



VIRTUE CORNER

You know intuitively what fairness is, but in a lot of cases intuition isn't enough. You know it isn't "fair" if a teacher flunks all the kids with blond hair just because they have blond hair. You know it isn't "fair" to hire someone less qualified just because they have connections that can exempt you from greens fees at the Country Club. But why? What is at the root of fairness? If you don't know, your fairness will fail in difficult situations.

Fairness is another way of saying the fundamental moral virtue of Justice. Justice is defined as "giving the other their due." Justice hinges on what "their due" means. Fairness is giving God and others "their due" in thought, word and deed. "Their due" means "what they deserve." What does God deserve? Well, he has created everything, he holds everything in existence every moment, he has come to pay the price for our sins, he offers us forgiveness and a ticket to everlasting life and eternal happiness, he has given us the Bible, the Church, the sacraments, a conscience, and intelligence to help us identify and choose the right path in life... What would a friend who has given that much deserve? Gratitude, loyalty, trust, friendship... The King of the universe deserves the love and obedience of his beneficiaries.

What do other people deserve? Now things start getting sticky. Some people, like parents, spouses, teachers, and close friends, have made sacrifices for your benefit; they deserve your gratitude, your respect, and, within reason, your help. All people, however, are created in the image of God. Jesus Christ has died to save them all – your Leader loves them all and has created them to share eternal life with him in heaven. Therefore, they all deserve to be respected and cared for as persons, not as things, not as cogs in a machine, not as numbers, not even primarily as clients, employees, colleagues, and consumers. Before taking on those roles, every person is a child of God; in his eyes they are your brothers or sisters, and his. "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me... In truth I tell you, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me..." (Matthew 25:40, 45)

What God and others deserve from you, then, depends not on what you can get from them, but on *who they are*.

Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that "everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity."

— Catechism of the Catholic Church #1931



GOSPEL REFLECTION (30 MIN)

“The Greatest Commandment”

Matthew 22:36-40

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

Romans 13:7-10

Pay to each one what is due to each: taxes to the one to whom tax is due, tolls to the one to whom tolls are due, respect to the one to whom respect is due, honor to the one to whom honor is due. The only thing you should owe to anyone is love for one another, for to love the other person is to fulfill the law. All these: You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and all the other commandments that there are, are summed up in this single phrase: You must love your neighbor as yourself. Love can cause no harm to your neighbor, and so love is the fulfillment of the Law.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Context. Tensions are ramping up between Jesus and the leaders of Israel. He silences the Romans (Mt 22:15-22), Sadducees (Mt 22:23-33) and now responds to the Pharisees. These were the Religious Lawyers who interpreted the meaning and application of Jewish Law. Which is the greatest and most important or foundational law?
2. What interests Jesus, Son of God, in his people's response to the law?
3. What is in the heart of a person who wants to "put another to the test". What is in a man's heart who wants to put Jesus to the test?
4. Do you get the sense that Jesus feels tested or insulted by the question? What is his attitude toward the Pharisees here? Is there a lesson here on how to answer your employees, coworkers, wife or children who question you?
5. How is love the answer and foundation to the Law? In your home and business, is love for each other more important than any house or business law?
6. St. Paul writing the Romans some years after reflects seamlessly the doctrine Jesus preached on love for neighbor and God. What are the parallels with the Gospel passage?
7. Does St. Paul to the Romans add anything?
8. How does Jesus' notion of fairness translate into today's business world?

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Romans 13:7-8



CASE DISCUSSION (30 MIN)

2 ways to go about it. Read the Case and discuss afterwards how it can apply to your leadership, parenting style. Or ask a member to voluntarily offer their challenges in practicing humility at home, in the work place or in their lumen action (volunteer work). The circle can offer some personal experiences on how they have confronted and resolved similar difficulties.

The following Case is taken from Ethics Alarms online site. <https://ethicsalarms.com/2010/05/06/the-problem-of-fairness-and-david-ortiz-a-case-study/>

The Problem of Fairness, and David Ortiz: A Case Study

Fairness is a core ethical value. It is also one of the most difficult to embody. We all know what fairness is in the abstract: treatment of others characterized by impartiality and honesty, and an avoidance of self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism. In complex situations involving many interested parties, however, seeking fairness becomes a dilemma wrapped in a conflict surrounded by contradictions. One of these complex situations now faces the Boston Red Sox, as the baseball team deals with the travails of its designated hitter David Ortiz. Sports has a fascinating habit of crystallizing ethical problems, and the Ortiz case demonstrates how hard it is to be "fair."

