



"Punctuality as Virtue" Character: A Self-Chosen Inner Identity

If one were to speak of character, it could very well be said that our actions are also acts of self-determination. Yet, what is character, or better still, what does it mean to exhibit Christ-like character? And how is it developed?

For centuries the ultimate goal of education in schools as well as families and communities was the formation of one's character. Students were taught languages, philosophy, literature, music and mathematics to increase not only wisdom, but also judgment, which would empower them to serve and contribute to the perfections of a society. Education, regardless of the methodology, sought to engender "virtue". However, in recent years it seems that education in general has drifted away from molding and helping students and young people positive moral character traits.

Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas once wrote in his book "Towards an Ethic of Character" that character is one's own act of self-determination. In them we not only reaffirm what we have been, but more importantly, we also determine what we will be in the future." This is very important in life since we must acknowledge that true and authentic Character formation encompasses not only the development of moral thinking, but also ways of speaking, and acting. These various elements of our life eventually through repetition become habitual. Character or virtue formation is fostered through practice and the development of consistent habits.

Character then, is who we are on the core of our being; it is the moral shape of our true or inner selves. Punctuality cannot be just who we pretend to be, but it is in fact who we really are, and who we are in the process of becoming through all of our choices. It is evident that character and moral virtues are shaped and formed in both families and communities. Consequently, Christian formation of character and virtue is essential because we do recognize that certain qualities of character can only be developed through God's grace at work in our lives. That act of grace that comes before and during the process of formation. Certainly we can look at the life of Christ as an example of the Virtue or character trait of Punctuality. Jesus' life exemplified a life of obedience to God. Jesus clearly modeled a life of humility and service, a life of Love, of Holiness as well as a Life of the Spirit. Still, many people at an early stage of base their faith in God on what their family has modeled. The same is true when it comes to morality.

Such traits included compassion, honesty, patience, punctuality, trust, humility, etc. As the great philosopher Aristotle ONCE ARGUED, "moral virtues are the result of human choices." Moreover, they are not something we are born with, but are developed through all of our daily choices. They must be modeled and learned long before they become ingrained habits or dispositions of one's character.

Most of us have come to realize that the character trait of “punctuality” seems to have been lost these days. I can recall one Sunday morning many years ago while I was a child at our local parish. Everything seemed to be in a hubbub with people walking all over the place even up in front of the Church to which we belonged. And even though the Liturgy was going on, people continued to walk in and disrupt the rest of us. This provides us with an opportunity to value the character of punctuality. As human persons, we all have the capacity to be FREE. Therefore, this capacity relates not only to our deeds, but also to our virtues and our character.

One’s freedom to choose who we will be and how we will act have its foundation in one’s ability to choose things we will do or not do. Punctuality falls within this specific parameter. We must take responsibility for the consequences of our actions. In addition, we all have the freedom to change. Not only do we have the capacity to choose character, to grow and to become different than we are today. As any of us know who have tried to play the piano, or take up a new language, serious change requires commitment and perseverance.

All of us as human persons have the capacity not only to choose between various options, but also to give an answer for ourselves in these choices. Punctuality means setting our sights on our integrity and consistency. A consistency that enables us to do what we have promised and to be who we say we are.

Finally, as human beings, we are social by our very nature. Thus, all of us live with, depend on and are made for others. All of these aspects of our character and way of virtuous living point us to the human orientation for community. Good moral character, especially “Punctuality” affords each and every one of us the opportunity by habitually answering the call to recognize, respect and respond to others as creatures fashioned in the image and likeness of God, anything less than that expresses utter disrespect for not only oneself, but also for everyone around us. Moreover, cultivating a life of virtue and a life of positive moral character enables and empowers us to become fully human.

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