

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

MORE ON BEING HAPPY

Last week I noted that I have been pondering on happiness and what it is that make us happy! So a bit more...

Most commentators and researchers on the subject agree that it is not material possessions that make us happy. However what does seem to be coming through is that a sense of self worth and enough material wealth to provide us with our basic life needs and to make us feel genuine participants in our communities are base lines for happiness. What is also coming through the research is that having a partner or close friends and being employed (if that is what we wish) contribute more to happiness than does our wealth or income. Further, NZ economist Brian Easton points out that money and possessions are often used these days to create an image of self worth in society. But, he notes, people's real worth in society is seldom related to their income—the very wealthy often contribute little of real worth (think Paris Hilton).

We need to resist being seduced by bigger and bigger houses and the latest model cars or cell phones! The social value of many people earning low wages is often greater than those we are encouraged to 'look up to', who appear on Rich Lists or magazine covers. Easton suggests that the idea that 'more is better' is a faulty assumption in our economic thinking. Beyond having 'enough', further wealth does not appear to make us either significantly more happy or more valuable members of society.

So we need to keep asking ourselves what role can we play as church, or can the media play, in changing social attitudes that seem to suggest just having money, or the things money can buy, makes us happy?

Susan Adams