



Renuntio

No nobler training exists but that which cherishes the good, the beautiful, and the true, thus producing disciples of knowledge and lovers of wisdom.

AMERICA'S IDENTITY: VALUES OR VIRTUE

Much of our learning and education involves making sense of words and their meanings. We know that the power of words, for better or worse, has been throughout history an extremely important power to possess. But what has happened in modern times is that many of our key terms have been watered down, completely changed or confused. Words have lost their power, or they have been twisted. Perhaps in no area of language is this clearer than with respect to "virtue" as it relates to "values."

So, what exactly is the difference between values and virtue? How can we understand the place both have in our vocabulary, lives and culture? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term "values" was not used to reference morality or the inner self until the late 1900's. In reality then, this is more of a 20th century and beyond phenomenon. Before that time, values language was by and large limited to economics. Think about it. The value of something is how much you pay for a thing, what it costs. It largely refers to aesthetic choices such the value of a T-shirt, a dollar, a movie, or the value of spending time watching sports. Values might also include things like "physical attractiveness", "an adventurous life", "achieving some goal", and so on. It's about how things look or even how we look at things.

Virtue, on the other hand, has everything to do with the concept of developing the inner life. It is about immersing oneself in a rich tapestry of stories and examples of the cardinal virtues including justice, wisdom, moderation, and courage. Cardinal virtues are so much richer, so much more powerful, so much more helpful to culture, so much better as foundational guides for human life than what mere values offer.

So, just maybe, we need to get back to, and practice, a richer language — for both culture and character. And that language, I believe, is the language of truth, the language of "virtues." Virtue-based education must build up a framework of moral citizenship. Since we want citizens of tomorrow to be respectful of other's beliefs, education and curriculum grounded in virtue must never (by design, default or instruction) close the door to a student's faith and ideals, or to hope. It should instead enrich them.

There was a book written a few years ago that became a publishing wonder, called the *Book of Virtues*. It's interesting — William Bennett, who used to be the Secretary of Education of the United States, was told by publishers that they wanted to call it the 'Book of Values,' and Bennett said, "No, the Book of Values is the Sears catalogue." (cont. pg. 2)

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THE XAVIER PROMISE

Xavier Classical Charter Schools are dedicated to providing a classical, academically rigorous, content-rich, liberal arts education, preparing students to excel in every duty and guiding them toward wisdom and virtue.

JANUARY EVENTS

- 1/9— PFA MEETING 3:15 P.M.
- 1/9— Dress Up Day—
Bikers and Surfers
- 1/10— Winter Showcase (9-12)
6:30 p.m. @CSI
- 1/16— End of Semester 1
Winter Showcase (7-8)
6:30 p.m. @Xavier
- 1/16— Early Release (gr. 1-12)
Kinder—NO SCHOOL
- 1/16— Board Meeting 6:00 p.m.
- 1/17— **NO SCHOOL (K-12)**
Teacher In-Service
- 1/30— Lady Liberty Travel Club
6:30 p.m.

Values or Virtue cont.

He would not allow them to call it that. Interestingly enough, the book is a wide-ranging collection of stories about virtue. I happen to own a copy. It was extremely refreshing to find a book that actually, unashamedly, promoted virtue. His book served not only as a guide to the great works of moral education, but to the great works of literature as well. The range of great authors and sources was most impressive: Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Plato, the Brothers Grimm, The Bible, Robert Frost, C.S. Lewis, Longfellow, Abraham Lincoln, and on and on. In reading great stories like these, we both improve our cultural literacy and refine our moral senses.

George Grant, a Canadian philosopher, made an important comment on radio a few years ago. This is what he said, "Values language is an obscuring language for morality, used when the idea of purpose has been destroyed. And that is why it is so widespread in North America. In North America, we no longer have confidence that there are any shared purposes for human life. We don't. It is that dramatic. Consequently, we cannot order any human action towards an end, because all means are related to ends."

From my perspective, the means are the practices of disciplines such as: what we study, how we live together, how we choose to live in a family, etc. These are all means toward an end. So, now consider the end. If the end is in fact about living honorably, nobly and virtuously, and where virtue is shown to us by particular acts and stories, then we have something to teach and something to learn. It is not "imposing values" but "teaching in truth," for after all, how we learn to live virtuously in the context of the lives we choose is highly personal as well as shared. In the end, it is what makes a culture thrive and what has for many decades given America its identity.

Becky Baird
Co-founder/K-6 Lead Teacher

JANUARY PILLAR OF THE MONTH

HONESTY — We never knowingly induce another to believe what is false. We are always truthful in what we say and do, regardless of the circumstances or consequences.

Jan. 6 – *"Honesty doesn't always pay, but dishonesty always costs."*
~Michael Josephson (former law professor/attorney, founded Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, b.1942-)

Jan. 13 – *"Honesty is the best policy."* ~Benjamin Franklin (American Founding Father, b.1706-1790)

Jan. 20 – *"The greatest way to live with honor in this world is to be what we pretend to be."* ~Socrates (classical Greek philosopher/a founder of Western philosophy, b.471 B.C. – 400 B.C., Athens)

Jan. 27 – *"If you cannot find the truth right where you are, where else do you expect to find it?"* ~Ralph Waldo Emerson (American Essayist, b.1803-1882)

*"A more secret,
sweet, and over-
powering beauty
appears to man
when his heart
and mind are
open to the senti-
ment of virtue."*

*Ralph Waldo
Emerson*