

EOHSJ LENT 2017 WEEKLY REFLECTIONS

PREFACE

The season of Lent is about to begin for our Church on March 1, 2017. Since no priest chaplain of our Lieutenancy had come forth to provide some meditations for this season I thought therefore, to do a modification of my book on virtuous living for you to develop during this season. The modification of these selected virtues are from my recent book *Periodic Chart of Virtuous Living for Teens* (available on Amazon.com). In the book I selected the elements in nature (since I was a former biology professor). Then I took the symbol of the element and tried to relate it to a virtue, using the same chemical symbol, for young people to learn to live. Coupled with how the elements act in nature with the named virtue and some added Scriptures that incorporate the virtue. Finally for each element/virtue is given a challenge. This is where I have adapted the text for teens to members of our Order.

I offer these as a way to reflect, develop, and grow in virtues during Lent. Growing in virtuous living will help you grow in a deeper love with the Lord. This is not meant to be sentimentality, but rather a way to be more authentic with the Lord. If you can do this, a blessing will be yours for the coming feast of Easter.

Use one of the selected virtues each week of Lent. Try to practice that virtuous living for the assigned week. This will put you in the same style of the saints, namely help you become holy. As you well know this is so needed in this world of negativity and lack of values. Pray God this growth in virtuous living will help give you the power to bring our country back to the Lord.

Therefore, the format for each reflection is as follows. In each title the number of the element on the periodic chart is given. Then the chemical symbol of the element is listed, followed by the scientific name for the element. This is followed by a word using the same letter(s) of the element as the related virtue. Then follows the discussion in three parts. First, **The Call**, explains something about the element in nature and relates it to spiritual living. Second, **The Word of God Says**. This section gives Scriptures to reflect that incorporate the spiritual virtue. You might want to use a different Scripture each day of the week. Third, **The Challenge**, which gives a simple way to try to live that virtue during the week. Enjoy your journey in growing in virtues this Lent.

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FIRST WEEK OF LENT MARCH 5, 2017

#18: Ar = Argon = Ardor

THE CALL

Ardor and argon sound alike and there is some relational ideas about both of them that are alike. Argon is important in nature for the metal industry. Ask your dad or a friend if he knows what arc welding is all about. That is what argon (an inert gas) is used for. It is also used for cutting of metals and in electric light bulbs, like the fluorescent tubes in your classroom at school. Ardor in the spiritual side of our lives is a sense of fervor that we have for the gift of faith that has been given us. Ardor or enthusiasm is another way of saying what passion do I have for my faith.

THE WORD OF GOD SAYS...

Acts 18:25 (RSV)

²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Romans 12:11(NIV)

¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Isaiah 42:12 (NAB)

¹³ The LORD goes forth like a hero, like a warrior he stirs up his ardor; He shouts out his battle cry, against his enemies he shows his might:

I Macabees 6: 47 (NAB)

⁴⁷ When the Jews saw the strength of the royal army and the ardor of its forces, they retreated from them

THE CHALLENGE

There is nothing more exciting than seeing the ardor of a person excited about their faith. It is a truism to say that when a person express their fervor for faith it has an infective result on others. Maybe you need to be like St. Ignatius of Loyola, who in his writings, had such ardor for the kingdom of God, that they transformed the reader. That is what it is for you as well. Think of it for a moment, for example, what most excites you? Is it your love for your parents? Is it your ardor for the sport of your choice, the music style that you like, or books you like to read. If you have an ardor for it, you will soar to success with it. Now translate some of that excitement, ardor, for the Lord who by His death on the cross has given you the incredible gift of faith. Try one day this week to express your excitement about your faith to another person. Watch what that ardor (excitement) will do for them.

SECOND WEEK OF LENT MARCH 12, 2017

#27: Co = Cobalt = Compassion

THE CALL

Ever have your mother tell you to take your vitamins when you were young? Well if she asked you to take Vitamin B-12, guess what? It contains cobalt. Vitamins are important for our lives to have some kind of extra vitality. If you are spiritually a vital person then you will be a person with compassion. This is often an under recognized virtue . I have always loved when a difficult situation arises and watch teens respond. There was a situation when I was pastor that a youth minister's son had been injured in an accident and needed incredible assistance, not only medical but also financial. I mentioned it to the teens and asked them to seek ways for our parish to help. The compassion that was displayed was astounding. The young person did not even live near the parish that they were asked to help and they did. That is compassion.

