

Deacon Jim's Corner
A Letter from Our Pastoral Coordinator
April 17, 2019



May Christ's peace, joy and hope be with you all!

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

In my former life as an instructor for 41 years, I taught a semester morality class to junior high schoolers. I enjoyed both the challenge and the dialogue between us. In the first initial weeks I always made my way to a word and a topic of which most juniors were unfamiliar. The word is *telos* and the topic is *teleology*. The Greek word, *telos*, means "end," "purpose," or "ultimacy." *Teleology* is the branch of philosophy that deals with that "purpose" rather than focusing on what causes something to exist, focusing more on *why* something is.

Our Catholic faith and in fact our spirituality ask us to get in touch with the life for which we are headed with Christ. The Catholic Catechism notes the following about this *teleological* point.

"The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for: The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator" (CCC. 27).

Our desire for God is written deeply in our hearts. St. Augustine, writing in the 4th century AD, is often quoted, when he wrote, "You've made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You" (Confessions. Book. I. St. Augustine of Hippo).

Despite the pursuit of our present happiness, focusing on our immediate needs for satisfaction, money, power, and prestige, the Church proposes that we look longer term for our happiness. What causes our restlessness, and what ultimately makes us happy is what really matters, regardless of how challenging things seem in the present moment, or even how "happy" we are now. Teleologically speaking, what makes us happy now may not last and in fact might even distract us from our ultimate purpose in union with God.

The quest for ultimacy, for *telos*, is sometimes confused when we hear the scripture passage, "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This can be a never-ending pursuit that can lead us into a very unhealthy place. I would suggest that using a more teleological perspective helps balance this goal of what Jesus meant by being "perfect." In the Greek New Testament, the word translated as "perfect" is the word *telos*, a better translation might be "complete." What completes us is our union with God and God's goodness, not necessarily our own perfection.

Our Lord Jesus provides us with the strength and courage to be complete as loved children of God. We're never able to be completely without sin, or free from results that sometimes are hurtful despite our good intentions. I have written about how embracing our weakness actually can open us up more to the possibility of God's graceful loving-kindness. Thanks be to God for His incredible and gracious pursuit of us. Let's let God find us in our pursuit of our purpose, i.e. our *telos*, our completeness in Him.

Deacon Jim

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deacon Jim".

Deacon Jim Fish, Pastoral Coordinator
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