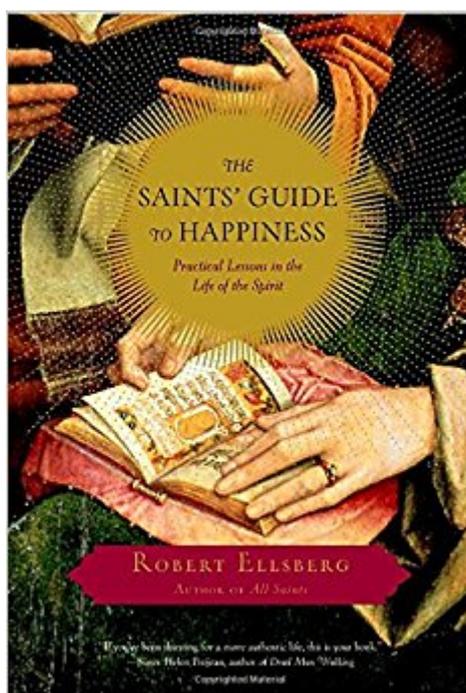


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The Saints' Guide To Happiness: Practical Lessons In The Life Of The Spirit



Synopsis

“What is happiness and how can I find it?” may be one of the most frequently asked questions there is. Perhaps that’s because it is so hard to experience lasting happiness. In *The Saints’ Guide to Happiness*, Robert Ellsberg suggests that some of the best people to show us are holy men and women throughout history—from St. Augustine to Flannery O’Connor, Thomas Merton to St. Theresa of Avila and Mother Theresa. These people weren’t saints because of the way they died or their visions or wondrous deeds. They were saints because of their extraordinary capacity for goodness and love, which in the end makes us happy.

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Customer Reviews

It takes a gifted writer to engage readers in a book of insights from men and women commonly understood to have spent their lives so close to God that they were unusual in almost every way. In this eloquent, seamlessly woven and delightfully readable book, Catholic convert Ellsberg, editor-in-chief of Orbis Books, makes the spiritual struggles and triumphs of sanctified men and women accessible and relevant to believers who grapple with the tension between the desire for earthly pleasure and the call to leave all behind and follow Jesus Christ. Giving this series of life lessons a vivid immediacy is the fact that Ellsberg ranges far and wide in his choice of saintly examples, including some non-Catholics and many modern icons of holiness. In the chapter on learning to suffer, for instance, 14th-century mystic Julian of Norwich and 20th-century Catholic writer Henri Nouwen fittingly illustrate Ellsberg’s point that affliction can become an instrument of

grace and transfiguration. What unites all the saints, he argues, is their ability and decision to see God's hand at work in the whole composition of their lives. Interwoven with moments of gentle homage to his mentor, Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day, this volume suggests to Catholics and other Christian readers the possibility that happiness can come by using the lens of holiness to illumine their lives, both remarkable and ordinary. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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Saints are experts on holiness, but what do they know about happiness? The answer, Ellsberg says, depends on what we mean by happiness and on our understanding of holiness. Saints aren't all that different. They wonder about the meaning and purpose of life, and they feel disappointment and sadness. Some of the saints he discusses are reasonably remote (Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, Teresa of Avila), others quite modern (Thomas Merton, Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin). They all share finely developed senses of humanity and compassion, with which they remain ordinary in the best, most expansive sense of ordinariness. They model ideal behavior, setting standards to which we all can aspire. Ellsberg explores happiness through the lives and writings of these remarkable men and women, showing how relevant their stories are today but offering no guidance in the conventional sense. He insists that there is no way to happiness. Rather, there is a way of happiness. June Sawyers Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Robert Ellsberg gives us here what might be called a real spiritual self-help book. Not new to hagiography (see his *All Saints and Blessed among all Women*), Ellsberg has obviously spent many hours absorbing useful lessons from reading lives of the saints and many wisdom figures. He even lived with one if you are inclined as many are to consider Dorothy Day a saint. In this short volume he describes the attitude, approach and words of wisdom from more than 140 'saints' that speak clearly to our day-to-day desires and experiences. These saints range from Hebrew Testament prophets to contemporary writers and witnesses, including Abraham, Paul, Augustine Francis of Assisi, the three 'Terasas'--Avila, Lisieux and Calcutta, Thomas Merton, Day and Henri Nouwen. Theirs and others' wisdom and modeling are brought together to guide our ongoing quest for vibrant living, fulfilling work and real loving. The more contemplative side of life is addressed in his chapters devoted to how to let go, sit still, suffer and learn to see. Weaving gospel and other scriptural passages into his narrative description of how saints lived their lives and what they said about it

Ellsberg helps the reader do the same, connect Scripture to life. This was the unanimous judgment of a men's faith sharing group I belong to over the past year which gathered weekly to reflect on the Sunday gospel readings in a lectio divina style while also taking a few pages each week of *The Saints' Guide to Happiness* to include in such reflections and their daily applications. In his introduction Ellsberg gives the reader a glimpse of his own progression in coming to love and study the lives of the saints and a perspective with which to view the saints: "It is a mistake to think of saints simply as figures from long ago. They are everywhere in our midst....people we know or pass every day: people who remind us of God...When we are with such people, we come away feeling gladder, more grateful to be alive, perhaps wishing that we knew the "secret" of their inner illumination." Readers will indeed find that they 'feel gladder' and that the saints come alive in a new way from the wealth of wisdom in this book.

There are many saints....famous and not so famous. They have many different theological and political points of view. But they have in common the fact that human misery is not an obstacle to happiness or heaven on earth. This book will help you understand that happiness is not the lack of problems or kind of mind numbness in the middle of tragedy but the faith in the helping hand of God in those situations. This book also opens our knowledge about different types of saints. Saints are closer to us than we think. Maybe there is one in our school, in our factory, in our office, or in our family...maybe we can become saints...or we already are.

I am a big fan of Robert Ellsberg, who edited Dorothy Day's diary (a heroine of mine), and was once at the *Catholic Worker* in New York. His writing style is warm, personal, and very accessible. I like the wisdom he imparts from his study of the saints, and find it something I can apply to my own life. This is a great book for a spiritual seeker (don't have to be Catholic!), and someone who just wants to learn more about the saints.

I first found this book on a bargain shelf and bought it with an attitude - that Saints would be the last people to know about happiness. The stories quickly destroyed that thought. This is a beautiful and inspirational book that I now buy for others. Modern day saints (not the ones I automatically think of as a Catholic) are included bringing hope to this reader. I have never shared it with someone outside my faith system, but I would guess many would enjoy this book and find it inspiring.

Many problems for the general run of humans to attack, but God has sprinkled humankind

throughout the ages with saintly persons who have put Spirit and Grace to good use; and He shall continue this until this world is no more.

I love this book. It is so nicely written and interesting. Not at all sanctimonious or cheesy. This deals with real life, the condition of being human, in terms anyone can understand, and it inspires in the way that someone we love and admire inspires us to be a better person. It's a healthy read, mentally and emotionally nutritious (and delicious!)

"The Saints' Guide to Happiness" is a truly inspired work by renowned author Robert Ellsberg. Unfortunately, the hardcover version is currently out of print, however with a little ingenuity they are still floating around and may be purchased online. The book offers in-depth contemplations and revelations on how to live the Word in our daily lives. With the saints as role models, Mr. Ellsberg guides the reader through some of the more difficult avenues we experience as human beings... forgiveness, love of neighbor, love of self, realizing death as the ultimate human experience... I have purchased and given away several copies of this book - all received with many thanks from friends and family - and recommend it highly.

Wonderful book. Great guide for growth in discipleship.

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