the root of charity from *carus*, meaning 'dear'. Dilection and charity are mental activities of the appetitus, and in this sense charity can be tantamount to dilection.

Aquinas distinguishes four goods worthy of love (*diligibilia*) and reveals their hierarchy: God, soul, neighbour and body. The bodily life is, after the soul, the most valuable thing in man's earthly life (Przanowski, 2018, p. 197). The intricacies of

2 In Thomas's writings the sensitive appetite (*appetitus sensitivus*) is twofold: 1. *Vis concupiscibilis* - the concupiscible power also called the "inclination for pleasure", which refers to good or evil known through the senses in an absolute way, without reference to hardship. In this appetite, the feelings are assigned to mental power. 2. *Vis irascibilis* - the irascible power referring precisely to hardship. Anger and passion are assigned to mental power (*passiones*) - Sth I-II, Introduction.

3 *Passio* is translated both as passion or desire and as a feeling associated with some kind of sensation, a physiological process.

Thomas's explanation of the kinds of love can be explained if we stick the order of the characteristics of these kinds of love and the relations between them.

Dilection (*dilectio*) is not located in concupiscentia but in the will and concerns only the rational nature. *Dilectio* as rational love is not discussed separately by Thomas but is concretised in the form of friendship and charity. However, it is possible to characterise *dilectio* on the basis of Thomas's reflections. Aquinas links the etymology of *dilectio* with *deligere* 'to choose'. *Dilectio*, in other words, loving by choice, may exist only between rational beings. Making a choice is connected with the will. *Dilectio* is connected with the acts of will that are analogous to passions (Andrzejuk, 2012, p. 279).

In his discussion on charity, St. Thomas links the habit of friendship (*amicitia*) with the acts of *amor* and *dilectio*. Charity, which can be considered both an act and a virtue of love, adds to dilection a certain perfection of love, directed to a highly valued, dear object – *carus*. Hence the name of this kind of love. Charity will be more extensively presented in the following chapters, since it is the kind of love more extensively discussed in this article. On the other hand, when speaking of friendship (*amicitia*) in the second part of *Summa*, Thomas had already developed a deeper analysis of Aristotle's teaching on friendship than at the time of writing the *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, thanks to the new translation of the *Ethics*. Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Woroniccki, 2013, p. 206) listed three conditions for true friendship: benevolent love, reciprocity, unity. The Philosopher raised the question about the possibility of friendship between humans and gods, to which he answered in the negative, pointing to the lack of something common that unites friends. St. Thomas, on the other hand, analysing the Aristotelian factors of friendship, drew the opposite conclusion, claiming that friendship can be even more perfect with God than with humans (Sth, II-II, q. 23, a. 1, co., Woroniccki, 2013, p. 207-209). He came to this conclusion through

Christian revelation and not just through natural reason, as Aristotle did. St. Thomas seems to attribute charity exclusively to God, although he did not declare this explicitly. St. Thomas justifies his conclusion on the grounds that only God can be the object of such an absolute love, because only God can ensure the fidelity and perfection of love. All other goods can be lost when the "good" indicated is misidentified and directed towards an apparent temporal end. According to St. Thomas, the love corresponding to the human condition is friendship, which also has a multifaceted dimension (Andrzejuk, 2012, p. 313).

Aquinas referred to passages from Scripture – Old and New Testaments – pointing to several of them and focusing more on the Gospel of John<sup>4</sup>. From this passage, Aquinas reads three important premises concerning the manifestations of the kinds of love presented by him (Przanowski, 2018, p. 194): these are:

1. *agape/dilectio*,
2. love "for friends" – love supplemented with friendship,
3. the giving up of one's life (self-emptying (*kenosis*) and humbling).

Thomas Aquinas recognises friendly love as the basis for understanding love in general and presents charity as friendship with God above all. Przanowski touches on some difficulties related to the translation of biblical texts, in this case the passage "He gave his life for his friends". In various translations one may come across the terms "to give one's soul" or "to give one's life". For the purposes of this article, these terms can be considered synonymous<sup>5</sup>.