Ortiz, or "Big Papi," as he is affectionately called, has been a Boston superstar since the 2003 season, when he unexpectedly emerged from the bench to become the team's most feared left-handed slugger in decades. During the 2004 season, the engaging Dominican designated hitter (Ortiz almost never plays in the field) moved up to legend status with an unprecedented string of game-winning clutch hits and walk-off home runs to lead the Red Sox to their first World Series Championship in 86 years. Slowed by injuries, and perhaps age and excess weight, Big Papi had a sub-par season in 2008, and in 2009 began the year with a two month slump of alarming proportions, prompting many to conclude that he was through as a productive offensive force. They were wrong: from June 1 until the end of the season, Ortiz was again one of the best power-hitters in the league. Still, the worries lingered.

Now it is a month into the 2010 season, and Ortiz is once again off to a terrible start. Not only is he not "hitting his weight," he is about 50 batting average points below it. His bat looks slow, and he isn't even drawing bases on balls, as pitchers no longer seem to fear him. Worst of all, his team is off to a slow start too, while its rivals in the ultra-competitive A.L East, the Tampa Rays and, of course, the despised New York Yankees, have both been winning consistently. The fans are worried, even panicked; the Boston sports writing corps, hysterical as usual, are fanning the flames daily. Should Ortiz be released for the good of the team? After less than 30 games and a hundred at bats? Is that fair? What *is* fair, in this situation?

- Victor Martinez, the team's slugging star catcher, is also struggling at the plate, arguably hitting even worse than Ortiz. He is younger, however, and it is assumed that this is just a slump. *But how can it be fair to dump Big Papi while another player keeps his job with the same sub-par performance?*
- Big Papi's contract with the team ends after the season, and his chances of getting another lucrative one, or perhaps any at all, depend on his performance this season: for him, this is literally a make-or-break year. Is it fair for this to play a part in management's decision whether to stick with him as he struggles? He can't show he can still hit if he doesn't play. Is it fair to take his livelihood away from him because the fans are panicking? Or is his contract status irrelevant—after all, he's been getting 12 million dollars a year from the Red Sox. Why should the team feel that it owes him special patience to allow him to make more millions, perhaps with another team?



- Ortiz, in his seven years with the team, has become its most dominant personality and famous player, and as a hero of the 2004 “Curse of the Bambino”-defying squad, an icon carrying the gratitude of the organization and the team’s fans. *Wouldn’t fair treatment be to acknowledge his past service to the team, and give him more time and patience than management normally would? Would this be favoritism, which is inherently unfair?*
- The Red Sox have another aging player, also a fan favorite, also a World Series hero (the MVP of the Boston World Series win in 2007) named Mike Lowell. He has been displaced as a regular player, much to his displeasure, because of declining skills in the field, but can still hit. This season, he has hit extremely well whenever he has had a chance to play. Like Ortiz, his career hangs in the balance. *Is it fair not to let him take Ortiz’s place in the line-up?*
- One reason some claim Ortiz should be treated as washed-up is the fact that he tested positive for a substance banned by Major League Baseball in supposedly private and anonymous tests run by the players’ union in 2003. But Ortiz has always denied that he ever used steroids or human growth hormone, the Players Union has confirmed that some of the substances flagged in the tests were trace chemicals found in then-legal over-the-counter supplements. Ortiz, like all the players involved, had also been promised that the results of the test would never be revealed to the public (they were subpoenaed by Federal authorities and illegally leaked to the press.) *Is it fair that Ortiz should be regarded—and treated—as a cheat and a fraud based on such equivocal facts? Or is it fair to use his declining performance since the PED crackdown as proof that his earlier heroics were the product of illicit substances? Ortiz has built a reputation for honesty and integrity over the years, yet his denials echo similar denials by other players—Bonds, Roger Clemens, Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire—who are widely believed to be lying. Is it fair to judge a man’s integrity by the lack of it on the part of his colleagues, rather than his own past conduct? If there are doubts, and there are many here, isn’t it fair to give Ortiz the benefit of them? Is it fair for the decision whether to dump Ortiz to be driven by the disappointing performance of the rest of the team?*
- Finally, should fairness to Ortiz be part of the equation at all? The obligation of management is to the team, first and foremost. It would be unfair to the team, its players and its fans to sacrifice or even risk the team’s 2010 season out of concern for Ortiz’s feelings, or loyalty to him, or a sense of obligation for his past heroics, wouldn’t it? Yet an organization that shows neither loyalty nor gratitude nor consideration to its most outstanding performers may undermine its morale and culture, which will eventually undermine its success.

