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Ten Secrets to Happiness

All of us nurse our own secret dream of what will bring us happiness and often that fantasy is at odds with what we know to be true at a deeper level. What will make us happy? In an interview for the Argentine weekly, *Viva*, Pope Francis weighs in on this topic, submitting his own “Top 10 Tips” for happiness. What are Pope Francis’ tips for happiness or, as he puts it, “for bringing greater joy to one’s life”?

1. Live and let live

All of us will live longer and more happily if we stop trying to arrange other peoples’ lives. Jesus challenged us not to judge but to live with the tension and let God and history make the judgments. So we need to live by own convictions and let others do the same.

2. Be giving of yourself to others

Happiness lies in giving ourselves away. We need to be open and generous because if we withdraw into ourselves we run the risk of becoming self-centred and no happiness will be found there since “stagnant water becomes putrid”.

3. Proceed calmly

Move with kindness, humility, and calm. These are the antithesis of anxiety and distress. Calm never causes high blood pressure. We need to make conscious efforts to never let the moment cause panic and excessive hurry. Rather be late than stressed.

4. A healthy sense of leisure

Never lose the pleasures of art, literature and play. Remember that Jesus scandalised others with his capacity to enjoy life in all its sensuousness. We don’t live by work alone, no matter how important and meaningful it might be. In heaven there will be no work, only leisure, we need to learn the art and joy of leisure not just to prepare for heaven but to enjoy some of heaven now.

5. Sundays should be holidays

Workers should have Sundays off because Sunday is for family. Accomplishment, productivity and speed should not become our most valued commodities or

we will begin to take everything for granted, our lives, our health, our families, our friends, those around us, and all the good things in life. That is why God gave us a commandment to keep the Sabbath holy

6. Find innovative ways to create dignified jobs for young people

If you want to bless a young person, don’t just tell that person that he or she is wonderful. Give a young person your job! Or, at least, work actively to help him or her find meaningful work. This will both bless that young person and bring a special happiness to your own life.

7. Respect and take care of nature

The air we breathe out is the air we will re-inhale. We can’t be whole and happy when Mother Earth is being stripped of her wholeness. Our salvation, like our happiness, is tied to the way we treat the earth. It is immoral to slap another person in the face and so it is immoral too to throw our garbage into the face of Mother Earth.

8. Stop being negative

Needing to talk badly about others indicates low self-esteem. Negative thoughts feed unhappiness and a bad self-image. Positive thoughts feed happiness and healthy self-esteem.

9. Don’t proselytise, respect others’ beliefs

What we cherish and put our faith into grows “by attraction, not by proselytising”. Cherish your values, but always act towards others with graciousness, charity, and respect.

10. Work for peace

Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace, like war, must be waged actively by working for justice, equality, and an ever-wider inclusivity. Waging peace is the perennial struggle to stretch hearts, our own and others, to accept that in God’s house there are many rooms and that all faiths, not least our own, are meant to be a house of prayer for all peoples.

(Offered with apologies for whenever my own thinking replaced that of Pope Francis.)

Source: Ron Rolheiser, August 18, 2014

REFLECTION

> What would you add to Pope Francis’ tips for human happiness?

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