

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

November 3, 2013

Spiritual Ponderings

Virtue Development

As we enter into the month of November we also remember to the familiar November topic of virtues and their developments. Pope Benedict XVI in his first homily as pope said the following: "The world promises you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness." As Catholics we believe that we are called to grow and to better ourselves and the way to do this is to grow in virtues rather than vices. As we continue our journey through the virtues we turn again to Barbara C. Unell and Jerry L Wyckoff and their book *20 Teachable Virtues: Practical Ways to Pass on Lessons of Virtue and Character to Your Children* to help guide us. Let us look at our first virtue.

Peacemaking

Peace-mak-er n. one who makes peace as by reconciling parties at variance.

Peace n. 1. The normal, nonwarring condition of a nation, a group of nations, or the world. 2. A historical period during which such a condition exists. 3. A state of harmony among people or groups. 4. The freedom from disorder normal in a community. 5. Cessation of or freedom from any strife or dissensions.

In order to be a good peacemaker, I think it is of primary importance to know where you are getting your self-worth from. I know that when I am getting my self-worth from the opinion of others, or from what I have, or from what I do, I am more likely to defend these things and not be a peacemaker. When I get my identity from God then I realize that it does not matter whether or not I am right or wrong because God loves me no matter what. The question no longer becomes what will build me up but rather what is the truth. Jesus received His identity from His relationship with His Father as seen at His Baptism with the voice from heaven. Jesus, firmly rooted in His identity, did not have to protect his possessions or his popularity. He could simply speak the truth. Being free in this way also allowed Jesus to cross many social boundaries in His days to reconcile people to God. He did not care what people thought of Him touching a leper or talking to a woman for His identity was rooted in the Father. People could insult Him, and ultimately kill Him and He responded only with love and forgiveness.

I have been watching a television series on Netflix called *Flashpoint*. In the show the police follow a simple creed to "keep the peace" by this simple formula – connect, respect, and protect. In connecting with the individual they try to communicate in a civil manner with the individual (who is often committing some crime) and at first this seems contradictory because most people first start yelling at someone who is doing something wrong. Connecting though allows them to show respect to the individual. As Catholics we proclaim that everyone is worthy or respect no matter what they have done and so this is a neat part of the show to see in action. The police officers show respect by treating them the person as a human being. The third thing they do is protect and by doing this they show something else and that there is a universal moral code. At no time do they lie to the people they are interacting with. If someone committed a crime they don't promise them no jail time. They do promise though to help the person through it. They also protect themselves and others. Life is too precious for them to become human targets. I wonder how many of our relationships would get better if we try to connect (begin talking with the person we are in conflict with), respect (show them at least common courtesy) and finally protect (not let them do harm to themselves or others.)

10 Steps to develop the virtue of peacemaking

1. Try to understand the needs and wants of another person
2. Try to find ways in which everyone can be satisfied
3. Listen to others tell you their complaints and try to get to the feelings behind their discontent.
4. Practice being assertive without getting angry.
5. Ask yourself why you are holding onto the position that you have.
6. Root yourself in the Gospel values. What would Jesus do?
7. Use "I statements" and not "you statements". "I felt hurt" is better than saying "you hurt me."
8. Pray for the person you are in conflict with
9. Remember win or lose that your identity comes from God and not from others
10. Make sure you stand up on the side of truth and not just the popular side.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
November 10, 2013
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Virtue Development

As we continue to reflect on different virtues and how we can make them a part of our repertoire let us remember Pope Benedict XVI's quote "The world promises you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness." As Catholics we believe that we are called to grow and to better ourselves and the way to do this is to grow in virtues rather than vices. As we continue our journey through the virtues we turn again to Barbara C. Unell and Jerry L Wyckoff and their book *20 Teachable Virtues: Practical Ways to Pass on Lessons of Virtue and Character to Your Children* to help guide us. Let us look at our second virtue.

Self-reliance

Re-li-ance n. Confident or trustful dependence. 2. Something relied on.