What makes being “fair” to David Ortiz undefinable is that every possible choice involves judgments, comparisons, projections and interpretations, all influenced by the experience, priorities, values and objectives of the decision-makers. It is fine to say that the fair decision must be impartial and not influenced by bias and self-interest, but in this case, as in many real world cases, the self-interest of the decision-maker and the object of the decision can’t realistically be partitioned. Terry Francona is the Red Sox manager, and is directly responsible and accountable for the performance of the team. He was also a major league player himself. The Golden Rule tells Francona that he should give Big Papi every chance possible to prove he can still be an offensive force. He also knows that if providing that chance coincides with his team’s collapse, he could lose his job, or at least his job security. And if being what he sees as being fair to David Ortiz is regarded by other members of the team, like Lowell, as being unfair to them because of bias and favoritism, the team will be hurt as well. Francona not only has to worry about being fair, he has to try to achieve the *appearance* of fairness. The truth may be that in complex situations, absolute fairness is always an impossible goal. Treating the need for fairness to all as an absolute requirement only guarantees paralysis and failure. The best course, squarely in the realm of Utilitarianism, is to accept the fact that some parties will be treated, or will think they are being treated, unfairly, and to try to devise a solution that addresses the main objectives while being as fair as achieving those goals will allow.

I’m not certain yet, but my guess is that this approach will not work out well for Big Papi.



Resources:

Centesimus Annos, Encyclical by Pope John Paul II
Gaudium et spes, Constitution on the Church in the World from the Second Vatican Council

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burwell_v._Hobby_Lobby_Stores,_Inc.

Self Assessment and Key Takeaways (10 min)

Questionnaire on Fairness

Do I tend to think in terms of "me" or in terms of "us"? Do I ever go out of my way to find out what's bothering other people, what they need, what makes them happy? Do I do this with everyone, or just those whom I naturally get along with? Why?

In what ways do I tend to play favorites? Does this tendency ever get out of control? Why? How can I better control this tendency? Do I tend to pass judgment on other people, considering myself superior to them? Why? How often do I make demands on other people simply out of personal preferences, not out of objective standards?

How much has familiarity worn down the deep respect I ought to have for my family members? Do I treat family members with the same courtesy and etiquette that I use in my professional relations?

Fairness in Practice

In Family

- Try always to see things from the other person's perspective
 - Give special attention to the sick, the weak, and the elderly
 - Give without counting the cost
 - Teach by example as well as words
 - Involve all family members in every aspect of family life
 - Take a front seat in the religious, intellectual, and social formation of your children
 - Give credit and lavish praise to others
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- Play favorites among children
 - Demand that everyone serve you
 - Leave everybody else to do the housework
 - Feel sorry for yourself
 - Complain in moments of emotional tension
 - Let emotions determine how and when you discipline your children
 - Avoid talking about important issues out of fear or insecurity
 - Manipulate your spouse by threats or making allusions to past mistakes

Fairness Does...

- Have and stick to clear standards
- Apply standards and rules according to the particular situation of individuals
- Get ahead by hard work, ingenuity, good planning, and effective use of resources
- Treat all people like people
- Strive to find win-win solutions to every problem
- Creatively foster the self-improvement of employees, colleagues, and consumers
- Appeal to the noblest motives
- Prefer to die rather than doing wrong
- Give hearty approbation and praise to others when it is due

Fairness Doesn't...

- Have double standards
- Expect that everyone obey me implicitly
- Deceive, lie, fudge, or make false promises
- Sacrifice human dignity for profit
- Forget that your business is not a machine, but a community of human beings working together for a common goal
- Get ahead by shady deals and moral shortcuts
- Ignore your business's impact on society as a whole in favor of a fat bottom line
- Ignore human rights and dignity
- Take all the credit for yourself

In Business



Lumen Core Values Self-Assessment (10 minutes)

Core Values Assessment. Spend 10 minutes in silence assessing positive and negative examples of how you have demonstrated humility in your relationship with others and God. What times have you most often had this attitude and in what circumstances do you tend to lose it? The below quadrant can help in jotting down some of your assessment as well as a tool for the whole Lumen Circle and how you can let it be a leaven in your life.

What struck me in this circle and how I might apply it to my THINKING. What CRITICAL ISSUES am I facing? What is the biggest CHALLENGES with these issues I face and what OPPORTUNITIES does it present.

Prayer:

Family:

Business:

Lumen Action:

What ACTION STEPS can I take now or long term? Develop a concrete resolution for how you can improve in your efforts to exercise Christian charity in you interactions with others during the next month. Your resolution should be a specific action or activity that is easily measured.

