

“Virtues to Live by”

SIMPLICITY

Before You Begin – An overview for teachers

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)

Definition

By living simply you will come to know what really matters in your life and be less afraid of not having more and more things. When you live simply you don't look out for the next thing to buy or follow. Little by little you realise that you don't need that many things to live a happy life. Living simply gives you time to think of others, do good and care for creation. Living simply helps you put more trust in God.

Virtue to Live By

I know what really matters in life

I can give time to think of others, do good and care for creation

Living simply helps me put more trust in God

Biblical sources

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10 NIV)

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33)

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3)

“Religion does bring large rewards, but only to those who are content with what they have. We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it; but as long as we have food and clothing, let us be content with that.” (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

“The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common.” (Acts 4:32)

The Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21)

Catholic sources

"Too many possessions keep us from God: the parable of the rich fool teaches us that a life of too much ease, comfort, luxury and accumulation distracts us from God and tempts us to feel that true happiness can come from what we possess materially. Simplicity of lifestyle encourages us to trust more in God than in our personal capabilities.

- Simplicity of life undergirds mission: when we live simply, we are not attached to our own plans, designs or ambitions. Simplicity also allows for pastoral mobility because change is not feared.
- Simplicity of life aids pastoral charity: if our lives are choked by possessions, eating, drinking, shopping, expensive travel and vacations we will soon discover we have little time or energy to pour out ourselves in generous service to others.
- Simplicity of life is a witness to the world: simplicity of life offers a good example, encouraging people to practise selflessness, justice and charity. It is also a constant reminder to people that this world is not our permanent abode.
- Simplicity of life fosters solidarity with the poor: when we live simply, we are often closer to people who are poor because we understand their plight and they feel able to approach us." (Ignatius Kaigama, Archbishop of Jos, Nigeria)

"We need to take up an ancient lesson, found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that "less is more". A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures. Such sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating. It is not a lesser life or one lived with less intensity. On the contrary, it is a way of living life to the full. In reality, those who enjoy more and live better each moment are those who have given up dipping here and there, always on the look-out for what they do not have. They experience what it means to appreciate each person and each thing, learning familiarity with the simplest things and how to enjoy them. So they are able to shed unsatisfied needs, reducing their obsessiveness and weariness. Even living on little, they can live a lot, above all when they cultivate other pleasures and find satisfaction in fraternal encounters, in service, in developing their gifts, in music and art, in contact with nature, in prayer. Happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer." (Pope Francis, *Laudate Si* para. 222)

Why Practise Simplicity?

Practising simplicity creates space to help us see what is truly important in life and opens up our capacity for wonder, to see the beauty of the simple things in life and to think of others. Reflecting on how to live more simply can, little by little, help us realise that we don't need that many things to live a happy life. Living simply helps us to let go of our control over things and other people and put more trust in God.

How do we Practise Simplicity?

A good way to practise simplicity is to learn to have gratitude for the good things that happen each day. This will help us learn what is really important in life. We can practise simplicity by thinking of others first rather than ourselves, by trying to be fair in our decisions and actions and by giving away things that we really do not need.

Key Words:

Simplicity, living simply, trust, wonder, sufficient, possessions, creation

Signs of living the virtue of simplicity:

I understand that simple things can make me happy

I am thankful for all I have

I can work, play, rest and pray each day

I take care of my belongings and those of others

I share my things with those who need my help

I do not waste food or resources

I only take what I need

Reflection Questions:

How can I live more simply so I am happy with what I need – no more, no less?

Am I thankful for what I have?

Is my identity bound up with the things I possess?

Do I always share my things with those who are in need?