

Coming Up

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A two day seminar for married couples exploring spirituality and sexuality in the Catholic context.

2007

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2008

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Brisbane, QLD Mar 8 & 9
Christchurch, NZ Mar TBD
Perth, WA Mar TBD
Wodonga, NSW Mar TBD
Warnervale, NSW Apr 5 & 6
Melbourne, VIC Apr/May TBD
Kent, GB Jun 7 & 8
Sydney, NSW Aug TBD
Brisbane, QLD Sep TBD
Birmingham, GB 1 & 2 Nov
Sydney, NSW Nov TBD

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Smart Loving

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Part 5 of the 'Quest for Happiness' series.

The Marriage Myth

Too many times have we heard the complaint – "I'm just not happy in this marriage anymore". For couples today, personal happiness has become the measure of whether a marriage is 'working' or more often, not. The mass media and our romantic fantasies conspire to convince us that we have a right to expect happiness from our marriage, or more specifically, from our spouse. When it doesn't happen, we conclude that the marriage is failing and that it must be our spouse's fault.

According to Frank Pittman, a leading therapist, marriage isn't supposed to make you happy, it's supposed to make you married!

An even more insightful perspective is the Christian one: the purpose of Marriage is not to make you happy; it's purpose is to make you holy. Holiness is about being orientated towards a divine purpose, devoted to the service of God which, in the Christian tradition, is lived out as service to others. A holy person is capable of putting their own needs and desires second to the good of others. Marriage develops us, matures us, extends us. It enlarges our capacity for generosity and teaches us about deeper values than the mere pursuit of our own personal happiness.

For many spouses, the times when they are most 'holy', are the times when they could conclude they were least happy. We're thinking of the compassionate care by our friend David, who nursed his wife throughout debilitating motor neuron disease. Or the extraordinary grace of Karen who extended genuine mercy and forgiveness to her adulterous (and remorseful) husband. Neither would say they were overly happy during these challenging periods of their lives. But they were certainly holy.

Moreover, we have yet to meet a **holy** person who was not filled with a sustained joy; a truer form of 'happiness' (see Smart Loving July 06). Self-giving (or loving) without condition is a sure path to holiness, and ultimately to lasting joy. Certainly marriage is not supposed to make us unhappy, but wise couples do not fall for the fallacy of believing the marriage itself must provide their happiness.

So... next time you find yourself griping about your spouse, think about how your disappointment might be a stepping stone to holiness. You may not be feeling especially happy in that moment, but if you turn your heartache towards the good of others, you will certainly have a different kind of positive emotion – the joyful fulfilment of knowing that you are a person of integrity and goodness.