Christ's promise of friendship and giving his life for "us" is the starting point of Christian reflection. Christ's loving action is salvific, and his sacrificial acts are a sign of the most perfect and supreme love. The elevation of man to a supernatural state, giving him a share in the divine nature, gives man a relation-

4 John 15:13-15 – "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father."

5 For more on this topic, see M. Przanowski, *Uniżony Bóg w myśli św. Tomasza z Akwinu [Humble God in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas]*, Wyd. Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2018, p. 194-198.

ship with God which can be called true friendship, in the literal sense of the word, not only figuratively. The foundation of friendship is the subjective treatment of the other person. The other person is a good in itself. If the other person is treated for the sake of pleasure, friendship cannot exist objectively. The love of friendship is subjective, because the lover refers to the loved one as a good in itself. Przanowski lists the characteristics, or rather conditions, of true friendship. Friendship is subjective, benevolent, mutual, participatory, unifying, free, active and lasting. In addition, he completes the characteristics of friendship by further characterising it as: revealing, sympathising, consensual, actualising, rejoicing and consoling, broad and sacrificial (Przanowski, 2018, p. 213–215).

### 1.3. On charity (*caritas*)

The root word of charity is, as already mentioned, Latin *carus* ‘dear’. In charity, St. Thomas points to the exceptional significance of the object of love, to something precious (*carus*). St. Thomas counts charity among the virtues, and among the supernatural virtues – the infused virtues (*virtus infusae*). A kind of friendship arises from the union of man with God as charity (Sth, I-II, q. 24, a. 2, co). This love, and the friendship that unites man with God, relates everything else to this love. All the other relations between man and beings are to be established for the sake of man’s love for God (Sth, II-II, q. 23, a. 1, co). There is a communion between man and God (God grants eternal happiness) and through it and on it this kind of friendship should be based. Charity consists in the unity of eternal happiness, which is a gift freely given (Sth, II-II, q. 24, a. 2, co).

St. Thomas, commenting on Peter Lombard who claimed that love for God in man is the Holy Ghost Himself, insists that love for God is a specific virtue created by God (Andrzejuk, 2012, p. 261–265). God creates *virtus* as an operative habit (*habitus*), which serves to build a relationship with Himself.

Virtue adds to the habit a direction towards good, i.e. it is a habit that cannot be used for evil purposes. *Caritas* is thus a habit and a virtue, originating in the supernatural, but perfecting spiritual powers in man’s intellectual powers and functioning in a similar way to other habits and virtues – consciously and voluntarily. Charity is used to define every virtue, because all virtues depend on it (ibidem, p. 261–265). Charity is the mother and form of all the virtues as its cause and end; it directs all the virtues to its end (Sth, II-II, q. 23, a. 8, ad. 1 – ad. 3).

The intensity of love is revealed in the giving up of one’s soul for one’s friends, and then it manifests itself to the highest degree and is all the more valuable the less it results from any obligation (Przanowski, 2018, p. 198–199). The first stage of love of neighbour consists in sharing or giving away material goods. The second stage already requires consenting to hardship and suffering out of love for one’s neighbour, and the third and final stage involves giving one’s soul, or life, something most precious in this world. *Caritas* is not obligatory, the giving of one’s soul for the salvation of one’s neighbour is only necessary if it flows from the function. *Caritas*, then, is the giving of one’s life, even when it is not required. The unsurpassed model becomes Christ, who dies for sinners and not only for the just (ibidem, p. 199), as it is written in the Letter to the Romans<sup>6</sup>; an example of Christ’s amazing love. Love is contained in the mystery of human redemption and the incarnation of Christ as a work of love (*opus caritatis*). Charity is, in its depths, unknowable, for with its fullness and perfection it transcends all created intellect and human knowledge (ibidem, p. 201).

Saint Thomas, analysing the text of Saint Paul’s<sup>7</sup> Letter to the Ephesians, lists the four dimensions of charity contained therein (Breadth, Length, Height, Depth), finding a metaphor for the most important characteristics of charity *found in the saints*.

6 Rom 5:8 – “But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”

7 Ephesians 3:17-19 – “and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

1. *Breadth (latitudo)* – means “breadth of *caritas*”, which reaches even the enemies;
2. *Length (longitudo)* – expresses the permanence of love beginning from earthly life until eternity;
3. *Height (sublimitas)* – refers to supernatural intentions, not for one’s own benefit but for the sake of God;
4. *Depth (profundum)* – symbolises the source of *caritas*, which is the Holy Ghost. Man’s love for God is made possible by the Holy Ghost.

