



# LIGHT & LIFE

VOICE OF THE ROSARY CENTER & CONFRATERNITY

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Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P., *Director* May-Jun 2023, Vol 76, No 3 Western Dominican Province

### Can Two Hearts Beat as One?

I remember one time a young woman asked me how old I was, and when I replied, she exclaimed, "Oh, how lucky! You grew up in the '80s!" I was a little taken aback. She was referring to the music I grew up with as a regular American child in that bygone era. I guess she *really* loved music from the '80s. Of course, we know the famous Latin saying, *De gustibus non disputandum est*, meaning more literally, "Regarding tastes, there can be no disputes," but rendered usually as "There is no arguing with taste" or "There is no accounting for taste." Growing up, I guess I *did* like a lot of the music I heard. One current tv series based in the period of my childhood has exposed many younger Americans to that music catalog, and led to a bit of a musical revival and reconsideration, especially in comparison to the darker "Grunge" era that followed in the 1990s.

But my word, there was also some *terrible* schlock. It's perfectly human to tend to forget the bad music and only focus on the good stuff. That's the way music becomes "timeless." Nobody remembers 90% of the music from *any* era. There were even more than the handful of Classical composers I tend to listen to on the radio station when I drive.

One thing that a lot of secular music with lyrics seems to express, regardless of the era, is the theme of "two hearts beating as one." This speaks to a human desire to seek another and be so compatible *with* the other, that it truly *does* feel as if there were "two hearts beating as one," that is, two people who think and act alike, perfectly in tune with each other. The dream is always to find *that* special someone, the "soulmate," and live happily ever after, as sometimes you see some older married couple still holding hands, and still very much in love.

Of course, people don't tend to write songs about all the hard work in the middle, from the wedding to the grave, that marriage entails, that even those sweet old couples had to go through in reaching that point that so many people are so envious of. We just didn't see that hard work, for the most part.

And that very human desire, as poetic or as trite as it may sound to us, is ingrained in us. The bitter man who rejects that kind of closeness and intimacy is often just

lashing out from a place of pain for *not* having that intimacy. Scripture could very well be summarized as a love story between God and His people, where in the honeymoon stage, He made man in His image, male and female He created them, and He saw some of His own goodness in man, and so He was pleased and declared it good. But as close as God was to Adam, this was not enough. By his human nature, Adam longed for someone more like himself to likewise share his joy, and so God created Eve. Genesis implies that their relationship with God before the Fall was very close. God would even walk with them



in the Garden (see Genesis 3). And then, sin ruptured both relationships, between the Man and the Woman, and between them and God. Discord entered Paradise, and the Man and the Woman felt shame from their now-sin wounded nature. Genesis 3:8 speaks of God still *looking* for them, not because He "lost" them, but because He knew that they were lost without Him. The phrase there is that He looked for them "in the breezy time of the day," literally, "the wind of the day," which probably meant sunset. It truly *was* the sunset, not in the sense of the sunset years of a couple in love, but the sunset of their relationship as it was meant to be.

And then God does something that is puzzling to many, but that I find wonderful: He asks Adam, "Where are you?"

God knows perfectly well where Adam is. When God asks you a question in Scripture, it's not for Him to gain knowledge, but it's often to make the person *being asked*

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# THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

## Do I Know You?

By Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.

When I was in college... way, way back in the day... I had two very good friends. We'll call them "Jim" and "Beth," because that's what their names were. It so happened that "Jim" and "Beth" were both close friends of mine. And as often happens in groups of close friends, two of the friends fall in love, and you have got couple. Well, no, they didn't just "fall" in love. They *crashed* in love like a high-speed train wreck, BAM! It was hard to get any physical separation between the two – they were *always* close together, holding hands, smooching, calling each other by little lovey-dovey names, the whole nine yards. And not only *that*, but it got to the point where it was hard to hold a conversation with him...her... them... IT, whatever "they" became. You might start talking to one, then the *other* one would answer and then the *other* one would complete the other's thought or sentence, and then *back* again, like a tennis game. Of course, by this point, I'm out of the conversation, and they've gone off on their own mental Love Boat cruise. The two were THAT close. I am sure you know the types. It got so we started calling both of them by one singular name: "JimBeth." No hyphen, just one name: "JimBeth." Because, by all appearances, we were dealing with ONE person. Now, depending on your point of view, this was: A) Romantic. B) Annoying. or C)... frightening. Oftentimes, it was all three at once.

