

March 2014

Responsibility and Virtues

I. Introduction:

- A. For many (maybe most) men, growth in the virtues occurs when they take on *responsibility*; they get married and, even more, they have children. These responsibilities force them to acquire and act on many of the virtues. For example, they are forced to forego many pleasures (temperance) and to do many difficult things (fortitude) in order to support a family.
- B. On the other extreme, if all you do is play all day, and you don't have any serious responsibilities, you can easily lose the virtues. For example, sometimes when men retire (or are retired) they gradually lose the good work habits or virtues they had, and after a time it actually becomes hard for them to work a full 8 hour day. We tend to forget that we had to ramp up to that 8-10 hour day when we were young; those habits can be lost.

II. Review some basic points about virtues

- A. Virtues aim at good actions that produce certain goods for life.
 - 1. Fortitude: you do what is difficult to achieve/protect what is good.
 - 2. Temperance: you curb your indulgence of urges in order to do what is better (especially longer-term). E.g., you continue working when you would like to go watch the game, because you need to get the project done in order to have the business go well and so support your family. Or you do not spend money on food or drink when you have an urge to do so, because you need it for your kids' tuition.
 - 3. Prudence: you have to think about how to achieve the good; balance this good with all the other goods (health vs. education of your kids).
- B. Virtues are formed by repeated actions, but those actions are chosen actions
 - 1. An alcoholic who is on a desert island and does not drink for a year does not acquire the virtue of sobriety, because he has not *chosen* to abstain, but does so only because he it was forced on him by circumstances. Upon his return to civilization he would probably be in the same state as before.
 - 2. A man who puts staples in his stomach to lose weight does not necessarily develop temperance in regard to food. He is almost admitting that he is not capable of making the choices needed to curb his indulgence.

III. To form virtues, you normally need some serious good that has to be achieve/protected. Play is not enough.

- A. By "play" we refer to all the activities we engage in where it doesn't really matter whether you achieve your goal or not. For example, you miss the game winning shot at the buzzer. But in the end, life goes on just as it would have if you had made the shot. This is play. But if the surgeon makes a mistake with his scalpel and cuts your artery, life will not go on just the same.

- B. With just play it is hard to develop the virtues.
1. Because it does not really make a difference whether you succeed, there is little reason to endure great pain or forego great pleasure just for the sake of play.
 2. Also, if one just pursues play, one is usually just following an urge and so will never develop temperance. Addictions to games like video games are an instance of this.
- C. The pursuit and achievement of serious goods is the normal school of the virtues and character.
1. When you are responsible for serious goods, you can't just ignore them; you have to put out for them; you have to shape your life and your behavior around them. This requires virtuous actions. You have to do difficult things, you have to deny many urges, you have to control your anger, etc.
 2. Some of the serious goods to be achieved have to do with ourselves, such as our health (so you diet or exercise). Most goods are relative to others: family, clients, patients, students, etc. The best school of virtue is responsibility for other persons.
 - a. Most obvious example is having children; once parents have a child, they need to respond to its real needs and this leads them to many virtuous actions. They also have to give good example (as they eventually learn) and that also fosters growth in virtue.
 - b. This also happens in professional work: you are responsible in some way for the good of others (doctor responsible for others' health; handling their investments which may be their retirement; repairing their furnace, especially in winter; building a ship to transport stuff etc.). Also, if you do not perform well, you get fired.

IV. What opportunities do your kids have for responsibility?

- A. This is an important question. If all they have is play, it is hard to develop virtues; even they can see that it does not matter and so there is no reason to kill yourself for the goal: "Why face all this difficulty for a game?" or "Why deprive myself of these things just for a game?"
- B. When there are real goods involved, it is much easier to demand of them the acts of the virtues; easier for them to choose those acts themselves; and it is precisely this choosing of the acts that forms the virtues.
- C. In a way, it seems that it may have been simpler for kids to take on real responsibilities in older times.
1. Most people worked on farms; children very early on started to work (e.g., milking the cows); they had serious responsibilities that made them get up early, be careful not to spill the milk, make a contribution to the common

welfare. Later they had to get in the hay, plow the fields, harvest the crops, etc.

2. Family businesses also provide a lot of opportunities for real work and real reasonability

D. What do most families have nowadays?

1. Chores, schoolwork, learning instruments
2. Jobs and in general earning money. Working for someone else who pays you is an excellent way to grow in the virtues.
 - a. Delivering newspaper (get up early; rain or shine; hot or cold etc.).
 - b. Caddying; mowing lawns; work on a farm; baby-sitting.

V. Parents need to think of how their children can have real responsibilities so that they can develop their character.

- A. It's good for them to have responsibilities that involve more than themselves, e.g., the whole family. Something like mowing the lawn.
- B. It is good to have set responsibilities (as opposed to one-time commands. For example it is different to give a boy the job of keeping the lawn mowed from simply telling him to mow the lawn today. In the first case, he has to decide when to do it in an ongoing way. This means that he has to make the *choices* that are needed to grow in virtue. And if he does not live up to the responsibility, it gives the parents an opportunity to talk to him about it.

February 2014

The Virtue of Faith

I. What is Faith?

- A. Definition: Faith is the infused virtue by which we habitually believe all that God has revealed.
- B. Content of faith: what is it that we believe?
 1. We believe all that God has revealed through Jesus Christ and through his apostles (revelation ended with the death of the last apostle).
 2. The *Deposit of Faith* (term used for the whole of what has been revealed) was entrusted by Christ to his Church (the Catholic Church). So if we want to know what is included (or not included) in the Deposit of Faith, we look to the Church which has the task of teaching all the faithful (called its *Magisterium*). This falls especially to the Pope and the Bishops in communion with him.
 3. The content of our belief is summed up in the creeds; a fuller exposition is found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- C. Motive of our faith: why we believe

1. We believe because we think all this has been revealed by God who can neither deceive nor be deceived. You believe what someone tells you to the extent that you think they are trustworthy. God is absolutely trustworthy.
2. We also have the evidence of the miracles of Christ (and the apostles) as recorded in the Scriptures (reliable historical documents) well as the evidence of the supernatural character of the Church over the course of history. These reasons lead us to see that it make sense to believe what Christ taught and what the Church now teaches.

II. Faith as a theological virtue

A. Faith is an infused virtue.

1. It is not something we can acquire on our own (like math and science).
2. It comes with the sanctifying grace which we acquire at Baptism.

B. By virtue of faith we believe things that we could not know by our own natural powers (things that cannot be proven in the normal way we prove things)

1. The mysteries like the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharist.
2. The supernatural end of our life: to be with God eternally in heaven (the beatific vision).

III. Faith can grow deeper; it also can grow weaker and even be lost.

A. We have to work to actually learn the contents of our faith.

1. Different people have different levels of understanding; this is fine, since most people are not and never will be theologians. What matters is that each person accepts all that the Church teaches.
2. Each person needs to work to acquire as good an understanding as he is capable of.
3. Children need to be taught the truths of faith. This is one of the most serious obligations of a Christian parent (more important than health, good secular education, doing well in sports, etc., all of which are important).

B. Faith has to be professed externally (e.g., at Mass); may be necessary to profess faith even at the cost of one's life.

C. Faith has to be protected (or it will be lost).

1. There are many ideas that are contrary to the faith (e.g., materialism); if a person accepts those ideas he will lose his faith, because he simply cannot believe incompatible things (unless he has a very mushy brain).
2. To needlessly expose yourself to ideas contrary to the faith goes against this virtue (e.g., reading books by authors who attack the faith). We need to check books without someone well informed before reading them. The faith is under attack from all sides these days, so you have to be very

careful. People absorb ideas contrary to faith without realizing it (e.g. scientism).

3. Also moral problems: people who enter into habits of sin (esp. 6th commandment) may try to justify their behavior and so come to deny the faith (they want to deny moral law and so deny author of moral law or at least his revelation).

IV. Transmitting faith to children

- A. Most serious obligation; parents are stewards of God for raising the children he has entrusted to them (parents do not own their children).
- B. Need to catechize them
 1. The responsibility for catechizing children falls primarily on the parents; they cannot pass it off to the school or even the parish (CCD).
 2. Nowadays parents need to catechize in the home; otherwise it probably will not happen (or will be extremely superficial). This means that parents have to know the content of the faith very well so that they can teach it to their children. Parents should want their children to be prepared to pass on the faith to others, not merely keep it for themselves.
 3. Parents will owe an account to God for how they passed the faith on to their children.
- C. Providing a culture of faith for your children
 1. Besides directly teaching the truths of faith, parents need to provide a thoroughly Christian atmosphere, at least in their home. For the faith to “stick” it usually requires some support from one’s surrounding environment, especially for younger people.
 - a. This environment is, to begin with, the family. It extends to the (local) church and to friends and possibly to schools.
 - b. In better times and in Christian countries, this environment extended all the way to the wider society. It no longer does (nor has for many decades). The wider culture is now hostile to Christianity and children will find their faith under attack very often (just read the NYT).
 2. Need to consider the culture of one’s home: is it a thoroughly Christian culture? This does not mean one’s home is a church or a monastery, but only that all the life of the home reflects one’s Christian faith (e.g., grace at meals).
 3. Children will need to learn that, as Christians, we are in a number of ways different from others and they cannot expect always to be like the others. This will require fortitude.
 - a. They need to learn that this is because we Christians have the truth (a truth they are called to spread).

- b. They need to know that the other people are in error (no relativism or false understanding as in “You’re OK, I’m OK.”)
4. Some ways to build a Christian culture within the home
- a. Children taught basic prayers (they can know them by age 3);
 - b. Saying the family Rosary (important that they see their parents pray);
 - c. Presence of holy picture and statues;
 - d. Saying grace at meals;
 - e. Presence of Christian literature: Bible, saints’ lives, etc. starting at a very young age;
 - f. An explicit trust in divine providence (and also the need for praying for intentions and thanking God for gifts received);
 - g. Alms-giving; contributing to the Church (children can learn to tithe from a very young age);
 - h. Obedience to God’s law taken for granted (including laws of the Church);
 - i. Observation of feasts and Church seasons (following of laws on fast and abstinence; recognition of feast days in the meals, etc.)
 - j. Generosity in accepting the children God sends;
 - k. Appreciation for vocations of those called to serve God in celibate vocations.

April 2014

Inculcating virtues (3): Conceptual Explanations

VI. Introduction:

- A. In past sessions we have talked about various factors that are involved in the inculcation of virtues.
 - 1. Habituation: the repetition of the act by which a given habit is formed.
 - 2. The development of the moral imagination: enlarging and refining the child’s mental store of actions that are taken as good (virtuous) or bad (vicious). There are two main ways this happens:
 - a. Example: seeing people around them (especially parents) children can see models of how they should act and they learn how to act virtuously by imitating those models.
 - b. Literature: children can see many models of how to act virtuously in good literature in which good actions are portrayed as good and bad actions as bad. For example, lives of saints.

- B. Today we will talk about *conceptual explanations*. By this we mean direct explanations about character and virtue. This is actually teaching children about what character is, why it is important, what are the different virtues and vices, etc.
- C. We are not talking about sitting one's children down for a class or lecture. Rather, we mean the sort of explanation a parent will give at opportune times, usually when some suitable occasion arises (e.g., your son has done something that was a clear lack of a virtue).
- D. Here is nice example of this from *Little Britches*, an autobiographical book by Ralph Moody in which he describes what his father said to him when, at the age of 8-9, he had snitched some cake or candy and then lied to his mother about it:

“A man's character is like his house. If he tears boards off his house and burns them to keep himself warm and comfortable, his house soon becomes a ruin. If he tells lies to be able to do the things he shouldn't do but wants to, his character will soon become a ruin. A man with a ruined character is a shame on the face of the earth.”

