

It would be foolish to pay more attention to the symbol of the Eucharist than the reality itself. But we can realize ever more deeply that the life-giving food symbolized by the bread and wine points to the mysterious reality of the life-giving sacrament of the Bread of Life:

I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone shall eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and as I live because of the Father, so he who eats me, he also shall live because of me (*John 6:51-58*).

—Arthur Bernardin, O.P.

ONLY THIS AND NOTHING MORE

*Once upon a midnight dreary,
while I pondered weak and weary,
over many a quaint and curious volume
of forgotten lore,
while I nodded nearly napping,
suddenly there came a tapping,
as of someone gently rapping,
rapping at my chamber door.
" 'Tis some visitor I muttered,
. . . only this and nothing more."*

PROBING THE THINGS that make men happy, St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa of Theology* reminds me of a poetic picture by Poe. The likeness revolves around a vivid image used by both although in different ways. Pondering the riddle of happiness, each artist employs the concept of a "visitor": Poe, directly and by name in his morbid poem, "The Raven"; St. Thomas, deftly hinting in his animated question, "Concerning the Things in Which Man's Happiness Can Consist."

Poe's visitor is a chilling creature, a bleak, black, ominous bird. Perched on a bust of the Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom and learning, it listens to a host of questions posed for solution. To each inquiry its answer is the same: "Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'"

In his discussion of happiness, St. Thomas also talks with a "visitor," or to be exact with seven of them: wealth, honor, fame, power, body-goods, pleasure, and last on the list, goods of the soul. "Can you bring a man perfect happiness?"; each guest is asked the same question. One by one, like the Raven they reply, "Nevermore!"

Every man wants to be happy; to want to be sad is insane. St. Augustine called happiness "the state of life made perfect by the collection of all good things"; in what does it consist? This is a problem man must ponder, a riddle he must solve, a question he must ask—and answer.

Perhaps *wealth* is the key? Many people seem to think so. Few things are sought after with greater diligence. For more than a few, whatever the theoretical ideal, riches provide the practical goal and with a magnetic force that defies description.

Food, drink, clothes, a home and car—these are all natural things and rightly desired by man as a kind of remedy for his human needs. Having them in a certain measure, he is satisfied—for a while. Then there is money, the artificial aid made by man for the convenience of exchange, and as a handy measure for things saleable. Never to be confused with something evil, these are good things; they are God-given; their abuse alone is bad.

Not all riches are the same; there are two distinct kinds: artificial, i.e., a dollar bill, and natural, e.g., a very dry Martini. Neither is something sought for itself but each for the sake of another; the money for the sake of the drink; the cocktail for the well being of the drinker. Natural riches are needed "only in a certain measure." This is an evident fact. Not even the movieland mogul wants an unending feast of exotic food, a multi-gallon goblet, or a continuous caravan of Cadillacs. Somewhere along the track of natural riches there is a flashing red stop sign. Man's engineer, his will, must heed it and halt. Only for money can he have the green light of unlimited desire, for here, concern can slip into craving and through the wiles of uncurbed concupiscence, an incautious man can be made a miser.

Wealth is a good thing—but it is not the best. As the object of perfect happiness it is grossly insufficient. Riches a man may have, but only for a while and although a million dollar bank book might do much to

make him happy, unhappily his fortune is not forever; sooner or later it too will pass away. Even while it is had it cannot bring perfect satisfaction. On the contrary; the more one possesses riches, the more does he realize their insufficiency. Remember unhappy King Midas! Everything he touched turned to gold . . . and a sadder man never lived.

But wealth need not be shadowed by gloom. Properly used it can be a short-cut to greatness. The rich man needs only to pause and ponder a single thought: "Why? Why am I rich? Could it be the sole reason riches have fallen into my hands is that through my wealth I might learn the joy that comes from giving?" A trite thought? Hardly! For the rich man it is not only useful but vital, for he has been warned: "The Gate of Heaven is hard to enter . . . a camel passes easier through a needle's eye." Rich man! Remember the poor!

There is security in wealth; there is also danger—the danger of lost control. When the dollar becomes master its value is lost and its keeper led straightway into temptation. Misused or abused, wealth is a menace, a wanton temptress like the siren Lorelei, luring her prey to the rocks of eternal destruction. Lazarus went to Heaven; and the rich man . . . to Hell.

If a ranch type home in Suburbia will help a man to live a better life, if his needs and means allow it, then without delay he should buy the house and fully enjoy the happiness it can bring. But let him remember, like all riches his new abode is merely a means for better living and not the end all of life. Like every good visitor, sooner or later it too will pass away, bearing witness to a fact he should have suspected: "Perfect happiness does not consist in riches!" But if not wealth, then what?

Every good Greek had his household gods. Carved in stone or painted on canvas, Zeus, Athena, Apollo, these three and a myriad more enhanced the decor of his home. The deities were superhuman, powerful and demanding. "Honor us," said the gods to the Greek, "or you'll be sorry." Wise man that he was, honor them he did, and daily.

