



Parish of the Nativity of the Lord

Book+Circle – November 2023

Finding Happiness – A monk's guide to a fulfilling life

About the Book

Now more than ever, people are searching for happiness, but not everybody knows how to find it. Why is 'being happy' such an imperative nowadays? What meaning do people give to happiness? In this book Abbot Christopher turns to monastic wisdom to offer answers, and to explain that in essence, happiness is a gift, not an achievement, the fruit of giving and receiving blessings. Abbot Christopher takes different aspects of happiness, examines them, tells us what monastic wisdom has to say about them, and offers us steps towards our own journey to finding happiness.

How did the book make us feel?

- We all felt enlightened having read this book. Abbot Christopher puts much of our Catholic teaching on the 7 (8) deadly sins into a very real context. The book prompted lots of new thinking for all of us.
- We all enjoyed reading this book and felt we would want to read it again, there is so much depth and very positive thinking about how to deal with the challenges of life today.

What did we think were the book's main strengths?

- Abbot Christopher strips everything back and starts to rebuild our understanding of the hollowness in today's culture through the eyes of spiritual understanding, and the importance of approaching things in a different way.
- His approach to explore the meaning of 'happiness' was very interesting. And we all enjoyed the discussion around 'love'.
- We found the references to a monk's life throughout the book intriguing and how it can be just as difficult for them as for the 'lay' person to deal with the 7 deadly sins. We chuckled at the section about monks avoiding 'bishops and women'!
- Abbot Christopher's tone is very gentle, very understanding as he explores the '8 thoughts'.
- The consumer society we live in today, with social media and marketing bombarding our every thought makes it a real challenge to keep a spiritual focus but Abbot Christopher helps us understand how to deal with this.
- On a practical level the book was a nice size, easy to pop in a bag and read anywhere.

What did we think were the book's main weaknesses?

- Very few weaknesses, Abbot Christopher is a fluent writer.
- The sub title to the book, with reference to a 'monk's guide' ..., could put some readers off thinking the book was more relevant to the religious than to lay people.
- Perhaps a criticism was that the book gets into lots of detail very quickly before the reader has quite grasped the subject matter of the book, it almost needed a small explanation that this was going to happen.

Would we recommend that this book is read by others?

- Yes, we felt this is a helpful book for anyone that wants to better understand the context of their life in today's society. Very powerful.
- Having read Finding Sanctuary and this guide to Finding Happiness we all agreed we would read other books by Abbot Christopher

Next Books & Diary Dates to end 2023

- **Thursday 14th December 8pm.** Book: **Pope Francis'** follow up letter to Laudato Si – called **Laudate Deum**

Small Meeting Room at St Joseph's