

Michael Kelleher
November 1, 2018 – Solemnity of All Saints
Re: Introducing the Virtues in Practice program

Dear Students,

Today is one of the greatest days of our year! We celebrate our superheroes! Not Spiderman, Superman, or Wonder-woman, but rather, all of the saints who possess amazing super human powers. Saints such as... St. Edward the Confessor... or St. Catherine of Siena... or St. Ignatius of Loyola...or St. Dominic...Each one of those saints possessed super human powers called “virtues”. And instead of superpowers such as flight, or x-ray vision, or deflecting bullets with a bracelet, virtues are actually good habits that can be practiced to help make us happier, healthier, closer to God and... in many ways, much like our favorite superheroes...we can help “save humanity”.

But, let’s look at some of our superheroes for a moment, my guess is that some of us even dressed up as our favorite superhero last night... For example, Spiderman jumps really high and swings from one building to the next... and Superman can fly so fast he makes the world spin the opposite direction... and Wonder-Woman uses her lasso to get people to tell the truth. A few lessons from all of this... while each superhero has their own amazing super power... in some cases, they need each other’s strengths to help fight certain types of evil together. Same with the virtues... while it’s certainly true that we should try to live a virtuous life by striving to improve in all the virtues... some virtues are easier for us than others. For example, take the seven virtues... let’s look at the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope, Charity, along with the Human Virtues of Justice, Prudence, Temperance, and Fortitude...On a personal note, if you ask people who really know me, they would say that I have a strong sense of “Hope” in people (it makes it easier to work in Catholic education when I have “Hope” that everyone is trying hard and students want to learn)... But, if I look at someone who I think is virtuous, such as my own dad, I think he really demonstrates “temperance”.... He never eats between meals... he is so good with food and exercise that, even at age 77, he was able to bike 335 miles this summer from DC to Pittsburgh. And I look at my mom as an amazing example of “faith”...She never misses Mass and she spends a lot of time in prayer. And then I look at my wife’s great virtue of “charity”. She is constantly trying to serve the poor and needy. So, while I can offer my dad, my mom, and wife an example of “hope”, they can set the example of “temperance” and “charity” for me. We can combine our superhuman powers!

But, these virtues had to come from somewhere. And they did... Over thousands of years of thought and experience have gone in to helping to determine what is good, true, beautiful, and virtuous. From Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates to the teachings of the church, we know that the virtues are a solid plan for how we can live a holy life. Even better, the Catechism of the Catholic Church lays out in detail how all the virtues work for us. We will be exploring all of this in the coming months.

And guess what?...Every super hero had to get training. What better place to train us to become superheroes than here in our own school? Therefore, I'm announcing to all of us that we will specifically be working to help us grow in virtue. The Dominican Congregation of Saint Cecilia has put together an incredible program called "Virtues in Practice" that we will start using in January. Specifically, each month we will focus on a different virtue. January will be Gratitude, February will be Honesty, March will be Mercy, April will be Justice, and May will be Zeal. We will look for virtue amongst our classmates by nominating our own peers for a virtue that we think they represent. It will look a lot like the Spiritus Awards program that we have in place already.

There are a few things that we want for each of you... 1) We want you to develop a well-formed conscience... "Virtues in Practice" will help. 2) We want you to be proud that you are a student at Saint Edward... when you put on the school uniform and go out in public, think of your uniform as your super hero outfit. I mean, why wear a cape when you could wear the logo shirt or the plaid skirt? 3) We want you to learn how to be the absolute best person you can be... which means you will grow to love God, and to work hard to help make God's kingdom on earth succeed.

So, look for this "Virtues in Practice" program in the near future and know that we are going to be working on helping each of us find and develop our "super human virtue power."