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LOOKING AHEAD

In this chapter the Holy Spirit invites you to ►

EXPLORE how being a friend can bring happiness.

DISCOVER how grace helps us grow in holiness.

DECIDE how to build a culture of life.

CHAPTER 2

Human Dignity



► What brings you happiness?

Holiness and happiness are two words that often are misunderstood. Many people choose paths to happiness that end up bringing them just the opposite. Jesus inspires thousands of men and women to seek happiness through service. He taught,

"And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

MATTHEW 25:40

► What is the connection between our search for happiness and our serving those in need?

TIMELINE

1850

1890

1930

1970

2000

1873-1897
Life of Saint Thérèse
Martin of Lisieux.

1964
Jean Vanier forms the
first L'Arche community.

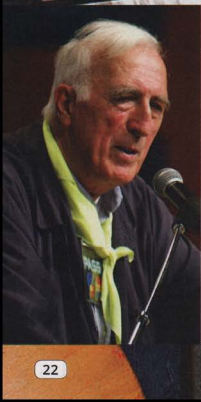
1995
Pope John Paul II teaches
from *Evangelium Vitae*.

1905
Laïcité is formalized into French law.

1973
US Supreme Court decides *Roe v Wade*.



An Ark of FRIENDSHIP



Inspired Christians, many of them young people, come together in loving service of the intellectually handicapped in communities called “L’Arche.” L’Arche was formed in 1964 by Jean Vanier.

Vanier was a professor who studied the meaning of happiness. He realized that everyone wants to be happy, but many people struggle in their pursuit of true happiness. Jean Vanier concluded that what makes us happy is loving God, ourselves and others, as well as being loved. So at the heart of happiness is a loving friendship.

► How do you find happiness in your friendships?

One day Father Thomas Philippe introduced Vanier to the suffering of people institutionalized with disabilities. Vanier invited Raphael Simi and Phillipe Seux, two such individuals, to come and live with him in the small town of Trosly-Breuil in France. This was the first L’Arche community, named after Noah’s Ark. These communities provide refuge for those in need.

Share Friendship

L'Arche communities are now found in over thirty-five countries around the world. There are seventeen in the United States. The purpose of an L'Arche home is not to "cure" the disabled but to share friendship with them. These communities help people in need find happiness through loving friendships. And through these loving bonds, people experience an unconditional love that reflects the love that God has for us.

The L'Arche Mission

In L'Arche homes, the intellectually challenged and the volunteers live together in community. L'Arche is not about institutional care for people; it is about solidarity through loving relationships.

The mission of L'Arche is to:

- create small communities that share their faith in an atmosphere of mutual friendship between people who have disabilities and those who desire to help people with certain disabilities.
 - establish and maintain life-long support systems with people who have disabilities, especially with those who are particularly vulnerable due to old age and/or multiple disabilities.
 - enrich the lives of persons with disabilities, recognizing their unique capacity, and share the values of compassion and acceptance.
- What kind of values do you uphold with your friends?

Seeds of Love

Vanier knew that persons with disabilities have dignity simply because they are children of God. In 1997, Pope John Paul II granted Jean Vanier the International Paul VI Award for extraordinary work that stems from his deep faith. The Pope said, "L'Arche has become a providential seed of the civilization of love."

Wisdom of the Cross

What makes the L'Arche communities so extraordinary is that they demonstrate the power of Christ working through people. Many L'Arche volunteers have realized that they have come not to "save" those who are disabled, but to be "saved" by them. They find in them a special connection to Christ. Saint Paul refers to this insight as wisdom of the cross (read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25). Wisdom of the cross is understood when the faithful embrace suffering.

Disciple POWER

SOLIDARITY

The Christian virtue of solidarity refers to a spirit of friendship and union with others, especially those in need. It is the practice of sharing spiritual goods even more than material ones. Solidarity also implies an effort by Christians to work for a more just society. Jean Vanier's befriending of the mentally challenged is a profound form of solidarity.



Members of L'Arche sit onstage in the Roman Colosseum after performing a play.

FAITH JOURNAL



Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. Then write down an example of how you became wiser for helping a friend deal with suffering.

► FAITH FOCUS

What is true happiness?

