

14th September 2022

Assembly Talk

Good morning everyone. I hope you remember that I talked about two things in the beginning-of-term assembly.

First, respect is the main building block in all relationships, and school is the best place for you to learn to respect other people's ideas, time, property and rights. The golden rule of respect is **“you should treat others the way you want to be treated yourself”**.

Secondly, I mentioned that school is also a place where you learn to be a better you every day. What do I mean by a “better you”? This is the topic that I would like to say more about in this assembly.

When we learn new ways of looking at things, new knowledge, and new skills every day, we grow not just physically, but also in knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and maturity. However, a “better you” is much more than that.

In our modern pragmatic world, learning has often been given a more utilitarian—or even vocational—purpose. Education, to many people, is preparation for university studies, and a good undergraduate degree initiates young people into their preferred professions. A lot of emphasis in learning is, therefore, placed on achievements and on academic performance.

However, in the Chinese Confucian tradition, learning has a much more noble function. Here, I hope our Chinese teachers would not mind my quoting some Chinese texts here and perhaps they would correct me later if I have made any misinterpretations.

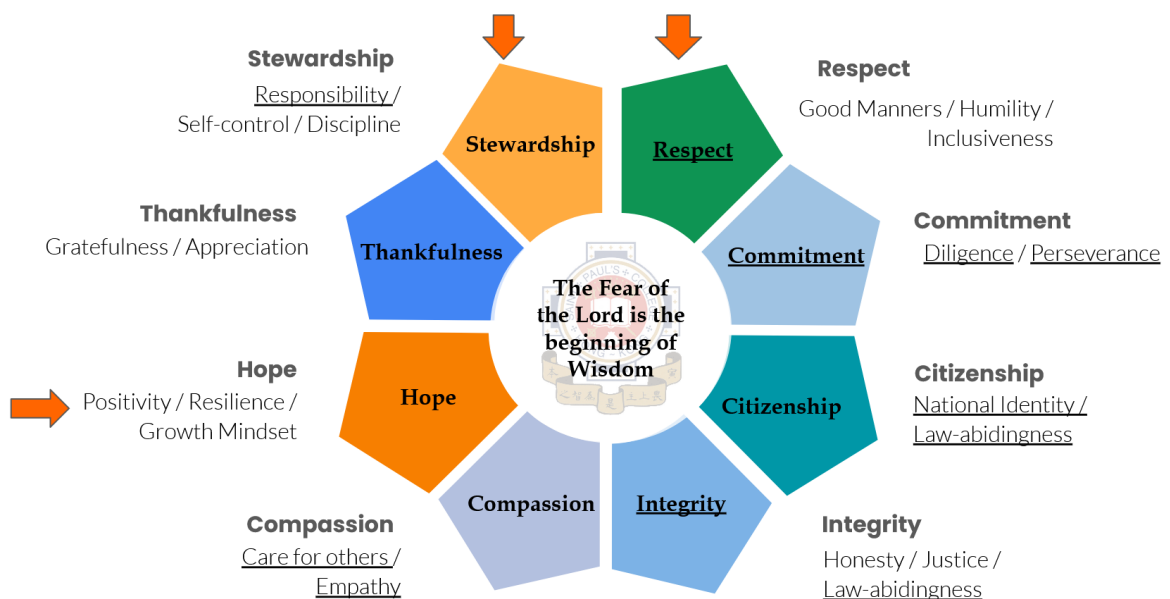
大學之道，在明明德，在親民，在止於至善

This quote, from the book of “Great Learning”, also forms part of the motto of the University of Hong Kong, as you can see in the university's coat of arms. According to Confucius, learning helps to reveal, manifest, illustrate our inner and sometimes forgotten

virtues so that we can renew ourselves and help to renew other people until we reach perfection.

Scholars of the Confucian tradition believe that the inner goodness we are born with is hidden or lost because of various temptations in life, and that learning is a way of retrieving, uncovering, restoring, and revealing this inner goodness. In contrast to the modern view of education, in the Chinese Confucian tradition, a lot of emphasis is placed on virtues and on moral being.

In modern day language, this is often referred to as Values Education which has been gaining traction with the government in the last few years. Taking into account both the curriculum framework issued by the Education Bureau, and our school motto, we have put together eight groups of core values that we would like to promote in St. Paul's College. These are: respect, commitment, citizenship, integrity, compassion, hope, thankfulness and stewardship. In the first assembly, I touched on respect, and today I want to say something about 'integrity'.



“Integrity” is an important value in the Christian faith and it is mentioned a number of times in the Bible. Proverbs 28:6 says, “Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.” Psalm 119:1 says, “Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the Lord”.

What is ‘integrity’? The dictionary entry for the word is “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles”. A more succinct definition can be found in an oft-quoted line, “Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching”, or “Integrity means doing the right thing, even when no one else is there to judge”.

What does “integrity” look like in our everyday life? There are many opportunities in daily life for us to demonstrate ‘integrity’, and these examples are by no means exhaustive. I am sure you can come up with many others if you have some discussions in class. For example,

- Being honest and truthful, which means not telling lies, not giving excuses for not meeting deadlines or for being late for classes
- Keeping promises, that is, you will do what you say you will, no matter how difficult it is
- Keeping important information confidential
- Owning up to your mistakes or wrongdoings; knowing that there are consequences for them
- Not cheating in tests or examinations
- No fabrication of information, research findings or data
- No plagiarism (copying or stealing other people’s ideas)
- Not taking bribes, cutting corners, or taking short-cuts

Personal integrity is a remarkable value and I hope you will learn to incorporate this value in your life.

Dennis Yuen