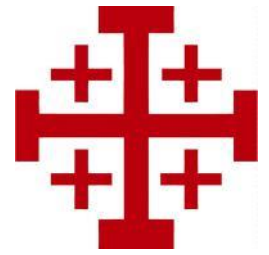


PASTOR'S CORNER



AUTHENTIC HAPPINESS

Happiness is the feeling of great pleasure or contentment. It is something that we all seek in our life. However, sometimes what we think will bring us happiness brings a false happiness because it is not from God. Lorene Hanley Duquin has written a brochure published by Our Sunday Visitor entitled, Pope Francis' 10 Secrets to Happiness. As we make our way through these months of winter, which often can be depressing, let us reflect on these "secrets" to bring happiness not only into our lives but all whom we meet. This week I will present the first five "secrets" and next week the remaining five.

- 1) Live and Let Live. We often jeopardize our happiness by trying to control the lives of others. We must be concerned with what God is asking us to do. In Matthew's gospel Jesus was rather blunt when he asked the question: "Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?"
- 2) Be Giving of Yourself to Others. When we are open and generous to others, especially those in need, we experience an intimate encounter with Jesus, who is the source of all joy. Once again from Matthew's gospel Jesus guarantees us that whatever we do for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do for him. Sharing material goods, offering emotional support, extending a helping hand, or providing spiritual encouragement, not only eases another's burdens, it enriches our life. I often hear volunteers say after helping another, "I got much more out of it than they did."
- 3) Proceed Calmly. The Holy Father warns us not to let our lives to become hectic or out of control. Pope Francis uses an image of a quiet pool of water and encourages us "to move with kindness and humility, a calmness in life." The key is to remember that happiness is not so much governed by what happens to us as it is by how we react to disruptive influences. Developing trust in God from a deep spiritual life centered on daily prayer and the frequent reception of the sacraments will help us maintain calmness no matter what is happening around us. When our life is centered on God, what happens on the surface of our life may irritate us a little, but it will not disturb the inner peace of our soul.
- 4) Develop a Healthy Sense of Leisure. The world in which we live operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Stressful job demands and other commitments fill people's daily lives. Parents juggle work with their children's school, sports, and other activities. Pope Francis has expressed a concern that the pleasures of art and literature and even the simple acts of playing with one's children and spending time with family members are being lost in the busyness of daily life. We need to give our bodies and minds a chance to renew and reboot themselves through leisure activities. We need to turn off the television, eat dinner together as a family, and communicate with one another.
- 5) Make Sunday a Holy Day. As you might expect, this is one of my favorites. Pope Francis suggests that a definite way to find happiness is to reclaim Sunday as a holy day. The Holy Father also recommends making Sunday a family day. The day begins with faithful participation in Mass. Making the rest of Sunday holy will depend on one's lifestyle. If you work indoors, outdoor activities will allow you to enjoy God's creation. If you are active all week, building some quiet time into the day might be the answer. When we observe Sunday as a holy day it offers us the chance to reflect on our spiritual side, appreciate the blessings of family, and find true happiness.