► FAITH VOCABULARY

actual grace

free will

holiness

intellect

sanctifying grace

soul

The Gift of Grace

You might have noticed that some people tend to judge others by their outward appearances. Do a little experiment now by looking at your classmates. Do not be surprised if you first see their outward appearances.

- How difficult is it for you to see beyond a person's outward appearance?

God sees us differently. He sees the whole person from the inward to the outward—both the **soul** and the body. God looks at each of us and sees his beloved son or daughter. The prophet Isaiah compared God's love for us to that of a mother and her child. Through Isaiah, God said:

*Can a mother forget her infant,
be without tenderness for the
child of her womb?*

*Even should she forget,
I will never forget you.*

*See, upon the palms of my
hands I have written your
name.*

ISAIAH 49:15–16

We are children of God, created in his own image and likeness (read Genesis 1:27). God shares his life with everyone—without exception. This is why every human being is sacred, or holy.

We call this gift of God sharing his life and love with us **sanctifying grace**. Sanctifying grace makes us holy, or one with God. Sanctifying grace keeps us in friendship with God. Through his grace, we participate in the life of the Trinity. The truth that God dwells in us and with us is the foundation of our dignity as human beings.

- Why is human life sacred?



Searching for Happiness

DID YOU KNOW?

A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place. The life of a Christian has also been described as a pilgrimage. We are pilgrims on an earthly journey toward the Kingdom of God. One way Christians outwardly express their spiritual journey is by making a pilgrimage. Heading toward a destination of true happiness with God is reflected in traveling to a sacred or holy place. Christians do this today as they make pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Rome, or other shrines that celebrate the mysteries of the Catholic faith.

Joined to Christ

Christians realize that God the Father has revealed his love for us in the person of Jesus, his Son. Through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, we experience God's love.

Most of you were likely baptized as infants. Your parents wanted you to honor your great dignity as a child of God. Baptism does that. Baptism brings you into the family of God, the Church. You are joined to Christ. Together as members of the Church, we walk with Jesus and each other. Your baptismal candle was lit to show that you are now in the light of Christ. You are called to be a light for others. When we share the light of Christ with others we show solidarity.

At Baptism, our life with God is restored. We receive the new life of **holiness** in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is living our life in Christ.

► What do you know about the celebration of Baptism?

The Road to Happiness

From the moment of your conception, you were destined to enjoy life with God—and with others—forever. This is the very reason God created each of us.

God creates human beings with a body and a soul. The soul is spiritual and immortal. It never dies. God has also blessed you with the gifts of an **intellect** and a **free will**. The gift of your intellect is the power to know God and to reflect on how he is part of your life. The gift of free will is the ability to love and serve God and to choose to center your life on him.

We will only be happy when God is the center of our lives. When we love God, our neighbors, and ourselves, we are cooperating with God's grace. We are showing our respect for the sacredness of human life. We are traveling the road to happiness—a happiness that will last forever.



Faith CONNECTION

Complete the sentence "Happiness is . . ." Then describe how you are on a pilgrimage of holiness.

Catholics BELIEVE

The laity includes the people of God who have not been ordained or promised to live the consecrated life. Lay people are called to holiness but not through ordination, or vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They are called to a life of faith through the vocation of marriage or the single life. Lay people, like all members of the Church, are rooted in prayer, charity, and the sacraments.

Love in Little Ways

From the day fifteen-year-old Thérèse Martin entered the Carmelite convent in France, she dreamed of doing great things for God. She focused on how she could keep God at the center of her life. Often Thérèse became frustrated with the difficulties of keeping God first in her life.

Then one day she read a passage from Saint Paul, in which he wrote that the best way to holiness is not by doing great things but by doing loving things (read 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13). After reading this passage, she wrote in her journal: "O Jesus, . . . at last I have found my calling: my calling is love."

Thérèse was summarizing the Great Commandment. Jesus taught:

"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

MATTHEW 22:37-40

Today we know Thérèse Martin (1873-1897) as Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus. In 1997 Blessed Pope John Paul II named her "Doctor of the Church." Thérèse, in her own little way, was describing the way to holiness. In both your words and your actions you too are to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind, even in the littlest of ways.

