



# the messenger

## The 12 Virtues Series

Information collected from around the globe.

Thanks to all contributors past and present!

### The 12 Virtues of a Good Teacher - Humility

- "Humility . . . directly opposes pride, which gives us an unjustly exalted notion of our own excellence."
- "A good teacher will be humble in mind, knowing full well his own insufficiencies; he will be humble in heart, loving his lowliness; he will be humble in action, behaving humbly in all he does."
- "Humility is accompanied by modesty. Thus a teacher who possesses this virtue considers himself highly honored to labor for the salvation of souls, following the example of Jesus Christ."
- "Humility excludes all vainglory [ego] as a motive of acting."
- "Humility eliminates jealousy. A humble Brother, far from feeling chagrin over the achievements and successes enjoyed by others in the same type of work, on the contrary, will be pleased to see that they equal and even surpass him; that they succeed better than he does in teaching."
- "The humility of a good teacher makes him courageous. He does not turn away from whatever may be lowly and uninviting in the schools and in the students. He welcomes them with kindness and mildness. . . . Still, he does not forget that he must always repress whatever might weaken his authority and give rise to disorder, insolence, lack of application, or other forms of misconduct on the part of the students."
- "The humility of a good teacher makes him charitable, affable, obliging, and easy to approach, especially by the poor and those whom he might find less interesting to deal with. Never does he assume an arrogant, disdainful, or scornful attitude when addressing the students."



### A Question:

How do you strive to be approachable to students, to teachers, to parents?





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## ***Humility***

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### **For Reflection**

*What statement speaks especially to you and your educational responsibilities?*

*What does this virtue look like in action?*

*How does one exercise humility towards oneself?*

*How do you know when your humility is effective?*

*How do you know when your humility is ineffective?*





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## HUMILITY

A virtue that inspires us with a realistic view of ourselves;  
it attributes to us our just due.



### Strategy 29-5: Respecting Our Own Stage

**Purpose:** To avoid frustrations and disillusionment that may come from unrealistic expectations.

**Description:** Reminding ourselves that teachers go through states of development and it is unwise to expect more of ourselves than is now appropriate.

Are you an experienced teacher? If so, strategies will probably help you improve quickly. Are you a beginning teacher? If so, strategies should help you move through the three stages most teachers experience.

*Stage 1: Pleasing others.* Beginners often start with a mind that is set on mastering job requirements, getting accepted, and especially, pleasing those in authority. They want students to like them. They want parents to like them. And they want whoever is in authority to like them, at least enough to offer them a permanent job. Some teachers call this the "survival" stage.

*Stage 2: Teaching the subject matter.* After some experience, particularly after receiving tenure, teachers typically enter a stage when what is most important to them is getting students to learn the subject matter they were hired to teach. Such teachers are willing to confront students, to push them to work hard, even to confront parents: "I believe your son would do better if he did not watch so much TV." Teachers at this stage often feel it is important to cover the subject matter. Pleasing others has reduced priority.

*Stage 3: Teaching beyond the subject matter.* After some time at Stage 2, many teachers notice that no matter what they do, some students never learn much subject matter and many of those who do promptly forget it, often within days of exams. Furthermore, the teachers may come to see that students who do not forget what they learned hardly ever use it. How often, after all, are adults asked to find the area of a parallelogram or name the battles of the Civil War? This realization leads teachers to reevaluate the importance of subject matter. Typically, then, they become less obsessive about covering subject matter, more willing to allot class time to other matters, for example, to events that excite or worry students. Such teachers typically open their concerns beyond subject matter to show respect for good living as well as good learning.



If you are a beginner, you will almost certainly start at Stage 1. Guard against expecting so much from yourself that you invite disillusionment. Similarly, if you have recently moved into Stage 2, you may find it wise to allow yourself to remain where you are as long as you need to be there. In short, respect your own time clock. Know that strategies will help you move through your teaching stages smoothly. And if you are one of the few beginners willing to risk starting with a Stage 3 focus, know that strategies will make success easier. You might even discover, as others have, that you will not displease others by being a Stage 3 teacher. You might find many people absolutely delighted that you can teach in inspiring ways. You will also discover that you will not slight subject matter mastery by becoming a Stage 3 teacher. In fact, we know of no better way to advance learning than by teaching in a way that inspires students to apply the very best they have to daily schoolwork.