Honor. What is the meaning of this familiar word? Before answering this question we must ask another more basic still. Granted the existence of honor, in whom is it to be found? Is it in the person who is honored, or is it in him who honors? Was it in the wise old Greek, or was it in his household gods? "In the Greek," Aristotle would answer and with this judgment St. Thomas would agree. Unlike happiness (which is in the happy man), honor is in him who honors and not in the honored person or place or thing.

Precisely stated, honor is this: a sign or attestation of excellence *in* the person honoring, *of* the person, place or thing honored. My honor for my parents, for instance, is in me, not in them. Your honor as a Catholic for the Vatican is in you, not in Italy. The Hindu's honor for his sacred cow is in the man, not the animal. Bovines might give milk; they will never give honor.

That which is given to a man, a place or a thing because of some evident excellence: this is the meaning of honor. Now in man, his excellence is proportionate to his happiness, that is to his perfect good. Thus while honor can result from happiness, happiness can never consist in honor.

Third among the goods of fortune below man suggesting itself as the happiness-giver, stands *fame* or *glory*. Like honor before it, fame too will be found deficient; it has never brought perfect happiness to any man or woman and it never will. There are many interesting witnesses to the truth; one is especially a propos.

Fifty years ago Mark Twain wrote a book on Christian Science; his accuracy of description is rare:

It is a sovereignty more absolute than the Roman Papacy or the Russian Czarship. It has not a single power, not a shred of authority, legislative or executive, which is not lodged in the sovereign. Its dreams, its functions, its energies—all have a single object: to build and keep bright the *glory* of the sovereign.

The sovereign in glory was Mary Baker Eddy and great indeed she thought her name. So high was her fame in the eyes of her followers, that in 1903, when the question arose of dedicating a new church in New York, she was given a choice of two inscriptions. One read, "To the Glory of God"; the other, "A Tribute of Love to our Leader and Teacher Mary Baker Eddy." After careful consideration, Mrs. Eddy decided against the dedication to God!

Here was fame in its acme, and yet the sovereign was sad; depressed to the point of drug addiction. Now if happiness consisted in fame, then Mrs. Eddy should not have needed morphine, for felicity precludes every want—even a desire for dope.

Glory (fame), says St. Ambrose, consists in being well known and praised. As with honor then, so with fame, some previous excellence is necessary; without this the estimation of other men would be impossible. We don't offer incense to what isn't there. Fame is consequent upon some previous excellence; in a certain sense it is a product thereof.

A final reflection on fame concerns its duration. Happiness is fixed and forever; fame is fickle and fast fading—here today, tomorrow gone. What city is without its bowery teeming with yesterday's heroes; men and women consigned to oblivion, in whose head there lingers the memory of applause, on whose door there once hung the star of fame? The "once famous," like the poor, we will have always with us. They bellow a fact; felicity is not fame.

"Do you not know that I have the *power* to crucify you?" Remember the words of a once famous Roman Procurator to his silent Prisoner? If happiness consisted in power, then life for the governor should have been bliss instead of the cross that it was. That Pilate had power no one denies, but to say that his power made him happy would be to lie. With all his power, Pontius was a miserable man.

Of power, a wise philosopher once wrote: "The power of man cannot relieve the gnawings of care, nor can it avoid the thorny path of anxiety." Boethius' dictum has wide appeal; it belongs not only to Pilate but to every man of power ever born.

Power is a means, not an end. It has value only according to the use to which it is put. Insufficient, incomplete, it could never play the role of ultimate goal; it must look on something further. *Il Duce, der Fuehrer, Tojo*—the litany could continue for pages; here were powerful men, but so unhappy. Power brings many things to its holder but felicity is not one of them.

Thus the enumeration of exterior goods is complete. Wealth, honor, fame and power—each of these is a good thing, but the best is yet to be found, and so like a skillful surgeon St. Thomas continues to probe. Deep within the soul of man there must be something unique; that for the sake of which everything else is sought. When this is found the search will stop, not before.

The Egyptian was an adept at preservation; examination of a mummy confirms the fact. So perfect was his art, so flawless the finished product, one might be led to suspect that the end of life was preservation—at least for the ancient Egyptians. Could this be true? Can the end of life ever be to preserve it? In other words, does the happiness which is perfect consist in goods of the body? The answer of course is a firm "no"—not even in Egypt. The end of life cannot be to preserve it.

Goods of the body are to be used by reason (that is by the intellect and will) somewhat as a ship is used by her master. Now if the *Queen Mary's* master was using his vessel for no other reason than to preserve it,

we might well look at the skipper with a suspicious eye. Ships are normally used to transport passengers or carry cargo from one port to another, not merely for the sake of preservation.

No, the goal of life does not consist in goods of the body; not in health, not in strength, not in beauty, not even in pleasure—although some thought it did (and many still do):

We call pleasure the beginning and the end of the blessed life, for we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us. From pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good. (From a letter of Epicurus to Menoecius)

Hedonism is here to stay. An old philosophy first formulated by Aristippus, later refined by Epicurus, then tempered by the "genius" of Democritus, its basic tenet is at once simple and earthy: the end of life, the highest good, is *pleasure*.

