

Grace Notes in Miniature

For Wednesday, May 27, 2020

Dear friends:

As I wrote yesterday's Grace Notes in miniature, I was unprepared for the report on Long Term Care Homes



released to the federal and provincial governments by Brigadier-General Mialkowski. This was based on reports from Canadian Forces personnel who had been sent in to assist in some homes and reflects a very hard and unbiased reporting of what they observed. As I worked through the revulsion, horror, and disgust at reading the details, I also was very glad that our CF medical and other personnel have put out formally what has long been an anecdotal picture of how we care for people who can't stand up for themselves. Now there can be no denial; now there must be action. I

had commented that we could learn a lot about attitudes towards our elders from our First Nations peoples and want to expand that to include what our own faith proclaims.

The fifth¹ of the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai states: Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you (NRSV). Leading up to the present age, the Ten Commandments have been considered moral imperatives; indeed, much of our Common Law derives from them. In the Jewish Talmud, honouring one's mother and father is considered on equal footing with honouring God. Do we then blame our treatment of the elderly on the diminishment of faith practice and the increase in the numbers of those who self-identify as "nones"? Jesus affirmed the honour due one's parents, and this was perpetuated in the writings of St Paul: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."— Ephesians 6:1-2

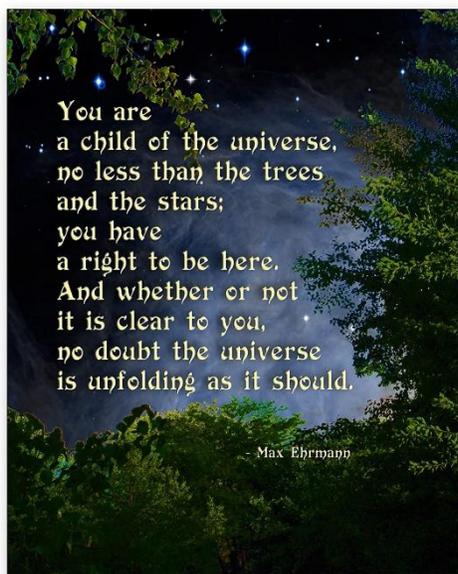
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXbWWASQbLM> The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that adult children have a duty to their parents to provide "material and moral support in old age and in times



¹ Fifth as Catholics count them; Protestants consider it the fourth Commandment and divide the Catholic tenth Commandment into two parts

of illness, loneliness, or distress.”²; this honour should be based on the son or daughter’s gratitude for the life, love and effort given by the parents and motivated by the desire to pay them back in some measure. It further develops the concept that this is the foundation on which respect for teachers, employers and those in secular authority is built.

In conversation with my doctor, a Muslim, yesterday, I learned that in his tradition the honour shown to one’s parents extends to their friends and, after a parent has died, their children will continue to visit the friends. He suggested it was considered more meaningful to take flowers to the surviving friend than to the parent in the cemetery. In some cultures, care for one’s senior citizens and elderly parents is a mark of honour; in others, it is seen as a burden which children try to avoid as the elderly live in shame at being that burden. Studies done in countries which have more relaxed Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) laws suggest that there are a significant number of elderly people who ask for MAiD, not because they really want to die but because they feel the resentment of their offspring, the younger generation who are paying for their upkeep, even when the money is coming from the parent’s savings. Elder abuse is not uncommon and often seriously under-reported everywhere.



I know that many of our schools do good work by visiting nursing and seniors’ homes, providing entertainment, prayers, artwork and so on; we need to be sure that we are not just teaching the virtue of good deeds but teaching a way of life in which the Consistent Life Ethic³ is enculturated.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUI2EyYIEKs>

Let’s make sure that every member of our community, bar none, feels valued, worthwhile and honoured; remember that every one of us is truly created in the image of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOrcqqpHCt8>

You may enjoy discovering – or revisiting – Desiderata: <https://mwkworks.com/desiderata.html> There is much wisdom in these words for how we treat ourselves and others: Jesus tells us, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself!” (Matt 22:37) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i00nL_6oAPQ

Blessings,
Gillian

² CCC 2218

³ <https://www.rehumanizeintl.org/post/2011-09-13-what-is-the-consistent-life-ethic>