

September 2023 ~ The Train of His Glory

Virtue Train

THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES ~ Our first virtues are the theological virtues. *Theos*=God. These powers are poured into us by God at our baptism and their call is to lead us back to Him. They cannot be obtained by our own effort; they are purely from His grace. They are faith, hope, and charity (love).

CARDINAL VIRTUES ~ The word cardinal comes from the Latin word *cardo* = that on which other things depend. These virtues lead us to honor the beauty, dignity, and God's presence within all humanity. There are four: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. These virtues grow through education, deliberate acts, and perseverance in struggle. All other human virtues . . . grow from these four.

DEFINITIONS OF CARDINAL VIRTUES ~ Prudence is the power of making an excellent choice. Justice is the power of giving what is due or owed. Fortitude is the power of embracing the pursuit of the good or resisting attractive evils. Temperance is the power to moderate our pleasures of created goods.

COAL ~ Virtues are a lot like coal. No one really wants to use coal as a source of power. It's dirty and it seems archaic and hard. But coal, just like virtue, is timeless. Maybe it comes in the Christmas Stockings to remind children to live in virtue. Coal is formed deep in the ground. This coal is then burned on a train to make steam. That steam flows through a series of tubes to the front of the locomotive engine. That engine transfers the power to the wheels on the tracks which moves it forward down the tracks.

TRAIN EXPLAINED ~ I think our body is the train. The loading of the coal is the virtue. Us continually loading the coal (acting in virtue) allows us (body, mind, and soul) to draw closer to Jesus and accelerate toward heaven. This gets tricky because we do not earn our way into heaven.

THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES ~ We can shovel coal all day . . . but without faith, hope, and love ~ the theological virtues infused by God's grace ~ the train has no engine to even move. Our act of shoveling coal, is us growing in human virtue. We are not earning our salvation; we are participating in it. God doesn't need our virtue; God desires our virtue. This is because He designed our body to be used most powerfully when we are virtuous.

We need the coal for our engine, but we may not really feel like shoveling the coal. The only way to grow in the strength of shoveling coal is to . . . shovel the coal. We become virtuous by doing virtuous things. This is because we do not begin an act of virtue feeling victorious. But once the act of virtue has begun and even afterwards, the feeling of victory follows.

EXAMPLE #1 ~ Getting yourself motivated for lifting arm weights when they have been sitting in the corner of your bedroom for 8 months . . . is HARD. But once we begin doing it, we get through the first rep, it becomes easier with each rep and afterwards it feels good. Our interior vibrance follows the exterior virtue . . . because we intrinsically know and crave it. We are powering our train forward.

EXAMPLE #2 ~ Getting up earlier to pray when you just want to hit the snooze two more times is HARD. But once we start sipping on that hot coffee, and plug into the Divine, it becomes easier as we go deeper into prayer, and after it feels good. Our interior vibrance follows the exterior virtue . . . because we are powering our train forward.

GOOD NEWS ~ Not only does it feel good living in greater virtue . . . When we increase our virtue in one area, the graces overflow naturally increase other areas of virtue. The loading of the coal becomes easier and easier and we grow these virtue muscles. Where virtue grows, more virtue grows. When I do those arm weights . . . it is easier to resist the second piece of chocolate cake.

Once our train is moving, it creates momentum. So the first day of the arm weights is “I’m gonna die” hard. The second day is, “I hate this, but I will do it” hard. The third day is, “Whatever. I’m doing it.” The fourth day is, “This is what I do to honor the glorious design of my body.” Eventually we find that when we are living in virtue it is easy, prompt and even joyful. God created our train to be magnificent and powerful and our body, mind, and soul KNOW IT. Let’s embrace the call to live out glory of being fully alive.

Vincentian Virtue Training

INTERIOR VIRTUES OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL ~ We are going to look at five of the virtues Vincent asked followers to live out.

