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## On the virtue of studiousness

by Dr. Michael J. Healy

In this little reflection I wish to describe to the Franciscan educational community, and especially our students, the moral or practical virtue of “studiousness,” a virtue to which you all are called. St. Thomas Aquinas devotes a section (II-II, 1666[7]) of the *Summa Theologica* to this virtue, and from this I take my inspiration, while also referring to other authors.

The virtue of studiousness pertains to or is a type of temperance. “Temperance” implies such things as moderation, restraint, direction, self-control, and discipline. Studiousness then is that virtue which is supposed to regulate and direct man’s desire to know. This “desire to know” needs direction because it can be at fault, and this in two directions: first, the soul may be carried away by an unrestrained, undisciplined curiosity (no order, no priorities, no direction); or, on the other hand, the soul may not be carried away at all, but captured by laziness and sloth.

So, let us look at each of these in turn. First, the virtue of studiousness combats or counteracts a desire for knowledge which is in some way defective. A desire for knowledge may be wrong in two ways. First, it may be wrong from its motive; that is, if one seeks to know primarily for the gratification of pride, for selfish ambitions, or as means to sin. Now, in itself, the knowledge of truth is, of course, the proper exercise of one’s intellect, is an end in itself, and is a good in itself. Indeed, St. Bonaventure points out that this is one of the ways in which man fulfills his nature as an image of God—that his intellect should reflect the truth. This is one of the ways in which man becomes like God—though not the most important way, compared to moral transformation and religious conversion. But,

our true knowledge is meant to lead us on to proper decisions of the will and to right actions. Otherwise—i.e., if knowledge is merely accumulated without decision and without action—then as St. Francis de Sales says: “We resemble beetles which settle upon the roses for no other end than to fill their stomachs and satiate themselves.” (Sermons on Prayer, Ch. 1.) So the virtue of studiousness would have us seek knowledge from a true motive: a sincere desire to understand and then to order our lives according to a true understanding.

Secondly, St. Thomas goes on, the desire for knowledge may be wrong not just from its motive but from its nature, and this in four interesting ways:

1. Our desire for knowledge is wrong if we omit to study that which is an obligation in favor of that which is not. Priorities are important here. For example, it would be wrong (a) to read an interesting novel rather than study for an impending philosophy test; or (b) to study an interesting few pages in theology (not due for weeks) rather

than study for a math test coming tomorrow. On a wider scale, it would be wrong to omit the study of theology, philosophy, history, and English in favor of pure professional training. This is why we have a core requirement at Franciscan University. St. Thomas, by the way, gives the following example of this reversal of priorities, quoting St. Jerome: “We see priests forsaking the gospels and the prophets, reading stage plays, and singing the love songs of pastoral idyls.” (St. Jerome was pretty strict.)

2. But, a second way in which the desire for knowledge may be wrong is seeking knowledge from the wrong sources, e.g., from your neighbor’s answer sheet. On a wider basis here, one commentator mentions seeking knowledge from horoscopes or fortune tellers. St. Thomas mentions the case of

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# short takes

## Rights of workers: an under-appreciated part of Catholic social teaching

In the discussion of fair labor practices initiated by Regina Schmiedicke (V,1), Kevin Schmiesing notes, “There are considerable practical difficulties with the notion of the family wage, the most important being the establishment of exactly what level of wage is ‘just’” (V,2). That is true, and is one reason why I am so proud to be a Catholic, with a rich tradition exploring this question.

Pope Leo XIII wrote about labor in 1891, and since then others Popes have returned to the matter repeatedly, notably in encyclicals that are named in reference to Pope Leo’s great work: *Quadragesimo Anno* (40 years after Pope Leo’s encyclical), *Octogesimo Anno* (80 years after) and *Centesimus Annus* (the 100th year after). Despite the admitted difficulties, the Holy See defended the notion of a family wage in the 1983 “Charter of the Rights of the Family.”

One of the great tragedies of our time is that so many Catholics are aware of only half of the Church’s teaching on how to live our lives in the modern world. Many Catholics embrace and promote the Church’s teaching on sexual morality; others are especially concerned with the Church’s teaching on matters of justice, including labor. Unfortunately, few Catholics are equally committed to both aspects of the Church’s great wisdom.

It goes so far that factions are formed within the Church. These factions rarely speak to each other, and even frequently denounce each other for hypocrisy. Thus it can and does happen that organizations that bill themselves as “pro-family” show themselves hostile to concern for the rights of wage earners. But the teaching of the Church is clear: family life is gravely threatened by sexual misconduct, and family life is gravely threatened when society is careless about the rights of workers. Schmiesing asks, “Does Catholic social teaching insist that every parent, upon the birth of a child, be guaranteed an increase in salary?” Perhaps not in so many words, but in essence the answer is yes—if the raise is necessary to meet the increased expenses involved in having another child.

