

From the Deacons's Desk

Hope & Joy Killers:

In my homily this weekend on "Gaudete" or "Rejoice" Sunday, I made reference to the things in our lives which can kill our sense of joy and hope. Below is the list in more detail. I've know most of these in my life at one time or another. How many can you relate to?

- 1. Forgetting our inherent worth.** Your worth is not contingent on external factors like your titles, relationship status, financial situation or career. These are just roles you play in life. As a human being, you are inherently worthwhile and whole.
- 2. Worrying about the future.** When you worry about what might go wrong in your life, you're creating your own personal hell in an otherwise peaceful and beautiful present moment.
- 3. Comparison.** Mark Twain once said, "Comparison is the death of joy". Instead of comparing yourself to other people, or comparing everything you've ever experienced, accept that things are different and remember diversity and contrast make life interesting.
- 4. A lack of gratitude.** We can become so focused on what we don't have, that we forget to notice what we do have. Pause and appreciate all of the love, beauty, abundance and blessings already in your life, and you may be surprised to realize you are rich beyond measure.
- 5. Ignoring our heart and intuition.** Most people live a life others expect of them, not a life that is true to themselves — it's the top regret of the dying. Have the courage to follow your heart's song and trust your intuition. It is your most dependable guide.
- 6. Being ruled by our ego.** Your ego is your social mask and the image you have of yourself — it's insecure and easily bruised by life's events and other people's opinions. Learn to tap into your soul — your eternal essence, who you really are underneath all the labels. Unlike your ego, your soul is unconditionally loving, strong, wise and enduring.
- 7. Comfort zones.** We hold ourselves back from taking risks and going after our dreams because we feel secure, albeit unhappy, in the certainty of our current life. We forget that even our secure circumstances could change at any moment, so in many ways we are no more secure in the 'known' than in the 'unknown'.
- 8. Living in our heads.** We spend so much time living in our heads instead of being present in the moment. If you catch your mind drifting into problem-solving or worrying mode, try bringing it back to the present moment by taking a few deep breaths and feeling the sensations throughout your body.
- 9. Holding onto resentment and anger.** When you refuse to let go of past grievances and practice forgiveness, you are only holding yourself hostage. As Buddha said, "Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned."
- 10. Prioritizing things that don't matter.** We spend so much time on things that don't advance our dreams or make us feel fulfilled — like constantly checking our email or scrolling through social media. Save more of your time and energy for things that progress your life or really light you up.
- 11. Negativity.** The world is a reflection of your dominant thoughts and feelings. What you think, you become. If you constantly focus on your problems, struggles and worries, you will perpetuate the same circumstances again and again. If you start to think in positive terms, you will experience more positive results.
- 12. Resisting the present moment.** If you are not yet living your ideal life, make peace with this fact while working towards your goals. If you struggle against each day, resenting each task you need to complete, it will drain all your energy leaving nothing left in the tank for you to work towards your dreams.
- 13. Our interpretations and stories.** We are meaning making machines, and often we read meaning into situations that isn't really there. We assume people are unhappy with us when they're just tired. We assume we're being judged, criticized or excluded when it really isn't the case.

- 14. Living in the past.** If you cling too tightly to the past and relive the best moments over and over, you may not be making enough room for new beautiful moments and joyful experience to enter your life. Have faith that your life will continually unfold in new wonderful ways.
- 15. Having no patience.** To everything there is a season. Learn to trust in divine timing more — believe that you are in the right place doing the right things at the right time.
- 16. Guilt and shame.** We all make mistakes and act in ways that don't reflect our highest self at times. But that doesn't make us bad people. Forgive yourself, accept yourself, and remember that your actions are not who you are.
- 17. Waiting for the perfect moment.** We put off our dreams until we feel ready and all of the stars have aligned — and so we are left waiting year after year. Sometimes you have to jump and build your parachute on the way down. As the Zen proverb goes, "Leap and the net will appear."
- 18. Limiting beliefs.** We've collected a range of limiting beliefs from our childhood, the media and the status quo. Beliefs like there is a single definition of success, there is such a thing as normal, and we are a certain kind of person. These unhelpful beliefs keep us trapped. Spend some time releasing and replacing them.
- 19. Putting our happiness on hold.** We put our happiness on hold until a day in the future when we're thinner, wealthier, more successful or have ticked off a suitable number of goals in life. We're forgetting that the journey is all there ever is, and if we can't learn to be happy today, it is unlikely that anything in the future will fill the void in our soul.
- 20. Fear.** We are terrified of experiencing the feeling of fear and will often do anything to avoid it. While fear can make us uncomfortable, it cannot stop us from moving forward — unless we let it. Learn to live with the feeling of fear and move ahead anyway.
- 21. Caring what others think.** We give away so much of our energy, power and inner peace by worrying about what others think about us and our choices. The truth is we can't ever know for certain what other people are thinking — and they can never experience life from our point of view, so we are the more appropriate expert on ourselves and our decisions.
- 22. Constant busyness.** Don't mistake making a living with making a life. When life gets busy, slow down and reassess. Take a deep breath. Spend one minute doing nothing. Meditate. Make time for things which replenish your well and brighten your soul.
- 23. Repeating the same mistakes.** As the saying goes, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results". When something is not working in your life, don't continue to bury your head in the sand — learn the lesson and make some changes.
- 24. Letting our emotions consume us.** When a strong negative emotion arises, we often let it take us over completely, losing ourselves in the feeling of anger, pain or jealousy. Learn to observe your hot emotions when they occur, and remember you are separate from and above them; they are not who you are. You can continue to watch them until they fade away.
- 25. Expectations.** We expect the bus to be on time, the queue to be short, the café to have our favorite salad, and our partner and friends to act in accordance with our every wish. Try approaching life with more curiosity, acceptance and an open mind.
- 26. Forgetting your higher purpose.** David Campbell once said, "Discipline is remembering what you want." Spend time determining your values, your dream life vision and your purpose — and then use these to guide you each year. Otherwise you will get swept away by the pull of the world and other people's wishes and views.
- 27. All talk and no action.** You can read all the faith, self-help and success books in the world, attend seminars, go to classes and read articles like this one, but nothing will change in your life until you start putting that knowledge into practice. Stop reading, start doing.