



NEWS FROM THE VILLAGE

FROM THE DESK OF THE UPPER SCHOOL HEAD

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PRACTICING THE MATTHEW 18 PRINCIPLE

BY CHARLIE MOONEY, UPPER SCHOOL HEAD

Many Christian schools and institutions have a policy that is often called "The Matthew 18 Principle." Of course, it is called this, because it is found in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel in which Jesus tells his disciples how they should handle a situation in which a person sins against a fellow Christian.

I actually don't like calling it the Matthew 18 principle, because appealing to it in any conflict implies that a sin has been committed by one party. At times, no one has sinned at all. It's just a matter of misunderstanding. That's usually the application in our setting at Valor. However, naming aside, I do stand by the principle in our context, and I insist on it in the Upper School. That means, if a parent emails me about a concern with a teacher (or vice versa), I will always ask first, "Have you spoken to [the other person] directly yet?" If the answer is "no," then I insist that is the next step and will not proceed further. That almost always resolves the issue.

There are three reasons that I do this:

1. Teachers are professionals, and I can show them professional respect by allowing them to speak for themselves. Conversely, parents (co-teachers) are partners in this model and should be afforded the same respect.
2. A value of Valor and any other good school is cultivating healthy parent-teacher relationships. Promoting healthy conflict management is key.
3. It almost always resolves the issue, thereby making my job simpler.

I'm very pleased at how well the Valor community has honored this practice and developed healthy relationships. Valor will only be as strong as its relationships.

OCT & NOV EVENTS

- Teacher Training (Fri, 10/8) - NO SCHOOL
- Fall Break (Mon & Tue, 10/11, 10/12) - NO SCHOOL
- PSAT - 11th Grade (Wed, 10/13)
- End of Q1 (Fri, 10/15)
- Rhetoric Student Retreat (Tue&Wed, 11/2-11/3)
- Rhetoric Vision Night (Wed, 11/17)
- Thanksgiving Break (11/22-26, NO SCHOOL)

CLASSICAL CORNER: THE SPIRIT OF SCHOLÉ

BY CHARLIE MOONEY, UPPER SCHOOL HEAD

The concept of scholé (pronounced: sko-lay) has historically permeated classical education but has been almost completely lost in the frenetic modern age. Scholé refers to learning in a setting of deep contemplation and even leisure. It is peaceful and relaxed. That doesn't mean it's not active and engaging, but the extrinsic pressures are removed so that the learner can enjoy being immersed without being rushed or coerced. It's what happens when you sit in a comfortable chair and dive into a rich book or when you lounge around with good food and friends and get lost in a conversation about the deep things of life. Those are rich and captivating moments we want to replicate here at Valor whenever possible.

Scholé is more than a mere approach to instruction. It's about the whole environment of the school or home. It's an approach to learning in the broadest possible sense. Schools that are characterized by scholé are not frenetic and stressful hubs of activity. Likewise, classical homeschools should be characterized by restful,

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Florilgium

"Of the three sorts of knowledge proper to a child--the knowledge of God, of man, and of the universe--the knowledge of God ranks first in importance, is indispensable and most happy-making."

Charlotte Mason, *Towards a Philosophy of Education*

HOUSEKEEPING

Keeping you up to date on miscellaneous information so we can move forward together with confidence and clarity.



- Upper School **Construction Updates:**
 - The Upper School office suite and the new boys' and girls' bathrooms are complete!
 - The Upper School science lab will be completed in the next few days (as of Oct 5).
 - The gymnasium is still under construction, as of October 5, but there has been tremendous progress. As I write, our new A/C system is going in. When the gym opens, PE classes and Logic School chapels will return there.
- We have a brand new **Pre-Arranged Absence Form** available in the front office and the Upper School office. School policy requires all families planning an absence (e.g. a vacation) to check in with teachers before leaving. This form will enable that communication and put more responsibility on the student to plan well. The student must pick up the form from one of the offices and take it to each teacher *before* taking the absence. The form is also available in the Lamp-Post and Wardrobe classrooms in Google Classroom under "Important Documents."
- As much as we don't want to have to say it, covid-19 is around for another year. Thankfully, we've managed to contain it very effectively (even with the more transmissible Delta variant). We now have a new **Covid Quarantine Support Plan** for any students who are in quarantine for one week or more. Bethany Brown sent out an email with an explanatory graphic on September 16. It is also available in the Lamp-Post and Wardrobe under "Important Documents."



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contemplative learning.

Of course, there are days in which life demands a less-than-peaceful response. Some days, life and other commitments just get in the way. Also, our own flesh gets in the way. Being in a perfect classical school would not suddenly take away the temptations of sloth and procrastination. These seeds of sin lie in all of our hearts and can be detrimental to achieving these days of scholé. However, those days should be the exception, rather than the rule. Generally, classical schools (and Valor home days) ought to be calm and home-like. We want them to be life-giving, rather than days of dreaded anxiety.

The decorum of the scholé classroom or home school should still be one of respect and engaging activity, but the atmosphere is more like a home than it is like a factory or a modern progressive school. This is one reason that I would not encourage a homeschool or a University Model™ family to replicate a modern school room in the home-with a rigid desk, a white board, and piles of textbooks. Modern school rooms ought to be more like beautiful, warm, and inviting homes. At Valor, we want our rooms to have warm colors, beautiful art, and comfortable design.

To be clear, I'm not suggesting that classrooms be places with refrigerators, televisions, clothes and toys strewn about, and someone asleep on the couch. (Don't worry. I don't have your living room in mind.) What I mean to say is that the best and deepest learning will happen when the learner is in an environment that feels more like an inviting home than like a cold institution.

If you want to read more on cultivating a spirit of scholé in your own home, I recommend the books listed below as a good place to start.

- *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation* by Josef Pieper
- *Leisure, the Basis of Culture* by Josef Pieper
- *Teaching from Rest: A Homeschooler's Guide to Unshakeable Peace* by Sarah Mackenzie
- *Home Education, Vol. 1* by Charlotte Mason
- *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education* by Kevin Clark and Ravi Jain