VIRTUE #1 ~ HUMILITY

- We do not compare gifts.
- We continually give thanks for all the gifts He has given us and continually gives.
- Complete recognition that we are completely dependent upon the Lord for everything.
- We recognize that we need others as we journey towards heaven.

SAINT VINCENT HUMILITY EXAMPLE ~ Vincent preached a sermon from the pulpit on the material needs of a poor family. A few hours later he was surprised to see the whole town come to their aid. But it was too much food and he realized it would rot before they could consume it. He knew all of these gifts belonged to God but they needed to be ordered. Vincent organized the first Confraternity of Charity where members would take turns helping the poor and the sick of the town. One of the legacies from this is the St. Vincent de Paul Society founded in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam. This amazing society began with virtue of humility lived out by St. Vincent de Paul.

VIRTUE #2 ~ SIMPLICITY

- Vulnerability in speaking truth, even when difficult, and living that out with authenticity.
- Speaking the truth so that others can understand and comprehend it.
- We know what the goal is and we are clear with all what that is as well.
- Honoring and bringing people together in a unified way through various aspects of one's life: work, prayer, community, solitude, leisure.

VINCENT EXAMPLE ~ St. Vincent was asked by a mother to go to her son in prison. When he arrived, he witnessed the horrific conditions of men on chains in filth. He often spent time with them, teaching them about the love of God in simple ways so they could understand and have hope. He recalled in a letter: *“I kissed their chains, showed compassion for their distress, and expressed sorrow for their misfortune.” St. Vincent de Paul*

VIRTUE #3 ~ MEEKNESS

- Ability to be gentle and open to whomever God sends to us.
- Being patient with growth so that others have time to adjust to change.
- Recognition that no one person will ever fulfill all the duties set before them.
- Ability to channel the anger of injustice in a way to find solutions.



LEGACY: SAINT CATHERINE LABOURÉ ~ Does this medal look familiar? Two hundred years after St. Vincent, a young girl named Catherine was in sorrow. She joined the Religious Order established by St. Vincent ~ Daughters of Charity. Labouré reported that Mary appeared to her inside an oval frame, standing upon a globe. Rays of light came out of her hands in the direction of a globe. Around the margin of the frame appeared the words: *“O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”* Mary wore many rings set with gems that gleamed with rays of light over the globe. When Catherine asked why some of the gems did not shed light, Mary replied, *“Those are the graces for which people forget to ask.” Our Lady to Saint Catherine*

VIRTUE #4 ~ MORTIFICATION

- Denying our desire for a good thing to seek a higher good.
- No one person can do everything.
- We recognize our goals and channel our limited energy into achieving them even though we must let something else go.

VINCENT EXAMPLE ~ Every night there were babies abandoned in the streets of Paris. Vincent would walk through the city to find them. He was forced to give the babies (called foundlings) to a rough orphanage. This pained him, but he could not establish an orphanage immediately due to his commitments in so many other areas. He knew that some assistance was better than death. He worked slowly with St. Louise to establish orphanages staffed by the Daughters of Charity that cared for the babies with love.

VIRTUE #5 ~ ZEAL

- Love on fire for God and others. Love is infectious and fire spreads.
- The willingness to go anywhere, and do anything, no matter the circumstance, to speak of Christ.
- To continue to persevere in faithful love even when difficult and to draw others in to share in the mission.

DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY ~ How did St. Vincent live this out? Up until St. Vincent, the only female religious communities were convents with cloistered nuns. A Catholic nun is a woman who lives a contemplative life in a monastery separated from the world (cloistered). Her ministry and prayer life are centered within the convent. St. Vincent had great respect for these religious within these convents, but he knew God was calling for more.

St. Louise de Marillac was inspired and directed by Vincent's spiritual leadership. She collaborated with him in founding the Daughters of Charity. They were responsible for organizing hospitals, asylums, orphanages, workshops for the unemployed, advocating for literacy, and establishing standards for local charities.