VII. The importance of conceptual explanations

- A. Children should learn about character and virtue just as they do about math and science and grammar, etc.
 1. When you know any area like math, engineering, literature, or accounting you are able to talk about it with the concepts and vocabulary that are proper for it (e.g., an accountant can talk about debits, credits, ledgers, fund balances, straight line depreciation, etc.). If you do not have this conceptual knowledge, you really do not understand the field nor can you talk about things in this area with any degree of clarity or precision. Another example is grammar. If you do not know grammatical terms and concepts like nouns, verbs, adverbs, or clauses, you will not be able to talk about your writing (or anyone else's).
 2. Character and virtue are the same. They have their own set of concepts and vocabulary. If a person does not have them, he will be hobbled (or even crippled) when it comes to understanding character and virtue. He may have a vague sense that some things are good and others bad, but he will not be able to articulate it and talk about it.
 3. As in most things, you need to flesh it out for it to be understood. For a person to understand character, he needs to understand the many virtues and vices that make up a person's character.
 4. We don't just say about these other areas that they will “pick it up along the way.” We should not think that children will just learn about character and virtue “along the way.” They need to be taught the concepts and vocabulary.
- B. If children are taught explicitly about things like science and math, but are never taught about virtue and character, they can easily conclude that these latter are not so important. Or, more commonly, that these are just vague things about which

you cannot really know too much (mushy opinions vs. hard facts). This, in our day, can easily lead to moral relativism.

- VIII. What ideas should they learn (by the time they finish high-school)?
- A. What we mean by character (the set of virtues and vices a person has);
 - B. What we mean by a virtue and a vice (good and bad habits relative to success in life as a whole);
 - C. The connection between character and happiness (having a successful life);
 - D. The connection between character and friendship as well as the connection between character and gaining people's respect;
 - E. How actions form virtues and vices. They should know that every time they do a good thing they are strengthening a virtue, and every time they do a bad thing they are strengthening a vice or weakening a virtue.
 - F. Be able to identify virtues and vices in themselves and in others.

IX. How do you teach children these ideas?

- A. Normally not with classes or lectures as in a school class.
 1. Usually at the time or place where it is suitable. This is usually when they have acted well or badly (maybe more the latter), or when they have been exposed to a good example of a virtuous person or deed or a vicious person or deed.
 2. It could also be examples from literature or history.
 - a. E.g., Harry Potter is spiteful at times. Rejoices in the evil that happens to others. This is a vice.
 - b. Sam is loyal to Frodo
 - c. Boromir is proud.
 - d. George Washington was magnanimous.
- B. It is good to identify the virtue or vice and say what it is and point out how the instance at hand is an example of that. In this way, the example leads them to have an understanding of the general concept of things like fortitude or temperance.
- C. It is also good to show them why each virtue is important. E.g., if you lack fortitude and do not do what is hard, you will miss out on most of the best things in life; if you are not loyal to friends, you soon be without friends; if you cannot control your anger, you will lose your friends and no one will want to work with you, etc.
- D. Parents need to have a grasp of these ideas in order to transmit them. They generally need to study a bit. Actually good people will have an easy time grasping these concepts, since they generally have a vague intuitive knowledge of

them already (you know that laziness is bad, even if you cannot articulate the fact that it is a lack of fortitude).

January 2014

The Virtue of Justice

V. What is Justice?

- A. Definition: Justice is the virtue by which we habitually give to other persons what is due to them. To give them (or let them keep) what is theirs.
 - 1. Classical definition: to render to each person his right or that to which he has a right (*ius suum unicuique tribuere*); more briefly: to each his own (*suum cuique*).
 - 2. While fortitude and temperance deal primarily with ordering one's own inner passions (fears, desires, etc.), justice deals primarily with our external relationships with other persons.
 - 3. Basically justice means respecting the rights of others (their true rights and not made up rights like the "right" to abort a child or the "right" of a man to marry a man). Or, we can say that it means treating people fairly.
- B. We do not interact with other persons only in terms of rights (I respect what is yours and you respect what is mine); we also interact with them on the basis of friendships where we have things in common (instead of "yours" and "mine" there is "ours"). But justice is concerned with respecting other's rights.

VI. Kinds of justice

- A. Commutative: exchanges
 - 1. Commutative justice is the most familiar to us. It is the kind of justice found between individuals (as opposed to between an individual and the community to which he belongs).
 - 2. The basic rule of commutative justice: each individual should have his own (e.g., cars, houses, shoes, hands and feet, wives, etc.). This implies a basic distribution of goods--private property--as opposed to something like communism where all is owned collectively.
 - a. You don't take the other person's things without his consent.

- b. You give his things to him when they come into your possession (what was borrowed, lost, sold, etc.).
 - 3. Examples:
 - a. Paying your debts.
 - b. Keeping your word (promises, contracts).
 - c. Respecting the other's person: no murder, no maiming, not ruining their good name without true need; respecting their wives (no adultery), etc.
 - d. Respecting others' property: no stealing, no destroying, etc.
 - e. Returning to another person what is theirs if they should lose it and you find it (their cat or dog).
 - 4. Exchanges should be equal: no price gouging, usury, etc. (usually occurs when the other person is in a position of hardship and you take advantage of it).
- B. Legal justice: where the individual member of a community gives to the community what is due to it.
 - 1. You are obliged to make your contribution to the common good.
 - 2. Basic idea: you owe the community certain things and justice requires that you give them over to the community. The community can demand those things as its own (e.g., taxes).
 - 3. What you owe the community is usually spelled out by law (e.g., taxes, speed limits, construction codes for fire, etc.), hence the name of legal justice.
 - 4. Here is the larger issue of a person being ready to serve the common good as opposed to selfish concentration on his own individual good.
- C. Distributive justice:
 - 1. Has to do with the distribution of what is common within a community to the individual members of the community (e.g., profits in a partnership).
 - 2. This applies primarily to the one who has to do the distributing:
 - a. He needs to observe the rule governing the distribution. E.g., if the rule is that the 1000 available slots at the university will go to the top 1000 scores on the qualifying exam, then the person(s) who oversee the distribution of these slots have to hand them out according to the rule.
 - b. The temptation here is to favor oneself or one's own at the expense of the others. E.g., a bureaucrat who awards a slot in the university to his own nephew rather than to the person who scored higher on the qualifying exam). He did not give that student what he had coming to him according to the distribution.

3. Often, in more corrupt societies, bribery is used to get the person overseeing the distribution (usually a government official) to act unjustly.

VII. Other areas of justice

- A. There are certain people who have benefited us greatly and to whom we owe (as a matter of justice) honor and obedience.
 1. Parents: this is called piety.
 2. Our country: patriotism.
- B. Religion: giving due honor to God (a very big area here).

VIII. How do you instill virtue of justice

- A. Example and literature.
- B. Teaching children to be fair (as opposed to favoring themselves).
- C. Instilling a kind of objectivity: justice demands giving others what is theirs; this requires an objectivity to see that and not measure everything by its impact on me (as children tend to do).
- D. Teaching them to be fair, not to lie, to keep their word (commitments); not to steal (not to “borrow”); not to cheat in school or in games etc.

February 2014

Theological Virtues

X. Introduction:

- A. The most important of the virtues are the theological virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity.
- B. As virtues, they are habits (stable interior dispositions) that dispose us to do certain good acts. In the case of the theological virtues the good acts are those by which we relate to God: we *believe* in God, we *hope* in God and we *love* God.
- C. These are distinctively Christian virtues and the acts they allow us to perform go beyond what is naturally possible for a person who lacks them. They are *supernatural* virtues.
- D. Of all the virtues to be concerned about as a father, these are the most important.
 1. They are needed not only for a good fulfilled life while on earth, but even more importantly, they are needed for a good eternal life in heaven with God. The theological virtues are a requisite for gaining eternal salvation.
 2. The single most important thing in a man’s life is how he relates to God; everything else is secondary. So the virtues by which we relate to God are the most important virtues.
 3. It is important that one’s children learn this and understand the relative importance of everything else in comparison with their relationship to God.

XI. How the Theological virtues are like the moral (cardinal) virtues

- A. They are habits: fixed internal dispositions toward a kind of good action. A person who has the virtues is able to engage in these acts (as a courageous man is able to stand in the face of dangers and difficulties).
 - 1. Faith: disposes us to believe in God and accept as true all that he teaches (through the Catholic Church). This is an act of the intellect (although moved by the will).
 - 2. Hope: we hope in God as our source of happiness in heaven and we also hope that he will give us the help (grace) we need to achieve heaven. This is an act of the will.
 - 3. Charity: We love God above all things and all others things as ordered to God. This is also an act of the will.
- B. They can grow stronger and they can grow weaker. They can be lost if not cared for. A mortal sin removes charity and hope and leaves faith in an imperfect form.

XII. How different from the moral virtues

- A. Directed to God
 - 1. Temperance and Fortitude are directed to our own internal passions/urges (like fear or desire); justice is directed to other people (respecting their rights).
 - 2. Theological virtues are aimed directly at God: I believe in God, I hope in God, and I love God. They are aimed at God as he has revealed himself: as the Trinity of persons.
- B. They are infused in us by God.
 - 1. Moral virtues are acquired through the process of habituation: you repeat an act enough times and it forms a habit.
 - 2. Theological virtues are “infused” directly by God.
 - a. This happens at Baptism; along with sanctifying grace come the three theological virtues.
 - b. As long as we are in the state of grace, we possess these three virtues.
 - c. They are lost if we lose grace (i.e., through mortal sin); they are regained if we regain grace (through confession).
 - 3. The theological virtues grow by increased grace (through the reception of the sacraments).

November 2014

Charity

IX. Nature of charity

- A. Charity is a theological virtue.

1. All the theological virtues aim at God himself; we believe in God (faith), we hope in God (hope) and we love God (charity). The moral virtues, on the other hand, aim at something other than God, such as a moderate indulgence in pleasant activities (temperance) or a true self-regard (humility). While these can and should be directed to God, they are not God.
 2. The theological virtues are infused directly by God. They are not acquired by the mere repetition of acts the way the moral virtues are.
- B. Definition: Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.
1. By charity we have a share in the love by which God loves himself. We love God for his own sake, i.e., because he is all good (vs. the virtue of hope where we related to God as the one who will make us happy, that is, we love God for our sake).
 2. By the virtue of charity we also love all the things that God loves, precisely because God loves them. This is how we love others when we love them by charity: we love them for God's sake. In this way we should love all men. Charity towards others is shown in all sorts of good things we do for them, especially helping them reach their eternal salvation.
 3. We do not love all persons equally by charity. There is an *order of charity* by which we love God above all other things. Next comes oneself; e.g., we should worry more about our own salvation than that of others, even though we should want the salvation of all. Then comes others, and here we love more those who are closer to us by virtue of all the various connections we have, such as family or profession.
 4. Charity is the greatest of all the virtues. All the other virtues are aimed at charity. For example, I should moderate my desire for the pleasures of eating and eat the right amount (temperance) out of love for God, that is, because that is what God wants for me. Doing what we do for the love of God is highest and best motive we can have. We should try to have that motive for everything we do (rectitude of intention). That implies that we try to do what God wants us to do.
- C. How charity is acquired, lost and regained.
1. We acquire the virtue of charity at Baptism.
 2. We lose charity by mortal sin. A mortal or serious sin, by definition, is one that is directly against the love of God and so "drives out" charity from our soul. (To will a sin, is to disobey God's law. God's law tells us what God wants us to do. So, to sin is inconsistent with love, which makes us do what God wants.)
 3. We regain charity by the sacrament of penance where we express our sorrow for our sin and our willingness to avoid the sin in the future (purpose of amendment).

4. Anyone who dies in the state of mortal sin (that is, without charity) cannot go to heaven, but rather goes to hell. So it is important to go to confession when one sins mortally and regain charity in one's soul.

X. How charity is lived

- A. Basically we make God #1 in our lives. We love God and attach more importance to our relationship to God than to any other person or thing, including wife, children, job, etc. Since what God wants for us is to live our natural duties, including family and professional obligations, there is no tension between loving God and loving those around us. We love them for God and in the way he wants.
- B. We pray to God as a son to his father; to Christ as our brother. We strive to develop a personal relationship with God.
- C. We obey God's law in everything, and the laws of the Church which speaks for God. We do so with a filial obedience born of love (vs. born of fear).
- D. Dealing with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.
 1. We pray regularly to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.
 2. We live a real piety toward Christ in the Blessed Sacrament (e.g. not yakking away in church while in front of the Blessed Sacrament, even at risk of seeming "rude").
- E. Keeping holy the Lord's day.

