



Lessons From the Pope

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Recently Pope Francis visited the United States. It was fascinating to see the response as millions of people stood in line for hours just to get a glimpse of him. Every day there were things that attracted both Catholics and non-Catholics alike to attend in person or to observe by television. Three things particularly caught my attention:

1. His Stamina - The Pope is 78 years of age. He has only one lung, a bad back and sometimes struggles with balance issues. Despite this, he rises every morning at 4 a.m. and takes few breaks during his busy schedule that involves walking and standing for long periods of time. Even though there are always throngs of people eager to touch or speak with him, he never seems to be in a hurry and still is able to defy the itinerary that was prepared for him by always being early for his next event.

2. His Mission - During one of the television broadcasts of his United States visit a commentator made a statement that was simple but profound. He said "When you are the Pope, you have to be comfortable with messiness". Of course, he meant the messiness of the world and people's lives. Most of us don't like messiness. We want everything to go smoothly and in our favour. As a result, we look for quick solutions to problems and make a big deal out of it when things don't go the way we want or how we planned them. The Pope, on the other hand, knows that people might never recognize their need for God unless they have troubles that they cannot solve themselves. You see, you can't have a testimony unless you have first had a test. Pope Francis knows that his work involves dealing with problems that people face at an individual level as well as problems that the world is facing.

3. His Message - During a speech to the Bishops of the church, Pope Francis talked about how our world has changed over the years. He compared the past to a small, friendly corner store where people were able to purchase everything they needed and could trust the owners who they got to know over time. The world of today, he said, is more like a large, supermarket that is impersonal. Pope Francis wisely explained that despite technology where people think that they are connected and getting the attention they crave, the world is really suffering from loneliness and a fear of commitment. His underlying message, of course, is to reconnect with God and with other people.

Well, you certainly don't have to be Roman Catholic to learn from the Pope. We can all learn to practice self-care so that we are physically able to be well and perform well. We can follow Pope Francis' lead when it comes to "messiness" and instead of looking for a quick fix, be thoughtful and allow our characters to strengthen during our challenges. Thirdly, we can reduce or even eliminate our own and the world's loneliness by reaching out to others.

It wasn't easy for a man who is more than a decade past normal retirement age to go half way around the world and then put in long hours with people who were crazy to take everything they could from him. But he seemed happy and blessed to do this. And I am likely just one of millions who benefited.