

Last week was homecoming at Sacred Heart Academy. And the theme was Camelot. The last event that happened was the Homecoming Dance. I spent about an hour sitting at the table with the chaperones, who were all teachers. And at one point, the chaperones had taken custody of a couple of foam swords.

Personally, I didn't quite see the harm – but I was reminded that no matter how soft the foam swords were, there was still a point on the end – and as the old saying goes, “It's all fun and games until somebody loses an eye.”

My own experiences and travels in Asia have given me occasion to accumulate a few swords – among which are a wooden practice Samurai sword, three tai chi swords, and two Chinese broadswords. In a couple of weeks, I'll have the privilege of being inducted into the Fourth Degree of the Knights of Columbus. Sadly, I've been informed that the clergy who are members are not supposed to carry swords. I suppose we'll have to look into revising their statutes.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us in today's reading:

*Indeed the word of God is living and effective,
sharper than any two-edged sword,
penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow,
and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.*

That is, the word of God can get in-between just about anything. It is a good and pious practice to spend some time each day meditating and contemplating the word of God. When we allow God's word to penetrate into our lives, it has the ability to peel away bad habits and sinful tendencies. It can confirm us in our good points and convict us of our bad ones.

But like a physical sword, the word of God as a spiritual sword can cause some serious damage. Many times throughout history allusions to Scripture have been used to justify some pretty terrible things.

So what's a good Bible-believing Christian to do? Primarily, it is important that we rely on the tradition of the Church to guide us in understanding and interpreting the word of God.

And when we seem to find conflicting voices even within the Church, we need to rely on wisdom – or as the First Reading from the Book of Wisdom calls it: Prudence.

Prudence is one of the four cardinal virtues. They aren't called 'cardinal' because they're red, or because they're some sort of bird. They're called 'cardinal' because the Latin word for “hinge” is 'cardo;' and these virtues are the “hinge” upon which our moral door swings open or shut.

So, what are these four cardinal virtues?

Justice.

Temperance.

Courage.

And prudence.

The four cardinal virtues apply to four facets of our human personality.
Justice calls us examine our own self-interest and the rights or needs of others.

Temperance ties in with moderation of our emotions and passions.

Courage is being able to deal with fear and the unknown.

And prudence, which is called the “Queen of the Virtues,” applies to our intellect, and helps us to act appropriately in regards to situations and times.

St. Vincent de Paul divides prudence even further – between what he calls human prudence and what he calls Christian prudence.

Human prudence, which is also called the prudence of the flesh and of the world, is that which has no other aim than what is temporal, thinks only of arriving at its end, and makes use of such methods and sentiments alone as are human.

Christian prudence consists in judging, speaking, and acting in the way that the Eternal Wisdom, clothed in our flesh, judged, spoke, and acted, and in guiding ourselves in all cases according to the maxims of faith, never according to the fallacious sentiments of the world, or the weak light of our own intellect.

And so, armed as we are with the word of God, we are called to act in Christian prudence.

But what’s a 21st century, sword-carrying, Catholic Christian in the City of Mount Pleasant supposed to do?

Jesus Christ, Himself, gives us the answer in today’s Gospel:

*"For human beings it is impossible, but not for God.
All things are possible for God."*

When we rely on only ourselves, it is – not almost impossible ... not virtually impossible – but as Jesus says ... IT IS IMPOSSIBLE.

The bottom line is – that we NEED to rely on God in all things. Which may or may not be easy for us. And for most of us, there are areas in our lives where we are happy to let God in – but there are also areas of our lives where we don’t want to rely on God.

And so, as we prepare to approach this altar, let us ask God to give us insight into an area where He is calling us to let Him in. It may be an area of control ... it may be an area of healing ... it might be in the area of forgiveness ... it may be somewhere that we are hurting.

But wherever it is, let us call out to Him in Faith, and let him penetrate our being with His Word, and open us to more fully rely on Him ... now ... tomorrow ... and every day.