

August 18, 2019

My dear John Carroll Society members and friends,

In St. Francis deSales' Introduction to the Devout Life (Third Part), it struck me that the sections of his classic that treat "speech" are still in that large part of the book that treats "virtues" as well.

Because of the linkage between speech and virtue in the devout life, I concluded that we look at this kind of speech through the prism of "virtuous speech." For sure "virtuous speech" is, and regrettably is not, an apt title of the kind of political speech that is the mark of our town in these days. It is quite counter-cultural.

Surprisingly, when I googled "virtuous speech," however, there were actually a number of definitions of "virtuous speech." The most descriptive for our purposes was: **"Timing and delivery are of utmost importance. Talk only what is necessary, and at an appropriate time. Make your speech patterns, demeanor, and vibrations free of negativity. Your delivery should have no undercurrent of arrogance, hostility, or jealousy."**

In his version of "virtuous speech," St. Paul writes: "Never let evil talk pass your lips; say only the good things men need to hear, things that will really help them...Get rid of all bitterness, all passion and anger, harsh words, slander, and malice of every kind." (Eph 4:29-32)

deSales writes: "Seeking familiar conversations with others and avoiding them are two extremes and both are blameworthy in devout people living in the world." (Third, #24) Seeking out an appropriate conversation with our neighbor is, for deSales, an act of love and should not be avoided less we shun the company of another. We should not avoid useful associations with those around us for "a soul often in the company of virtuous people cannot help sharing in their good qualities." (Third, #24) "Ordinarily moderate cheerfulness should predominate in our associations with others." (Third, #24)

These are time-worthy bits of advice as we begin a new John Carroll Society year and post Labor Day work year.

"Virtuous speech" is a good motto for this year at John Carroll and in our town.

Prayerfully in Christ,

Msgr. Peter J. Vaghi
Chaplain