



Virtue Corner

Magnanimity: Do the Little Things with Love

Core Values

Lumen virtues

	<i>Character</i>	<i>Faith</i>	<i>Leadership</i>
}	Prudence	Spiritual drive	Excellence
	Perseverance	Prayer	Integrity
	Fairness	Stewardship	Influence
	Self-mastery	Confidence in God	Magnanimity

This year we have reflected on three of the four virtues related to leadership: influence, integrity, and excellence. We now turn over the next three months to the fourth and final virtue under leadership: magnanimity.

The Lumen handbook defines magnanimity as “commitment to serve by putting others’ needs first.”¹ The handbook further explains that “the word ‘magnanimity’ comes from the Latin for ‘great (*magna*) soul (*anima*).’ In this context, ‘great’ can also mean ‘big.’ It means having a soul big enough to embrace others and a heart that doesn’t turn in on itself, but opens up to take in the world.”²

The leader *par excellence*, Jesus Christ, showed us magnanimity in action: taking flesh as a child, going about teaching and healing, giving us his Body and Blood in the Eucharist, offering his life on the cross for each one of us, and promising eternal life to his disciples. Christ shows us magnanimity in practice and says to each one of us: “come follow me”³ and “blessed are you if you do it.”⁴

The Lumen Handbook invites us to consider three ways to grow in magnanimity. We will reflect on and discuss each one in the next three months. We will dig into the first now, and the other two in subsequent months. The first is to start doing the little things with love. “*Form the habit of thinking in terms of others’ needs and desires by doing one small act of charity (or kindness) for*

¹ Lumen Handbook, 96.

² *Ibid*

³ Lk 18:22

⁴ Jn 13:17

*a family member every day. Do it in a hidden way, without trying to draw attention to yourself. Soon this one little act will open your soul and blossom into a steady flow of ingenious charity that spreads happiness into everyone in your life.*⁵ As leaders, we often think about the “big picture” and falsely conclude that small acts of love are wasting our time with “small stuff.” Jesus Christ, however, reminds us that actions of care, compassion, and mercy towards those around us are never a small thing.

St Therese of Lisieux is well known for her “Little Way.” She teaches us that God wants us to do the small things of life with great love. The path to magnanimous living is right in front of us. The people and relationships in our lives invite us to give ourselves in loving service, often to the point of sacrificing physical and emotional comfort for the good of others. The cost of being a faithful parent, a loyal employee, or a supportive friend is high. We pay this cost through daily, small, and often hidden actions: attentive listening, offering help where needed, daily chores, work obligations, and much more. These small actions offered with love to God are an “autobahn to holiness,” a quick path to allow the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts from selfishness to self-giving in the likeness of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Scripture

Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.

Luke 6:37-38

Questions for Discussion

1. How does Jesus’ standard call us to magnanimity?
2. What is an example of Jesus loving in small, little, and easily overlooked ways?
3. How can we apply the lesson of magnanimity to family members? At the office?
4. What things limit the “measure” you offer to those around you?
5. What is an example of when the Lord invited you to increase your measure of generosity in time, talent or treasure?

⁵ Lumen Handbook, 97

Inspiring Quotes

“Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the action that we do.”

St Mother Theresa of Calcutta (Nobel Peace Prize Lecture, 1979)

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.”

1 John 4:20–21

Case Study

Magnanimity in a Moment of Need (September 11, 2001).⁶

Just a few minutes after United Airlines Flight 175 struck the South Tower of the World Trade Center, 24-year-old Welles Crowther called his mother and calmly left a voicemail: “Mom, this is Welles. I want you to know that I’m ok.”

Crowther was an equities trader at Sandler O’Neil and Partners on the 104th floor. But after that call, the man who was a volunteer firefighter in his teens made his way down to the 78th floor sky lobby and became a hero to strangers known only as “the man in the red bandana.”

Amid the smoke, chaos, and debris, Crowther helped injured and disoriented office workers to safety, risking his own life in the process. Though they couldn’t see much through the haze, those he saved recalled a tall figure wearing a red bandana to shield his lungs and mouth.

He had come down to the 78th-floor sky lobby, an alcove in the building with express elevators meant to speed up trips to the ground floor. In what has been described as a “strong, authoritative voice,” Crowther directed survivors to the stairway and encouraged them to help others while he carried an injured woman on his back. After bringing her 15 floors down to safety, he made his way back up to help others.

“Everyone who can stand, stand now,” Crowther told survivors while directing them to a stairway exit. “If you can help others, do so.”

⁶ <https://www.businessinsider.com/7-incredible-stories-of-heroism-on-911-2015-9#1-a-24-year-old-equities-traderhelpedat-least-a-dozen-people-get-out-and-then-he-went-back-in-withfirefighters-to-save-more-1>

“He’s definitely my guardian angel — no ifs, ands or buts — because without him, we would be sitting there, waiting [until] the building came down,” survivor Ling Young told CNN. Crowther is credited with saving at least a dozen people that day.

Crowther’s body was later recovered alongside firefighters in a stairwell. He was heading back up trying to rescue more people when the tower fell.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think Welles Crowther acted magnanimously on September 11?
2. How do small, hidden acts of love and service prepare you for a moment like this?
3. How does this example inspire you to live magnanimity in your daily life?

“A leader is one who, out of madness or goodness, volunteers to take upon himself the woe of the people. There are few men so foolish, hence the erratic quality of leadership in the world.”

- John Updike

“We do not very often come across opportunities for exercising strength, magnanimity, or magnificence; but gentleness, temperance, modesty, and humility, are graces which ought to colour everything we do. There may be virtues of a more exalted mould, but... these are the most continually called for in daily life.”

- St Francis de Sales

Lumen Core Values Self-Assessment (10 minutes)

Core Values Assessment. Spend 10 minutes in silence assessing positive and negative examples of how you pursue excellence in your relationship with God and others. The below quadrant can help in jotting down some of your assessment as well as a tool for the whole Lumen Circle and how you can let it be a leaven in your life.

<p>What struck me in this circle and how I might apply it to my THINKING. What CRITICAL ISSUES am I facing? What are the biggest CHALLENGES with these issues I face and what OPPORTUNITIES does it present?</p>
<p>Prayer:</p>
<p>Family:</p>
<p>Business:</p>
<p>Lumen Action:</p>
<p><i>What ACTION STEPS can I take now or long term? Develop a concrete resolution for how you can improve in your efforts to improve your relationships with others during the next month. Your resolution should be a specific action or activity that is easily measured.</i></p>