In some ways, our own Catholic theology reflects this. The theologians of old liked to use a term called "co-naturality," and they would use the example of a couple in love, or two very good friends – that is, two people who *know* each other in and out, who know everything about the other, almost as if by instinct. It is something truly incredible to behold.

We say that Jesus Christ is the God-man, and we usually simply repeat it in the Creed, without truly thinking about it. Jesus Christ IS fully God AND fully man. In Jesus, we are not dealing with two different people who only *seem* to be very close. We are dealing with Jesus Christ, who is one and *only* one person of the Trinity, but of the same One God. It is the truest type of co-naturality, where all three persons of the Trinity share the same divine nature and essence. It is little wonder, that with the creeping darkness drawing ever closer upon the band of the Apostles at the Last Supper, Philip asks Our Lord Jesus for a favor, to show them the Father (see John 14). Our Lord instructs Philip, "...I have been with you all this time, and still you do not know Me? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I say to you, I do not speak on My own. Instead, it is the Father dwelling in Me, performing His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me—or at least believe on account of the works themselves." (John 14:9)

To us moderns with the benefit of the Creed, it is perfectly understandable here when our Lord tells the Apostles that He and the Father are one, and that if they see *Him*, then they also see the Father. But to a Jew at that time, to see the Father, the see God in the pure essence of God would be utterly dangerous. Did not God tell Moses that "No one can see me face-to-face and live?" If Philip thought that our Lord could show him the Father, and he could still live, then he would have accomplished something no one else had since the days of Moses. But more than that, he would have done what each of us want, from our very core, and for what we were made: to see God, to see the Father. Jesus is the way *to* God, *through* God, in Himself. By His human nature, co-natural with His divinity, He is, as St. Paul tells us, "the icon of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (see Colossians 1:15) But this is not where Our Lord Jesus Christ wants it all to stop. This is where He wants it all to *begin*.

He seeks another kind of co-naturality with us, one that would put to shame the fieriest of romances. He seeks to be so close to us, that we know *Him* so well (for He already knows us better than we know ourselves), that we too are one, if you will, two hearts beating so closely in unison that no one could tell that there were two hearts, in actuality. This is reflected in much sacred artwork, that depicts the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts, side by side.

At the Annunciation, while God created Mary and her human nature, still, Jesus Christ at the moment of His incarnation drew His human nature from her – flesh of her flesh. There was an incredible closeness there, but this closeness in nature is nothing compared to that closeness of hearts and mind that the Blessed Virgin Mary shared with her Son. At one point when He was teaching, a woman in the crowd cried out in praise, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and blessed are the breasts that nursed You!" But He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." (Luke 11:27b-28)

In the same way that we can't just say "Love is love" (since Greek and Scripture give us three kinds of love for man: *agape*, *philia*, and *eros*), neither can we just say that "Knowledge is knowledge." This is where we get in trouble, when we can't make distinctions, because of a certain lack of vocabulary in our English language for these terms. Latin, for example, uses "scire" and "cognoscere," while Spanish uses "saber" and "conocer." The best way to teach these words to English-speaking students is that "scire" or "saber" is more to know, as in a fact of science, while "cognoscere" or "conocer" is more like "to be familiar with," or "come to know," as we come to know a place or person, not just as a list of data or facts, but through experience and some kind of intimacy. "Cognoscere" has at its root "gnosis" from the Greek, which is a kind of knowledge that goes beyond merely factual, analytical,

or deductive to an instinctive and deeper knowledge. Historians may come upon countless documents that tell us a lot about George Washington, and they may actually have many more facts about George Washington than even his wife could ever possibly know, but I am certain that not one of them “knew” ol’ George in this sense of *gnosis* as well as Martha Washington did.

