13th June 2025

Satisfied

"I got the Weary Blues, and I can't be satisfied."

Langston Hughes, *Weary Blues*

The "Weary Blues" of the American writer, Langston Hughes, clearly left him in a state of being unsatisfied. Would he *ever* be satisfied, or would he be stuck with *The Rolling Stones* and complain that "I can't get no satisfaction" at any time? We'll never know. In his Epistle to the Philippians, St Paul affirms, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances". Langston Hughes evidently can't say that. But can *you*? Can I? If we can, what does that satisfaction look like? If we can't, what do we need to do?

Given that the recent Conclave to elect Pope Leo XIV took place in the Sistine Chapel, and that his first Papal Mass was celebrated there, I was reminded of our visit to St Peter's Basilica some years ago. The Sistine Chapel is a truly remarkable place. But think on this. In a letter to his father in 1512, the artist, Michelangelo, wrote of his work on the ceiling:

I've finished that chapel I was painting. The Pope is quite satisfied.

Blooming right, the Pope should be satisfied! Michelangelo nearly killed himself completing his commission. But was Michelangelo satisfied for himself? Probably not, even though he's left us an artistic legacy that is unsurpassed. Is *any* artist satisfied with their work? Is a performer satisfied with their last show? Is a preacher satisfied with every sermon?

And herein is the problem. Satisfaction from the praise of others – from work on the Sistine Chapel to a well-received sermon – is one thing. But an inner, personal satisfaction is quite another. With childhood injunctions to "be perfect" as drivers in our adult life, we appear to be doomed to failure. Remembering the warning that "pride comes before a fall", self-praise looks like we're sinning again, and satisfaction remains frustratingly out of reach. Oh, those weary blues …

So let's start a campaign to put those blues aside and be content to know that we've done our best and can do no more. Let's recognise that perfection will *always* be unattainable and be satisfied that we've done good! Let's be as proud as we can be of who we are. The world needs us to strive to do well. But it also needs folk who're satisfied, who've found an inner peace, whose "weary blues" *don't* dictate their worth and value.

A prayer for today

Striving to do better? Yes! Perfect, Lord? Never! But praying you're satisfied? Always.

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