

Continued from bulletin -

have I in heaven? and besides thee what do I desire upon earth? For thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever. (Ps 72:25-26)

The saints have ever longed for this vision of God. In the opening paragraph of his *Confessions*, St. Augustine famously wrote: You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.

And in *The City of God*, the same saint explained: He is the fountain of our happiness, He the end of all our desires. Being attached to Him, or rather let me say, re-attached — for we had detached ourselves and lost hold of Him — being, I say, re-attached to Him, we tend towards Him by love, that we may rest in Him, and find our blessedness by attaining that end. For our good, about which philosophers have so keenly contended, is nothing else than to be united to God. St. Gregory Nazianzen taught: God himself ... is the highest crown of all intelligible things, to whom every desire is directed and fixed, and in no way does desire reach beyond him ... For he is the ultimate of all things that can be desired, and when we attain him all searching will be at rest.

And while meditating on this sublime truth, John Henry Newman wrote: Thou alone art the food of my soul. Thou alone art inexhaustible, and ever offerest to me something new to know, something new to love. At the end of millions of years I shall know Thee so little that I shall seem to myself only beginning. At the end of millions of years I shall find in Thee the same, or rather, greater sweetness than at first, and shall seem then only to be beginning to enjoy Thee: and so on for eternity I shall ever be a little child beginning to be taught the rudiments of Thy infinite Divine nature. For Thou art Thyself the seat and centre of all good, and the only substance in this universe of shadows, and the heaven in which blessed spirits live and rejoice.

Supreme happiness is found in God, and in Him alone.

Why is God man's supreme beatitude?

In the book of the Apocalypse, we read:

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. (Apoc 1:8)

God is our first beginning and our last end. He created all things from nothing, He sustains all things in being, and He is the final end to which all creation is directed.

If this is so — and we know from both reason and revelation that it is — God must be the ultimate satisfaction of all our desires. If we needed

something other than God to be fully satisfied, there would still be something to attain beyond God, in which case He could not be our final end.

As He is our final end, all our desires must find their fulfilment in Him. Through the divine revelation entrusted to the Church, we know that this fulfilment will be found in the beatific vision — a supernatural vision beyond anything unassisted human nature could either desire or attain.

In theological terminology, God is said to be the *sufficient* and *necessary* object of our beatitude.

God is the *sufficient* object, because in possessing God, we possess everything needed for perfect happiness.

As the mid-20th century theologian Joseph F. Sagües, S.J., expresses it, God is the “supreme good” who contains “in himself ... in an unlimited and excellent way ... everything that can bring happiness to a man.”

God is the *necessary* object because without Him we cannot be truly happy. Sagües explains:

[S]ince the object of the human will is everything good, and the object of the intellect is all being, God, as the supreme good and the supreme being, is the object of those faculties and in fact the principal one. Therefore, he is the last object to such an extent that without him these faculties cannot be satisfied.

In other words, lesser goods can satisfy our intellect and will to some extent, but only God can satisfy our rational nature fully. Therefore, only in the possession of God can we find our fulfilment and lasting beatitude.

Conclusions

In this article, we have seen that the Catholic Church teaches that the essential object of our eternal beatitude is God Himself. Those who die in the state of sanctifying grace will see Him as He is for all eternity, and in that supernatural vision find their supreme happiness. This state is called heaven.