

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

JUSTICE



Virtue of the Month:
Justice

Saintly Exemplar:
St. Thomas More



Sacred Scripture:

“If a man is just and does what is lawful and right – if he does not oppress anyone..., commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked..., is careful to observe My ordinances, he shall surely live, says the Lord God.”

Ezekiel 15:5-9

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

“*Justice* is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the ‘virtue of religion.’ Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. ‘You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor’” (CCC 1807).

What is the virtue of justice?

Justice is the habit of being fair and righteous in all circumstances.

- The *natural* virtue of justice calls us to be fair and honest in our relationships with God and others.
- The natural virtue of religion is part of the virtue of justice and directs us to honor and worship God. The virtue of religion requires us to show reverence, love, obedience, and gratitude to our Maker.
- The *supernatural* virtue of justice makes us responsible for following the teachings of the Christ and His Church in all aspects of life. Christian justice causes us to give to God what is due Him and, within that understanding, to give others what is due them as children of God. The foundation of the Ten Commandments is about living justice toward God and neighbor.
- The virtue of justice does not stand alone, “it is intertwined with the virtues of sincerity, gratitude, obedience, friendship, simplicity, honesty, and reverence due to God.”

Why do we need the virtue of justice?

- The virtue of justice draws us to give God reverence, worship, love.
- In justice, we seek what is good and fair and avoid what is evil.
- Justice helps us to give others what is their due, so that they can fulfill their responsibilities and exercise their rights as persons in their situation in life. We also try to see that others do the same.
- In justice, each person is to be treated with dignity.
- Justice is required to repair any harm done to a neighbor.
- Justice makes for peace and mutual trust and confidence among men in that it respects the rights of all and restrains deceit and fraud.
- We have a responsibility to improve the conditions for individuals to obtain their due (Social Justice).
- Due to the fact that everything that we have is a gift from God, we are temporary stewards of these gifts. In justice, we must make good use of these gifts in serving others. Therefore, on the Day of Judgment, we will be asked how we used the gifts that we received.

Suggestions for teaching the virtue of justice at home:

Justice in the family demands that all members:

- Understand the proper order and headship... the role of father, mother, child.
- Develop open and honest communication, where the child in the absence of fear, can share whatever is on his/her heart with their parents.
- Understand that justice is not allowing an injustice to be done to them. Further, if an injustice occurs, there is a need to discuss it with parents and appropriate authorities.
- Be respected by others and have the right to appropriate privacy.
- Help others reach human and supernatural fulfillment.

Aspects in teaching the virtue of justice for younger children:

- Teach your children to keep promises and to tell the truth.
- Teach your children to keep rules for games and to complete the game even when they are losing.
- Teach children to respect the property of others – not to steal, damage or break anything. If something is found, return it to the owner; if damaged, make restitution; if owed, repay it immediately.
- Explain what is unjust while encouraging/insisting that the child live justice in all actions.
- Guide your child to exercise self-control, making reparation if/when control is lost.
- Help children to understand justice with regard to these values: sincerity, gratitude, obedience, friendship, honesty, simplicity, reverence due to God . Help them to practice justice in each area.
- Explain how age-differences (age appropriateness) influence the practice of justice.
- Teach children to respect the rights of others: to knock before opening a closed door; to refrain from “borrowing” items without the owner’s knowledge; to refrain from interrupting conversations.
- Teach children to keep commitments such as accepted invitations, home and school responsibilities.
- Teach children to listen to adults and then follow those instructions so as to do the task correctly.

Aspects in teaching the virtue of justice for children ages 9-13:

- Teach your children to avoid small acts of injustice such as lying to get out of a situation.
- Prevent your children from being unforgiving/vengeful but train them to be forgiving/optimistic.
- Teach your children to return borrowed items promptly in the same condition they were borrowed.
- Teach your children to help friends and siblings to act in an upright manner such as discouraging friends from shoplifting, sneaking into places without paying, etc.
- Teach your children to apologize, always making reparation, to avoid gossip, and rash judgment.

Aspects in teaching the virtue of justice to teens:

- Justice demands that we see the image of God in *every* human person and to treat them with respect.
- Teach your teens the importance of obeying just laws and understanding their civic duties.
- Help your teen to see his duty in everyday activity as a brother, a companion, and a citizen.
- Teach your teens that to live the virtue of justice takes a great deal of prayer, prudence and wisdom.

Adapted from Raise Happy Children Teach Them Virtue, Mary Ann Budnick, R. B. Media, Inc., pp. 270 - 282

Justice

St. Thomas More

Steps in learning and developing the virtue of justice are:

1. The child realizes that to live in harmony people have to act justly toward others.
2. The child learns to establish an agreement between himself and others (i.e. the rules of a game).
3. The child learns he has a duty and moral debt toward others as well as others have a duty and moral debt toward him.
4. The child recognizes just laws and his duty toward society.

Good habits/virtues are developed through the practice of good acts frequently done.



Painting: Mary Mother of the Church Parish, La Crosse, WI.

Prayer to St. Thomas More

Dear scholar and martyr, it was not the king of England but you who were the true defender of the Faith. Like Christ unjustly condemned, neither promises nor threats could make you accept a civil ruler as head of the Catholic Church. Perfect in your honesty and love of truth, grant that lawyers and judges and I may imitate you and achieve true justice for all people.
Amen.