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High Purpose

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High Purpose

When we look at the great suffering of people from natural disasters or grave injustices, or hear about the latest tragic killing of someone in our city, we can easily become sad, frustrated or discouraged. When we make plans for the future we might wonder whether or not our efforts will be worth while. But when we reflect on our purpose in life, we will recognize the great significance of the decisions we make that are in accord with that purpose.

We are not in charge of everything or everyone. But if we are clear about the persons we are and the capabilities we have, we can make unique and necessary contributions to the world about us. The image of our each being one drop of water in an ocean of goodness does not come close to the reality that every one of us can make conscious choices to pursue his or her purpose in life. If "job satisfaction" can be a consideration in choosing a profession, deep personal fulfillment is a reasonable expectation for those who actively live out the purpose of their existence.

If we imagine that the reason we exist is to become powerful and make the world the way it should be according to our opinions, we will fail, and experience frustration. Frustration is the painful consequence of knowing that our will is not done, that something is not working out as we want it to.

If our real purpose can be described as responding to God's love by loving in return, and by loving those whom God loves, we cannot be frustrated. We can fail at times, but no person, and no other created thing, can prevent us from achieving our high purpose. God is wholly occupied with loving. That is who God is. We human creatures have been given the capacity to engage in this activity of God, one choice and one action at a time.

We are creatures, not self-creators. We come from God, and in God, we can live and love as those who are given life, life with a purpose. Our realistic response to God is not that of focusing our attention exclusively on God in prayer all day, but to love God in all that we do. The God we love is also found in all of creation, and especially in those, like ourselves, who are created in the image and likeness of God.

One aspect of love is gratitude. We are able to reflect upon, recognize, and give thanks for who we are and what we receive as creatures of

God. Gratitude is far more than the occasional sentiment that leads to sending another Hallmark card. Gratitude suits perfectly the consciousness and free responsiveness of which we are capable. We are created with the appropriate and acceptable means for giving thankful praise to God for who God is and for giving thanks for the beloved persons we are as individuals and as members of the family of humans. When we reflect on the gifts we have received and those we continue to receive, we acknowledge the love with which they are given, and respond with love. Gratitude is a positive experience for us, matching perfectly the capabilities of our hearts.

As humans, we are able to experience awe, reverence, or deep respect for God, and also for God's creation, including us and all other people. When we respect the lives that we are given, and those of other persons, and accept appropriate stewardship for all that exists about us, we honor the God who creates all. Ours is a double gift: all that we can recognize with our exterior and interior senses is given to us out of love, and we are able to recognize and acknowledge the reality of these gifts with deep satisfaction.

Nothing is as important to us as loving and being loved. God loves us actively, continually, and personally, as well as directly and in and through all that is created. We are not the results of a passing thought or desire, or of some generic act of creation. When we act out of love, we please God, ourselves, and at least some of those we love. Just as we are all expressions of the self-giving of God, we give to others of who we are and what we have. Parents literally give of themselves in bringing new human life into the world, and continue to nurture their children in deeds as well as thoughts and emotions. We all give of ourselves to foster life in our families, friends, co-workers, and, as we are able, even in our enemies.

When we consciously accept our high purpose in life, we do not lack for any quality that is necessary to fulfill it. All day, every day, we have many and varied opportunities and challenges for exercising our God-given powers of expressing gratitude and praise, of respect and reverence, and of loving service to God. Whether or not others recognize the extent to which we are living our purpose in life, God knows and appreciates every least and imperfect return of love that we make, whether directly, or on behalf of his other children on this earth.