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## Strategy 33-13: Apologizing

**Purpose:** To model behavior that is healthy for mature relationships.

**Description:** Honestly apologizing to a student, modeling respectful social behavior.

It's strange how often apologies are misused. Some people feel they should never admit being wrong. Others feel they are always admitting they are wrong. yet an apology can be healthful for all concerned if it is clean, caring and honest – especially if it comes from a teacher. "I'm sorry," we might say, "that I nagged so much yesterday about your lab reports. I wish I hadn't done that. Now for today's lesson..." Just a simple statement, without elaboration or discussion, can work wonders.

We might also encourage students to learn the art of apologizing, perhaps saying something like this:

Class, I'd like to see us apologize when we make a mistake and hurt someone. As you will probably notice, I will apologize from time to time. Sometimes I get too impatient, or too irritable, or too tired, or too something... I might snap at someone or sometimes snap at the whole class. I may not realize that until later. In those cases, I like to come back and say I'm sorry once I get a better perspective.

I might say to someone for example, "I'm sorry I got so angry and talked to irritably yesterday. No one deserves such treatment. I hope I didn't hurt your feelings. I don't want to hurt you or anybody else. It's just that sometimes I am unable to do better. I'm sorry if I hurt you." You, too, might apologize in class sometimes. It clears the air. It often dissolves guilt. It helps keep a group running smoothly. Usually it makes us all feel a bit closer.

To give us a bit of practice now, imagine you have made a mistake and acted in a way that was not your best self. Maybe start by imagining what you could say or do that might be hurtful to someone. Then write possible words you might say, maybe the next day, to that person. After a few moments, I'll ask you to share your ideas with a partner. Maybe someone would be willing to role-play such talk for us all. Let's see what we can learn about phrasing apologies.

Such a lesson may be unnecessary. Simply modeling the behavior – that is, simply apologizing in the classroom when you do something you regret – often leads students to pick up on the strategy and begin to apologize to each other more often. Such behavior can contribute substantially to a healthy class community.



*"The Humility of a good teacher makes him courageous. He does not turn away from whatever may be lowly and uninviting in the school and in the students. He welcomes them with kindness and mildness; without showing any distaste, he puts up with their natural defects: their rudeness, their ineptitude, the flaws in their character. He patiently bears with their indocility, impoliteness, ingratitude, opposition, and even insults without yielding to resentment or revenge, even when these faults are directed at him personally. Still, he does not forget that he must always repress whatever might weaken his authority and give rise to disorder, insolence, lack of application, or other forms of misconduct in the part of the students..."*



Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

## Amazing Grace

1. A- ma- zing grace! How sweet the sound, that  
 saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but  
 now I'm found, was blind, but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
 and grace my fears relieved.  
 How precious did that grace appear  
 the hour I first believed.

3. Through many dangers, toils and snares  
 I have already come.  
 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
 and grace will lead me home.

4. The Lord has promised good to me;  
 his word my hope secures.  
 He will my shield and portion be  
 as long as life endures.

Words: John Newton (1725-1807)

Music: American Folk Melody:


Arranged: John Rombaut

## Reading

from Brother Agathon 1785, translated by Brother Gerard Rummery 1998

Our divine Saviour teaches us the necessity of this virtue when He tells us: "Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter into the Kingdom of God." (Matthew 18:3)

Humility is accompanied by modesty. Thus, a teacher who really possesses this virtue considers himself highly honored to labour at the salvation of souls, following the example of Jesus Christ and of the Apostles. If he is talented, he does not make a display of it; he does not show conceit, pride and overbearing manners. He does not look down on his brothers nor on what they do. He does not seek to be praised for what he does, nor applauded for his success; he does not attribute to himself the glory which is due only to the One who distributes talents as He sees fit; he refers all such esteem to God alone.



The humility of a good teacher makes him charitable, affable, obliging, easy to approach, especially by the poor, and those whom he might find less interesting to deal with. Never does he assume, when addressing the students, an arrogant, disdainful, or scornful attitude.

### *Our response* from Philippians 2

- Side One:** I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind.
- Side Two:** Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble towards one another, always considering others better than yourselves.
- Side One:** And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had.
- Side Two:** He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.
- Side One:** Instead of this, of his own free will, he gave up all he had and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness.
- Side Two:** He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death, his death on the cross.
- Side One:** For this reason God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name.
- Side Two:** And so, in honour of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below, will fall on their knees.
- Side One:** And all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.
- All:** Glory be to the Father .... Amen.

### *Pause for quiet reflection*

#### *Reading* from Corinthians 1

Now remember what you were my brothers and sisters, when God called you. From the human point of view few of you were wise or powerful or of high social standing. God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise, and he chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful. He chose what the world looks down on and despises, and thinks is nothing, in order to destroy what the world thinks is important.

