Great Expectations:
Virtue-Based Student Learning Expectations
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Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary School’s melding of the cardinal virtues with the school-wide learning expectations has provided a wonderful framework for our students, staff, and families to fulfill our mission of living out Christ’s gospel message of love.

Presentation school has been blessed with the wisdom and humble service of our beloved Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist. Their spiritual guidance has transformed this school. Our students are given more opportunities for direct encounters with Christ through an abundance of opportunities for receiving the sacraments. Their example of joyful service and diligent work is very contagious as our students, staff, and parents continue to do amazing work day in and day out.

The Lenten season calls us to rely heavily on the virtue of temperance. St Mark’s gospel message reminds us that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert and so, we too, must allow Him to lead us into that place of spiritual isolation in order to free ourselves of the daily distractions of our modern materialistic world. As an example to our children, it’s critically important to teach them truly substantive means to enter into a closer communion with Christ rather than moderate sacrifices such as giving up candy or video games. Attending mass more often, offering extra prayers for those in need, or serving the poor can lead them to feel more deeply His love. True temperance involves taking the time, energy and resources one may have spent indulging oneself and offering them as gifts to others. By giving them more opportunities to encounter Christ through prayer, worship, and service, the practice of temperance becomes second nature.

It is evident at this school that our families put this ideal into practice. The children are very conscientious about self-control and obedience. It is apparent that they have received a plethora of God’s graces as a result of their loving homes and the support their parents receive here at Presentation. I feel truly blessed to be their physical education instructor. I am afforded the opportunity to teach them so much more about the sciences of exercise and physiology because I spend so little time with behavior modification. The students take an authentic attitude toward applying the virtues in the class setting. Many of them need no prompting at all and most need very little.

Their foundation in virtue is clearly seen during our parachute unit with the younger grades. The students are so excited to participate in this activity and if their desire to go wild with the parachute is not controlled, chaos will quickly ensue. In fact, this is part of the lesson. I will at times remove all restrictions just to show them that the activity does not work unless we all practice self-control. There are a number of really fun things that can be done with a group of kids and a parachute if everyone practices self-control. The students quickly learn that by participating with a cooperative attitude they get to experience a greater sense of joy and accomplishment. It’s not often that we receive an immediate reward for our virtuous behavior!

Inspired by the spiritual guidance of our pastor, Father Leatherby and the Sisters, I’ve become more acutely aware of how my vocation as physical education instructor can help lead others to holiness. St. Paul tells us that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, this gives me an elevated sense of responsibility to teach the children everything I can about exercise, fitness and health. The gift of our bodies must be treated as sacred because they are! I want to see them develop healthy bodies, which will enable them to serve God and others in greater capacities. I want them to understand that moderation in food and drink can have positive lasting effects on their lives. Developing healthy attitudes toward exercise and nutrition in conjunction with spiritual lessons of temperance will help children grow to appreciate God’s gift of the body. This will lead to the proper balance of self-esteem, modesty, and confidence.

St. Paul also tells us that we must “run the race” of life. The finish line is of course our heavenly reward. We must be ever mindful of our “pace” in order to moderate our spiritual, emotional, and physical desires. Christ’s body endured unimaginable pain and suffering so that we could all be delivered from eternal damnation. In accepting His graces through the practice of temperance, we more perfectly can unite ourselves to Him as part of His mystical body. The challenge in carrying out my vocation is to ensure that each day my instruction of our students is guided by these teachings of the Gospel.

Temperance: The freedom to be moderate in the desire for and use of pleasant things

- **Lovers of Beauty** with an appreciation for the different expressions of art, music, and other cultural experiences
- **Assertive Communicators** who seek the “truth which will set man free”
- **Integrated Individuals** who recognize their dignity as human persons
**Lovers of beauty**

with an appreciation for the different expressions of art, music, and other cultural experiences

- Can define the virtue of studiousness (desire to know); “what it looks like”, “what it sounds like”
- Can recognize beauty in creation and the arts
- Understands that literature, art, films, and music form one’s soul for good or ill
- Understands the elements of objective beauty across cultures
- Delights in beautiful art, music, poetry, literature, film
- Chooses books, music, and films according to principles of truth, goodness, and beauty

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**Assertive Communicators**

who seek the “truth which will set man free”

- Can define the virtue of moderation (self-control); “what it looks like” and “what it sounds like”
- Communication is understood as a form of self-gift and as truth serving charity
- Has a grade-level appropriate comprehension of the mechanics of English language and usage
- Understands communication to include handwriting, grammar, English, foreign languages, and clear/ordered ideas
- Communicate assertively in a loving and respectful way in written and oral form and in public and intimate settings
- Communication skills are demonstrated in high-quality writing, beautiful handwriting, and eloquent speaking an end.
- Acquired of skills for the proficient use of current technological tools
- Exposed to the basics of a foreign language and culture