THE WORD OF GOD SAYS...

2 Corinthians 1:3 (NAB)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement,

I John 3: 17 (NAB)

¹⁷ If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?

Luke 6:36(NJB)

³⁶ 'Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate.

Psalms 145:9 (RSV)

⁹ The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

Colossians 3:12 (RSV)

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience,

Matthew 15:32 (RSV)

³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

THE CHALLENGE

If the Lord is good to everyone, and we are called to follow the Lord, then we need, as He tells us, to be compassionate to others. Notice when we give compassion then we are promised that the love of God remains in us. What a blessing indeed. Notice that God's word says that if you are compassionate you will also receive from God the gift of encouragement. Seems when we do, as the Lord has done, we end up being the one who is also blessed. Perhaps today is the day to look to see how you can have compassion for someone else. I know that older people who are in rest homes are generally very lonely people. They begin to sparkle when a person comes to just say hello. What a simple way to express the compassion you have. Watch the joy you see on the face of that older person. You

may be the only person other than staff who comes to visit them. When you have made the visit and leave just remember the feeling inside of you. This is an expression of the blessing that God gives to those who give compassion.

THIRD WEEK OF LENT MARCH 19, 2017

#9 F = Fluorine = Faithfulness

THE CALL

Faithfulness to God and His Church is an incredible source of protection for you and your life. Fluorine in the natural world is important for our lives. You probably know it best because it is added to drinking water to help provide strong teeth. I grew up in Denver, Colorado where our water was naturally rich in Fluorine and as a result, we have few cavities. Would not you also love that? Nature provides a great protection for us. God, through our faithfulness to Him also provides a great protection to us.

THE WORD OF GOD SAYS...

Psalm 25:10 (RSV)

¹⁰ All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Psalm 26:3 (RSV)

³ For thy steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in faithfulness to thee.

Psalm 33:4 (RSV)

⁴ For the word of the LORD is upright;
and all his work is done in faithfulness.

Psalm 89:1 (RSV)

¹ I will sing of thy steadfast love, O LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim thy faithfulness to all generations.

Hebrews 13:5 (RSV)

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you."

Psalm 91:4 (RSV)

⁴ he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

THE CHALLENGE

You read it God will never fail you, never forsake you. This is God's promise. What a sign of encouragement especially for you. There is such a lack of faithfulness among many of your peers and it becomes almost an infection. Your challenge is not to give in to unfaithfulness. See what you can do to express your faithfulness to God by giving witness to how you believe in the truths of our Church. Maybe you could even invite a good friend to be faithful in attending Mass each week with you.

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT MARCH 26, 2017

#4 Be = Beryllium = Belief

THE CALL

Belief is a true jewel of our lives, like the element beryllium, which in its precious state is known as either aquamarine or emeralds. And we know that belief is essential for our eternal salvation. We are called daily to witness to our belief, which is a precious jewel of our lives.

THE WORD OF GOD SAYS...

2 Thessalonians 2:13 (RSV)

¹³ But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

Psalm 119:66 (RSV)

⁶⁶ Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in thy commandments.

Mark 5:36 (RSV)

³⁶ But ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

Mark 16:16 (RSV)

¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

John 20:31 (RSV)

³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

John 3:18 (RSV)

¹⁸ He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

John 6:47 (RSV)

⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

Mark 9:23 (RSV)

²³ And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes."

THE CHALLENGE

What great promises the Lord gives to you for your belief. In a world of non belief and cynicism and negativity, what a great relief it is to witness to what you believe in your life. Think of the promise the Lord gives "everlasting life"; all "things possible" for the believer; no condemnation. What a gift in a world of negativity. You want those promises and all it requires in your faithfulness to your belief in the Lord Jesus. Belief in other "promises" of the outside world cannot give you those promises. It should be clear the way to choose. Do it and be blessed. Pick a day this week and spend some time talking to the Lord and telling

Him you are thankful for your belief in Him. Give up something to prove it. That might be something as simple as not reading your email for a day.