Thomas inscribes the four dimensions of *charity*: love of enemies, permanence, orientation towards eternity and origin from God in the plan of the Cross<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. The Holy Ghost as Love and Gift

The Holy Ghost is the person to whom the names of Gift and Love correspond (Sth, I, q. 33-38). “The Holy Ghost is the person who possesses what the Father and the Son possess; all three are holy and are spirit” (Levering, 2016, p. 360). The Holy Ghost, who is uncreated love, can be in a person who possesses created love. The Holy Ghost stimulates the soul to acts of love. In both *Summa theologiae* and *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas relies on the understanding of love that God loves Himself (Emery, 2021, p. 53). St. Thomas compares the appearance in the will of a loving predilection directed (the will loves what the mind has conceived beforehand) towards a concupiscible being to a property of the Holy Ghost. This property makes it possible to show the distinctness of the Holy Ghost and to see the presence of “God loved in God who loves himself” and makes it possible to call the Holy Ghost personified love, with the reservation that this name does not reflect his fullness (ibidem, p. 54). The “seal” of love appears in the loving will (immanent origin), it refers to the will from which it comes and to the Word, which is presupposed before love. The motif of love

is also present when St. Thomas explains the concept of “Gift”, which also refers to the Holy Ghost. Gift implies a relation of origin, as does love (Sth, I, q. 37, a. 1). Saint Augustine argued that the gift of the Holy Ghost is none other than the Holy Ghost. “But the Holy Ghost is a personal name; so also therefore is ‘Gift’” (Sth, I, q. 38, a. 1, co). St. Thomas explains that the very name “gift” “imports an aptitude for being given”. All things given involve both parties, the giver and the recipient. The divine person is both given and is a Gift; only a rational creature can accept such a gift and have a divine person.

Thomas speaks of charity<sup>9</sup> in many places in *Summa* and in his other works in which he addresses the subject of man’s relationship with God. “charity is a friendship (*amicitia*) of man for God, founded upon the fellowship of everlasting happiness” (Sth, II-II, q. 24, a. 2, co). The fellowship reaching eternity is not a natural good, but a gift freely given, i.e. *caritas* is neither innate nor acquired by natural forces, but poured in by the Holy Ghost, being the *amor* of the Father and the Son, it is the fruit of the act of loving (Andrzejuk, 2012, p. 263). St. Thomas explains the understanding of the Holy Ghost, referring to the question of Love.

### 2.1. Specificity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost

The gifts of the Holy Ghost make it possible to act differently than when directed by the natural powers. The Holy Ghost moves the will to love in such a way that it cooperates in the accomplishment of the act. “But it is evident that the act of charity surpasses the nature of the power of the will, so that, therefore, unless some form be superadded to the natural power, inclining it to the act of love, this same act would be less perfect than the natural acts and the acts of the other powers; nor would it be easy and pleasurable to perform” (Sth, II-II, q. 23, a. 2, co). All the gifts are attributed to the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost, being Love, has the character of the first Gift. Some gifts are attributed to the Son

8 Description and wider explanation in: M. Przanowski, *Uniżony Bóg w myśli św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, Wyd. Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2018, p. 200.

9 The term *caritas* is the Latin translation of the Greek *agape*. Charity, loving, the virtue of supernatural love; in Christian theology and philosophy, one of the three theological (infused) virtues, directed to God as the supreme Good, itself worthy of love, and to all other beings for God’s sake, (from:): <http://www.ptta.pl/pef/pdf/c/caritas.pdf>.

by appropriation<sup>10</sup>. These are the gifts that concern the intellect (Torrell, 2003, p. 222). The origin of the Holy Ghost according to love, which has the power to move and to keep in motion, makes it possible to attribute to the Holy Ghost the works of movement, and thus the mastery over the course of created life. Confirmation of this thinking can be read from the words of Genesis (Gen 1:2) where the Spirit is “sweeping over the waters”. Life manifests itself above all in movement; it is the Holy Ghost who sets things in motion and keeps them in motion, and so we might say that the Holy Ghost rules over life<sup>11</sup>. God himself is everywhere, and his effects are everywhere. One such effect is the love with which we as human beings love God. Love for God is found in the human soul through the Holy Ghost, which means that the Holy Ghost dwells in man. The first effect as *love-caritas* is the presence of the Giver Himself, that is, the Holy Ghost, and with Him the whole Trinity in the soul of the just. St. Thomas emphasizes that it is clear that God loves most those whom he has made his friends through the Holy Ghost (Torrell, 2003, p. 230).

