

February 1, 2026—Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

God has made us for happiness! Another word for happiness is “Blessed”, which is the first word in each of the 8 Beatitudes. The CCC (#1718) says that we have a **“natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart.”** This desire for happiness can never be satisfied by the loves or things of this world. It can only be satisfied in God Himself.

The Feast Day of St. Thomas Aquinas was this past week. He is one of the top theologians and most intelligent thinkers that we have in the entire history of the Church. He is pictured in one of the stained-glass windows in our Church. He is seated at a writing desk with a dove on his shoulder, symbolizing the Holy Spirit. Two angels are holding up his greatest work, the Summa Theologica, and a Host and chalice are at the top. His writings give great insight into our Catholic faith, but especially regarding the change of the bread and wine at the consecration, into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. He used the word transubstantiation to explain it. Near the end of his life, he was praying in the chapel when the crucifix came alive and Jesus spoke to him. Our Lord said, **“You have written well of Me, Thomas. What reward would you have?”** He answered, **“Nothing but You, Lord.”** After this vision, St. Thomas did not write anything more. He reported that after that vision of Jesus all his writings were no better than straw. He had a glimpse of the true happiness that only God could provide.

There is a difference between happiness and pleasure that we sometimes overlook. Pleasure is a response of the senses to a pleasant stimulation, such as when you eat a delicious meal. But as soon as you stop eating, the pleasure ends and you will soon become hungry again, the pleasure is only a memory. For someone with a well-formed conscience, an immoral pleasure causes the person to feel guilty. We know now that pleasure also stimulates chemicals in the brain to seek that pleasure again and again. Over time it becomes less satisfying and demands an increase in intensity and frequency, which leads to addiction and slavery to sin. Of course, God has made human pleasures, but the danger is that they can cause us to forget God and the true happiness that He wants for us.

Happiness doesn't depend on the stimulation of the senses but finds its origin in the mind and will. When you do a selfless deed for another person, without counting the cost or seeking return, you get a sense of happiness and well-being, even if you didn't get any pleasure from it because it may have been a difficult

sacrifice. That kind of happiness enriches your life and moves you to further deeds of love.

St. Maximilian Kolbe found himself arrested by the Nazis and put in the most ugly, hopeless and miserable place imaginable, the concentration camp of Auschwitz. While others despaired, he gave the little he had to eat to others and prayed and absolved them from sin as a priest of God. In the end, he traded his life for another man who was condemned to death in the horrible starvation bunker. He helped those men to find God even in that place; they would sing and pray the Rosary and receive absolution from Father Kolbe as they died one by one. He found happiness and meaning and gave it to others, even there.

The Beatitudes are a prescription for true happiness. The Christian ultimately finds this true happiness in God and His eternal reward. The first Beatitude is, **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”**. Jesus is not just speaking about those who are materially poor, that is why He adds “poor in spirit”. He reminds us that we cannot find true happiness in this world, but in His kingdom. If our happiness depends on money, possessions, fame and success, we will never find it. There will always be something that we are missing; we will be unfulfilled. It’s the sad story of many actors and sports figures who seem to have all the pleasures and treasures that this world can offer, except happiness.

In this age, where sexual immorality is only a swipe away on our phones, God is calling us to be pure of heart. The pure of heart, do not have sin clouding their vision and keeping them from seeing the needs of others and God’s plan. The ultimate happiness is what we call the Beatific Vision. That means that we will see God face to face in glory, like St. Thomas Aquinas did in his vision. **“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.”** I want to see God one day and I hope you do too. Only God can purify our hearts so that we can attain the Beatific Vision.

**“Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”** This world promises many things, but it cannot follow through on its promises. We should not expect to find perfect happiness in this world because that desire will only be fulfilled in heaven. Earth is not heaven, so let’s not be disappointed when we must mourn or struggle in this life.

The last two Beatitudes tell us to be happy when we are persecuted or insulted for the sake of what is right and for the sake of the Name of Jesus. We can endure those things with joy because we have our sights set on something beyond this

world—**Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.**” St. Maximilian Kolbe certainly did—and we can too.