



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Four Different Kinds of Happiness

We were created by God to desire four different kinds of happiness. In order to be healthy and happy, we need a balance between the four levels. What are these four kinds of happiness and how do we go about maintaining this balance?

Happiness 1 – Physical pleasure and possessions

This first level of happiness comes from food, music, material goods, entertainment and other things that we experience through our physical senses. These forms of pleasure and happiness are obvious to everyone.

Happiness 2 – Ego-gratification

The second level of happiness comes from such things as achieving a goal, winning a game, exercising proper authority over people and being liked by others. It is natural to feel good about ourselves when we complete a job, take first place in a contest, make a good decision that affects other people and when we have a few, very good friends.

Happiness 3 – Doing good for others

The third level of happiness comes from making a positive difference in the world through our attitude and actions of kindness and compassion toward others. The reason underlying our actions is that we seek the truth and beauty of the sacredness and importance of each human person by showing them the love and justice that is due them. We live this out through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The spiritual works of mercy include instructing others about Jesus, helping friends or family members to recognize the harmfulness of a serious sin, giving counsel to those who doubt God's love, comforting a discouraged person, forgiving those who injure us, bearing wrongs patiently, and praying for the living and the dead. The corporal [bodily] works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. How about choosing to do one of these works of mercy during this month?

Happiness 4 – Acceptance of God's unconditional love

The fourth level of happiness comes from accepting the perfect truth that God loves us in an unconditional manner. It can be difficult for so many of us to know and believe this truth. There are two things that can help you to be convicted that God knows and loves you completely. Pray for the grace to know how much God loves you and He will reveal this to you. Slowly read the Gospel of Luke which will help you to see and understand the love of Christ. This time of Advent - preparing for the coming of Christ - is the right occasion for these practices

What is important to remember about the four levels of happiness is that the meaning and purpose of human life is to do good for others and accept the unconditional love of God. This can be difficult for us because we desire all four of the different kinds of happiness. When we place more emphasis on Levels 1 and 2, and ignore or neglect Levels 3 and 4, we will fail to reach our life's full potential. We find true happiness – inner joy and peace – when we maintain balance and keep Levels 3 and 4 as the main focus of our lives.

Ann Lankford
Office for Catechesis and Evangelization

For more information contact:

Parish Name:

Address:

Ph:



DIocese of LA CROSSE, WI