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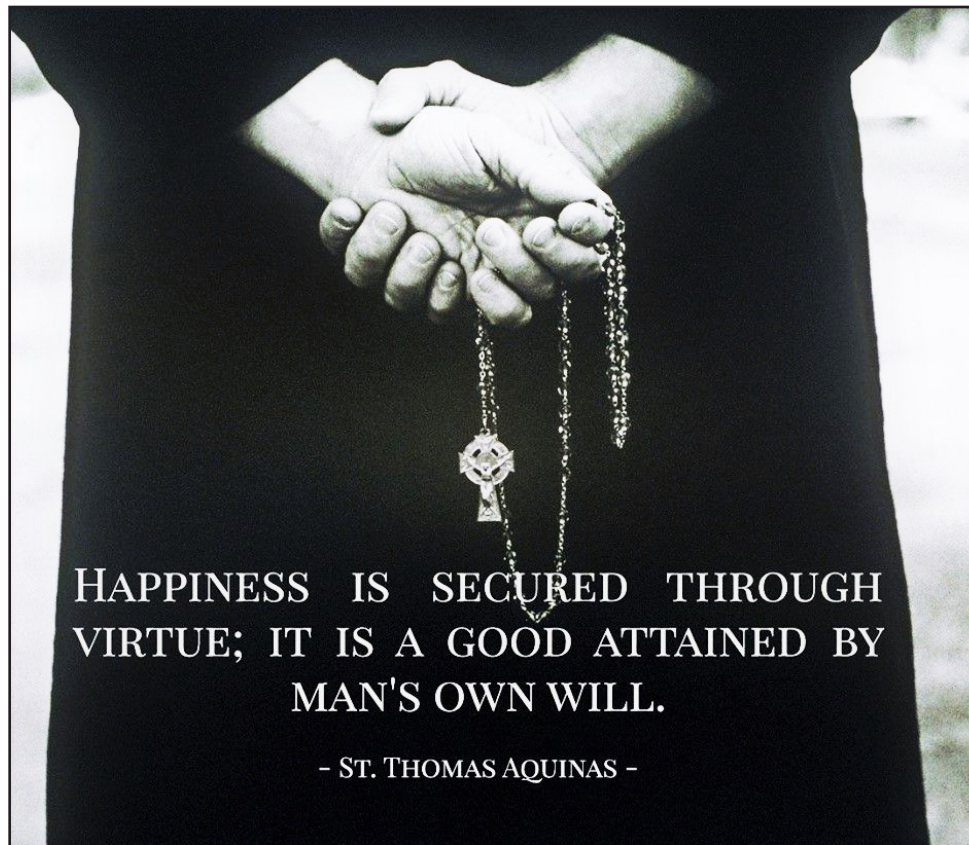
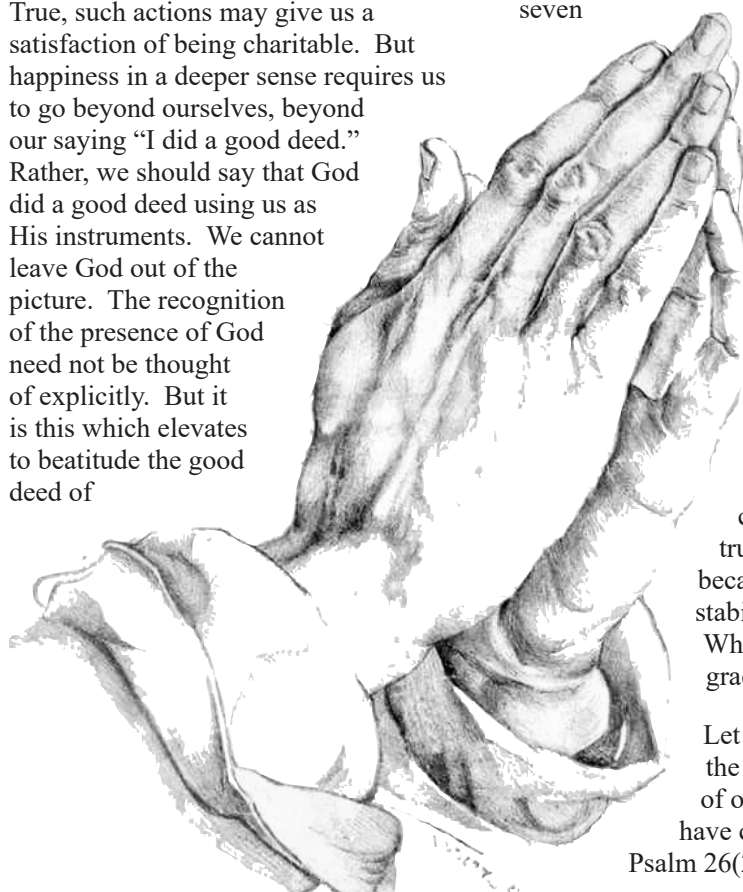
spirits are not from heaven. "The gods of the nations are demons. But the Lord made the heavens."⁴

We need to fulfill our purpose in life. How do we discover what it is? When we ask this question we usually think firstly on a mundane level: What should I be doing with my life in terms of career, marriage, my plans for the future, things I wish to accomplish? These are important things and it helps to pray to God for guidance.