This means that no one can boast in God's presence. And God has brought you into union with Christ Jesus and God has made Christ to be our wisdom. By him we are put right with God, we become God's holy people and are set free.

So then, as the scripture says, "Whoever wants to boast must boast about what the Lord has done."



### *Our response*

from Letters 81 and 109 of John Baptist de La Salle

Side One:

You must be convinced that your vocation demands of you quite a different degree of humility so that what would be tolerated in another person should not seem tolerable in you at all.

Side Two:

Looking on yourself as the lowest of creatures, you should place yourself beneath everyone else and be astounded that anyone can put up with you.

Side One:

See how far you are from having such sentiments and be ashamed that you know yourself so little. Ask our Lord to engrave this humility deep in your heart.

Side Two:

There is no better way of destroying your deep-seated pride than the acceptance each day of humiliations.

Side One:

Humble yourself when you cause suffering to others; and when you find others criticizing what you do, be convinced that they are right.

Side Two:

You must be convinced that there is none who is not more virtuous and more spiritual than you.

Side One:

You like to profess that you are a great lover of humility and that you have great esteem for it, just as long as you can avoid humiliations as much as possible.

Side Two:

What good will it be for you to love the virtue and to refuse to practise it?

All:

Glory be to the Father .... Amen.

### *Pause for quiet reflection*

### *Intercessions*


### *Closing prayer*

### *Reading*

from Corinthians 1

All:

Merciful Saviour, you are meek and humble of heart, you resist the proud but show favour to the humble. Grant us the virtue of humility that we may appreciate our value in your sight and that we may never seek to devalue nor to pretend superiority over another. We ask this in Jesus' name.  
Amen



## The Magnificat

The Lord has done mar - vels for me: ho - ly is his name.

1. My soul glorifies the Lord,  
 2. He looks on his servant in her nothingness;  
 9. the mer cy promised to our fathers,  
 10. Praise the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit,

my spirit re - joices in God, my Saviour.  
 hence - forth all ages will call me blessed.  
 for Abra - ham and his sons for ever.  
 both now and for ever, world without end.

3. The Al - mighty works marvels for me.  
 5. He puts forth his arm in strength  
 7. He fills the starving with good things,

Holy his name!  
 and scatters the proud - hearted.  
 sends the rich away empty.

4. His mercy is from age to age  
 6. He casts the mighty from their  
 8. He pro - tects Israel from his

age, on those who fear him.  
 thrones and raises the lowly.  
 servant, re - membering his mercy.

God resists the proud but gives his grace to the humble. (Proverbs 3:34)

St. John Baptist de La Salle, pray for us. Live Jesus in our hearts, forever!





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## REFERENCES FOR THIS ISSUE OF "THE MESSENGER"

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KINDLY  
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**MANY THANKS FOR  
YOUR TIME, EFFORT  
AND ENERGY IN THE  
CREATION OF THESE  
RESOURCES. YOUR  
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**LIVE  
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## Earning Respect

By looking at the physical form of the word 'humility', it seems to me that humility is a quality of a HUMAN being. Lack of humility will probably result in HUMILIATION. The antonym of this word is respect. In other words, a humble person deserves respect.

As teaching professionals, in the service of children and indeed of God, we have the responsibility to look at this word more closely. Although each of us may look like a grain of sand, from God's point of view, we are in fact of utmost importance.

If we claim to be 'teaching professionals', we will expect respect from our students. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, seldom does anybody in this world receive divine respect, while the status of teacher does not imply automatic respect. The argument that we are more knowledgeable than our students is no longer sufficient. If we hold such a corrupted belief, we should be ashamed of ourselves. Instead of making some high-sounding and bare assertions, teachers should behave respectably. We should be humble and develop ourselves personally and professionally to meet the ever-changing challenges. We should look for improvement and hunger for knowledge like young children. Respect is earned, not bestowed. Don't simply sit there and wait for respect. Sitting hopefully only brings humiliation.

However, respect does not mean being perfect or flawless because everybody makes mistakes. We should be brave enough to correct our own mistakes. In fact, admitting one's mistakes and having the courage to correct them should be honoured. Sometimes, making mistakes is a developmental and learning process that should not embarrass us. One of our major duties is to be here to teach students how to be respectable people-how to act humbly by engaging themselves in life-long learning and finding ways to deal with their mistakes.

If one is humble, the virtues of gravity, silence, prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve, gentleness, zeal, vigilance, piety and generosity will fall into place. God will make sure of that.