XI. How to inculcate the virtue of charity in one's children

- A. First of all, have them baptized. And don't wait for months to do this. That one's child have the charity of God in his soul is far more important than any social considerations (this is part of putting God first). Or even most considerations of health (e.g. that he or she might catch a cold by going outside).
- B. The example of the father is key.
 1. Kids, especially boys, have to see that their father loves God; otherwise they can easily feel that love of God is just for women; they will think becoming a man means leaving things of God behind.
 2. They need to see that their father loves God; how do they see that? See that he prays; that he takes the law of God and the Church seriously (e.g., will not miss Sunday Mass; will not make plans that imply missing Mass). He makes visits to the Blessed Sacrament. He prays: things like the family Rosary, grace at meals, prayers at night, etc.
- C. Live Sundays and other feasts in the home.
 1. Sunday should be a special day and there should be explicit recognition that it is the day of the Lord (no work; teach them catechism, etc.)
 2. It is good to acknowledge bigger liturgical feast days in the home, even if only by having something special in the meal.

3. Some family recognition of Advent and Lent (e.g., use an Advent wreath; or have some family penance for Lent).
- D. Have holy pictures or statues in the home.
 - E. Prayer at home: The family Rosary has been repeatedly recommended by the Church.
 - F. Read the Bible. It is a good practice to read a children's Bible to young children.
 - G. Have the children read saints' lives: examples of men who loved God (esp. men). It is wonderful to read lives of the saints to small children.
 - H. Teach them to go to confession regularly; teach them what the mortal sins are (e.g., 6th commandment, especially for boys).

XII. Vocation of children

- A. Teach the children that the single most important thing in their life is their relationship with God.
- B. The big thing in their life is to find the vocation God is calling them to. More important than professional success, fame, riches, social acceptance, etc. For parents, this should be the single most important issue for their children's future. They need to do what God plans for them (vs. whatever plans the parents might have).
- C. Have them be open to a call to a celibate vocation: priest, religious, numerary, etc.

April 2014

The Virtue of Gratitude

XIII. Definition

- A. Gratitude is the virtue by which a person gives thanks and shows his appreciation for benefits that he receives from others. By gratitude you acknowledge that the other has done a good for you (including a good that was owed in justice and could be demanded of the other as a matter of right).
- B. It is part of the virtue of justice.
 1. It is a form of rendering to others their due.
 2. In a way, you are giving back to the person for what they have given you. There is a kind of settling of accounts. If you did not give thanks, it would be as if you still owed something.

XIV. Importance of thankfulness

- A. Simply as a matter of justice, we should give to others what they have coming to them; in the case of benefactors, that is thanks.
- B. Social interactions are much easier when people show gratitude. All relationships go better when people express their thanks to one another.
- C. In a larger sense, gratitude is important because it makes a person recognize that the goods he receives are in fact *gifts*.

1. This starts with one's own life.
2. It is also true of talents, parents, siblings, upbringing, and education. All these are things we receive gratuitously. No one is making us pay for them. We did not earn them. They were given to us.
3. It is very healthy for a person to see that he has received and is still receiving many, many goods as gifts. Think of all the goods that come through the Church, such as the sacraments. Think of all the services that family members render to one another freely. A person with a good sense of gratitude will avoid the false sense of entitlement that takes goods for granted and also leads to bitterness and unhappiness whenever the goods are not given. A person who habitually gives thanks, will be better able to put into perspective lacks of things when they come ("The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord," as Job said).

XV. How gratitude is manifested

- A. Generally it is manifested by explicitly giving thanks when we receive gifts or good things.
 1. It starts with giving thanks to God (Eucharist means thanksgiving).
 2. It should characterize all our dealings with others, from important people to lower level people. Family, colleagues, service people, etc. The person with the virtue of gratitude will thank anyone who helps him, no matter what the relationship (think of Thomas More giving the tip to the executioner just before he chopped off his head).
- B. Some more specific areas where a child can learn and form habits
 1. Thanking God for all the goods received
 - a. Mass, saying night-prayers that include thanksgiving for all received that day, grace at before and after meals.
 - b. Special visits to a church or even little pilgrimages to give thanks for special events or benefits received.
 2. Thanking those who give them gifts
 - a. Saying thanks whenever they are given anything.
 - b. Writing thank-you notes (to Grandma for Xmas gifts, etc.).
 3. Thanking people (host, organizers, patrons, etc.) at the end of an event; not leaving without doing so.
 4. Thanking people at table as part of good manners (e.g., whenever someone passes you something). This needs to start at home and cannot just be something you do when you have company over or you are out somewhere.
 5. Thanking salespersons, guides, parking attendants, etc. and even strangers for any help they may give (e.g., receiving directions).

XVI. Special role of example here

- A. Children learn this from their parents; especially how you thank others (e.g. see parents thank someone at the end of an event or a party).
- B. See parents accept lack of something with good cheer, do not have the sense of entitlement (vs. complaining and criticizing someone because they did not provide the good thing you think you should have).
- C. See parents deal graciously with service people, even when the service may not be optimal.

April 2015

Truthfulness

XIII. Truth telling and manliness

- A. Telling the truth, even when hard, is an essential part of a manly, virtuous character. A liar is not respected, and rightfully so. It is important that boys learn this as early as possible.
- B. Christ said, “Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no’.” A well developed, virtuous, character is marked by simplicity of speech in which the person tells the truth more or less directly, although always with charity. Lack of simplicity indicates an immature character.

XIV. The morality of truth and lies

- A. Basic moral principle: it is always wrong to tell a lie; i.e., to express in speech what you believe to be false—not the way things really are—in order to deceive the listener. This is the constant teaching of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- B. Not all lies are equally bad. Lies that are said in order to commit an injustice are more seriously wrong than lies that are said as a joke or to help someone (as happens with the nun in *Les Miserable*).
- C. We should note that a person can not tell the truth without lying: he just does not say anything. There is a duty to tell the truth only when the other person has a right to know (e.g., your boss).
- D. Many times it would be wrong to say the truth because you have an obligation of confidentiality, as happens often in professional matters and sometimes in family matters. Generally is it wrong to say the truth if to do so would offend against charity. Much gossip actually goes against charity—it hurts people—even though it is true.

XV. The virtue of truth telling

- A. By the virtue of truth-telling, a person is habitually disposed to tell the truth when it is required. This is more than just avoiding lies. It means saying the truth when it is needed either for justice or for charity.

- B. Truth-telling requires the virtue of fortitude; often it is hard to tell the truth, because of the consequences that it might entail, or because it may be painful to others. At times, truth can cost a person his life, as happens with the martyrs when they are called to give witness to Christ.
 - C. Typical areas where telling the truth can be difficult:
 1. About one's self (not trying to be what you are not; not exaggerating your talents, abilities, accomplishments)
 2. About one's actions; admitting your failures (especially when you go to the sacrament of Penance).
 3. About others. Telling others the truth when they need to hear it, even though it may be hard; for example, to tell someone that he is dying, so that he can prepare for his death (this is an act of charity).
 4. Moral truths which others may find hard to accept. This is to be done when necessary; we do not need to be scolds who point out everything wrong people are doing. In our present culture, this is becoming more and more difficult especially in matters relating to sexuality and marriage.
- XVI. Defects to be avoided
- A. Lying
 - B. Exaggeration
 - C. Flattery (vs. normal politeness)
 - D. Vague promises one does not really intend to keep
 - E. Gossip
 - F. Unkind speech and needlessly talking about the defects and sins of others. This includes unnecessary criticism, even of public figures. The rule of charity is not to speak ill of another person unless there is some pressing (prudential) reason to do so. For example you may have to warn a friend about a person who might hurt him.
- XVII. Helping one's son to learn to tell the truth
- A. Some important areas
 1. It is important for sons to equate truth-telling with manliness. They need to know that telling the truth will be hard at times, but a courageous man does it anyways.
 2. They need to learn to speak directly but with charity.
 3. Learn not to speak badly of others.
 4. Learn to mean what you say; do not commit if you do not intend to carry out what you said you would do.
 5. Confessing lies when they go to Confession.

- B. The single most important way to teach is by example, especially the father's example.
- C. Explicit correction (without anger) is needed when one sees that one's son has not lived truthfulness well. For example, if he has gossiped, or exaggerated, or made promises he did not really intend to keep.

Virtue and Happiness

I. Introduction

- a. We can talk about the goal of Sherpa Club by looking at *happiness* and what people need to achieve *happiness*.
- b. We assume that happiness is what parents most want for their children:
 - i. That they do well in life.
 - ii. This includes that they do well for eternity (the "big" life).
- c. The goal of Sherpa is to help fathers help their sons to have happy, successful lives.

II. Happiness depends on acting a certain way

- a. We can ask what happiness is or what makes a person happy.
- b. Basically it is a question of *activities*.
 - i. Not primarily a question of possessions (rich people are no happier).
 - ii. Not a question of talents: many very highly talented people are very unhappy (think of all the famous people who commit suicide).
 - iii. Not primarily a question of where you live or the weather.
 - iv. More a question of what kinds of friends/relationships you have (biggest single relationship is that with God).
- c. What matters most of all is what kinds of *activities* you do.
 - i. The relationships you have (family, friends, even political) are built upon activities. If you act well, your relationships will be good; if not, they will not be good and you will not be happy (think of what you need to *do* to have a good marriage).
 - ii. Your work is satisfying if you are doing what really contributes to the good of others. If you are not doing that, you will not find satisfaction (even if earning a big salary; how you get people to quit). That is, for your work to be satisfying, you have to be engaged in the right sort of activities.
- d. What sort of activities?

- i. With respect to God
 - 1. We need to honor God: worship.
 - 2. We need to talk to God: prayer.
 - 3. We need to join in the work of salvation: apostolate and evangelization.
 - ii. Treating other people well
 - 1. We need to treat others fairly, respecting their rights (everyone, even strangers).
 - 2. We need to treat others loyally (in friendships).
 - a. Being honest with people.
 - b. Truly seeking their good even without advantage to yourself.
 - c. Doing what they like even at the expense of what you like, etc.
 - 3. Promoting common goods within communities to which you belong, as opposed to acting selfishly.
 - iii. Leisure activities: enjoying beauty, etc.
- e. A person who can consistently act in these ways will have a good life, even in the midst of hard external circumstances (for example, people have been happy in prison).
- f. A person who does not act in these ways will tend not to have a good life.
- i. Person who easily becomes angry with others.
 - ii. Person who drinks too much.
 - iii. Person who does not live marital fidelity.
 - iv. Person who is lazy and selfish and does not put out for others or for group goals; he ends up by himself because others don't want to be with him.
 - v. Person who does not respect rights of others (ends up in jail).
 - vi. Person who complains all the time: people get tired of being around him.
 - vii. Think of people where you say, "If only he would . . .
 - 1. Get his drinking under control.
 - 2. Work harder.
 - 3. Not spend so much.
 - 4. Not get so angry.
 - 5. Be more understanding of other people's faults and shortcomings.

III. Virtues as basis for activity that leads to happiness

- a. To be happy a person has to act in certain ways, and he needs to act consistently in those ways. Just every now and then will not do. How do you ensure that you will do something consistently and do it *well* consistently?
- b. The answer is a *habit*: a fixed inner disposition to do something a certain way. That is what you develop with a golf swing, playing a musical instrument, etc. You develop the *habit* and then you can do it well consistently (e.g., you always hit the right keys at the right time, in the right way).
- c. The virtues are the inner habits of acting in the ways we have described. There are internal, fixed, dispositions (habits) toward good actions (virtues). They are formed over time, and once formed, are pretty stable. Possessing these virtues is the secret of having a happy life.
- d. This is a tradition of 2500 years. It started with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and was taken up by Christians. It was most highly developed in St. Thomas Aquinas (we will follow him, although I will not be quoting from the *Summa*). The virtues are part of Catholic doctrine and are discussed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (see nos. 1803-1845).
- e. There are many distinct virtues (good habits), each dealing with a different aspect of life. Some examples:
 1. *Fortitude*: for handling difficulties (difficulties are found throughout our lives in most areas of our lives).
 2. *Temperance*: moderation of desires and pleasures (all kinds, and especially bodily pleasures).
 3. *Justice*: our dealings with others (specifically respecting their rights and giving them their due).
 4. *Meekness*: for handling anger well.
 5. *Generosity*: for handling money well.
- f. Virtues are necessary.
 - i. Other skills are good, but not necessary (e.g., playing the piano, learning chemistry, doing auto mechanics, playing tennis, etc.).
 - ii. Virtues are necessary; without the virtues, the other good things will be ruined. For example a person with a drinking problem will undermine his job, his sports, his piano playing, etc.