FIFTH WEEK OF LENT APRIL 2, 2017

#1 H = Hydrogen = Holiness:

THE CALL

Like Hydrogen, which is the most abundant atom on the planet. Holiness is the most abundant gift we can strive for in our lives. It is not an easy task in a world set against holiness. Therefore, the Lord gives us the call to holiness. Strange as it is hydrogen, the number one element, is also the simplest and lightest of all the elements and the most abundant element in the universe. That should also be the makeup of our spiritual life, that is, holiness should be the simplest thing in our complex world and the most abundant element of our relationship with God. Also interesting is that we as humans are made up mostly of water. You guessed it water is two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. It is obvious that without water we would not be much, but because we are seekers of holiness we are more than water that makes up most of our human bodies. As water is essential to who we are as mere humans so is holiness essential to who we are as creatures of our loving God. Let us examine what God's word instructs us about holiness.

THE WORD OF GOD SAYS...

Leviticus 19:2 (RSV)

² "Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy.

1 Thessalonians 4:7 (RSV)

⁷ For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness.

Psalms 93:5 (RSV)

⁵ Thy decrees are very sure;
holiness befits thy house,

O LORD, for evermore.

2 Corinthians 1:12 (RSV)

¹² For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we have behaved in the world, and still more toward you, with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God.

Ephesians 4:24 (RSV)

²⁴ and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Hebrews 12:14 (RSV)

¹⁴ Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

THE CHALLENGE

There is nothing more exciting than seeing holy people. I remember an occasion at one parish I was assigned to, was to witness young teens coming in on a Friday or Saturday night after athletic events to come to the adoration chapel and spend some time before the Lord. What a dedication to living in holiness. What a preparation for the coming of heaven. What a witness to other teens to make holy all that they do in their lives. The next time you are going out for a social night or coming home from a sporting event, find a church near you that has perpetual adoration. Stop there, pray before the Lord for a time, and thank Him for something special that has happened in your life that week. If you cannot think of anything you can always thank the Lord for the gift of life.

PALM SUNDAY APRIL 9, 2017

#19: K = Potassium = Kindness

THE CALL

This is an interesting element, we call it potassium. This element is essential for nerve and heart function. We give it a symbol of K. Let that K in the chemical world stand for another K in the spiritual world, namely kindness. Kindness if

essential for your heart to be set on the desires of the Lord. Let us build on that symbol "K" and understand the need for Kindness in your world today. Teens have not been known to outwardly express kindness for one another or adults in their lives for fear that they will be made fun of. Strange is it not for this to be such a controller of behavior. Remember that kindness was such a mark of how the Lord interacted with people of His time.

THE WORD OF GOD SAYS...

Proverbs 21:21 (RSV)

²¹ He who pursues righteousness and kindness will find life and honor.

Micah 6:8 (RSV)

⁸ He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Galatians 5:22 (RSV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

1 Peter 2:3 (RSV)

³ for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Sirach 12:1 (RSV)

¹ If you do a kindness, know to whom you do it, and you will be thanked for your good deeds.

Sirach 3:14 (RSV)

¹⁴ For kindness to a father will not be forgotten, and against your sins it will be credited to you;

THE CHALLENGE

If you have an interest in history you may be excited to read what the ancient document known as the Didache (the Writings of the 12 Apostles), an early writing of the apostles about life in the early church, has to say about kindness. It

goes something like this "To insure good treatment of His servants in all ages wherever the gospel might be preached, Jesus made it known that He put a high premium on all acts of kindness done towards them. " What a blessing to read this. What a blessing to know that kindness is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for our lives. It always strikes me that people are great when challenged to perform random acts of kindness. I recently read about a store in one of our major cities, that has a small box outside, and as people pass by, it is activated to speak a random act of kindness to the passerby. Try to be like that machine, and just once a day, perform a random act of kindness. It might be something as simple as you helping another who is having difficulty in an area in which you excel. Try it and feel the sense of blessing that you have received by that act of kindness.