Life's end, for Epicurus, was not intense pleasure, but rather an abiding peace of mind, a state of cheerful tranquillity. Intellectual pleasure was better than the pleasure of sense, although everyone should have a good share of both. The wise man was the smart fellow who so regulated his life that it was filled to the brim with pleasure, devoid of the slightest prick of pain. Moderation was advised but only to better enjoy future pleasure. What increased pleasure was good; what lessened it was bad and to be avoided.

To deny that pleasure of some kind is involved in happiness would be nonsense. Pleasure is naturally desired; without it we could never be perfectly happy. But the pleasure concerning us here is the cheap pleasure we tap from the world; the pleasure we drain from our faculties and from the objects of delight that surround us. It is a pleasure like filling your lungs with fresh morning air.

Bodily pleasure is a certain delight drawn by men from the world of sense; it follows the possession of sense goods. We feed ourselves to stay alive, although eating is usually a pleasure. With our eyes we see where we are going and more often than not the sightseeing is delightful. Our ears listen to words and hear the sound of music with more than a little satisfaction. But sensible goods are imperfect goods; they are unable to satisfy the whole man, and so they could not be the ultimate goal.

The prime purpose of pleasure is enticement. Man has natural faculties beneficial to himself or to others; pleasure coaxes their use. The diet-

mindful Doctor would not dare the caloric desert he has denied to his patient, if the tempting parfait did not pamper his taste buds. Why do we, any of us, keep our eyes open sixteen hours each day? Could it be because we like to "look"? Problems provide an attractive challenge. This is a stroke of good fortune. Were it not for the enjoyment of a difficult problem successfully solved, many might trade the luxury of thinking for a life of color T.V.

In the plan of nature, pleasure is a means rather than an end. Men may make it an end and seek it for its own sake. But to do this is to contradict one's own nature, to live in an unnatural way.

In his book, *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius speaks again—this time, on pleasure:

Anyone who chooses to look back on his past excesses will perceive that pleasures have a sad ending; and if they render a man happy, there is no reason not to say the very beasts are happy too.

The point is well made. How can happiness consist in delectation? Man shares bodily pleasures with the animals; beatitude is his alone.

Pleasure was the Hedonist hallmark; for the Stoic it was a curse. He would rather be mad than glad. Virtue was the only good; not a means to the end, it was the end itself. Virtue was its own reward. But is it?

Happiness is a subjective state; it is experienced within the soul not outside of it. But while it is a good of the soul, it cannot be produced within the soul except by the acquisition of something else: by *knowledge* for instance, the good of the intellect, or by *virtue*, the good of the will.

The knowledge-chaser, the man who spends himself in the labor of learning, has indeed chosen the better part; Aristotle has affirmed the fact, and he would know. Provided that he doesn't expect the impossible, namely, that his knowledge might someday bring him perfect happiness, he is likely to be a very happy man. But it must always be remembered, knowledge cannot bring beatitude. The latter is flawless and perfect; the former is plagued with defect. Acquired by incessant study, never perfectly clear, even in a lifetime, knowledge cannot be complete; there will always be something, unknown. Then too, learning can be devoted to the service of evil as well as good. How then could it make all men happy?

Virtue is a straight way, a right direction, an apt aim at the highest good. Now no one takes a way to a way, directs himself to a direction or aims at aiming. A goal must be set up, otherwise these things are inane. All the goodness of a virtue has come from the end to which it leads.

Therefore, neither knowledge nor virtue can be itself the end. Besides, the practice of virtue is no little thing. The yoke is sweet but it is still a yoke, and a yoke it must always be. But pain or even difficulty even in the slightest degree is utterly incompatible with felicity. The Stoic might have stood firm while his neighbors were intoxicated with pleasure, but we must not be naive—he wasn't exuberant with happiness.

Wealth, honor, fame, power, body-goods, pleasure, goods of the soul; the guest list is complete. None of these things taken separately nor the combination of all together can satisfy the demands of beatitude. Some of the goods are mutually exclusive; all of them will pass away. This alone is proof enough, felicity is not found here.

Humanity has many desires; only divinity can fulfill them all. In comparison with God, the goods of man, wealth, fame, power and all the rest, are not unlike visitors rapping at the door. We should not attempt to avoid them, nor should we send them away; these are friends; they have been sent by God. Welcome their company, enjoy their stay, however brief it might be. Remember—with them we have much in common! For if not visitors, what then on earth are we?

—Stephen Peterson, O.P.

THE WORD OF GOD AND THE PSYCHIATRIST

BENNETT CERF told a story recently about a little girl in an orphan asylum, who was so painfully shy and unattractive that she was shunned by the other children and regarded as a real problem by her teachers. She had been transferred from two other institutions and now the directors were seeking a pretext to send her on her way again. One afternoon they finally found their pretext. The little girl was seen fastening a letter in a branch of a tree that overhung the asylum wall. This was against all the rules and they could scarcely conceal their elation. Hurrying to the spot, the matron pounced on the letter and tore open the envelope. It read: "To anybody who finds this: I love you."

This is the kind of story that makes us re-think our ideas on what love is. From our childhood we have known that the Gospel message is one of