**Hope Fulfilled: Heaven**

Discussing the virtue of hope directs us to think about life beyond this world. In previous articles, we pondered God’s desire for us to be happy and how our faith gives us hope in that reality. We also considered how consistent choices toward “good” or “virtue” create a platform that counters human restlessness. A virtuous life brings peace during our lifetime while setting the course toward eternal happiness in Heaven.

When we look to life after our death, we look with hope to a fullness of life in union with God. We get to see God face-to-face. Such a state is called Heaven. People wonder about Heaven as they ponder images of white-robed people sitting on cloudlike pillows in eternal idleness. They fail to see the attraction thinking an eternity like that sounds boring. Saint Pope John Paul II helped us by giving a more accurate picture of Heaven. He said that Heaven is not a physical place. We cannot look up and say, “there it is.” He said, “We know that the “heaven” or “happiness” in which we will find ourselves is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity. It is our meeting with the Father which takes place in the risen Christ through the communion of the Holy Spirit.” The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, "this perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity, this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed is called ‘heaven.’ Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness" (n.1024). This is the opposite of human restlessness or boredom.

The virtue of hope takes us through this life, preparing us for the next. Beyond this life, the person who elected to live a life of good, choosing for God, will no longer need hope. Everything they ever hoped for will be fulfilled. The hunger to be with God or long-gone loved ones will be fulfilled. All of our emptiness from sinful choices and brokenness will be gone. Christ said that he came so we might have life (John 10:10). The ultimate of that life is Heaven. But the good news of this promise leads to happiness even in this life. In our earthly life, we can choose virtue and union with what is holy that pays off ahead of the grave. Virtue and hope can bring us happiness on this side of the grave.