The principle is stated explicitly in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931):

71. In the first place, the worker must be paid a wage sufficient to support him and his family. . . It is an intolerable abuse, and to be abolished at all cost, for mothers on account of the father’s low wage to be forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the home to the neglect of their proper cares and duties, especially the training of children. Every effort must therefore be made that fathers of families receive a wage large enough to meet ordinary family needs adequately....It will not be out of place here to render merited praise to all who . . . have tried and tested various ways of adjusting the pay for work to family burdens in such a way that, as these increase, the former may be raised...

Michael Welker seems to doubt that unfair labor practices are widespread in Catholic organizations. And he noted that when there are serious labor abuses, “significant legal remedy is available,” including the

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We welcome submissions from faculty, students, administrators, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, benefactors and friends, on any topic of interest to a general university readership, provided they are courteously expressed and framed with a view to advancing the welfare of FUS and/or Catholic culture at large.

We recommend opinions be kept to fewer than 1,500 words.

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# What is distributism?

by Thomas Storck

Much of the history of the Western world since the middle of the nineteenth century has been the history of the clash of competing economic systems. Ever since the Communist Manifesto of 1848, when it was claimed that a “specter is haunting Europe,” a specter indeed has been haunting not only Europe, but the whole world. This is the specter not just of communism, but of rival economic and social systems which many times since then have convulsed mankind. But in the minds of many this rivalry of economic systems has come to an end: communism and socialism have both been defeated, and therefore only capitalism is left to reign triumphantly throughout the entire world. However, this is not the case. In a neglected passage of the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II points out that mankind’s choices are not restricted to capitalism and the now discredited socialism. “We have seen that it is unacceptable to say that the defeat of so-called ‘Real Socialism’ leaves capitalism as the only model of economic organization” (no. 35). If this is the case, then it behooves Catholics to take a look at distributism, an economic system championed by many of the best minds in the Church in the first part of the twentieth century, men such as G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Fr. Vincent McNabb and many others. Let us see exactly what distributism is and why many Catholics see it as more akin to Catholic thought than capitalism.

In the first place, we would do well to make a few definitions of the chief terms we will be using, and especially of capitalism. Too often this word is left undefined, and each person gives it some sort of connotation in his mind, good or bad, depending on his own beliefs, but never clearly defined. Now first, what is capitalism not? Capitalism is not private ownership of property, even of productive property, for such ownership has existed in most of the world at most times, and capitalism is generally held to have come into existence only toward the end of the Middle Ages in Europe. Perhaps the best way to proceed is to take our definition from a very weighty source, and then we will see how that definition does indeed fit the facts of history. We will turn, then, to the encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), in which capitalism is defined or characterized as “that economic system in which were provided by different people the capital and labor

jointly needed for production” (no. 100). In other words, under capitalism normally people work for someone else. Someone, the capitalist, pays others, the workers, to work for him, and receives the profits of this enterprise, that is, whatever is left over after he has paid for his labor, his raw materials, his overhead, any debt he owes, etc.

Now is there anything wrong with capitalism, with the separation of ownership and work? In itself there is

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nothing unjust about my owning a factory or a farm and employing others to work for me, as long as I pay them a just and living wage. But nonetheless, the capitalistic system is dangerous and unwise, its fruits have been harmful for mankind, and the supreme pontiffs have often called for changes which would, in effect, eliminate capitalism, or at least reduce its scope and power.

Let me explain and justify the assertions I have just made. And in order to do so, I must first make a brief detour to talk about the purpose of economic activity. Why has God given to men the possibility and need for producing and using economic goods? The answer to this is obvious: we need these goods and services in order to live a human life. Thus economic activity produces goods and services

for the sake of serving all of mankind, and any economic arrangements must be judged by how well they fulfill that purpose.

Now when ownership and work are separated there necessarily exists a class of men, capitalists, who are one step removed from the production process itself. Stockholders, for example, typically do not care about what the company they are formal owners of actually makes or does, but only whether its stock price is rising or how large a dividend it pays. In fact, on the stock exchange, shares change hands thousands of times a day, that is, different individuals or entities, such as pension funds, are part owners of companies for a few minutes or hours or days, and then the stock is sold to someone else and they become owners of some new entity. Thus this class of capitalists naturally comes to see the economic system as a mechanism by which money, stocks, bonds, futures, and other surrogates for real wealth, can be manipulated in order to enrich themselves, instead of serving society by producing needed goods and services. As a result, men have made fortunes by hostile takeovers, mergers, shutting down factories, etc., in other words, by taking advantage of private property rights,

not in order to engage in productive economic activity, but to enrich themselves regardless of its effect on consumers or workers.

