



# Making Space for God

A Thomistic Model of Interior Transformation

# Overview of Precis

**Goal:** To offer an account of what is given in grace and of how those gifts become operative in our lives.

- Key Moves:**
1. Describing the Christian Difference
  2. The Hypothesis of “Infused” Virtues: Already Present, Barely Felt
  3. Allowing Infused Virtue to Become Operative in Our Lives



## The Christian Difference

### Biblical Exemplars vs. Human Excellence:

- Virtue as conceived in the Aristotelian tradition orders us to a *this worldly* flourishing, one which can be pursued through our own efforts.
- Christ calls us to a higher form of flourishing, one that:
  - Orders us a good that we cannot fully grasp
  - Requires the Holy Spirit's help to pursue
  - Seems to require a more than human strength


Aquinas sees the latter flourishing as a transformation of the former...but it's not the case that Aristotelian virtues simply *become* Christian.

Aquinas, in keeping with a long tradition of Christian thinkers both before and after him, thinks the virtues that order us to the acts that exhibit the fulness of our Christian vocation are given along with grace in baptism.

- If life in Christ is available to all who are called, this seems like it should be correct
- But if this is correct, why don't those virtues seem to be operative *as virtues* in most of us?
  - Why, e.g. do we typically not feel an *inclination* to do such acts, even if we recognize that they are good to do?

A New Life that  
is *Already There*?





## Allowing Infused Virtue to Surface

Matthew 22:1-14 and the need to  
“put on” Christ

Aquinas: “putting on Christ” is a process (Rom 13)

- It begins in baptism
- Is continued through the “putting on” of infused virtue
- Culminates in becoming Christlike

We “put on” the virtues given in grace by trying to do the things those virtues, when fully felt, actively incline us to do:

- “put on” faith by memorizing scripture
- “put on” infused temperance by fasting
- “put on” infused justice through acts of poverty

Aquinas describes “putting on” the virtues given in grace as necessary to **both** avoiding sin **and** allowing infused virtue to become manifest in us.