



If there is one thing that defines human beings, it is their ability to love. But not just any love—love that, when disordered, can lead us to confusion and unhappiness. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches us that love is not merely a feeling but a natural inclination toward the good. However, for this love to be truly fruitful and lead us to fulfillment, it must be properly ordered. This principle, which the Angelic Doctor called **Ordo Amoris**, is the order of love.

But what does this concept really mean? How can it help us live a fuller and holier life today? In this article, we will explore the origin, theological depth, and practical application of *Ordo Amoris* in our time.

## 1. What Is the Ordo Amoris?

The term *Ordo Amoris* translates as “order of love.” For St. Thomas, love is not simply an emotional impulse but an act of the will that must be rightly directed. In other words, it is not enough to love—we must love what is truly worthy of love and in the proper degree.

This principle is based on the biblical teaching that love must have a correct order:

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39)*

God must be loved above all things because He is the Supreme Good. Then, love must extend to others and to ourselves, but always in this hierarchical order. When love is disordered, the soul becomes disoriented, seeking happiness in lesser goods and ending up dissatisfied.

## 2. The Origin of the Ordo Amoris in the Philosophy and Theology of St. Thomas

St. Thomas Aquinas did not invent the concept of *Ordo Amoris* but refined and developed it based on the teachings of St. Augustine, who wrote:



“*The order of love consists in loving things in the measure that they should be loved.*” (De Civitate Dei, XV, 22)

St. Augustine already saw that disorder in love was the root of all human sins and sufferings. When we love temporal goods too much and love God too little, we fall into idolatry and selfishness.

Thomas Aquinas, influenced by Aristotle and Christian tradition, systematized this idea and incorporated it into his vision of natural law and morality. For him, *Ordo Amoris* reflects the very order of the universe, where each thing has its place and purpose. Christian morality, therefore, consists in conforming our love to this objective order.

### 3. How Can We Apply the Ordo Amoris in Our Lives?

In daily life, *Ordo Amoris* helps us make just decisions and avoid extremes that lead us away from true good. Let's consider some examples:

#### a) Loving God Above All Things

In a society that constantly invites us to place our hopes in money, power, or pleasure, *Ordo Amoris* reminds us that **God must be the center of our lives**. This does not mean despising material things but using them according to their purpose and without making them our ultimate goal.

Example: A Christian who sacrifices his faith for career success disorders his love because he places a lesser good (work) above the supreme good (God).

#### b) Loving Others and Oneself in Proper Measure

Love of neighbor is essential, but it must be well-ordered. Loving does not mean always pleasing others or allowing abuse. Nor does it mean selfishness or neglecting the common good for personal interests.

Example: A father who works hard to provide a better life for his family but does not neglect his time with them practices *Ordo Amoris*. On the other hand, if he becomes obsessed with wealth and neglects his family's spiritual needs, he is loving in a disordered way.



### c) The Proper Use of Material Goods

Material goods are good in themselves, but when they become the center of our lives, we fall into greed or idolatry. *Ordo Amoris* teaches us to use them with moderation and generosity.

Example: A businessman who uses his wealth to help those in need demonstrates ordered love. In contrast, someone who hoards wealth without concern for others has misdirected his love toward lesser goods.

## 4. What Happens When Love Is Disordered?

Disordered love is the root of many evils in the world. When we love pleasure more than virtue, money more than human dignity, or our own opinions more than truth, conflicts, injustices, and divisions arise.

St. Thomas explains that the capital sins are, at their core, manifestations of disordered love:

- **Pride:** loving oneself above God.
- **Greed:** loving money more than one should.
- **Lust:** loving sexual pleasure outside the order of marital love.
- **Wrath:** loving personal justice more than patience and mercy.

When love is rightly ordered, life finds harmony. It is like a symphony where each instrument plays its part at the right moment.

## 5. A Call to Conversion: Restoring the Ordo Amoris

In times of moral confusion and crisis of values, *Ordo Amoris* is a sure compass to return to God and true happiness. How can we restore this order in our lives?

1. **Prayer and the sacraments:** Only God can reorder our hearts. The Eucharist and confession are essential.
2. **Examination of conscience:** Daily reflection on whether we are loving in the right order.
3. **Spiritual formation:** Reading Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church.
4. **Works of charity:** Loving in action, helping others without falling into empty activism.

St. John of the Cross said:



| *“In the evening of life, we will be judged on love.”*

But not just any love—it must be a well-ordered love. May the Lord grant us the grace to love in the order He has established so that we may live in peace in this life and enjoy eternal happiness.

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May this article not be just a reflection but a starting point for reordering our priorities and living according to God’s plan. **Because only when love is ordered does life make sense.**