



<https://www.regnumchristinyctnj.org/index.php/2017/06/12/the-virtues-we-would-be-wise-to-remember/>Graciousness in word and action seems to be fading away with the “Greatest Generation.” It would be a pity to lose what our parents and grandparents demonstrated so well.

“Let your speech be gentle, frank, sincere, straightforward, candid and faithful” (St. Francis de Sales).

I still remember overhearing my mom during her long phone conversations in the kitchen with her friends. Expressions like these would naturally flow from her mouth: “Joanie, I was just calling to thank you so much for substituting for me the other day when I was a little under the weather. I am truly grateful for this sacrifice.”

Or: “Mary, I thoroughly enjoyed our time together yesterday at lunch. Thank you for making the time.”

Or: “Hi, Cathy, I heard that you just found out you have cancer, and I wanted to let you know that you will be in my daily prayers and we are organizing a meal schedule for you and your family for the next few months. So please do not worry about that. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

I was often reminded at our family dinner — I considered it a huge blessing to have my three siblings and my mom and dad at the table for 90 percent of our dinners — to ask for things properly. “Tom, could you please pass the salt? Jim, when you finish serving yourself, could you please pass the chicken parmigiana? Deb, may I take your plate?”

We could not talk with food in our mouth. We were constantly reminded to listen respectfully and not to interrupt, and we tried to stay on topic without bouncing all over the place in our discussions. The dinner table was a training camp, and I hope that for all the parents reading this article, you too can form this nobility and self-control in your kids.

The British novelist and essayist C.S. Lewis once remarked, “The ‘frankness’ of people sunk below shame is a very cheap frankness.” Although I appreciate transparency and clarity of expression, I do think some of our politicians and just ordinary people can be a little too “direct and clear” about how they feel or what they think.

Recently I held the door for an elderly couple on the Lexington Avenue entrance to Grand Central Station in Manhattan, and I motioned them to pass before me. The woman said to her husband, “George, it has been a while since anyone has held a door for us, especially here at Grand Central!”

It’s the little things that matter so much in our human relations: Offering your seat to someone else on a crowded subway or bus, deferring the seat with the best view in a restaurant, focusing the conversation on topics the other person might prefer instead of what you’d like to discuss, engaging in random acts of kindness without looking for pats on the back, and truly “listening” with kindly attention.

Forbes magazine wrote this Capsule Course in Human Relations many years ago:

“Five most important words: I am proud of you.

Four most important words: What is your opinion?

Three most important words: If you please.

Two most important words: Thank you.

Least important word: I.”

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