St. Thomas Aquinas, in one article of his *Summa Theologiae*, deals with these different kinds of knowledge in an article on the gift of the Holy Spirit of Wisdom, saying, namely:

Wisdom denotes a certain rectitude of judgment according to the Eternal Law. Now rectitude of judgment is twofold: first, on account of perfect use of reason, secondly, on account of a certain connaturality with the matter about which one has to judge. Thus, about matters of chastity, a man after inquiring with his reason forms a right judgment, if he has learnt the science of morals, while he who has the habit of chastity judges of such matters by a kind of connaturality.

Accordingly it belongs to the wisdom that is an intellectual virtue to pronounce right judgment about Divine things after reason has made its inquiry, but it belongs to wisdom as a gift of the Holy Ghost to judge aright about them on account of connaturality with them: thus Dionysius says (Div. Nom. ii) that “Hierotheus is perfect in Divine things, for he not only learns, but is patient of, Divine things.”

Now this sympathy or connaturality for Divine things is the result of charity, which unites us to God, according to 1 Corinthians 6:17: “He who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.” Consequently wisdom which is a gift, has its cause in the will, which cause is charity, but it has its essence in the intellect, whose act is to judge aright, as stated above (I-II:14:1). *Summa Theologiae*, II-II:45:2

This is a lot to take in at once, but St. Thomas Aquinas is dealing with all kinds of knowledge here, even when dealing with chastity, in some sense the “‘to know’ in the Biblical sense,” which often in the Old Testament referred to having carnal relations with someone, since all kinds of “to know” have the same root in Hebrew, as we see in the King James translation of Genesis 4:1, “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived.”

In short, he says that one can know all the factual details and come to know through human reason, for example, that chastity is a good virtue to have. Even pagan or unbelieving philosophers and scientists would say through reason that chastity is a good, at least as in so far as it prevents one from becoming an addict or slave to bodily appetites, but instead, masters these appetites, and thus him or herself, as is better able to dedicate him or herself to science, for example. Christians would add that this also comes to us as Christians by a divine intimacy and knowledge of God that comes from wisdom through charity, that is, love. We cannot come to *truly* know love unless we love and are loved. We cannot come to love

God unless we love God and are loved by God. Which, fortunately for us, as St. John says, “We love because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) Our love may start off a bit shallow or awkward, but it can only grow deeper through experience and a conscious seeking out of the other. True love or charity tells us that the deepest love goes far beyond a simple carnal knowledge of the other, thus, chastity keeps love, *all* the kinds of love, in right order.

Thus, as Evagrius the desert monk famously once said, “If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you pray truly, you are a theologian.” Now, in our day and age, we would say that one who has obtained a Master’s or Doctorate in Theology, for example, is a theologian, but this would not necessarily be someone who *knows* God, except superficially, that is, without a *personal* knowledge of God, by the way of our previous example of the historian and Martha Washington knowing George Washington.

For prayer is a lifting up of the heart to God, a kind of communication that is hard to describe, since it is not so much by words, as by an intimate spiritual experience. If you need to pour out your heart to God and tell Him everything that happened, that is perfectly fine. But that is not what makes prayer, in itself. Couples who share a kind of co-naturality do not need a lot of words. They know each other so well that to be together in silence *is* communication. Note also that they don’t both have to be perfectly “aligned” with the other to have this communication, this intimacy. One can be strong for the other when the other is weak or unable. And in this love story, it is *God* who is our strength when we are weak. Yes, we *do* need to know certain factual or reasonable things about God – this is why we have a Creed, and why we repeat it so much, but these are meant to be the first steps for us to come to a deeper knowledge and love of God. The Church tells us, in effect, “Here is *what* God is. Now, we want you to know *who* He is.”