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are abundant in their effects on all creation. And the cause of creation is Love, as the cause of the creation of things. The gift is not only the unilateral dwelling of the Spirit in man, but, according to Thomas, that which is loved is present in the one who loves, it is also necessary that through the Holy Ghost not only God may be present in the soul of man, but also man in God, as St. John announces (1 John 4:16,13): “and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him”.

## 2.2. On love in the Holy Ghost

*Caritas* is the work of the Holy Trinity, but in the greatest degree it represents the Holy Ghost. In charity the Holy Ghost as a person takes the names of Love and Gift. Charity is something unique in man. In the chapter on friendship, the characteristic features describing the Holy Ghost were listed. St Thomas divides charity into a natural love between people and a supernatural love, which is friendship with God. Thomas compared the characteristics of human

friendship and drew the conclusion that they are included in the supernatural charity. In supernatural friendship with God, the features of natural (human) friendship are present in an analogous way (Przanowski, 2018, p. 217).

Charity as an effect of the Holy Ghost can be characterised as:

1. Subjective – man, who receives everything freely from God, is able to love Him for God Himself, in the likeness of God who loves man also for man himself.
2. Benevolent – wanting good for man will be different from wanting good for God, for one cannot want the same for God, for He is perfect and needs no more good and perfection. Wanting good for God involves the breadth of friendship and wanting good for all who are associated with Him and belong to Him. The highest degree of God’s benevolence consists in granting such good that has a supernatural dimension (Sth, I, q. 21, a. 1 and 2).
3. Reciprocal – charity is characterised by reciprocity in its subjective relations and benevolence towards both God and man, with regard to ontological differences.
4. Participatory – man’s friendship with God requires participation in something commonly shared. What is common to man and God is God-given eternal happiness, initiated on earth in the form of grace.
5. Uniting – the Holy Ghost granting charity unites man with God in that love. The highest expression of earthly union with God is contemplation (SCG, IV, c. 22).
6. Free – charity is both the free act of man and God’s gift, making people free. *Caritas* is an infused, supernatural love linking man to God.
7. Active – the act of supernatural love provides the greatest incentive for action and activity. Charity as the mother of all virtues affects their acts.

<sup>10</sup> Appropriation is a way of showing the Divine Persons by the use of essential attributes.

<sup>11</sup> Some passages of Scripture may be quoted in confirmation of these words, e.g.: “It is the Spirit that gives life” (John 6:63), “I will make breath [Spirit] enter you so you may come to life” (Ezek 37:5).



8. Permanent – *caritas* as a virtue is a permanent, supernatural habit that can be lost through mortal sin.
9. Revealing – Thomas sees in the act of revelation the most important proof of God’s friendship towards man. The Holy Ghost as a friend reveals the greatest mysteries.
10. Sympathising – God shows sympathy and compassion towards man. On the part of man, this compassion makes man unite with God with regard to the appetible object.
11. Compatible – under the action of the Holy Ghost, man’s will is transformed into one that is compatible with the will of God. God’s will becomes man’s love.
12. Actualising – the Holy Ghost, who inspires charity, is also present in the soul of man. Charity causes the presence, the mutual abiding in each other of God and man.
13. Joyful and comforting – just as in friendships between people a friend is present when needed, in difficult situations he becomes a comforter. The joy of a friend’s presence is great. Similarly, in charity, God dwells in the soul of man and brings comfort and joy in adversity.
14. Broad – because of God’s friendship man is able to love others. Charity enables us to love God for God Himself, but also to love others, even our enemies.
15. Sacrificial – God gave his life in the sacrifice of the cross out of love for man. Because of charity, man may also be capable of spiritual sacrifices and even acts of martyrdom.

To sum up, one can say, according to the words of the Holy Scriptures, that “charity makes it possible to be friends with God and to transfer this friendship to other people. He who loves God discovers that he has been invited to the company of God’s friends. God’s love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who has been given to us” (Giertych, 2019, p. 31).

### 3. *Caritas* and the gift of wisdom

Love and wisdom are considered by Aquinas to be the most important in ordering the hierarchy of importance of human endowments. Love is first and most important when it comes to human actions and pursuits. Wisdom is the most important fruit of knowledge. Thomas concludes that wisdom is conditioned by love, which means that there is no wisdom without love. Wisdom thus transcends cognition and also refers to human action (Andrzejuk, 2012, p. 332).