The popes have indeed justified the ownership of private property, but if we examine how and why they have done so, we will see that the logic of their position is far from the logic of capitalism. Let us look, for example, at a famous passage from the encyclical of Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891).

Men always work harder and more readily when they work on that which is their own; nay, they learn to love the very soil which yields in response to the labor of their hands, not only food to eat, but an abundance of the good things for themselves and those that are dear to them. (no. 35)

But what happens under capitalism? Do men learn to love the very stock certificates which yield cold cash, in response to the labor of someone else's hands? The justification of private property that the popes have made is always tied, at least as an ideal, to ownership and work being joined. Thus Leo XIII: "The law, therefore, should favor ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many people as possible to become owners" (*Rerum Novarum*, no. 35), and this teaching is repeated by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* (nos. 59-62, 65), by John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* (nos. 85-89, 91-93, 111-115), and by John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* (no. 14). If "as many people as possible...become owners," then that fatal separation of ownership and work will be, if not removed, at least its extent and influence will be lessened. It will no longer be the hallmark of our economic system, even if it still exists to some extent.

And this brings us directly to distributism. For distributism is nothing more than an economic system in which private property is well distributed, in which "as many people as possible" are in fact owners. Probably the most complete statement of distributism can be found in Hilaire Belloc's book, *The Restoration of Property* (1936). Note the title, *The Restoration of Property*. For the distributists argued that under capitalism property, certainly productive property, was the preserve of the rich, and that this gave them an influence and power in society far beyond what they had any right to. Yes, the formal right to private property exists for all under capitalism, but in practice it is restricted to the rich.

A further feature of distributism that follows from this, is that in a distributist economy, the amassing of property will have limits placed on it. Before one objects that this sounds like socialism, he would do well to remember Chesterton's remark (in *What's Wrong With the World*, chap. 6), that the institution of private property

no more means the right to unlimited property than the institution of marriage means the right to unlimited wives!

In the Middle Ages those quintessential Catholic institutions, the craft guilds, very often limited the amount of property each owner/worker could have (for example, by limiting the number of his employees), precisely in the interest of preventing anyone from expanding his own workshop so much that he was likely to drive others out of business. For if private property has a purpose and end, as Aristotle and St. Thomas would insist, it surely is to allow a man to make a decent living for himself and his family by serving society. But one living, not two or three. If my business supports myself and my family, then what right do I have to expand that business so as to deprive others of the means of supporting themselves and their families? For the medievals saw those in the same line of work, not as rivals or competitors, but as brothers, brothers engaged in the very important work of providing the public with a needed good or service. And as brothers they joined together into guilds, engaged priests to pray for their dead, supported their widows and orphans with insurance funds, and generally looked after one another. Who would not admit that this conception of economic activity is more akin to the Catholic faith than the dog eat dog ethic of capitalism?

I realize that much of what I say here must sound strange to many readers. Most Americans are acquainted only with capitalism and socialism. But a little knowledge of Catholic economic history and of traditional Catholic economic thought will be enough to convince any fair minded reader that there is an entire world out there of genuine Catholic thought on this subject nearly unknown in the United States. And if the current "science" of economics contradicts this thought, then ask yourself, what authority does that "science" have? It arose from the deistic philosophy of the so-called Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, and it is curious that some Catholics, while condemning (rightly) the philosophy of that unfortunate century, warmly embrace its economic theories, not realizing that those economic theories arise from the same poisoned well as Voltaire and the Encyclopedists. But it is not too late to remake our thinking after the very pattern of Jesus Christ and his Church—if we are willing to banish from our lives the idols that are worshipped in our own country and embark on the fascinating journey of discovering Catholic economic thinking. ■

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specter of “bankrupting litigation” (V,2).

Indeed such remedies exist, but the people who accept the difficulties of an apostolate in the first place are usually extremely reluctant to take a charity organization to court. What Catholic wants to take another Catholic to court? Will legal proceedings damage critical pro-family work?

Some disclosure may be necessary here: Regina was referring to me and two others when she spoke of a complaint filed with the National Labor Relations Board against a pro-life charitable organization. When my fellow fired employees and I filed a complaint with the NLRB (after the local diocese told us that they had no jurisdiction in the case), we were accused of handing a club to the Clinton administration—a club that will be used against many pro-life and religious organizations. But we are convinced that the NLRB is a rational alternative to “bankrupting litigation,” and that it deserves the whole-hearted support of Catholics who understand and support the Church’s social teaching.