- iii. Virtues or character are like the operating system; if it is not stable, it will crash and so the applications, no matter how good they are, will not function well.
- iv. The virtues are not selected or named arbitrarily. They are precisely the good habits a person needs to lead his life well and without which he can ruin his life (e.g., if you do not handle drink or anger well, you can end up without job, family and friends).
- g. So, if you want your sons to be happy and lead good lives (this being what most decent parents most want for their children), you need to pay attention to virtue.

IV. Why it is important to know about the virtues

- a. If you want your sons to be happy, the most important thing you can do for them is to instill in them the virtues.
- b. To do this, you need to know about them and understand their basic structure (what they are, what kinds there are, how they function).
- c. You need to know how they are acquired, since this is especially where you want to help your sons.
- d. You need to be able to identify them (or their absence).
 - i. You should be able to identify them by name; like a doctor who doesn't just know you are sick, but has to identify the disease; we all tend to know when someone lacks virtue, but not everyone can say just what virtue is lacking.
 - ii. You need to be able to teach sons about virtue; identify the virtues for them (as we do with trees and birds) in themselves, and around them in others, and in literature.

V. How the virtues are acquired

- a. By habituation: by a person repeatedly doing the good action.
- b. By example: seeing models that can be imitated.
- c. Instruction: actually talking about character and virtues with your children.

Virtues & Temperaments

XVIII. What is temperament?

- A. Virtues are fixed interior dispositions to act in a morally good way.
1. With a virtue, a person will act well *dependably*, and, because he acts well, he will live a happier life.
 2. Virtues are *habits* that are *acquired* by repeated actions. We call the collection of a person's virtues (and vices) his *character*.
- B. Temperament is an *inborn* set of aptitudes, inclinations and tendencies.
1. Temperament includes differences in modes of perceiving, experiencing emotions, interacting with others, aptitudes for different sorts of activities, likes and dislikes.
 2. These aptitudes or inclinations are not themselves morally good or bad; they can be used for morally good actions or for morally bad actions. In themselves they are morally neutral. An example would be being introverted or extroverted. Neither of these is, in itself, morally good or morally bad (unlike courage and cowardice).
 3. These aptitudes and tendencies tend to be inborn; they tend to be pretty steady throughout life. As inborn, we can say that they are God-given. It is part of the variety God has wanted within the human race (it keeps things from getting too boring).
 4. All these, we can say, constitute a person's personality. Virtues correspond to character and temperament corresponds to personality (this is a bit of a simplification, but is basically valid).
 - a. Since ancient times it has been noticed that people have different sets of aptitudes and inclinations and that these are distinct from virtues and vices. Classically four temperaments were distinguished: Melancholic, Sanguine, Choleric, and Phlegmatic. This classification endured into the nineteenth century and people still refer to it today.
 - b. In modern times there are a variety of schemes for categorizing personality types (temperaments), e.g., Meyer-Briggs (16 basic types), Holland personality types (6 types), and many others.
 5. The key point in talking about temperaments is to recognize that people are naturally different and these differences are not just differences of character. Of course, underneath all the differences is human nature which is the same in all.
 6. We should not use temperament as an excuse for lack of virtue (e.g., shy persons who might excuse themselves from being properly social with others because they are "introverts").
 - a. Everyone, regardless of his natural temperament, needs to struggle to acquire the moral virtues and build up a good character.

- b. The usual presentations of the various personalities do not usually distinguish between virtuous and vicious development of a particular temperament. They will sometimes treat a vice that is often found in a particular temperament as if it were part of the temperament itself. For example, because it is often found in choleric persons, becoming excessively angry can be taken to be part of the choleric temperament. But in fact it is a vice.

XIX. The need to understand one's own and others' temperaments

A. Basically this is needed to live Christian charity.

1. The common tendency is to impose our own personality/temperament on others.
2. We tend to think there is something wrong with people who are different from ourselves and blame them for it.
3. Charity requires that we understand people as they are and do not fault them where there is no fault and do not insist that they become some other way, when there is nothing wrong with the way they are.

B. It is necessary to understand the temperaments of one's children's

1. Each child will have his or her own temperament. Different children, even in the same family, can have quite different temperaments. It is necessary to recognize this so as to be able to encourage the strengths of each child (e.g., artistic talents).
2. Need to avoid insisting on what they may never be able to do well (e.g., a clumsy boy will never be a good athlete). The tendency is to want them to do what is suitable to our own temperament (what we like doing and value).
3. Need to see the weaknesses that typically accompany each temperament and help the child to avoid them. Since they have a natural inclination in the direction of the weakness (e.g., choleric persons tend to become angry or introverts tend to be shy), they need to be especially encouraged to fight against these weaknesses and establish a virtuous character.

XX. Encouraging the strengths and fighting the weaknesses

- A. As we have said, each temperament will have characteristic strengths and weaknesses
- B. The strengths will tend to come out and children will follow their strengths, because it comes naturally and they find out early on that they are good at this or that. Problems may arise if parents or teachers do not appreciate their strengths, e.g., a father who does not appreciate artistic talents and just wants his son to play sports, or vice versa.
- C. Parents need to watch for the weakness that can come with temperaments. Some examples:

1. Introverts can be excessively shy, and unsocial
2. People who like novelty (e.g., Myer Briggs *Perceivers*) often can be disorderly in material things, often do not finish projects they begin, often can be easily distracted as they work, etc.
3. People who naturally like order can become excessively rigid; they can miss the forest for the trees, etc.
4. People who naturally have strong feeling of sympathy for others can become overly sentimental.

Additional, optional materials:

Understanding a child's temperament

Understanding a child's temperament can help reframe how parents interpret children's behavior and the way parents think about the reasons for behaviors. By parents having access to this knowledge now helps them to guide their child in ways that respect the child's individual differences. By understanding children's temperaments and our own helps adults to work with them rather than try to change them. It is an opportunity to anticipate and understand a child's reaction. It is also important to know that temperament does not excuse a child's unacceptable behavior, but it does provide direction to how parents can respond to it. Making small and reasonable accommodations to routines can reduce tension. For example a child who is slow paced in the mornings may need an extra half hour to get ready. Knowing who or what may affect the child's behavior can help to alleviate potential problems. Although children obtain their temperament behaviors innately, a large part that helps determine a child's ability to develop and act in certain ways is determined by the parents. When a parent takes the time to identify and more importantly respond to the temperaments they are faced with in a positive way it will help them guide their child in trying to figure out the world.

Recognizing the child's temperament and helping them to understand how it impacts his/her life as well as others is important. It is just as important for parents to recognize their own temperaments. Recognizing each individual's temperament, will help to prevent and manage problems that may arise from the differences among family members.

Temperament continues into adulthood, and later studies by Chess and Thomas have shown that these characteristics continue to influence behavior and adjustment throughout the life-span.

The four temperament types

Each of the four types of humors corresponded in ancient times to a different personality type. These were associated with a domination of various biological functions. Lievegoed suggested that the temperaments come to clearest manifestation in childhood, between approximately 6 and 14 years of age, after which they become subordinate (though still influential) factors in personality.^[13]

Sanguine

The sanguine [temperament](#) is traditionally associated with air. People with this temperament tend to be lively, sociable, carefree, talkative, and pleasure-seeking. They may be warm-hearted and optimistic. They can make new friends easily, be imaginative and artistic, and often have many ideas.^{[14][15]} They can be flighty and changeable; thus sanguine personalities may struggle with following tasks all the way through and be chronically late or forgetful.^[16]

Pedagogically, they can be best reached through awakening their love for a subject and admiration of people.^[16]

Choleric

The choleric temperament is traditionally associated with fire. People with this temperament tend to be egocentric and extroverted. They may be excitable, impulsive, and restless, with reserves of [aggression](#), [energy](#), and/or [passion](#), and try to instill that in others. ^{[14][15]}

They tend to be task-oriented people and are focused on getting a job done efficiently; their motto is usually "do it now." They can be ambitious, strong-willed and like to be in charge. They can show leadership, are good at planning, and are often practical and solution-oriented. ^[14] They appreciate receiving respect and esteem for their work. ^{[16]-20}

Pedagogically, they can be best reached through mutual respect and appropriate challenges that recognize their capacities. ^[16]

Melancholic

The melancholic temperament is traditionally associated with the element of earth. People with this temperament may appear serious, [introverted](#), cautious or even suspicious. They can become preoccupied with the [tragedy and cruelty in the world](#) and are susceptible to depression and moodiness. They may be focused and conscientious. They often prefer to do things themselves, both to meet their own standards and because they are not inherently sociable. ^{[15][14]}

Pedagogically, they can be best met by awakening their sympathy for others and the suffering of the world. ^[16]

Phlegmatic

The phlegmatic temperament is traditionally associated with water. People with this temperament may be inward and private, thoughtful, reasonable, calm, patient, caring, and tolerant. They tend to have a rich inner life, seek a quiet, peaceful atmosphere, and be content with themselves. They tend to be steadfast, consistent in their habits, and thus steady and faithful friends. ^{[14][15]}

Pedagogically, their interest is often awakened by experiencing others' interest in a subject. ^[16]

People of this temperament may appear somewhat ponderous or clumsy. Their speech tends to be slow or appear hesitant. ^[14]

About Virtue in General

I. Introduction

- A. Goal of Frontiers is not merely to have a good time and spend a couple of quality hours with your sons but to contribute to your effort to help them grow up to become the type of young man you'd like your daughter to marry.
- B. Another way of putting that is that we hope to help you help your sons become men of character. That is men who are kind, God-fearing, upright, industrious, loyal, courageous, self-controlled, prudent, etc.
- C. What makes someone a good man, a man of character
 1. The classic answer is virtues. This approach has roots all the way back to 500 BC and Plato and Aristotle. A man of character, a good man, is a man who is virtuous, who has the virtues. That's what we are going

to focus on both today and in the upcoming months. Before we do that, let's look briefly at a few other factors.

2. **Temperament.** It certainly does influence our development. You need to be aware of the different temperament of each child. One will need to overcome being overly adventurous and taking too many risks, another will need to overcome excessive fearfulness and concern. In helping children develop, it is very important to know their temperament well. But temperament is not the whole story. Men of all temperaments can be good men, virtuous men. And you can help your sons overcome the weaknesses of their temperament and build on its strengths. St. Josemaria wrote, "Don't see that's my character, it's the way I am. It's your lack of character. Be a man"
3. **Environment:** Environment does have a large influence on how people behave and on how their character develops. If a person grows up among thieves, he is more likely to become a thief. It is true that some people manage to be good and behave well in very difficult environments, and some people who live in very favorable environments behave badly. But environment is important. Above all the home environment, and we will stress that a lot in future talks. Also the peer environment. Not all of your son's friends are going to be virtuous or even trying to be virtuous but the more friends they have who are trying to be virtuous the more likely your sons are to succeed. For that reason, one of the goals of the Frontier Club is that the boys make friends with other boys whose families share your commitment to trying to help them become men of character and good Christians.
4. **Physiological and psychological factors.** Many people think that the lack of virtue and vices are a sickness to be treated medically. We see this a lot. Many people's first reaction to a lack of virtue is to seek a medical solution. Nineteen percent of high school boys have been diagnosed with Attention Disorder and 10% are taking a psycho stimulant like Ritalin. Many of our contemporaries believe that whatever goes on in a person is somehow caused by the state of his body; if something is wrong, then there must be something out of whack physically, and so we need doctors and medicine to treat it. Of course some children do have special physiological and psychological problems and you need to be to that possibility, but it is not the most important factor for most boys. Furthermore, even people with physiological and psychological problems can often become virtuous and doing so may help them deal with their

problems.

- II. With those preambles let's get to our principal subject, virtue, which is the principal determinant of character. You need to know about the virtues if you are going to educate your sons to be men of character.
 - A. Need to know what you are aiming at (we all know in a vague, general sort of way, but it's better if we are clear and can articulate it to ourselves, to wives and to the sons).
 - B. Need to be able identify virtues and lacks of virtue in your sons (like a doctor who has to diagnose the illness before he can prescribe a treatment).
 - C. Need to know how to help your son develop virtues.
 - D. Today I will just give a general overview, touching on many topics that we will develop in subsequent talks in the upcoming months.