But there is an overarching spiritual purpose which applies to everyone and which we learn in the answer to the catechism question: why did God make us? The answer to this question we have committed to memory: to know, love, and serve God in this world and to be happy with Him in the world to come. We should be ever mindful of this because one who commits his heart to this will never have cause to despair, even in bad circumstances. God does not reveal to us at once a detailed plan for our life. But He does illuminate the next step in our path, expecting us to continually pray for guidance. We may make mistakes, commit sins and depart from the true path. But He is always there to lead us back. We can be confident in that He will not forsake us. Our happiness is founded upon confidence and trust in Jesus. The Divine Mercy prayer reminds us of this.

We are not fully happy in this life. Only God is perfectly happy in His being. We can participate in that happiness of God by becoming more like Him. This is the path of beatitude, which is the flourishing of the soul.

Happiness is achieved by perfection, which does not mean being flawless. Rather it is a process of completion of fulfilling a purpose. Happiness requires action on our part which leads to beatitude. It may seem counterintuitive, but this action is not simply the practice of acting generously or with kindness. True, such actions may give us a satisfaction of being charitable. But happiness in a deeper sense requires us to go beyond ourselves, beyond our saying "I did a good deed." Rather, we should say that God did a good deed using us as His instruments. We cannot leave God out of the picture. The recognition of the presence of God need not be thought of explicitly. But it is this which elevates to beatitude the good deed of



HAPPINESS IS SECURED THROUGH VIRTUE; IT IS A GOOD ATTAINED BY MAN'S OWN WILL.

- ST. THOMAS AQUINAS -

natural benevolence, which even pagans can display.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the action leading to happiness is to be found in contemplation.⁵ We are so wrapped up today in busyness that we think that action must be physical.⁶ As noted by Aquinas, the highest act of the human person is contemplation, particularly contemplation of God.

Contemplation is not merely an act of discursive thought or a rational investigation of theological doctrines. Rather it is an intuitive knowing or seeing. And this is the basis for eternal life.⁷ It is a supernatural gift which must be petitioned of God and a grace to be asked for out of love. Love precedes contemplation.

There are impediments which render such love difficult or impossible. These impediments we all know as the seven deadly sins: pride, envy, greed, anger, sloth, lust and gluttony. These are the doorways to sin.

But perhaps the worst impediment to happiness is fear, or anxiety. There is much to make us fearful if one only looks at the world. One cannot place one's trust in worldly things because there is no stability in the world. What is needed is the grace of contemplation.

Let the recognition of the Giver of the gift of our life inspire us to have confidence in God.

Psalm 26(27) tells us where to

place our trust:

The LORD is my light and my salvation, of whom shall I fear.

The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom shall I be afraid.

One thing I ask of the LORD; this I seek:

To dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life and contemplate His temple.

Jesus also spoke about trust. He said to His disciples:

Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me.⁸

Trust in God eliminates fear and this allows our soul to flourish in the contemplation of God – our ultimate happiness.

But for those who are so bound to the world that they cannot or will not trust in God, fear can erupt into hate.⁹ Perhaps the worst possible sin is hate. It is the closest thing to the demonic. Unlike anger, it is not by itself the desire to cause pain to another person. Rather, it is the desire that someone or something cease to exist.¹⁰ It is the most vicious attack on God's creation and on being itself. We see it everywhere today.

Why do people hate? Hatred is typically caused by self interest and fear, especially fear of loss. We want the thing we fear to go away. And what does modern man fear? It is the loss of absolute autonomy. It is the sin which goes back to the Garden of Eden with the serpent dripping its poison into the hearts and minds of men. The devil whispers to us: You shall be as gods, deciding for yourselves what is good and what is evil. You will be the measure of all things. God's laws, which are for our protection, are to be seen as barriers to satisfying our earthly desires.

Indeed in modern secularist society

individuals are seen as bundles of emotions and desires to be exploited by consumerism, envy of those with greater possessions, propaganda inciting resentment towards political and social targets, desire for power, freedom to do anything, say anything, experience anything, or go anywhere. Even natural law, which is reason applied to the nature of man and recognition of an external objective reality, is repudiated. Such mind boggling idiocies as transgenderism and same sex marriage are touted as constitutional and human rights enforced by law. Religion, especially Christianity and the Catholic Church, is hated as the enemy of the people. Religion gives us rules to guide men to happiness. But because they are rules not made by men they are hated as well as the happiness to which they are directed. Since the natural law is a part of man, the hatred of modern secularist man turns back upon itself into depression, self hatred and a desire for extinction.¹¹ It is a collective madness which only the grace of contemplation can cure, but which cannot easily penetrate the constant distraction in which we are immersed from childhood.¹²

One way to break through to those who have at least some openness to

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