

SPIRIT DAILY

WHEN IT COMES TO HAPPINESS INDEX, FAITH, HUMOR, AND BLESSED MOTHER MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT



It was interesting last week when economists at Harvard University and the University of British Columbia released a study identifying what they claimed were the "happiest" (and unhappiest) places in America.

The top five spots were all in Louisiana (Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Houma, Alexandria). And the happiest state was Louisiana as well.

You wouldn't know that by the way the media often portrays this region (see: *Duck Dynasty*).

It didn't totally surprise us that Louisiana would come away with the "happy" award. We often do retreats there (plan another, God willing, in October), and there's no place where the people are friendlier or more humorous. It seems that *everyone* in Louisiana has a good sense of humor. They seem to be "happy in their own skin" (and perhaps more than satisfied with the culinary skills of local cooks).

Granted, New Orleans wasn't in the top (it was 95). And don't discount the spiritual, as well as temporal, problems. In places, they are severe. But there may be a lesson here: Louisiana is also one of the very most actively Christian states in the nation. It is at the top tier in resisting abortion. There are churches everywhere. The very term for a county is "parish."

So take it a step further: surrounding states like Mississippi and Alabama are likewise Christian intensive, but Louisiana is also intensive Catholic. And also, Louisiana is one of if not *the* most Marian of states. Might that factor into all the contentment? While there are nine states with a higher percentage of registered Catholics, in

Louisiana the Christianity is worn out there in the open, unabashed (except perhaps in the French Quarter).

Does it tabulate into self-satisfaction?

Apparently, money doesn't, not always. Louisiana ranks 44th of the states when it comes to median family income (\$42,944 one recent year). It is in the top ten for "poorest" states.



Apparently, though, we need to redefine what "poor" means.

To be fair, metro areas with low happiness levels tend to be those in aging industrial corridors that struggle with dwindling employment opportunities (thus, economy is a factor). Good people there; bad economic climate.

But the wealthiest city in the United States, New York City, with 70 billionaires and (hear this:) 389,100 millionaires (one of every twenty-five), ranked as the *unhappiest* metro area in the country. (This is a city where a townhouse in Manhattan recently went for \$27 million and apartments can sell for more than \$100 million or rent for \$135,000 a month; at the famous Four Seasons restaurant in Manhattan a waiter once knocked over a bottle of Chateau Margaux Gran Vin, thought to be one of the most expensive bottles of wine ever; the insurance company paid \$225,000 for the mishap).

Again, to be accurate: there is also poverty in New York, much. And it takes a lot more to live there (a millionaire on the Upper East Side of New York is basically middle class, certainly not "rich").

But it seems to prove the old adage of how money can't buy happiness.

The unhappiest?

That seems strange. New York can be wonderful. And if it's so "unhappy," why do more than 8.3 million -- a record number -- choose to live there? It is a city of many wonders and a good number of great, devout people, though it is also a city that is as intensively pro-abortion as Louisiana is against it. All the major networks are based there. Hollywood is largely financed here. It is the center of finance, fashion. An incredible, intense place, and it has improved in the "friendly" category (as well as in the category of safety). An amazing number of tourists are flocking there.

Yet, there is something missing, it appears, something that money can't buy but that (ask Louisianans) a Rosary apparently can.

--7/30/14

[Note also: Michael Brown retreats: [Connecticut](#) and [Announcing two retreats in California](#)]

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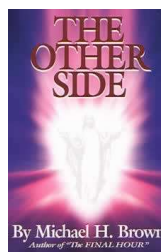
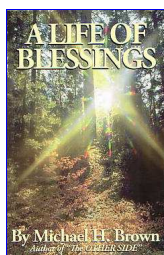
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