- III. What virtues are
 - A. They are habits of acting well, of choosing the good.
 1. Habits are acquired dispositions that incline us to act in a certain way and make it easy to do so. They are acquired by repeating acts. The professional golfer finds it relatively easy to hit a good drive because he has acquired the habit of swinging the club properly. How? By doing it thousands of times. Habits can be good or bad, like being courteous and considerate or like eating too much.
 2. A virtue is a habit of acting well in the moral sphere. It is acquired by practice and makes it relatively easy to act well. A person who day in and day out acts justly and who sees someone drop something very valuable on the street will find it easy to alert the person. Someone on the contrary who often acts unjustly, even in little things, will find it much harder not to pick up the item and keep it.
 3. Virtues are what make someone a man of good character. Even a virtuous person may occasionally act badly, but it will be out of character. If you want your son to grow up to be a man of character, it is essential to help him acquire virtues, and the earlier the better.

4. There are many distinct virtues (good habits), each dealing with a different aspect of life. Some examples:
 - a. Fortitude: for handling difficulties (found throughout our lives in most areas of our lives).
 - b. Temperance: moderation of desires and pleasures (all kinds)
 - c. Justice: our dealings with others (specifically respecting their rights and giving them their due including being truthful)
 - d. Prudence. The virtue of choosing the right means to obtain our goals. It does not mean being timid or small spirited. Obviously not the characteristic virtue of seven year olds.

IV. Why virtues are important

- A. Virtues are the single most important factor for a happy life. Happiness comes not just from professional success, wealth, fame, etc. nor even from having a good family (though both help) but from living a good life. Happiness depends on many factors (talents, good and bad fortune, one's political regime etc.), but the single most important one is virtue. Virtue lets you handle the vicissitudes of fortune (endure hardship well and not be corrupted by good fortune). This is also true of eternal life (most important factor is virtue of charity).
- B. Virtues are necessary
 1. Other skills are good, but not necessary (e.g., playing the piano, learning chemistry, doing auto mechanics, playing tennis, etc.).
 2. Virtues are necessary; without the virtues, the other good things will be ruined (e.g., a person with a drinking problem will undermine his job, his sports, piano playing, etc.).
 3. Virtues/character are like the operating system; if it is not stable, it will crash and so the applications, no matter how good they are, will not function well.
 4. The virtues we will see in later sessions are not selected or named arbitrarily. They are precisely the good habits a person needs to lead his

life well and without which he can ruin his life (e.g., if you do not handle drink or anger well, you can end up without job, family and friends).

5. So, if you want your sons to be happy and lead good lives (this being what most decent parents most want for their children), you need to pay attention to virtue.

V. How the virtues are acquired

A. Habits are formed by repeated actions (hard at first, but they become easier as the habit is formed)

1. A big job of parents is to get their children to do the actions that will form the good, virtuous habits (a long battle that requires fortitude and perseverance and prudence to know when to insist and when to back off).
2. Parents need to have the fortitude to insist (nicely but firmly) that children perform certain actions repeatedly until a habit is formed (e.g., clean up their room, finish their homework). If they cave in because they don't want to give the children too hard of a time, the children may fail to develop the good habits they need to. An example:

A father who helps a son who is struggling to do his homework. Each night it's a struggle because the son does not want to finish his homework. After many weeks working with him, the father might ask himself, "Should I continue pushing my son to do his homework?" "Am I being too tough on him?" "Will my son dislike me if I keep insisting that he finish?" The better way for this father to ask the question is, "Has my son developed the habit of finishing difficult tasks?" "Will my son be better off 10-20 years from now if I insist – gently but firmly – that he finish his work?" When phrased this way, usually the answer is "Yes, he will be better off," and "Yes, I should keep helping him each night to finish his homework." Perhaps the father will be "less popular" with his son for a while because he (the dad) is holding the line, but the son will be much better off. (By the way, often a boy resents this type of insistence only when the father insists with anger or frustration. This is the challenge for the father and a point he needs to examine himself on. If he insists gently, without getting upset, and if he keeps reminding his son why he is insisting

on this point (i.e., that his son needs to learn to finish tasks, even when they are disagreeable), the son is much less likely to resent the father's insistence. In fact, he will appreciate it down deep.)

- B. For actions to be really virtuous and for those who perform them to be really virtuous, good actions have to be done freely. We may be coerced to do good, but if we want to do something else, those actions are not virtuous. So education in virtue also includes educating children's reason, teaching them to understand why certain actions are good (like kindness to their siblings and respect for their mother) and others are not. The goal is that eventually they do virtuous actions on their own because they realize it is good and they want to for them to act that way.
- C. The first (often unconscious) way children learn what is good and bad is by observing what happens around them. They will imitate what they see (we all know stories of little tots who hear bad language from their parents and start to repeat it).
1. Personal examples: parents' example is the single most powerful example in their lives. If you want your children to treat your wife with respect, it is essential that you do so.
 2. Also the example of their siblings.
 3. Literature: books, TV, movies, etc. present all sorts of examples of good and bad behavior. The presentations are not always accurate (often vice is presented as good). Parents need to be very careful about the literature their children are exposed to. Stories about heroes and saints and bible stories provide models. Things children read and things they see on TV can be excellent occasions to talk about virtue and about what is good and bad.
- D. Instruction. It is important to actually talk about character and virtues with your children. An important part of the program of Frontiers is to provide in the talk given to fathers and sons together material that you can talk with your sons about. It is enormously important to talk about virtue, about what is good and why. Otherwise your conversation with them about the important things in life may be limited to correcting them.
- Especially as children grow older, it becomes increasingly important that they not only behave well but come to understand why and to want to do

it. In a surprisingly short period of time, they will be young adults and will necessarily have to make their own choices.

VI. Future talks

- A. Each talk in the future will have two parts: 1) virtue in general and 2) a specific virtue.
- B. Virtue in general: kinds of virtue, structure of virtue, role of reason and passions/impulses, relationship to temperament, etc.
- C. Specific virtues: classic cardinal virtues (Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance) but also the many virtues that fall under them (e.g., under temperance comes moderation in eating, drinking, and chastity but also humility, control of anger, a desire to know) and a proper spirit of play.

The Basic Elements of a Moral Virtue

I. Introduction:

Today we will start talking about virtue in general (the first half of each talk will be on some aspect of virtue in general). We will talk about the general structure of a moral virtue, i.e., the “parts” that make it up. It is good to understand this structure, since the way the virtue is acquired depends on the structure.

II. The four states of character

- A. Each moral virtue deals with a particular area of our life. More specifically, each virtue deals with one (or two) passions/urges/desires like the desire to eat, or the desire for money, or fear of physical pain, anger, etc. The virtues are distinguished from each other on this basis: temperance deals with our desire to eat, liberality or generosity deals with our desire for money and fortitude deals with fear of pain, etc. (see last page for a chart of sample virtues).
- B. For each of these passions/desires/urges, there are basically four typical states of character that we find in people.
 1. **Virtue**: when a person knows what the right thing to do in this area (e.g., the right amount to eat) is and has orderly desires. This person will consistently do the good act (eat the right amount in a given situation).
 2. **Moral Continnence**: when a person knows what is the right thing to do in this area (e.g., the right amount to eat), but has inordinate (too strong) desires. This person has to struggle against his strong passions which are pulling him in the wrong direction. He

general wins the struggle and so generally does the good act (the dieter who “wins” and eats the right amount for the situation). This is also called moral strength.

3. **Moral Incontinence:** when a person knows what is the right thing to do in this area (e.g., the right amount to eat), but has inordinate (too strong) desires. This person has to struggle against his strong passions which are pulling him in the wrong direction. He general loses the struggle and so generally does the bad act (the dieter who “loses” and eats too much for the situation). Afterwards, once his passion has subsided, he regrets what he has done and realizes he should not have done it (he may even know this as he does it, like dieters who “cheat”). This is also sometimes called moral weakness.
4. **Vice:** when a person thinks it is good simply to indulge the desire and so indulges it as much as possible. Such people usually have inordinate desires. For example, a glutton usually has inordinate (too much) desires to eat, and simply indulges them. This indulgence can become very excessive. After his indulgence, he does not regret it, but simply thinks it was an enjoyable thing to do.

C. Each of these four is a state of character, i.e., it is more or less stable. It will not change in a day or a week or even a month. These are habits and can usually be changed only with consistent effort over a fairly long period of time. This is particularly true of the affective/passionate aspect of character.

D. How do you assess a person’s state of character?

1. See what they do in a consistent way (good or bad).
2. See what sort of interior struggle there is when they do what they should or shouldn’t (e.g., a young boy obeying a request from parents). This distinguishes virtue from moral continence.
3. See what sort of regret there is for doing what is bad (distinguishes moral incontinence from vice)
4. To assess your own affective state, you do what you should do and see how hard it is; for the virtuous person it is not too hard. E.g., for a person who is truly temperate, it is not too hard to eat the right amount. Such a person is not plagued by strong urges that he has to fight. In the case of a morally strong person, he will have to fight the urges. This is hard and even painful.

III. The essential elements of the virtue: Cognitive and affective

A. Each virtue has two essential parts:

1. A cognitive part by which the person understands what is the right thing to do; what is the right goal to aim at.
2. An “affective” or passionate or desiring part (more generally an *urge* of some sort). Examples of these urges: desire to eat, desire for sexual pleasure, desire to know, anger, desire for wealth, fear of pain, fear of ridicule, desire for honor and praise, desire to play,

etc. As affective or an urge, this “pulls” or “pushes” a person in one direction or another, toward or away from something. This is distinct from thinking, although clearly closely related to it since whether we tend toward or away from something depends a lot on how we understand it (e.g., if we do not think something is harmful, we will not fear it; nevertheless, the thought that the thing is harmful is different from the fear which “pushes” us to flee from it).

3. To possess a virtue in its full (perfect) form, you need to have both elements: you need to know what the right thing is and have the right passions/urges in its regard.
4. With respect to passion/urges, the virtuous state is not to have no passions (a kind of stoicism), but rather to have the right passion, i.e., experience desire for the right things, at the right time, in the right way (not too strong or too weak). For example, the virtuous state with regard to the passion of anger (called meekness), is not to have no anger, but to become angry at the right things, at the right time, in the right way etc.

B. Acquiring these essential elements

1. These two elements are not acquired in exactly the same way.
2. The cognitive element has to be learned.
 - a. Children learn this first through example (of parents first, then of others), through approvals and disapprovals (“Good boy” or “Bad boy”), then through literature and through the general surrounding culture. They also learn it by direct teaching, especially as they mature.
 - b. Children can learn what is not true. E.g., in our day, it is not unusual that a father teaches his son, by example and by his approvals and disapprovals, that sports (games) is more important than it really is. The child can come to attach excessive importance to success in sports and usually will come to desire it too strongly (this is against the virtue of eutrapelia). Or many children learn that prayer is not important (they see no one praying and are never told it is a good thing to do).
3. The affective element is shaped by habituation.
 - a. There may be some natural, temperamental basis for how strongly one feels a desire toward a particular sort of good, but there is a very large influence of sheer habituation.
 - b. Over time our desires are formed by how they are indulged or curbed. This is how habits are formed.
 - i. If always indulged, they will tend to grow stronger. E.g., if one always indulges his desire to eat, the desire grows stronger and becomes harder to control/oppose. So too if one indulges fears.
 - ii. If one does not indulge the passion, it diminishes over time.
 - iii. Basically one habituates one's passion (appetites) virtuously by repeatedly choosing to do what reason sees as the right thing, whether or not the passions push in another direction.

- c. Parents need to have a read on where their children stand in terms of their urges and how they are being habituated. Habituation—for better or for worse—starts at a very young age.
- d. For young children who are not yet able to think about what is best for them, parents supply reason and have the children indulge passions reasonably by telling them what to do or not to do. Hopefully, with time, the children’s reason matures and they can direct themselves. At that point it will be much easier for the children if their affective side has been well habituated under the guidance of their parents. If they have been well habituated, they will be more receptive to the true cognitive state when it is taught to them.

