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FROM THE DESK OF FATHER JONATHAN

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This week the Vatican-based magazine "La Civilta' Cattolica" ("Catholic Civilizations") published an article entitled "The Prosperity Gospel: Dangerous and Different".   It was written by two close associates of Pope Francis. In the article, the authors describe the Prosperity Gospel as a theological current in some evangelical churches that teaches that God wants his followers to be rich, healthy, and happy. This theological current turns God into a vending machine that will spit out whatever good thing we ask from him. The Prosperity Gospel would say that if we truly believe in God he will make us wealthy. If we truly believe in God, he will fulfill every one of our dreams. This false Gospel is often used by preachers to say that if you give money to the church, you will become rich. These preachers often convince their people that the reason why they (the pastors) are rich, is because they have been highly favored by God.

The authors rightly point out that this is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As St. Paul teaches us in the Sacred Scripture, the only thing we should boast of as Christians is the cross of Jesus Christ. That is, just as Jesus went to the cross to die for our sins, we too need to die to ourselves, especially to our sinfulness, take up our cross and follow Him.

This is not to say that God does not want us to be happy or that he wants us to suffer. That would be a false Gospel too. God wants us to flourish as human beings, but this flourishing does not always imply material wealth or even good health. We can flourish even in our sickness and poverty if we unite our sufferings to the sufferings of Jesus. Heaven--not earth--will be the place where every one of our holy desires is fulfilled.

I highly encourage you to read the full article. Just google the name of the article, "The Prosperity Gospel: Dangerous and Different".

God bless, Fr. Jonathan