**Because I’m happy**

What do Pope Francis and Pharrell Williams have in common?

Some of you will recognize the refrain “Because I’m happy.” It is from Pharrell Williams’s song “Happy” from the soundtrack of the movie Despicable Me 2, produced in 2013. The song peaked at No. 1 in more than 30 countries around the world. The repeating lyrics in the song are:

Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof.

Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth.

Clap along if you know what happiness is to you.

Clap along if you feel like that’s what you wanna do.

The contagious, upbeat song seems to tap into something pure and natural. It’s hard not to keep your feet from moving, which I’m sure was Williams’s intention. The simple lyrics also move on several levels.

“A room without a roof” could simply be a line to rhyme with the next verse that ends in truth.” But on a deeper level, “a room without a roof” speaks of freedom and sunshine. It’s an invitation to look at the sky and think of the possibilities of human achievement.

Similarly, the second line, which equates happiness with truth, calls to mind Pope Francis’ recent interview in which he laid out his 10 steps to happiness.

In order to achieve happiness, the pope says, we need to live and let live. Above all, he says, respect everyone’s opinion, everyone’s truth. We may not agree with a person’s belief or lifestyle, but that does not inherently make it any less valid.

The third line, “Clap along if you know what happiness is to you,” could go along with the pope’s fourth and fifth steps to happiness: Be available to your children and family, especially on Sundays.

Life is short. When we are near the end, we will look back on the time we spent with our families as the best of times. If you remember, happiness to a child always revolves around family.

Children live in the present. Although monetary gains may be important for future educational needs and security, quality time spent with loved ones trumps any bank draft.

The fourth line of Pharrell Williams’s song, “Clap along if you feel like that’s what you wanna do,” speaks of an action step. We need to actively strive for happiness.

Pope Francis also challenges us along these lines. He says that to be happy, we must give ourselves tirelessly to others, actively work for peace, care for the environment, and empower young people.

Happiness, in other words, takes us out of ourselves and into the sphere of others. Seeking happiness through helping others will surely complicate our lives, but being a friend who cares is worth any risk.

Pope Francis and Williams give us the constructive advice to move on.

Pharrell Williams says it in his dance moves; the pope says it in his interview and lives it in his kindness.

We have all had moments we would like to live over. That is impossible, but it is not impossible to have a willingness to let the next moment be better than the last. This is Christian maturity.

St. Peter is our example on this front. He made many blunders that are chronicled in the Gospels. I’m sure he made many more that were not so well publicized.

The important thing is that he did not let those blunders immobilize him. He learned from his mistakes and kept moving forward.

Asking for the grace to forgive ourselves as well as others will lead us far down the road we need to travel.

Happiness is an elusive term. Can a person be happy, for example, with a debilitating disease or living in substandard conditions? Perhaps. Psalm 4 says:

“‘What can bring us happiness?’ many say. Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord. You have put into my heart a greater joy than they have from abundance of corn and new wine. I will lie down in peace, and sleep comes at once, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.”

Finally, the saying “Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life” is attributed to Confucius. That’s sound advice from a wise man.

Choosing a job that helps others and builds up the Kingdom of God is the noblest of career paths. Happiness may fleetingly shine on us by accident or chance, but we need to seek it out for it to be all embracing.

Happiness, in Pharrell Williams and Pope Francis’ way of thinking, should spark our imagination and seek out the greater good.

If we can make this pursuit our life’s work, we should have no problem finding happiness. Clap along if that’s what you wanna do.