As an intellectual, St. Thomas seeks the perspectives that open up opportunities for reason at the moment of Revelation (ibidem, p. 70). Charity enables an attitude rooted in reason and will towards the other person, whom it sees as a value.

#### 3.1. The relation of the gift of wisdom to the virtue of love

On a par with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the theological virtues are gifts of God, and they too refine the person, making them capable of acting in accordance with God’s will. In Scripture, the words “rest upon him ... the spirit of wisdom and understanding” allow us to understand that the gifts and virtues are given by divine inspiration, which implies a certain movement from outside (Torrell, 2003, p. 287). “For God loves nothing so much as the one who dwells with Wisdom” (Wis 7:14 and 27–28). In the gift of wisdom the virtue of love manifests itself in the highest degree and is the fruit of the gift. Saint Thomas did not immediately see the connection between the virtue of *caritas* and the gift of wisdom; he first examined love itself and its relationship to the object, then linked the gift of wisdom to it (Sth, II-II, q. 23, a. 1). At first, he linked wisdom only with reason and knowledge and then he combined them with faith. He based his considerations on the attribution of wisdom, reason and knowledge to the power of speculative cognition. After careful analysis, he changed his position, linking the virtue of love with the gift of wisdom. The reason he so decided was that wisdom, reason and knowledge belong to the category of speculative cognition. Therefore,

after deeper analysis, he discussed the gift of wisdom together with the virtue of love. Love precedes cognition, the gift of the Holy Ghost animates wisdom with a direct experience of God (Woroniecki, 2013, p. 235).

### 3.2. Reinforcing the gift of wisdom through love

Love in its highest degree is manifested in wisdom. The nature of God is itself love, wisdom and goodness – “the charity whereby formally we love our neighbor is a participation of Divine charity” (Sth II-II, q. 23, a. 2, ad. 1).

The gift of wisdom, like the other gifts, grows through love. It is intensified by the love of light in reason. This intensification of the gift of wisdom, given by love, has a beneficial effect on love itself, thus enabling it to accept more deeply the mystery of God hidden in the soul and consequently to unite more fully with God (Woroniecki, 2013, p. 235). St. Thomas proclaims the primacy of reason over the will, but at the same time sees the superiority of the will in apprehending the object of predilection. The dependence of the will on reason is not manifest in that the will always chooses the more perfect cognition; the tension of the will is often determined by the perfection and greater value of the object rather than the perfection of the cognition. The will has the capacity to overtake reason, to attract it, which is illustrated precisely by the relation of the virtue of love to the gift of wisdom. Woroniecki writes: “this pulling of reason upwards by an otherwise subordinate will nowhere appear more clearly” (ibidem, p. 236).

Love comes from the Holy Ghost who moves the human mind, but not in a passive and compelling way, but in accordance with the choice of the will. *Caritas* is not just an act, but a gift that gives freedom (Przanowski, 2018, p. 217). In the process of the soul loving the God who dwells in it, one can see what help the gift of wisdom gives to love. Love creates this help for itself in order to refine the power of reason. Love improves the intellect to

love and know God ever more deeply. The refining of reason is the possibility of a deeper penetration, a simple insight into truth. Intuitive insight is more perfect than complex analysis, but it is only available in a limited way. Woroniecki comments that there is nothing strange in the fact that, under the influence of love, the human soul desires to know God better in His infinite form (Woroniecki, 2013, p. 236). In this desire man can get help in the form of the gift of wisdom, which improves reason to obey God and makes man judge everything from God’s point of view. There is then a chance that a ripening towards contemplation will slowly begin to appear and that discursive reasoning will gradually begin to disappear. At the peak of the action of the gift of wisdom, the soul can reach mystical union. Reason will be reduced to a quiet, peaceful insight into God, and the soul will begin to experience His loving action. The gift of wisdom manifests to the highest degree that which is contained in the gifts of reason and knowledge, namely, affective cognition, in which the judgments of reason follow human affectivity, are the consequence of the will’s adherence to an object with which it is united by love. The deeper the union with Love caused by the gift of wisdom, the deeper the inner peace that radiates outwards as it grows (ibidem, p. 237).

