



# Carmelite Spiritual Center

7-00

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## Life is Worth Giving

More Steps to True Spiritual Happiness

by Fr. Kevin Shanley, O.Carm.

There has been such an unusual response to the first column entitled "Seven Steps to Spiritual Happiness," that this writer has been encouraged to add seven more steps to the original ones. Indeed, such encouragement has also resulted in an entirely new program offered at the Carmelite Spiritual Center in Darien, IL. And here they are:

1) Read Scripture to Become Aware of God's Love and Trust in Your Life. Both the Old and the New Testaments are overflowing with God's "Love Story" for His believing and beloved people. Readers should be able to identify with and rejoice that they are part of that story, and be filled with love and trust in the Lord.

2) Stop Critizing Others, and Yourself; Accept Unconditional Love from God and Others. Criticism is almost always a negative experience, and seldom does much good. Encouragement and affirmation, however, are much more likely to bring about good results. Then we can begin to give and receive true love — with no negative strings attached.

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3) Re-discover Rest in Your Life; Don't Wait for Eternal Rest. Too often Seniors and others have a sense of diminishing time in their lives, and try to cram in activities. They would do well to remember the old Irish saying, "The one who invented time certainly made a lot of it." We need to enjoy our time with ourselves and others, and measure it by quality not quantity.

4) Express Gratitude Joyfully and Often to Others; Accept Forgiveness Easily. "Gratitude is the memory of the heart" is an old saying that reminds us that we need to express our thanks to those who have shown us kindness. And forgiveness should be graciously accepted, too. It is often difficult to say, "I'm sorry." Make it easy for others!

5) Stop Wasting Time on Perfectionism; Celebrate Whatever Progress Happens. St. Luke's Gospel encourages us to be as "compassionate" as our Heavenly Father is. When we reach out to others, alleviating their sufferings, then we are truly God-like. Then we can celebrate even small advances we make in our spiritual lives.

6) Pray About Painful and Difficult Emotions (e.g., Fear, Sorrow) in Your Life; Pray for Self and Others. Too often we neglect to pray about difficult emotions in our lives, as though God ~~was~~<sup>(WERE)</sup> not truly interested in such things.

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God is truly interested in all aspects of our lives, and focusing on them in prayer helps us to understand that God is loving and caring. And so are we when we pray for others in our lives.

7) Pray about Conflict; Learn to Cope with It in Your Life. Too often conflict is such a negative experience in life that we don't even want to face up to it in prayer. This is especially true of conflict among family members and/or friends. But when we pray about conflict, we can often learn to resolve, or at least cope, with it in our lives and the relationships with others.

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