The Virtue of Temperance

I. Introduction:

Temperance is the virtue by which we habitually resist the urges or desires that pull away from actions that we know by reason should be done. There are many such desires, so the virtue of temperance actually covers a wide variety of desires and actions.

II. The things temperance deals with and the urges/passions involved

A. The things dealt with

- 1. Temperance governs our action with regard to good things that we find attractive and desirable: food, drink, sex, knowledge, play, wealth, etc.
- 2. All these are truly good things (they contribute to our perfection as human beings) and it is right that we are attracted to them and pursue them and enjoy them.
- 3. Temperance gives us the ability to deal with these things in a moderate way, which means in accord with what reason tells us (e.g., eat food in a way that is healthy) without letting the attractiveness of the thing govern our actions (e.g., eat until we don’t feel like eating any more).

B. The passions or emotions involved in the virtue of Temperance

- 1. Desire: the basic urge for a good (when it is not yet possessed); there are many such desires of various sorts:
 - a. Desires for eating, drinking, sex (the big three).
 - b. Many others: desire to know, desire for honor, desire for wealth, desire to avenge injustice and to right wrongs (anger), desire to play games, etc.
- 2. Delight/pleasure: the emotional response to actually possessing the good.
- 3. Most desires are actually good in themselves (e.g., the desire to eat). But when they are excessive they tend to “drag” the person around and lead him away from doing what he should. Uncontrolled urges/passion can enslave a person (extreme case is addiction).

4. The temperate person habitually moderates his desires so that they are not excessive and do not dominate him. He is able to govern his actions according to what reason says is the right thing (e.g., eat without going to excess; having sexual relations with his wife, but not other women, playing games as need to relax, but not more).

III. Basic structure of the virtue and its opposed vices

- A. There is something a person should do which he sees by his reason (e.g. eat healthy; marital fidelity)
- B. The person experiences urges or desires toward some other attractive good that will pull him away from doing what he should (e.g., Big Macs; his pretty young secretary).
- C. Temperance is the virtue by which a person habitually controls the urges or desires that will pull him away from the good of reason (i.e., what reason recognizes should be done). The temperate person habitually has his desires under control (i.e., he has moderate desires) and he indulges them according to reason: the ones he should, when he should, in the way he should, and to the degree he should.
- D. The person who is temperate is thus able to do (freely choose) what reason requires without being pulled away (e.g., to focus on his work even though he desires to know the score of yesterday's football games).
- E. As in all virtues, there is also need for a judgment (of prudence) as whether a desire should be satisfied here and now or not. This is the thinking side of the virtue. How much a passion/emotion/urge should be satisfied depends on many circumstances, and it requires a judgment or reason to determine it (e.g., how much to eat for breakfast on a given day will depend on what we are going to do that day).
- F. Implied here is that the person has *higher ideals* which give him a measure for how much he should indulge any given passion. For example, it is because a person is committed to the ideal of marital fidelity that he curbs his sensual desires toward women other than his wife; it is because a man is committed to many serious goods (personal, family, societal, God) that he limits the time spent on play to what is necessary for his rest. In general, to be interiorly free for dedication to higher goods (God, knowledge, beauty, friends, the common good, etc.), one should have moderate desires that are not interfering with the pursuit of these higher goods (think of all the damage done by politicians who indulge their sexual desires illicitly). A person without higher ideals will find it hard to understand why he should curb his desires for bodily goods like eating and sex.

IV. The vices opposed to temperance

- A. By way of excess: the desire is too strong so that it dominates. This is by far the most common vice.
 1. Big three: gluttony (eating), drunkenness (drink), luxury/unchastity (sex).

2. Others: curiosity (excessive desire to know), anger/rage (too much anger), pride (too much love of honor), greed (excessive desire for wealth).
- B. By way of deficiency: the desires are too weak, something like anorexia. This is not too common.
 - C. In the case of vice a person loses his judgment of what is the right thing and takes indulgence of the desire as the highest good and so thinks the more indulgence the better (e.g. a glutton who, in extreme cases, uses the vomitorium). More commonly a person knows what the right thing is, but is unable to resist the desire or urge when it comes: this is moral incontinence. This is the state of most dieters.
- V. Examples of specific virtues included under the general umbrella of temperance (the same basic structure found in difference subject matter or urges):
 - A. Desire for food/eating: *abstinence* (vs. gluttony) [these are terms used by St. Thomas]
 - B. Desire for drink: *sobriety* (vs. drunkenness)
 - C. Desire for revenge: *meekness* (vs. anger)
 - D. Desire to know: *studiosity* (vs. curiosity)
 - E. Desire for money/wealth: *generosity* (vs. greed and stinginess)
 - F. Desire for play: *Eutrapelia* (vs. unnamed vice of desiring too much play).
 - VI. Importance of temperance (why it is a cardinal virtue)
 - A. Lack of temperance can result in a person committing grave injustices (grave sins).
 1. A man who is unfaithful to his wife (think of all the harm that resulted from the intemperance of Henry VIII).
 2. A woman may not control her eating and become less attractive to her husband; this can cause problems for the marriage.
 3. Many people are intemperate in regard to alcohol and consequently do not live up to their professional and family responsibilities.
 4. Someone who is too attracted to play (golf, football, etc.) can neglect important obligations toward his wife and children and others around him.
 - B. Without temperance you are unable to accomplish many important goals and goods that require sustained concentrated effort
 1. Most larger projects in life and in professional life require that a person be able to concentrate without getting distracted.
 2. For example, it is quite common in the academic world that a person is not be able to finish his Ph.D. dissertation, simply because he cannot force himself to sit and do it but keeps getting distracted by many other things.
 - C. Most fundamentally, a person who is dominated by passions and urges will not be able to devote himself to higher goods of God, family, friends and the common good.

VII. How the virtue is inculcated/gained

A. The affective/passionate aspect

1. As with other moral virtues, a person comes to experience the right amount of desire for the right things at the right times, etc., through habituation. Habituation to the virtue occurs by repeatedly choosing to do what you should in the face of desires to do something else.
2. For teaching young persons to acquire the virtue of temperance they cannot be allowed to indulge every desire as it comes along; they need to learn, through the reason of another person, to moderate their desires and indulge them in accord with reason (e.g., eat what is healthy). This means that they will often have to deny a desire completely (e.g., the urge to hit someone in anger) or postpone its indulgence: e.g., eating at meal times and not just whenever they feel like it; doing their work/chores, homework when they should and putting off playing to later; going to bed when they should and not staying up for TV, reading, games, music, etc.
3. Parents and teachers should regulate the indulgence of urges in their children/students. Things like eating between meals, eating too much sweets, watching too much TV or playing too much video games (or any video games), not going to bed because they desire to play, read, watch TV, etc. In effect, parents need to supply the rule of reason until they can do it for themselves. Obviously, the children need to make some choices for themselves if they are to learn, so failures will occur as part of the learning process.
4. For those who have problems with temperance, it is very often necessary to get *help from other people* in order to acquire the virtue. On one's own, the good resolutions will tend not to stand up to the presence of the desire (e.g., dieters who "cheat" when faced with food they like). This is why there are twelve-step programs for extreme cases of intemperance (sometimes referred to as addictions). Or programs that automatically show another person every site you visit: this helps people who want to avoid looking at pornography on-line.

B. The cognitive aspect

1. A person needs to learn:
 - a. That he should indulge desires in a reasonable way; that doing what is good and worthwhile will always mean denying oneself indulgence of desire (like an Olympic athlete); that a mature man is not pulled around by his desires, but rather dominates them (e.g., he can go without eating when that is required).
 - b. That these desires are good and the problem is indulging them in the wrong way. They should not think that desires are wrong or that pleasure is wrong. The key is moderation according to reason.
 - c. How to size up difficulties realistically (many people, especially cowards, over-estimate the difficulties).
2. How a person learns these ideas:
 - a. Example (especially parents)

- b. Literature: stories, history, movies, etc. in which the connection between temperance and achieving higher goods is manifested.
 - c. Living within an fixed order is very helpful: i.e., things like a house schedule, times for doing chores, homework, etc. that require a person to do what he ought regardless of the urges or desires he may have at the moment.
 - d. Having children earn money for their own spending as early as possible; the tasks/jobs they will have to earn money will force them to achieve a task and forgo the indulgence of many urges in order to do so.
 - e. Not allowing (or at least discouraging) very excessive indulgences like all-day snacking, hours and hours of listening to music, hours and hours of video games, watching sports, etc.
- C. Higher ideals
1. Since one moderates his desires because their indulgence would prevent him from pursuing a higher ideal, it is necessary that children have such ideals. They need to see love of God, marital fidelity, contribution to society, etc. as important goods, the achievement of which requires moderating many desires (as an Olympic athlete moderates many desires for the sake of winning a gold medal). Proper literature is very important for the inculcation of higher ideals.
 2. Children need to come to see the connection between moderating their desires and achievement of higher goods

The Virtue of Fortitude

XVII. Things dealt with and passions involved

- A. Fortitude deals with things or actions that should be done but which are difficult or painful (the difficult good).
- B. The passions or emotions involved in the virtue of fortitude
 1. Fear: the basic urge to flee difficulty and pain (or whatever might harm us)
 2. Confidence or daring: the urge to confront difficulties (what we see in good athletes: they get “fired-up” when things get tough; they are not wimps).

XVIII. Basic structure of the virtue and its opposed vices

- A. We see by reason (thinking) that we should do something; this thing involves some difficulty or pain; if we have the virtue of fortitude, we face the difficulty readily and do the act; if we lack the virtue, we will tend to run away and not do the act. There are intermediary states (moral continence and incontinence) where a person feels too much fear but is able to overcome it (moral continence) or fails to overcome it even though he knows he should (moral incontinence).
- B. The virtue of courage does not remove all fear: many things are objectively harmful and objectively to be feared (e.g., death). The courageous person does the act he should do, even while experiencing fear. His fear does not cause him to

avoid the necessary act. He does not, however, have excessive fear, but the right amount at the right time for the right things, etc.

- C. The good that reason recognizes one should pursue is usually the object of another virtue, either justice or charity. There is something that you have an obligation to do (justice) that is hard: e.g., stand up for honesty and not do a shady deal when your colleagues want to do it. Or work hard all day long because you are being paid for it (justice). Or taking a sick child to the hospital in the middle of the night (charity). A person who lacks fortitude will end up being unjust and not living charity, because he will flee from the difficulties these inevitably involve.
 - D. There is also need for a judgment (of prudence) as whether the good to be achieved justifies the possible harm involved (e.g., risking death).
 - E. The opposed vices
 1. Cowardice: too much fear that leads one to shirk one's duty and charity. In its more extreme cases, cowardice will alter a person's judgment of what hardships should reasonably be borne and the coward will tend to overestimate the hardships (and so justify avoiding them).
 2. Temerity; too little fear and too much daring as in General George Custer (he was always known as a very effective officer, but also as a daredevil)
 3. Cowardice is far more common than temerity. In educating people into virtue, it is much more frequent to have to encourage than to discourage people to face difficulties.
- XIX. Examples of fortitude
- A. Highest act: facing death for a noble cause (martyrdom, dying in battle, etc.)
 - B. Facing physical pain when necessary: tiredness, lack of sleep, cold, heat, hunger, injuries, etc. This happens at work (finishing a project that needs to be finished), in the family, and in other good causes.
 - C. Facing disapproval or ridicule from others when doing the right thing requires it.
 - D. Being different from other people (when necessary). This is ever more important for Christians.
 - E. Disciplining children. It is often easier to give in or just pacify them with TV, video games, etc. (the "baby-sitters"). Teaching children that they will need to be different at times.
 - F. Having large families.
 - G. Speaking in public (fear of what others will think)
 - H. For children: school work, homework, chores, sports, learning an instrument; earning money is an excellent way for them to experience the relationship between facing difficulty and achieving a good.
- XX. Importance of the fortitude (why it is a cardinal virtue)

- A. Many important goods in life have difficulties attached to them. If a person is not able to face difficulties in a consistent way, he will not achieve many important goods both for himself and for others. For example, if a man wants to be a doctor, he has to face all the difficulties of studies, residency, specialty, etc. So too if one wants to start a business. So too in marriage (always difficulties). So too if you have children (always difficulties). A coward will experience a shrinking of his life as he flees from one difficult good after another. He is unable to achieve much and eventually cannot even maintain friendships because he is not willing to engage in common actions with friends (the heart of friendship) when those actions are difficult.
- XXI. How the virtue is inculcated/gained
- A. The affective/passionate aspect
1. As with other moral virtues, a person come to experience the right amount of fear for the right things at the right times, etc., through habituation. Habituation to the virtue occurs by repeatedly choosing to do what you should in the face of fear.
 2. For teaching young persons to acquire the virtue of fortitude, they have to be encouraged (and at times required) to face difficulties and not be allowed to run away from them (if allowed to do this repeatedly, they will develop into cowards). Laziness is usually lack of fortitude.
 3. Parents and teachers should not try to protect their children from difficulties and even all pain, but rather teach them to face them.
 4. It is good to ask just how many difficult things one's son has to do. Does he get out of them easily or is he required to face them?
- B. The cognitive aspect
1. A person needs to learn:
 - a. That he should face difficulties and pain and not run from them. He should not be surprised by difficulties and pain and should understand that they are part of life.
 - b. What difficulties he should face and which he should not face (the overly-daring person faces difficulties and dangers that he should not).
 - c. How to size up difficulties realistically (many people, especially cowards, over-estimate the difficulties).
 2. How a person learns these ideas:
 - a. Example (especially parents)
 - b. Approvals and disapprovals; if when he does not face a difficulty this is accept with approval (or no disapproval), he will learn that it is OK to flee from difficulties).