From the culmination of the union of love and wisdom arises contemplation, which is the joint action of intellect and will. In contemplation, intellectual cognition and the judgment of wisdom meet. The contemplative life, although rooted in the intellect, begins with the will, because charity stimulates and activates contemplation (Sth, II-II, q. 180, a. 7, ad. 1). Analysing the union between love and wisdom, Thomas also emphasises peace, referring to the active life, which is the fruit of this union. With regard to the theoretical life, the fruit of the union of love and wisdom is precisely contemplation<sup>12</sup>. “Of all the activities of the virtues, the most pleasant is the contemplation of wisdom (...). Philosophy assigns the

<sup>12</sup> The matter of the active life is temporal things, to which human actions turn. The matter of the contemplative life, on the other hand, are the cognisable principles of things, at which the contemplative persists, Thomas Aquinas, *Kwestie dyskutowane o prawdzie*, vol. 1, transl. A. Aduszkiewicz, L. Kuczyński, J. Ruszczyński, Wydawnictwo Kęty, 1998, p. 526.

contemplation of wisdom admirable pleasures because of its purity and permanence<sup>13</sup>. The perfection of contemplation as the fruit of the union of love and wisdom consists in not only seeing God's truth but also loving it (Andrzejuk, 2012, p. 335).

## Conclusions

The statement that Saint Thomas's intellectualism is realised in love may be quite accurate, since for Thomas the summit and end of reflection was to know God's Love.

The fulfilment of man's rational life equates with the loving contemplation of God Himself and the relationship with Him. Man's love for God is a kind of friendship, based on man's union with God, through which God grants his eternal happiness and on which he builds this friendship (Sth, II-II, q. 23, a. 1, co). This does not mean that *caritas* cannot exist between human beings; it can, but under certain conditions. *Caritas* comes, as explained above, from *carus* (dear, precious, more excellent), so that there arises a necessity of liking the right object, because if the object is inappropriate, in the sense that it does not arouse admiration, true love will not exist. *Caritas* is characterised by different degrees of intensity. St. Thomas recognizes that *caritas* adds some perfection to love in the general sense because of the great value of the object of love. The value of the object of love implies a certain particularity, but not a uniqueness. Man need not have only one object to which this love applies (Andrzejuk, 2012, p. 314).

Love strengthens all the virtues and thus ignites itself. The gift of wisdom is intensified by love (light) in reason. The reinforcement of love by wisdom, the interaction of the virtue of love with the gift of wisdom, enables man to know God ever more deeply and to unite ever more closely with Him. Becoming like God by seeking wisdom directly contributes to union with God through love (Przanowski, 2015, p. 35). It is difficult for man to mature in love due to his weakness resulting from self-love. However,

despite these obstacles, he is able to love God for Him alone, thanks to charity, which is a supernatural friendship with God. Charity also fulfils all the conditions of natural (human) friendship. *Caritas* is an infused virtue and has two objects of predilection: God and man. It is important to emphasise that *caritas* directed towards man can only exist for God's sake and includes all people, because God has loved everyone. In *caritas*, therefore, there is room for what is not found in friendship, the love for enemies (Sth, II-II, q. 23, a. 1, co). For Thomas, the supernatural character of man's love for God remains important. Love exalts man in a special way, it turns a servant into a friend, because the gift of love surpasses all gifts. For all the other gifts can be possessed without love and the participation of the Holy Ghost, but if they are to be accompanied by love, then the Holy Ghost is absolutely necessary. The Apostle in the Epistle to the Romans (Rom 5:5) says: "the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Torrell, 2003, p. 502). Man's charity for God is rooted in the Trinity, in which the Holy Ghost is Person, Love and Gift. Charity unites the created being (man) with the Creator so that as friends they share life together (Turner, 2017, p. 198). In the intellect (*intellectus*) the origin of the rational creature was imprinted the origin of the Son from the Father, and in the will (*voluntas*) the origin of the Spirit through the Son from the Father. We are sons of "all God." The Father is our origin, through the Son we were created, and the Holy Ghost animates and transforms us (Gałuszka, 2021, p. 76).

## Abbreviations

- Rom – Letter to the Romans
- Wis – Book of Wisdom
- Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
- 1 John – First Letter of St John the Apostle
- John – Gospel according to St John
- Sth – *Summa theologiae*
- SCG – *Summa contra gentiles*

13 Purity is understood as pleasure caused by immaterial things, permanence refers to those which come from immutable things, A. Andrzejuk, *Metafizyka obecności: wstęp do teorii relacji osobowych*, Wydawnictwo UKSW, Warsaw 2012, p. 314.

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