



As a linguist, I love virtues with weird-sounding names. **Benedicencia** is the virtue of speaking well of others, from Latin *bene*, meaning “well”, and *dicere*, meaning “say” (we have the word *benediction* in English, so *benedicencia* really means to “speak blessing”.) The virtue of *eutrapelia* is another favourite of mine: the Greek word literally means “good turning”, but translates as “wittiness”, and connotes the qualities of rest, play, and cheerfulness combined (and would be a fun virtue to focus on!) A final favourite funny-sounding virtue is the virtue of *parrhesia*, and might be the most challenging of the three. *Parrhesia* comes from the Greek word literally meaning “all speech”, and this virtue challenges us to speak freely, candidly, and boldly, even – and especially – when it’s not welcome.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, **we are all called to the virtue of parrhesia at a very specific point during the mass.** When the priest invites us to pray the Our Father, he begins with the words “we dare to say.” *Parrhesia* is the daring to speak up, to be brave, to boldly trust that we are loved by God, and to boldly tell others that they are too.

Two weeks ago, I lost a friend to suicide. My husband read her obituary in the paper; it was a busy day when our house was full of extra activities and extra people, and he wasn’t able to tell me until I’d finally laid down at the end of the day. When he broke the news to me, I sat straight up in my bed, and after many moments of disbelief, I whispered, “I should have done more.” “You did all you could,” he replied.

I had met her over ten years ago – as soon as we'd moved into our new house, she and her husband and new daughter introduced themselves over the back fence and we all became quick friends. Eventually, we took down enough boards of our shared fence to create an opening through which our children could pass back and forth, sharing our sand pit, and their play structure. After we moved out, we stayed friends – they came to see our new house, and we visited often at the school where our children were often in the same class. A little over a year ago, I had run into her in the dairy aisle of the grocery store, and 45 minutes later, while our yogurt warmed in our carts, she'd shared some of the struggles she was having in her marriage. I didn't know if my husband and I could help, but I promised we'd try, and as we hugged goodbye, we vowed to each other we'd all get together soon. By the time we finally reconnected for that get-together, she and her husband had already separated, living in different homes, sharing custody of their daughter. She came over by herself instead.

Over tea, I learned that my dear friend, not Catholic nor Christian nor in any way religious, was searching in a million different directions for healing, from crystals to astrology to past-life analyses. **She was already so wounded, so divided, and so earnestly seeking, that I barely had the courage to speak up.** But we'd always spoken frankly: years ago she was the first person I told when I was diagnosed with post-partum depression, and she had hugged me with such compassion then that I knew **I had to show the same to her in that moment.**

I told her that there was a Creator Who made her for Himself, and Who loved her. "Seek Him," I said, quoting St. Augustine, **"your heart will always be restless until it rests in Him."** I know it wasn't the message she wanted to hear.

Of course, I'll always wonder if there was more I could have said and if through what I did say, she ultimately found True Rest.

**In gaudete et exsultate, we are challenged by the eighth beatitude to be "a nuisance." Please be a nuisance. Please speak up, speak bravely, speak blessing; please keep proclaiming the bold message of the Gospel of love. Dare to say**