

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time January 26, 2020

“The community of believers were of one heart and one mind.” (Acts 4:32)

Have you ever considered why it is that throughout our lives, each of us has been moved to learn, complete, and experience new things? If I were to make a guess, then I would propose that this question is not high on your priority list. Yet, let us take a moment to consider this question. From the days of our first parents, mankind has experimented, studied, and learned new things to help him cope with his environment. Humanity has always been, and will always be, on a quest, a pursuit for knowledge and fulfillment. For our part, we have joined in this constant pursuit, adding our findings to this vast, ever growing encyclopedia of combined human effort.

Saint Thomas Aquinas tried to answer this question by teaching that every person seeks to know and understand because they believe the answers will satisfy them. Through the accomplishment of their desire, man will find happiness. For Saint Thomas, happiness is the goal of all of humanity's endeavors. It is both an individual goal and a common goal. It is a constant which has and will always join people together.

Saint Paul may have considered this point as he composed his First Letter to the Corinthians. It might have been the catalyst which inspired him to write those beautiful words which we heard today: *“I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.”* The tragedy which had begun to develop in Corinth was not that they could not find happiness, but they were seeking their happiness in unfulfilling pursuits. As the old country and western song goes, they were “looking for love in all the wrong places.”

The happiness we seek cannot be found in created things or worldly prestige. It must come from something greater, something both universal to all and outside of ourselves. There must be a universal good which has, does, and will satisfy mankind's need for true happiness. For Saint Paul, this absolute good, this limitless happiness can only be found through the soul's pursuit of God. God is the ultimate object and end of man's quest for happiness.

Saint Paul would have foreseen the fact that we are limited by our intellect and abilities to accomplish this task. The personal and communal divisions which had arisen in Corinth would further hinder this endeavor to know, love, and serve God, unless they were honestly addressed and dealt with. It would take Paul's letter, his prayers, and, most importantly, the Holy Spirit's assistance to redirect this wholly natural pursuit back toward God.

Today, almost two thousand years after Saint Paul wrote his letter combined with the assistance of an expanding library of human knowledge, we still need the Holy Spirit's guidance to assist us in our pursuit of ultimate happiness, of God. Coupled with this divine assistance, we need a new generation of Saint Pauls who will remind us of what unites each of us, not those things which further divide us. Let us pray this day that God will raise up men and women throughout our great world who, through their pursuit of God, of happiness, will remind us of our own quest.