Self-reliance is a virtue that is quickly going away or is at least getting harder and harder to teach. Things that use to take time and skill can be done with a touch of a button. For example, the other day I decided that I wanted to cook some cobbler in my Dutch oven. I first started the charcoal fire in order to get the charcoal nice and hot. Then I went in and dumped all the ingredients into the cast-iron Dutch oven pot. Finally I placed the Dutch oven on top of some of the hot coals and placed some hot coals on top of the Dutch oven lid so that the cobbler would cook evenly. As I was cooking the Dutch oven, I came to appreciate modern conveniences realizing that cooking with a Dutch oven was the way that many meals had to be prepared before we had gas or electric ovens.

Practicing the virtue of self-reliance does not mean that we have to be doomsday preparers but it does mean that we should be able to face difficult situations with confidence. If we have a flat tire on the road we may not be able to fix the tire but we should be able to call for help and not panic.

Practicing the virtue of self-reliance I think also means that we can try an option and if it fails we can try something else without beating ourselves up about it.

Here are four practical tips in order to become self-reliant.

1. Assume responsibility. Start taking responsibility for your life and the things in it. Don't assume that life is going to take you where you want to go or make you the person that you want to be. Make sure you are the person who is waking yourself up in the morning and not your mother. Keep track of your own appointments and important due dates. Finally don't blame your teachers, bosses, or others if you are not doing well. Figure a way around them if necessary. If you see them as an obstacle like a traffic jam don't sit there in traffic and honk your horn as a victim. Instead try different side streets until you get around the roadblock.
2. Be informed. Make sure you take time to learn about the many different things that affect your life and how they work so that you can understand them when you cannot access Google.
3. Know where you are going. What are your goals and how are you going to get there. Don't give into peer pressure.
4. Make your own decisions. One thing I've learned the hard way is that life is actually much easier and a lot less stressful when you proactively make your own decisions. It's tempting when you're younger to simply let life happen to you and hope that decisions and problems will magically resolve themselves. They won't. In fact, problems and decisions often get bigger and harrier the longer you wait to take action on them. Make proactive decision-making a habit. With any choice or problem you may face, decide on an action plan quickly, and execute it immediately.

10 Steps to develop the virtue of self-reliance

1. Try to make an association between pleasant activities and self-generated activities
2. Try not to react to the environment but rather be proactive

3. Encourage your creativity and imagination
4. Practice putting aside immediate gratification for delayed gratification
5. Perform activities that encourage self-reliance such as Jig-saw puzzles and exercise
6. Think about how you have accomplished tasks before
7. Practice brainstorming different solutions to different problems
8. Get other peoples feedback and learn from your mistakes
9. Get other peoples feedback and treasure the things you do well.
10. Look for opportunities to serve.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
November 17, 2013
Spiritual Ponderings
Virtue Development

Today we will look at the virtue of self-motivation and once again we will be using insights from Barbara C. Unell and Jerry L Wyckoff and their book *20 Teachable Virtues: Practical Ways to Pass on Lessons of Virtue and Character to Your Children* to help guide us. Let us look at our third virtue.

Self-Motivation

Mo-ti-vate vb. To provide with a motive

Mo-tive n. 1. something that causes a person to act 2. Moving or tending to move to action. 3. of or relating to motion or causing of motion.

Charles Dubois, an English author, once said, "We must be prepared, at any moment, to sacrifice who we are for who we are capable of becoming."

Michelangelo was quoted as saying: "The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark."

In Jesus' parable of the man who received 5 talents, the man who received 2 talents, and the man who received one talent, remember, the major complaint was the lack of self-motivation of the person who buried the talent out of fear. The other two went forth and made a profit because they were self-motivated. (Mathew 25) What are we doing with the talents that God has given us.

The following are some ideas on how to become self-motivating.

10 Terrific Self Motivating Tips By Mike Moore

No one can motivate anyone to do anything. All a person can do for another is provide them with incentives to motivate themselves. Here are ten very effective strategies to help you get up and get moving toward actualizing your enormous, untapped potential.

