

Reflection on Virtue
By,
Susan Santandreu
Member of SS. Peter and Paul R.C. Church

It seems strange and almost redundant to talk about the virtue of virtue but from a faith perspective virtue is everything! Virtue has been defined as “The moral excellence evident in my life as I consistently do what is right.” St. Paul said, “You should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth.” Ephesians 4:22-24. Not just once, but time and time again we need to put away the old self and put on the new in order to model Christ. Virtue is something that we strive for every day.

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1833 states that “Virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good.” Practicing virtue, in essence, is striving to incorporate as many of the 49 character qualities from alertness to wisdom into daily life as possible. Every day we are faced with choices. Some choices involve deciding between what we really want to do and what is best, what would benefit us and what would benefit others and so on. When attempting to lead a virtuous life, we need only to look back on the example set by those we admire and especially by the life of Jesus Christ Himself! Remember when people started wearing those bracelets inscribed with the letters: W.W.J.D? It was a simple reminder that when faced with a difficult decision, it’s best to think first, what would Jesus do if it was his decision? The only way to know is to study the Bible and the teachings of Christ that have been handed down to us. If we don’t know Him, we won’t be able to surmise what he would do in any given situation.

Unfortunately, some people believe that God thinks just like they do instead of the other way around. They feel that if they can justify something in their minds, God will be more than willing to go along with it. This way of thinking leads many into error. Instead of making an effort to discover the truth about God and his Son Jesus, some would rather assume that God wants nothing but their happiness so whatever they decide will make them happy must be O.K. One way to determine if your version of W.W.J.D. is off base is if He never makes you feel uncomfortable with what you decide. Living a virtuous life involves studying the virtues and understanding their implications for our lives. It’s about doing what’s right in every situation, no matter what the cost, no matter who is watching and especially when no one is watching.

Virtue is found throughout the bible in the old and new testaments. In 1 Chronicles 29:17 we hear, “I know, O my God, that you put hearts to the test and that you take pleasure in uprightness.” The entire Book of Proverbs is a manual of integrity with such sayings as, “He who pursues justice and kindness will find life and honor.” Proverbs 21:21, as well as, “The reward of humility and fear of the Lord is riches, honor and life.” Proverbs 22:4. In Philippians 4:8-9 St. Paul writes, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.” In 2 Peter 1:5-7 he tells us that God has bestowed great promises and that through them we may come to share in the divine nature as long as we stay away from the corruption that exists in the world, “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love.” All with the intention, of course, of entering into the perfection of heaven by following the example of Jesus Christ and listening to his teachings and reflecting them in the way we behave toward one another daily.