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**Integrated individuals**

who recognize their dignity as human persons

- Can define the virtue of modesty, “what it looks like” and “what it sounds like”
- Can identify various positive emotions; can distinguish and communicate the positive emotions appropriately
- Can distinguish and respect the emotions experienced by others (empathy)
- Practices values of good health, physical fitness, and healthy life choices on and off campus
- Practices modesty in dress, word, and action on and off campus

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**SLE Pillar**

**Temperance**

The freedom to be moderate in the desire and use of pleasant things

Student Learning Expectations: Student Learning Expectations flow from the school’s Mission Statement. Please enjoy reviewing the working version of our three Student Learning Expectations (SLEs) that are clustered around the cardinal virtue of temperance.

Detailed rubrics are available in the front office, or email srmaxi-milianmarie@presentationschool.net to have a copy emailed to you. The SLEs will not be finalized until the Spring; your comments and suggestions are encouraged and welcome.
“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price.

So glorify God in your body.”
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

During this season of Lent, it seems like I am always aware of my body. Either I’m hungry or just weary. And these are my bodily sensations— I won’t mention my internal weariness with myself, especially my anger and self-pity. Somehow though, God repeatedly shows me his patience, love and encouragement as I try to gain some sense of self-control over my body. He wants this for us even more than we want it for ourselves.

Sometimes our bodies work well and do what we want them to do, and they do it in marvelous ways. Not long ago, I watched the movie Chariots of Fire again after many years. The story is timeless in many ways; two men working toward an epic event (the Olympics) while each deals with his own interior struggles. The story addresses the themes of diligence, excellence, and perseverance, all the while drawing our spirits forward with the pursuit of good and truth.

After watching Chariots of Fire, I learned about Flanagan’s Run, a book by Tom McNab. This true story treats the same theme of runners training for a monumental event. Here too runners train their bodies to do something that very few would even dream of attempting—a race across America. While this is a good “running story” it also encourages the reader to stretch the limits of what he thinks is possible.

But what about those who are not blessed with healthy or athletic bodies? What about those with physical disabilities and mental handicaps? How would St. Paul encourage them to glorify God with their bodies?

Tiny Tim, the little boy with the crutch and a smile in Charles Dicken’s A Christmas Carol, could never run a physical race, but with his grace and joy and even because of his physical challenges, he was able to reach into that very small and hard to find open place that was Scrooge’s heart. His feat was equal to any cross-continental race.

Some years ago, my children and I listened to the audio version of “The Door in the Wall” by Marguerite De Angeli. Robin, the main character, has his entire life turned upside down when he falls ill and becomes crippled during the plague. His father is at war and Robin is alone and without resources. By the time he journeys to his parents’ side, he has proven himself to be truly a noble boy, son of a nobleman. His body will never return to its previous healthy and limber state, but he has persisted through challenges physical, mental, and spiritual and met his new life with virtue. When Robin asks his father if he is ashamed to see his once healthy son, now walking with the aid of crutches, his father responds to his son that “the courage you have shown…make so bright a light that I cannot see whether or not your legs are misshapen.”

Laura Ingalls Wilder of the Little House books wrote about life with her sister Mary Ingalls who became blind at the age of fourteen after she fell ill with scarlet fever. Through Laura’s eyes, we come to know Mary as a self-controlled, modest, and accomplished young girl whom the author describes as nearly “perfect” when compared with impetuous Laura. And yet, we can only imagine the very real difficulties that Mary encountered during her supposedly quiet and hidden life.

In the historical novel written about the life of Saint Damien of Molokai, Father Damien and the Bells (Arthur and Elizabeth Sheehan), the Saint of Molokai takes his desire to serve God as a missionary to the extreme. He becomes neighbor, friend, nurse, and priest to the leprous men and women of Molokai. Not only does Fr. Damien tend to the bodies and souls of the lepers, but in the end, as we know, he contracts and dies of the very same disease. What I had forgotten about this man, one of my all time favorite heroes and saints, is that after his death, “all signs of illness had gone from his face, and his hands were completely healed.” (p.160 Father Damien and the Bells) God immediately provided all present to witness his affirmation of Saint Damien’s interior beauty and purity.