Many Catholics would say that St. Thomas Aquinas is one of the greatest theologians of Holy Mother Church because of his encyclopedic knowledge, his keen deductive powers, and his ability to reason. But any true Dominican would add, “No, he is one of the greatest theologians because he *also* had a deep, intimate knowledge of God that came through a profound life of faith and prayer.” St. Thomas Aquinas did not merely write academic tracts, but also composed hauntingly beautiful love poems, which were reflections of his intimate knowledge of God. You may be familiar with a couple of these, such as the *O Salutaris Hostia* or the *Tantum Ergo*.

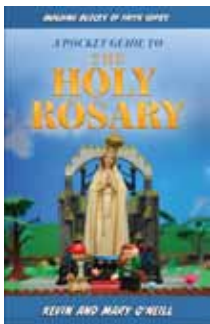
In this way, I would dare to say that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the First and Greatest Theologian. When the shepherds in the Gospel of Luke spread the news of the Birth of Christ and the message of the angels about Him, they are reporting factual knowledge of events that happened. “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19) Even when she didn’t understand exactly what was happening at the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, with her Son telling her, “Did you not know that I had to be in my Father’s

house?" (Luke 2:49), she "treasured all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51b). She did not want to *simply* know what happened, but to come to understand deeply and profoundly in her heart the will and knowledge of God. She does not just want to report to St. Luke as he wrote his gospel *what* happened, she wants the reader to come to a deeper, experiential knowledge of her Son, when she says, "Do whatever He tells you." She wants *you* to ponder these things of God in *your* heart, and to treasure them there likewise.

I know that we Dominicans have a bit of a reputation of being academic "eggheads," but we are also the same Order that promotes the very simple yet profound meditation that comes from praying the Rosary and meditating upon its Mysteries, because we want you to come to know and understand and love God more, pondering and treasuring these things of God in your heart, as the Blessed Virgin Mary did, and as St. Thomas Aquinas did.

So my brothers and sisters, when you cast your eyes upon the Sacred Heart, you might see a heart wounded by man, but you also see a heart that invites you in, to begin to experience a kind of personal and spiritual intimacy and wisdom that goes beyond our capacity to understand in this poor world of shadows. When you look upon the Immaculate Heart, you see a heart likewise wounded by all that man would do to her Son, a heart that lets us know that yes, there will be pain and sorrow in this life, but through the difficulties, there will be an encounter with the deepest love of her Son. These are two hearts that joyfully beat as one, but the beautiful part about this is that there can be an *infinite* number of hearts beating in holy harmony. The two hearts are not there to gloat over us, but to call us to join them. Perhaps none of us can be as finely tuned as the Blessed Virgin Mary is to God, but God did not make you to be anyone else but the best *you*, and the best you is that you who is as full of grace, that is, as filled and infused with God, as possible. ■

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***(Can Two Hearts Beat as One? Continued from page 1)***  
 the question to come to a realization. I imagine it's much like our parents asking us, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" Oh, they knew exactly what we were doing. In a similar manner, God wants Adam to realize just what he had done.

When we sin, we are in a way breaking that same harmony, that same intimacy. The call to repentance and conversion begins with God asking us, "Where are you?" much in the way He asked Adam, as if to say, "Where are you? Why is there a rupture between us? Come back, and let us set things aright."

And here is where we arrive at the wonder of the Immaculate Heart. It is little wonder that the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus are so often depicted together. *Those two* are truly the "two hearts that beat as one." Her will is to do the will of her Son. The Son's will is to do the will of the Father. Through His human nature, then, Jesus Christ re-establishes that harmony and spiritual intimacy between the Woman, Man, and God.

Our Lord teaches us in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8) She is most blessed, because she is most pure, and she is most pure, because she seeks the will of God above all things, and the end for us of the will of God is to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and our neighbor as ourself.

But we ignore one simple fact, and this I believe, although you are free to disagree with me, that it still takes hard work in this life, even for the Blessed Virgin Mary, to keep that relationship strong with God. Look at all the hard work it took from God's perspective – we see it on the Cross every day.

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