- c. Literature: stories, history, movies, etc. in which the connection between fortitude and achieving good is manifested. E.g., stories of the martyrs.

January 2014

Inculcating virtues (2): Literature

XXI. Introduction:

- A. Last time we talked about the moral imagination: the store of possible actions that a person has in his mind/imagination along with the “classification” of those actions as morally good or bad (or indifferent).
- B. We talked about three ways that moral imagination is formed: 1) example, 2) literature, 3) direct explanations of the virtues. We focused on example as one of the major ways the moral imagination is formed. Children (and adults) see others doing good and bad acts and store them up as possibilities for their own actions (e.g., how you dress for various occasions).
- C. Today we will talk about *literature*.

XXII. What we mean by literature

- A. By literature, we understand all the various stories, fables, histories, etc. in which people see moral actions portrayed. This is distinguished from example, in which people see actual actions done by real people in their presence. This is wider than the usual sense of English or Russian literature (basically written fiction).
- B. Literature is, as it were, a kind of surrogate example. People see actions portrayed that they do not see in their real life. These actions can be:
 1. Real (oral and written histories, biographies, historical plays and movies, etc.);
 2. Fictional (story-telling, poems, novels, plays, movies, etc.).
- C. In addition, those actions are usually portrayed as good or bad. Literature in this sense serves as a large and continuous source for the formation of the moral imagination.

XXIII. Power and importance of literature

- A. Literature fills in many of the “gaps” in a person’s experience; things that you have never experienced in real life like fighting in a war, being kidnapped, being a movie star, living in circumstance or places or times far removed from your own.
- B. Literature gives people a sense of what is normal: what is done “out there” outside my particular home or school, etc. This is especially true for kids who instinctively know that their world is not necessarily the same as the big wide world. It is important that the view of the larger world reinforces the values that are being imparted in the home.

- C. Because literature has an author (other than life itself), it tends to be presented in a way that captures our imagination.
1. An author can frame his story and just focus on what he wants; leaves aside what is irrelevant (in real life everything is jumbled together).
 2. The author can tell the story or recount the history in an interesting or compelling way that draws us in and excites our interest. People will often remember what they encounter in literature better than what they experience in real life.
 3. The result is that literature can have a very strong influence on one's moral imagination.
- D. An author can make the actions appear good or bad, often in a more vivid way than real life.
1. This is the real power of literature: it can make actions appear one way or the other.
 2. It can make bad actions seem bad; it also can make bad actions seem good., E.g., modern movies where you are happy the guy gets the girl, although it means they are now going to live together out of wedlock. Or where someone lies and you are happy he does it and gets away with it. Or kids treat parents and adults disrespectfully and it is treated as a funny thing (as a sympathetic character).
 3. Socrates was condemned for impiety because he was accused of teaching the young of Athens not to follow the Gods. But what Plato presents is that Socrates thought the stories about the Gods needed to be changed, since the stories presented the gods engaging in all kinds of immoral behavior and this was not a good model for the youth (also unfitting for a real god to be engaging in this sort of activity). At any rate, the ancients like Socrates and Plato were very aware of the power of literature for good or evil moral formation.
- E. Literature provides a common stock of actions and characters by which any person can speak about these things (Dr. Spock, Harry Potter, George Washington, Job, Mr. Magoo, etc.).
- XXIV. Need to ensure that children are getting good literature
- A. What is good literature? It is literature that presents good actions as good and bad actions as bad; (e.g., Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*; Tolkien; Shakespeare; even the Hardy Boys). Good literature can contain bad actions and include bad characters (it not just about goody-goody characters), but it presents them as bad.
 - B. Need to think about books, movies, videos, history etc. in terms of how they present actions as good and bad. Bad literature can deform the moral imagination. E.g., a movie in which a kid lies and gets away with something and it is presented as good or even just funny gives the impression that lying is OK. Or showing some gay person being persecuted so that you sympathize with the gay and come

away saying that they should be understood and allowed to live their lives as gays.

C. Control what comes into the home:

1. If you do not control that, you are giving up the moral education of your children to someone else (TV programmers, makers of video games, authors of books or magazines).
2. Need to find the right literature: kids need literature and will find it one way or the other. You need to make sure it is good literature. There is plenty of good literature that they can both enjoy and profit from.
3. People sometimes say that you can't protect your children from what is "out there" so just let them see it and then deal with it. There is some truth to this, since you cannot (and should not) keep them from all that is "out there." But the fact that certain things are not allowed in the home has a powerful pedagogical value, even if they see things outside. What is communicated is that these things are bad, and we don't accept them here even if others may accept them.

D. Christian literature

1. As Christians, we need to have literature that reflects Christian teachings and values. This does not mean it has to be about explicitly Christian themes or that all the heroes have to be saints. For example, J.R.R. Tolkien would be an example of Christian literature, because the values that come through are essentially Christian.
2. The Bible: children should read (or be read) the Bible, including the Old Testament.
 - a. The stories of the Old Testament are given to us to help us understand man's relationship with God.
 - b. The basic point that comes through time and again: when you stick with God (obey him, worship him, not worship false gods), things go well for you. This is a very important lesson, especially for children.
 - c. Also they learn about the whole notion of divine providence: that God acts in our lives and that a good man relies on God, prays to God, thanks God.
 - d. There was a time where the Bible was one of the main staples of literature: read in the home from a young age; was integral to popular culture (people could refer to characters in the Bible and everyone knew who they were talking about). For Christians it remains the most basic literature. It was given to us by God himself precisely so that we would learn from it how we should act.
3. Lives of saints

- a. Children need to see examples of people who lived their faith in a heroic way. They can be moved by them (The example of a nun who was inspired to follow her vocation because her mother who told her that every third book she read had to be the life of a saint. One was the autobiography of St. Therese. That book is what put the idea of becoming a nun into her head). Young girls need to see the example of St. Maria Gorretti to see how they should protect their chastity. Boys need examples like St. Sebastian or St. Lawrence.
- b. Accounts of the martyrs: let the children see what their Christian faith may require and how they may have to respond in those circumstances.

XXV. Need to talk about the literature with sons

- A. Literature provides a very good occasion for fathers to talk to their children about good and bad acts. Parents should take advantage of literature to instruct their children.
- B. It is also important to point out the errors of bad literature when they are exposed to it.

March 2014

The Virtue of Generosity or Liberality

XXII. Definition

- A. Generosity or liberality is the virtue by which a person handles money well, particularly in terms of giving it away.
- B. It is part of the virtue of temperance: you need to control the urges attached to money and spending money:
 1. The urge or desire to keep it for yourself and spend it on yourself;
 2. The urge to give it away, which, while being a noble urge, can become disordered.
- C. The things generosity deals with:
 1. Money: particularly one's own money that one can give away.
 2. Other things that one could give to others.
- D. Opposed vices:
 1. Stinginess and greed: a person is habitually disposed to give away too little and keep too much for oneself;

2. Prodigality: a person is habitually disposed to give away too much; to spend too much on others (people who come into a lot of money can be prodigal as in prize fighters).
3. Stinginess is the more common vice and hence the one parents need to watch for more.

XXIII. Acquiring the virtue (esp. children)

- A. A person needs to engage in acts of giving things to others.
 1. This requires that a person has something to give;
 2. You also have to have those to who you can give.
 3. It is good to ask if your son has anything to give and to whom he can give it. Does he ever think about giving away money? Or giving gifts bought with his own money?
- B. Need for example.
 1. Children need to see others give things away, especially their parents.
 2. They need to see such giving praised (and also to be encouraged to give).

XXIV. How best to have children have things (money) to give away.

- A. How do they have their own money? Do they earn it? Are they given it as gifts (birthdays, Christmas, graduation)? Are they given a fixed allowance? They need to have some money in their own control if they are to make the choice to give it away.
- B. How are they encouraged to give it away?
 1. Do they buy Christmas gifts or birthday gifts with their own money? Do they have to make any sacrifice to buy gifts? Do they give money to the Church (e.g., in the Sunday collection)? Or send money to the missions?
 2. Some families have the policy that children put aside a certain portion of whatever money they receive/earn in order to give away.
- C. Does giving it away mean a sacrifice for them? That is, is there something they cannot do that they might have done if they had kept the money?

XXV. Another related issue is that of saving money.

- A. It is good for children to not spend all the money they receive, but to put it aside for something like college, or some bigger purchase (such as a car once they are older). Not spending money on immediate gratification is a good way to develop temperance.
- B. Another idea is that they have to pay for their own activities (e.g., go on a ski trip), or at least pay a certain portion of the cost. They may have to save up for this.

Industriousness

XXVI. Nature and importance of Industriousness

- A. What is industriousness? The virtue of working well. It is a very American virtue (as in Horatio Alger), but is needed for life in general.
- B. Its importance for life
1. Throughout life a person has to work (unless you are fabulously rich); success in life requires that a person work well, at least to a minimal degree.
 2. Some people are extraordinarily talented and can get by with little work, especially when they are young, but these same people often fail to learn to work well and as life goes on they experience troubles.
 3. To have formed a habit(s) of working well will allow a person to support his family, make a real contribution to society, and keep him from falling into many temptations that come from idleness. It will also allow him to sanctify his work, which is its deepest meaning (you need to work well if you are to offer your work to God).
- C. What elements makeup industriousness?
1. Punctuality; starting on time. This is often an issue of temperance, in that you have to leave off doing something else that you like doing.
 2. Perseverance, especially when it becomes more difficult. This is an aspect of fortitude.
 3. Neatness and Order: keeping things in their places; cleaning up as you go; doing the distinct tasks in the proper order, etc. Being able to plan ahead without having to rely on deadline-generated adrenalin.
 4. Finishing tasks: getting all the last details done and getting the finished product out the door to whoever is waiting for it.

5. Teamwork: being able to coordinate your work with others. Most jobs involve this and a great number of men are very bad at this.

D. Work is the norm, not play. This is something boys need to learn early in life.

1. Most of people's time is spent in productive activity. This is normal.
2. Play is a respite from work, so that we can recoup our energies. We do not work in order to play, but vice versa.
3. We work to have leisure which is different from play (has a contemplative aspect to it).
4. To treat play with the seriousness of work is a deformation (lack of the virtue of eutrapelia).
5. Obviously boys need to play, but they need to learn its proper role in life.

XXVII. Inculcating the virtue of industriousness

A. Example of Father

1. They need to see their father work, if possible in his workplace.
2. It is good for boys to hear about their father's work; the problems he faces and how he overcomes them. Normally their only access to the world of professional work is their father. They like hearing about it and it increases their respect for their father.
3. The father should not complain about work or act as if he dislikes work and can't wait to be done with it. This gives a negative impression of work.

B. Making sure the children have real work to do

1. They need real work if they are to develop the virtue of working well. Virtues are formed by repeated actions of the good type of behavior. You cannot learn to work and develop these habits without real work. That means things that have real consequences for life (as opposed to games where the outcome does not really matter).