- * Be willing to leave your comfort zone. The greatest barrier to achieving your potential is your comfort zone. Great things happen when you make friends with your discomfort zone.
- * Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Wisdom helps us avoid making mistakes and comes from making a million of them.
- * Don't indulge in self-limiting thinking. Think empowering, expansive thoughts.
- * Choose to be happy. Happy people are easily motivated. Happiness is your birthright so don't settle for anything else.
- * Spend at least one hour a day in self-development. Read good books or listen to inspiring tapes. Driving to and from work provides an excellent opportunity to listen to self-improvement tapes.
- * Train yourself to finish what you start. So many of us become scattered as we try to accomplish a task. Finish one task before you begin another.

- * Live fully in the present moment. When you live in the past or the future you aren't able to make things happen in the present.
- * Commit yourself to joy. C.S. Lewis once said, "Joy is the serious business of heaven."
- * Never quit when you experience a setback or frustration. Success could be just around the corner.
- * Dare to dream big dreams. If there is anything to the law of expectation then we are moving in the direction of our dreams, goals and expectations. The real tragedy in life is not in how much we suffer, but rather in how much we miss, so don't miss a thing.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
November 24, 2013
Spiritual Ponderings
Virtue Development

Our final virtue this month is the virtue of Responsibility. As we look at this virtue let us once again turn to Barbara C. Unell and Jerry L Wyckoff and their book: *20 Teachable Virtues: Practical Ways to Pass on Lessons of Virtue and Character to Your Children* for more insights.

Responsibility

Re-spon-si-bil-ity n. 1. The state or fact of being responsible 2. An instance of being responsible. 3. A particular burden of obligation upon a person who is responsible. 4. Something for which a person is responsible. 5. Reliability or dependability, especially in meeting debts or payments.

In many ways we are the sum of all the choices of our life. There are things that happen to us that are outside our control but it is still how we choose to respond to such situations that define us. In many ways become exactly what we make them out to be.

A man came to me for advice the other day. He said his problem was that his children will not come and visit him anymore and thus he does not get to see his grandchildren anymore. I asked him, "Do you have any idea why your children don't come around anymore?" He answered that he did not. I asked him then, what would your son or daughter say if I asked them why they did not visit you anymore. He responded that his daughter and son would say something like, "they did not want him smoking, cussing and drinking in front of their children (his grandchildren)." I then preceded to ask the man if he smoked, cussed, and drank in front of his children and grandchildren and he said: "yes." I told him that this is where his problem was and that his actions were preventing his children from coming around and that he had to take responsibility for his actions and change them if he wanted to see his grandchildren again.

The following is a cute story about responsibility

The mouse trap by Stephen on February 5, 2010

A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package. "What food might this contain?" the mouse wondered. He was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap. Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning: "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it." The mouse turned to the pig and told him, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The pig sympathized, but said, "I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers." The mouse turned to the cow and said, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The cow said, "Wow, Mr. Mouse. I'm sorry for you, but it's no skin off my nose." So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house – like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital and she returned home with a

fever. Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient. But his wife's sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well; she died. So many people came for her funeral; the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them. The mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness. So, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem and think it doesn't concern you, remember, when one of us is threatened, we are all at risk. We are all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and make an extra effort to encourage one another. Each of us is a vital thread in another person's tapestry.

10 Steps to develop the virtue of Responsibility

1. Realize that learning responsibility is about learning to behave in a way so that others will trust you.
2. Means helping with the well-being of those around you especially family members
3. Means being able to feel what others feel and to understand their needs
4. Learning to respond with full knowledge of a situation
5. Learning to respond and understand the full needs of others
6. Learn to think about the outcomes and the impact they will have.
7. Learn to delay gratification
8. See the big picture
9. Realize that we are all connected with each other.
10. Realize that making mistakes is alright but making excuses does not really help