Keeping God First

Today too many people try to find happiness in the latest gadgets, fine foods, trendy fashions, non-marital sex, or the accumulation of material possessions.

As with all earthly things, such joy is fleeting, and relationships are often damaged. Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430) experienced many broken relationships. He finally discovered that a relationship with God is the source of true and lasting human happiness.

By choosing God first and keeping our hearts fixed on Jesus, we too will be satisfied. We will realize that striving for holiness and searching for happiness go together.



Thérèse Martin of Lisieux (1873-1897);
Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

The Law of Love

Jesus is our model for living a holy and happy life. During his life on Earth, Jesus showed us ways to love the Father and others—even when he was ridiculed and persecuted. He taught his disciples a way to holiness and happiness in a new commandment. Jesus said,

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."

JOHN 13:34

Divine Help

God did not leave us on our own to figure out how to live a life of holiness and happiness. God the Father pours out the Holy Spirit upon us. The Holy Spirit constantly

energizes us, directs us, and strengthens us to seek happiness by living holy lives. This divine help is called **actual grace**. Actual grace comes in many forms. This divine help empowers us to live as adopted daughters and sons of God the Father.

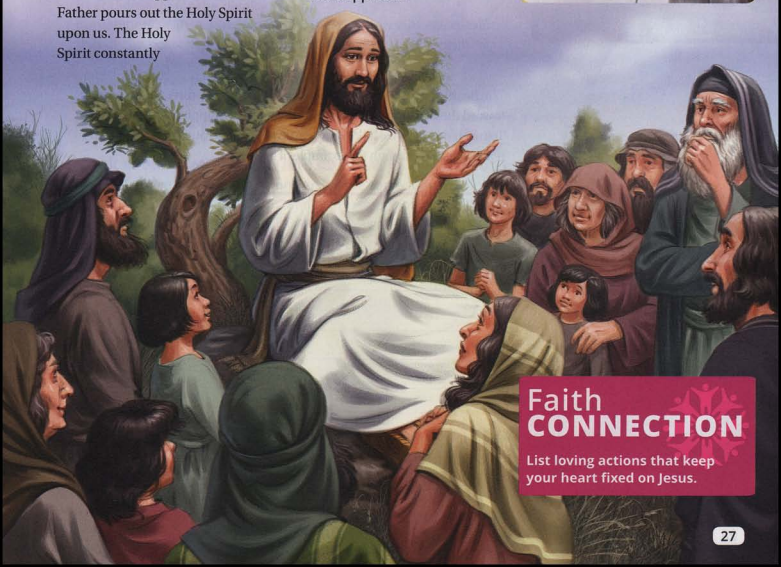
Together as Church

We are not alone in our search for happiness and holiness. We are members of the new People of God, the Church. Through the gift and guidance of the Church and the celebration of the Sacraments, we are joined with Christ and one another.

- Describe how the Church helps you search for holiness and happiness.

DID YOU KNOW?

Blessed Pope John Paul II emphasized the importance of the spiritual life and the universal call to holiness. He canonized 482 men and women as saints, by far the most of any pope in history thus far. He continued to show the universal pursuit for holiness, by including many holy men and women as first native-born saints from various nations.



Faith CONNECTION

List loving actions that keep your heart fixed on Jesus.



The Beatitudes

Jesus taught about the practical connection between happiness and holiness in the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes identify the attitudes and actions blessed by God. They describe the happiness, or blessedness, of people who keep their lives focused and centered on God by committing loving acts.

Jesus taught:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

*Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.*

*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.*

*Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

*Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

MATTHEW 5:3-10

The Beatitudes are a summary of discipleship. They direct our attention toward the Kingdom of God—our eternal life of happiness and holiness. To reach that goal we follow the way Jesus pointed out to us by his own teachings and through the example of his life.

Faith CONNECTION

Reread the Beatitudes. Think about the connection between the Beatitudes, happiness, and holiness. How might you try to live one of the Beatitudes this week? How will this beatitude help you to be happy and grow in holiness?

BEATITUDE
HAPPINESS
HOLINESS

BUILD a CULTURE of LIFE

Every person is a sacred gift from God.