2. Their own studies. These are serious activities with serious consequences. They need to be helped to clear times of study and they need to be held to high standards in their studies (i.e., good grades).
3. Household Chores
4. Earning money. A paying job (especially with someone other than the parents), is an excellent school of virtues. Keeping children short on money (i.e. giving them little money) is a good incentive for them to look for paying jobs (it usually takes some imagination).
5. Other activities that are serious and involved work, such as volunteering.

C. Work before play

1. Children need to learn that you do your work before you play. They should certainly play, but they should do so after doing their work. Just like real life. In this way they learn unconsciously that work has priority over play.
2. They should not feel guilty about playing, which can happen if parents are not careful (parents can sometimes give the impression that you should be working all the time). They should have the sense that when your work is done, you can go out and play or do whatever you want.

Intro to videos

- Today we're going to watch two short videos about Opus Dei and its founder St. Josemaría.
- The Christian tone and spirit of Southmont's programs are entrusted to Opus Dei, an organization of the Catholic Church. Moreover, at Southmont, Opus Dei also offers various activities of Christian formation such as classes, retreats, spiritual direction, and so on.
- Tomorrow is the 115th anniversary of St. Josemaría's birth. Also, John Coverdale is not here today, yet he appears in one of these videos! So, we thought this would be a good opportunity to show them to you and tell you a bit more about Opus Dei.

Commentary on short videos about Opus Dei and St. Josemaría

- I want to briefly follow up this video by explaining a few of the main features of the spirit of Opus Dei.
- **Divine filiation.** "Divine filiation is the foundation of the spirit of Opus Dei," said its founder, Saint Josemaría Escrivá.

- This is the most fundamental truth about a Christian.
- A Christian is a child of God by virtue of baptism, both in the general sense that God created us, but even more intimately in the sense that God invites us to share, by our baptism, in the inner life of the Trinity, as a son in the Son. We're called to spend all of eternity as a child of God contemplating our Father God.
- Because this is so fundamental, our divine filiation should shape our whole life. For starters, it should give us a lot of joy, confidence, and security. But I want to mention 4 other features of the spirit of Opus Dei which flow from this fact.
- **Sanctifying work and ordinary life**
 - "It is in the midst of the most material things of the earth that we must sanctify ourselves, serving God and all mankind," said Saint Josemaría.
 - God made the world and he made human nature. These are good things which God wants us to carry out according to his plan and with love for Him.
 - The family, marriage, work – all of our activities – are opportunities for drawing close to and imitating Jesus, trying to practice charity, patience, humility, diligence, integrity, cheerfulness, and all the other human and Christian virtues.
 - Most of our days are taken up with work. If we strive to do our work very well, to see it as a service to others, and if we try to do it for love of God – this is sanctifying our work.
- **Prayer and sacrifice.**
 - In order to sanctify ordinary life and live your whole day, every day, for love of God, it takes practice. Like any other aspect of life. It doesn't happen all at once.
 - So, Opus Dei encourages people to develop a plan of life, like a work-out plan, that is made up of all the traditional Christian practices.
 - First and foremost, frequent reception of the Sacraments: confession, Holy Mass.
 - Second, daily times of prayer: mental prayer, the Rosary, reading and meditation on the Gospel, etc.
 - And finally, to live a spirit of penance by offering up little difficulties and sacrifices in one's daily life to God, trying to be united to Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.
- **Unity of life.**
 - If everything our Father God made is good and if the point of our life is to prepare to be with God forever, then it makes sense that every aspect of our life should be directed to God.
 - St. Josemaría explained that Christians working in the world should not live "a kind of double life. On the one hand, an interior life, a life of union with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life." On the contrary: "There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God."
 - We should always respect the freedom of our fellow citizens and live naturally as one more citizen in society, but we shouldn't ever turn off our Christian switch in one or other spheres of our life.

- **Charity.**
 - Anytime you have something good, you naturally want to share it with others.
 - This is equally true with our faith. A natural consequence of getting to know Christ and developing one's faith is the desire to spread it to others.
 - The most important way that most Christians are called to spread our faith is through our ordinary relationships – among your colleagues, relatives, friends, neighbors.
 - Giving good example and especially showing forth our joy and love.
 - Talking to our friends about our faith.
 - This is simply part of the dual commandment of love: to love God above all things and to love one's neighbor as oneself.
 - What better can we do for a friend than help him get closer to God and to Heaven?
- To finish, on a practical level if you're interested, I encourage you to grab one of these general brochures about Opus Dei, to look at more of the videos which there are of St. Josemaria on the website, and to feel free to purchase any books by or about St. Josemaria from our books for sale cabinet which is next to the front door. And above all, feel free to ask questions to each other or to me or others who help run things at Southmont.

Prudence in the use of time

XXVIII. What is Prudence?

- A. Definition: Prudence is the virtue which lets us habitually deliberate well about how to act (morally). Deliberation is the thinking we do before we make a decision or choice.
- B. Prudence is involved in all the acts of all the virtues, because we always have to think/deliberate about how we will act. Since we are free, our actions flow from our choices, and choices are made by *thinking* beings, such as human beings.
- C. The deliberation of prudence aims at the highest goal, which is the goal of our whole life: *happiness*. We can also call happiness *success in life*. Happiness is not just a warm feeling, but an objective way of being.
 1. All the subordinate goals (health, wealth, athletic achievement, entertainment, artistic activity, etc.) are aimed at this higher, comprehensive goal. We do all that we do in order to be happy.
 2. When the prudent man deliberates, he is thinking about a possible action in light of how it will impact *happiness* (his own or others').
 3. The prudent person can regularly and dependably find the right means to achieve happiness (as a good doctor can regularly and dependably find the right means to restore the health of the patient).

XXIX. Well-used time

- A. Time is a gift from God. It is like the parable of the talents in the Gospel. Each of us is given so much time in our life and God wants us to use it well to "make a

profit.” The ultimate measure of our use of time is whether or not we have used it the way God wants us to use it.

- B. As we all know from our own experience, we can easily waste time.
 - 1. Sometimes it is as simple as sitting around daydreaming.
 - 2. Sometimes it is wasting time looking at stuff on the internet we have no need to know or can learn easily another time.
 - 3. Sometimes we do good things, but not the right thing: not what we really to be doing at this time. For example, we can be at work—a good thing—but we really should be home with our family. Or we can be exercising—a good thing—when we really ought to be praying.
- C. It takes the virtue of prudence consistently to use our time wisely: to be doing at each moment the thing we should be doing at that moment. This does not happen spontaneously, but rather requires the deliberate consideration proper to prudence.

XXX. Priorities

- A. An absolutely first condition for good use of one’s time is to have one’s priorities clear. Use of time always involves choosing to do one activity when you could do (many) others. Without any set of priorities, these choices would become random and you could not really think about them in a rational way. That is, you could not make prudent choices about how to use your time. You would just end up doing whatever you felt like doing at a given moment.
- B. It is necessary to step back from time to time to review your priorities. What are the most important things in life? Am I giving priority to those things? Something like a retreat is an excellent time to do this.
- C. What things should have priority?
 - 1. 1st priority: our relationship with God.
 - a. Praying should be something we do daily in a planned way.
 - b. Learning more about the faith (spiritual reading): this should be regular and on-going. A little time each day.
 - c. Working on our own spiritual development, e.g. receiving spiritual direction or attending an annual retreat.
 - 2. 2nd: our family. Wife first, children second, then other relatives. Taking care of all their needs. These are obligations of charity.
 - 3. 3rd: our professional work well done (an obligation of justice).
 - 4. Other things of lower priority: personal friends, community service, health and fitness, hobbies, entertainment, etc.
- D. To have priorities does not mean that you focus only on the higher priorities. You need to take care of all of them. In many circumstances the right thing to do is to take care of a lesser priority. For example, there are times when the right thing to be doing is exercise and not praying or doing professional work, even though

these are more important. But, overall you do not abandon or slight what is more important for the sake of what is less important. This can happen, for example, with men with their hobbies: they can spend less time on their families than they should because of a hobby or sport.

XXXI. Some important aspects of good use of time

A. Getting up at a set time (vs. sleeping in)

1. This is usually not much of an issue on a normal work day (except, perhaps, giving in and hitting the snooze button).
2. It is important to have a fixed time to rise, even on weekends and vacations. When are seeking the good of others—family and friends—we will always have a lot to do and need as much time as we can find to do it.
3. In terms of the first priority, if you try to pray daily, do spiritual reading daily, or go to weekday Mass, you quickly find out that a key element is getting up early which gives you some quiet time. Taking your kids to Mass on a Saturday morning is a great way to build up their piety.

B. Planning (avoiding last minute panics; highly inefficient)

1. Planning is a matter of charity. Unless you have planned what you are going to do and when, you end up wasting a lot of time figuring out what to do next. You also have many last minute “panics” which are usually pretty inefficient (e.g., the extra trips to the store that result from not having thought ahead). When you consider the virtue of charity and all the good you can do for other people, you can see that inefficient use of time means that you can do less for others, that is, you cannot live charity as well.
2. Everyone needs some sort of daily schedule. Between commutes and professional work we usually work out a schedule for workdays. It is important to have plans for how you will use whatever free time you may have.
 - a. It may be little, especially during the week. It may be simply that you help your wife as much as you can.
 - b. But, especially on weekends and vacations, it is good to have plans (obviously leaving room for some spontaneity). What should be avoided is having stretches of time where you just “veg out” doing nothing worthwhile. Being out with friends is another story.
3. It is good to step back periodically, on a retreat or something similar, and look at how well planned your time is. Many people, if they actually track their use of time by the hour discover how much time they are wasting and how little they are following their priorities. Once you realize this, you can adjust your plans for what you will do and when (i.e., make a plan).

C. Doing one thing at a time

1. Multitasking is a myth (for almost all persons).
 2. People who get things done efficiently almost always focus on the task at hand and get it done and then move on to the next thing. They avoid the constant interruption of phone, email, texts, TV, etc. It is good to have time just to focus on tasks that need to be done (maybe leaving your phone off for a stretch of hours).
 3. Especially in giving attention to other people, it is important to give them one's full attention without being sidetracked by phone, texts, etc.
- D. Not wasting time. There are many ways to waste time and we all fall into them.
1. Doing something you don't really need to do (checking the score of the game for the fifth time).
 2. Doing nothing at all (daydreaming, idle fantasies about unreal successes, useless memories, and so on).
 3. Wasting "down-time". Consider how well you use your commute; you may actually be able to read books (on tape) or pray the Rosary. Even waiting in line at a store or an airport can be put to good use, if you try to pray (e.g., you can easily do a decade of the Rosary while standing there). So too sitting in the waiting room at the doctor's office (as opposed to flipping through People magazine).
 4. Doing what someone else can do while not doing what only you can do (and are supposed to be doing).
 5. Unnecessary or over-extended conversations (especially at work).
- E. The role of temperance and fortitude
1. Fortitude is needed to face difficult things and do them without hesitation. People waste a lot of time avoiding things they find hard, or painful or embarrassing, etc.
 2. Temperance is needed to control all the urges that lead to distractions from what we should be doing at a given moment. People can spend hours on video games, internet, blogs, watching sports or TV, long unnecessary conversations, etc. Usually this reflects a lack of temperance; they are following urges that should be curbed.

XXXII. Teaching sons how to use time well

- A. The father's example is crucial. If the father uses his time well, it sets a tone in the house. If the father wastes a lot of time, the sons will pick up on that.
- B. Sons need to see that their father lives clear priorities. God is first. Then family. Then work. The priority of God should be reflected in family life. Prayer is not seen as a waste of time, but as something necessary for a happy life.
- C. Getting up in the morning. Children should get up at a set time. This can vary, but sleeping in until you just feel like getting up is not good. If this becomes a habit, it will be hard to overcome later in life.

D. Children should not spend too much time on play.

1. They should spend the majority of their time on serious activities such as school, homework, chores. Reading should be encouraged to avoid empty time and boredom. Reading aloud to young children is an excellent way for them to want to read books on their own.
2. If they can get a job early on, that is good. Not giving them money (or very little) is a good way for them to want to work.
3. Video games are to be avoided as much as possible. They should learn early on that life is not about play.