The southern writer, Flannery O’Connor once wrote the introduction to the biography of a little girl named Mary Ann Long. (A Memoir of Mary Ann). Mary Ann lived a short life, dying at the age of twelve after having been diagnosed at age three with a malignant tumor that took over the entire side of her face. What O’Connor elaborates upon in this introduction, is that this little girl was not a sentimental caricature of sanctity, but the real thing, a saintly child. While Mary Ann’s body was marked by a deadly illness, her body, mind, and soul, moved forward to claim a simple and some say, holy, death.

So as we struggle with our stubborn bodies (and minds and hearts) during this season of Lent, we really can take heart knowing that some very holy men and women also struggled—a great deal! St. Joseph of Cupertino, “the levitating saint”, was said to have “been remarkably uncever”. Up until the time of his death, he remained a simple man, but persisted in his efforts to love God in all he did. Joseph died a very holy man. (The Reluctant Saint—available on DVD and VHS).

In a short address Pope John Paul II made to the Congress on Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State, the Holy Father said, “Even our brothers and sisters who find themselves in the clinical condition of a ‘vegetative state’ retain their human dignity in all its fullness. The loving gaze of God the Father continues to fall upon them, acknowledging them as his sons and daughters, especially in need of help.”

We can comfort ourselves knowing that God looks upon our efforts with a loving gaze and infinite patience—always ready to enhance our least efforts for the Kingdom. Comfort indeed. Blessed Lent!

Booklist for Glorifying God in your Body

- Flanagan’s Run by Tom McNab
- A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens
- The Door in the Wall by Marguerite De Angeli.
- Little House on the Prairie Series by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- Saint Damien of Molokai by Arthur and Elizabeth Sheehan
- A Memoir of Mary Ann by Flannery O’Connor
Temperance is the freedom to be moderate in the desire and use of pleasant things, while fortitude is the freedom to endure difficulties for the sake of a good purpose. In other words, temperance is when we say “whoa!” and fortitude is when we say “Go!” At the end-of-the-day announcements we have been taking time to reflect upon the virtue of temperance and its related virtues. We have asked ourselves, “Did I remember to pray for the Gift of Fear of the Lord?”, “Did I practice moderation with food?”, “Did I practice modesty by acting with purity of heart in dress, words and actions?”, “Did I practice orderliness by keeping my physical appearance clean; order in my desk and room; completing my responsibilities in a logical and responsible manner?” As you can see, temperance is a beautiful virtue – in fact, it helps us to see clearly what is true, beautiful, and good.

Being social creatures, communication is something very pleasant to the human person. Knowing this, we have dedicated one of our new SLEs to highlighting the responsibilities we and our students have regarding communication. The new SLE — Assertive Communicators who seek the “truth which will set man free” — deals with the virtue of moderation (one of temperance's related virtues) as applied to communication. Moderation allows all the luster and beauty of truth to shine through all forms of our communication. It is a virtue that helps us to see that communication is a act of self-gift, governed by truth and charity. As a student body we have discussed how powerful our words are and how temperance and moderation can help our words build up our community (or the negative—break it down). This is why we highlight in our handbook that any talk or communication that criticizes, demeans, puts down, or casts a negative light on someone else in his or her absence is unacceptable and is corrosive to community life.

A story about St. Philip Neri can help us understand the power of our words: One day, a woman who was notorious for being a gossip went to confession to Father Philip. For her penance, Philip told her to carry her feather pillow to the windiest hill of Rome, cut it open and shake out all the feathers and return to him. The penitent did as she was told. When she returned, Philip told the woman to go back to the hill and collect all the feathers that she had shaken out. “But Father!” she exclaimed, “The wind has carried away all the feathers by now! It would be impossible for me to collect them again.” St. Philip replied, “That is what has happened to all the rumors and gossip you have spread around Rome. You can never take back all those idle words you have spoken.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides wonderful guidance in regards to the essentials of communication governed by self-gift, truth, and charity. What is interesting, is that the word “gossip” is not in the Catechism, but the Church uses the following vocabulary and definitions:

♦ The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury (C.C.C. 2477).

♦ The Catechism presents detraction and calumny as those offenses against truth which destroy the reputation and honor of one’s neighbor (C.C.C. 2479).

♦ A person is guilty of detraction when, without objectively valid reasons, he or she discloses another’s faults and failings to persons who did not know him/her.

♦ A person is guilty of calumny when, by remarks contrary to the truth, he or she harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them.

♦ Also included under offences against truth is rash judgment. One is guilty of rash judgment when he or she, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of another. The strength of the Christian community lies in the careful effort to interpret another’s thoughts, words and deeds in a favorable way. (C.C.C. 247b)

May Christ’s light, truth, mercy, and love be always on our lips and in our hearts!