Human life is present from the moment a baby is conceived. From the moment of conception to a person's death, every person is to be cared for and treasured.

I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live.

DEUTERONOMY 30: 19

Blessed Pope John Paul II wrote an encyclical called, *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life). In this letter, he challenges us to build a culture of life by standing up for the dignity of the human person. The pope reminds us that at the heart of Jesus' message is that all of us are to enjoy life abundantly (read John 10:10).

PRIORITIES OF SOCIETY

Look around your world and observe the priorities in society.

You will notice that some are contrary to the sacredness of life. Many people express opinions, make choices, and act in ways that violate human dignity or destroy human life. But God calls you to always respect and protect human life.

Identify what you perceive to be the top three priorities in society. Then describe how these priorities do or do not build a culture of life.

PRIORITIES IN SOCIETY

CULTURE OF LIFE

1.

2.

3.



PRIORITIES OF THE CHURCH

To be a follower of Christ, you will end up going against some popular opinions about life. This could be very uncomfortable. The Catholic Church speaks out and asks you to speak out to defend all human life as sacred and to protect the dignity of each person.

As a Catholic, you are called to be pro-life "from the womb to the tomb." This means doing whatever you can to protect the life and dignity of everyone. This means recognizing the truth that human life begins at the moment of conception. Therefore, direct abortion is never an acceptable choice. This also means that we must reach out to women who struggle with their pregnancies.

Being pro-life also means having deep respect for the terminally ill and the elderly, and never abandoning them. This also means loving even our enemies and seeing that persons convicted of crimes too have dignity. Therefore, acts such as assisted suicide or the death penalty as a form of revenge are not consistent with the culture of life.

These are not easy challenges. Yet when you root your life in faith and prayer, God will give you the strength necessary to help build a culture of life.

IN FAVOR OF LIFE

- Form a small group and discuss how you can speak out in favor of life as a sacred gift from God.
- Using art, music, or role-play, illustrate what you have discussed. Draw a rough sketch here, then complete a final work of art to show, play or demonstrate to the class.

MY FAITH CHOICE

This week I can continue to choose life by _____

PRAY

Lord, help me to love others as you have loved me. Amen.

Recall

Define each of these faith vocabulary terms:

1. sanctifying grace _____
2. holiness _____
3. soul _____
4. intellect _____
5. free will _____
6. actual grace _____
7. Beatitudes _____
8. solidarity _____

Choose one of the following questions, and write a short answer. Share with a partner.

9. What does it mean to say that every human being, from womb to tomb, is sacred?

10. Describe the Christian understanding of holiness.

Reflect

Using what you have learned in this chapter, briefly explain this statement:

"[We are] called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of [our] earthly existence . . ."

POPE JOHN PAUL II, EVANGELIUM VITAE (THE GOSPEL OF LIFE), 2

Share

Discuss with a partner how the Beatitudes guide you in your search for happiness on Earth. Be able to explain this to a second grader.

WITH MY FAMILY

Discuss as a family what truly makes your family happy. How does that happiness compare with the happiness that Jesus taught?

To Help You REMEMBER

1. God created each of us in his image with a body and a soul.
2. We are created out of love for eternal happiness with God.
3. Happiness on Earth is found in our call to holiness.



The BEATITUDES

Leader: In the Beatitudes Jesus gives us both a vision and practical guidelines to seek and find happiness. Let us open our hearts and minds in prayer.

All: Jesus, you are the way to holiness and happiness.

Reader 1: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

All: Jesus, you are the way to holiness and happiness.

Reader 2: Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

All: Jesus, you are the way to holiness and happiness.

Reader 3: Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

All: Jesus, you are the way to holiness and happiness.

Reader 4: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

All: Jesus, you are the way to holiness and happiness.

Reader 5: Blessed are the merciful, or they will be shown mercy.

All: Jesus, you are the way to holiness and happiness.

Reader 6: Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

All: Jesus, you are the way to holiness and happiness.

Reader 7: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

All: Jesus, you are the way to holiness and happiness.

Reader 8: Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:3-12

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are the way, the truth, and the life. Guide us in living as you taught so we may rejoice with you, the Father, and the Holy Spirit forever in eternal happiness.

All: Amen.

