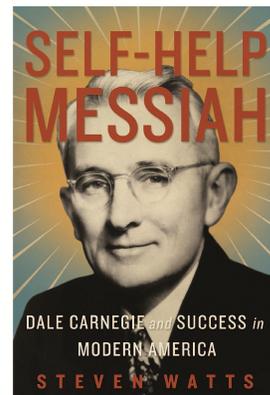


Recently, I read *The Self-Help Messiah: Dale Carnegie and Success in Modern America* by Steven Watts. I enjoyed it. The book is a biography. However, it does explore why the teachings of Dale Carnegie, the famous 20th century self-improvement guru, resonated so strongly among Americans, particularly, mid 20th century Americans. Basically, up until the Great Depression it was believed and taught that character was the key to success. It was rooted in Christian principles. Yet, as more and more rural Americans and immigrants moved to the cities and entered corporate America, they felt their character didn't mean much to anyone. They felt like mere cogs in a machine. In turn, Carnegie in his book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) emphasized three traits that modern workers needed to develop in order to succeed. They are: enthusiasm, self-confidence and friendliness. According to Carnegie, the easiest and



best way to improve your looks and personality is simply smile and ask someone how they are doing or ask them something about themselves. The one thing to avoid at all costs is a fight. It's better to walk away or diffuse a heated conversation than score points. It's more important to keep relationships alive. Traditionalists, even clergy, railed against Carnegie that he was promoting superficiality. To his credit, however, Carnegie did not discount character but he believed that if you want to stand out in a crowd, be enthusiastic, self-confident and friendly. I think it's worth thinking about.



Now fast forward to the morning of July 5th. I was with family at the beach. I was having coffee and a sausage and egg sandwich for breakfast at a local establishment. The cafe was empty outside of staff. In walks NBC News personality Hoda Kotb. She had just worked out and is all smiles and personality.



She personified enthusiasm, self-confidence and friendliness. She's saying hello to the entire staff. Then she walks by me with a huge smile and asks how I'm doing and eagerly awaits my answer. I look over my shoulder thinking beautiful women don't smile at me and simultaneously ask how I'm doing. What do you know, this time one did. We start talking. I told her I'm a priest and I think my parishioners would get a kick out of a picture of me with her. She told me to give her my phone because she takes the best selfies. I thanked her. I don't think it's too big of a stretch to say we will now be BFFs. My delusions aside, she made me feel special by simply smiling at me and asking how I was doing. I think it's worth asking ourselves are we men and women of character who are enthusiastic, self-confident and friendly, at least within the parameters of our own personalities? If not, we should be. It's Catholic.

By the way, after I returned to the house, my family told me not to feel special, Hoda is like that with everyone. Also, apparently, the savvy celebrity always controls the encounter with the geeky super fan and takes the selfie so they don't have to stand there forever waiting for the fan to take the "perfect" photo. There is nothing like family to bring you back to earth.