**Some Notes about the Human Person and Virtue**

1. Virtue actually changes the human person, so that someone who was lazy becomes hard-working or someone disorganized becomes well-ordered in his or her life (etc.).

2. Virtue is not an energy drink – “pound it down and you feel great.” Virtue is almost exactly parallel to building a lean but strong physique: you need accurate knowledge about the body, foods, and technique; you need to sleep, rest, exercise, and eat regularly; you can only make gains *a little* everyday, with frequent setbacks.

3. A person’s psychology becomes more and more capable of healthy thoughts, feelings, and actions the more he or she grows in virtue. When we say a person is *good*, we mean that he or she has virtue.

4. Knowledge is to virtue as food is to a body-builder: you simply cannot grow if you don’t have it.

5. The ultimate purpose of virtue is to build relationships, even virtues that pertain to regulating your own affairs.

6. Virtue is always built in five steps, for a Christian: (1) prayer and sacraments, (2) gaining knowledge, (3) practice of the virtue, (4) examining progress and making adjustments, (5) repeating the previous four steps again and again.

7. Much patience is required. This is not your drop-60-pounds-in-6-months diet where you then balloon out. This is a life-long endeavor which is more like dropping three pounds every month, or putting on one pound of lean muscle every month.

8. Emotions are either the biggest enemy or the biggest ally to virtue. The virtuous person has very strong emotions, but *only* for the right reasons, at the right times, in union with others. The vicious person experiences all kinds of emotion, or a lack of emotion, too vehemently and at the wrong times.

9. Emotions and vicious tendencies can be overcome with *study* in a “war of attrition.” Very slowly, over time, ideas will gently move your emotions toward those things you think about, if you persevere in filling your mind with good ideas. Ideas move us to act, just like emotions do, but ideas are much more subtle and slow-moving. Emotions are more superficial and they come and go more easily.

Therefore, the person beginning on the life of virtue will find that he or she is tormented with how many things he or she does out of emotion and vicious tendency. The key is to reinforce what is good with as much knowledge as possible as frequently as possible *and to act on those good ideas as frequently as possible* (without action, no virtue is ever built). Do this perseveringly over a number of years and many things that seemed impossible to overcome will be overcome.

10. Like people, virtues reinforce one another and help each other to grow. If you are having trouble with one virtue, it may be due to a lack of virtue in another department of life.