They started a new style of community in the Church. He brought the feminine religious life out of the walls of the convent to serve in authentic communion with those in need. We now have Catholic Sisters in many different religious orders who live, minister, and pray within the world. This all began with the virtue of zeal lived out by St. Vincent de Paul.

Virtue Plan and The Train of God's Robes

CROWN JEWEL STRATEGY ~ We know virtues grow through education, deliberate acts, and perseverance in struggle. We have experienced a little virtue education tonight. Now we are going to give some ideas to put these into action. We are using our Crown Jewel Strategy: Plan ~ Do ~ Reflect ~ Adjust. Let's start with a plan!

HUMILITY VIRTUE APPLICATION IDEAS

1. Acknowledge the accomplishments of others; praise God for them.
2. Allow others to speak and listen to them. Show deference to the opinions/desires of others over your own.
3. Stop lying ~ even little white lies that make a story more entertaining. Pause and correct yourself.
4. Be willing to ask and receive help from others.

SIMPLICITY VIRTUE APPLICATION IDEAS

1. Stop rushing; plan out extra time between items on your calendar/to-do list.
2. Does the way you spend your time or money reflect your love for Him? Adjust as necessary.
3. Recognize the worldly barriers that keep your life complicated and eliminate three of them.
4. Discern what should be given to God what should be given to help those in need and then do it.

MEEKNESS VIRTUE APPLICATION IDEAS

1. Remain calm, allow others to speak or act first.
2. Tolerate inconvenience without complaining or speaking ill of others.
3. Do not make decisions on important things in haste.
4. Be gentle and patient with yourself and others.
5. Forgive injury quickly.

MORTIFICATION VIRTUE APPLICATION IDEAS

1. Practice fasting from actions, foods, or activities that you enjoy.
2. Plan-Do-Reflect-Adjust weekly with activities and goals to keep greater order and balance.
3. Do not procrastinate the work or obsess about it. Stay with the task from start to finish.

ZEAL VIRTUE APPLICATION IDEAS

1. Increase your daily time in prayer and in Eucharistic Adoration.
2. Ask a stranger to pray . . . Ask a friend to come to a KB Gathering . . . send a prayerful text . . . send a card of affirmation or gratitude and include a bible verse.
3. Volunteer your time to those in need according to your area of gift.

DO ~ Now you have chosen two items and you will complete; you will shovel some virtue coal. This is the stage where it is easiest to give up. When we are tempted to give up, we will remember . . . The exact moment where it is incredibly hard, and we are tempted to give up . . . is the exact moment our virtue grows the strongest.

REFLECT ~ Genuine formation includes repetitive and reflective practice. After you work on 1-2 specific virtues during the week ~ reflect on how you feel before, during and after. Is embracing this virtue a barrier for you honoring your vocation or is it raising you to new power in your vocation?

ADJUST ~ Recognize any adjustments you need to make. It's a journey. We are patient with our growth over time. There is good news about virtues. Trains no longer run on only coal; they run on diesel fuel AND coal. What is our fuel? Prayer and the Sacraments. The grace from these empowers and elevates our virtues.

"I saw the Lord seated on a throne, High and exalted, And the train of His robe filled the temple." Isaiah 6:1

ROBE

The train of God's robe filling the temple is symbolic of His glory and majesty. We are His train of glory.

The fabric of our lives are sewn together through Him . . . The more Christians there are, the greater His train of glory extends. Living in virtue allows us to His love to one another because we are not meant to live in virtue alone. Through fabric of St. Vincent's life, God raised up many others including St. Louise, St. Catherine, and Frederic Ozanam who in turn have raised up thousands more ~ including you.

KINGDOM BUILDERS

The saint quote that led our founder to create Kingdom Builders was from St. Vincent de Paul.

"Our vocation is to go not into one parish, nor into only one diocese, but throughout the earth. And to do what? To inflame human hearts. It is not enough for me to love God if my neighbor does not love Him as well." St. Vincent de Paul