I’m with Regina. The teaching of the Church on family life is as balanced as an icon of the Holy Family. To protect the dignity of each individual as a child of God, we must struggle for personal morality and also for social justice. Love for the child leads us to defend motherhood as a noble vocation, and also to assert the right to wages and working conditions that take the family into account.

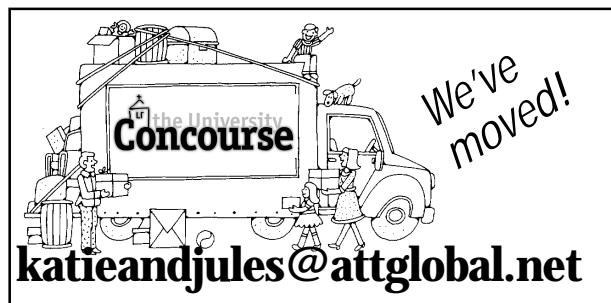
*John Cavanaugh O’Keefe*

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## The eternally practical liberal arts

Mr. Jason Negri’s recent article in the *Concourse* reminds me of a hallmark of liberal education: it is cherished by the man who is liberally educated and very difficult to recommend to the man who is not.

Mr. Negri seems to believe that those of us who insist on the primacy of forming the mind and character might just be elitists with romanticized notions of the past. In fact, nothing would be more elitist than the idea that the average student is incapable of or uninterested in the life of the mind, desiring only job training from his *alma mater*. Moreover, if anyone is likely to romanticize the past, it is the man ignorant of history, unable to inhabit the present due to his own



cultural poverty, incapable of proposing a better future through lack of philosophical discipline.

No one denies that certain occupations require specific professional competencies. In my experience, though, most employers are perfectly willing to train a new employee, but are impatient with people left ineducable by years of perfunctory vocational studies. I myself have an undergraduate music degree, and graduate degrees in music and French, and have never taken a course in business or computers. Nevertheless, I have not had the least difficulty obtaining employment with commercial interests and have held a couple of positions that promised much better reimbursement than my current teaching post at Franciscan University. (Yes, some people teach because they actually enjoy it.)

Although it is never my intention (nor my duty) to prepare students for the “market place,” a liberal arts degree is, in fact, an excellent preparation for all walks of life. Serious study in any humanities discipline requires the ability to think, speak, and write clearly and creatively; to identify, comprehend and solve problems efficiently; to discern truth from falsehood; to distinguish fact from opinion. Frankly, I can think of no poorer preparation for a rapidly changing planetary culture than “practical, training-type programs” whose contents will be outdated shortly after commencement exercises.

As examples of the “practicality” of my field of study, here is what some recent graduates are doing with their B.A. in French. One works for a worldwide employment agency in Washington. Another works for the New York office of an international real estate company. Yet another edits textbooks for a college publisher. Some of my former students have gone on to careers in government or the military. For others, the initiation into language studies has inspired them to take up more difficult languages, like Chinese and Japanese, sometimes combined with graduate studies in foreign relations. And of course, several former students are now teachers of French.

I am glad that Mr. Negri has brought up the question of “oppressive student loan debts.” However, poor scholarship endowment has nothing to do with the question of liberal versus more practical studies. Possessing

a liberal arts degree does not prevent one from finding satisfactory employment, even in the “business world.” But ill-advised borrowing often means that students must obtain lucrative salaries *immediately* after graduation, instead of being able to undergo a period of apprenticeship during which they might demonstrate their capacities to an employer.

There might be persuasive arguments against the idea that the traditional liberal arts should remain the foundation of a college degree, but the proposition that such studies are “impractical” is not convincing.

*Timothy J. Williams*

*Mr. Williams is an Assistant Professor of French at FUS.*

## Computers and liberal learning

I would like to thank Anne Schmiesing for her comments furthering the discussion of the nature of a liberal arts education. I readily grant her distinction between the humanities and the liberal arts, and would modify my earlier comments accordingly.

Concerning the place of computer science in the liberal arts, Mrs. Schmiesing seems to say that basic computer use skills should have a place therein, based on the analogy with writing as a means of communication in the tri/quadrivium. This analogy, however, does not work the way she would like it to, because insofar as writing was a prerequisite, it does not pertain to a liberal arts education. And insofar as a liberal arts education does teach writing, it does so under the aspect of teaching clear and accurate thinking and the expression thereof. In order to make the analogy hold, then, Mrs. Schmiesing would have to show that learning how to use a word processor, email, and the internet is something which fosters clear and accurate thinking and expression. I don't think that anyone is going to be able to show such a thing, and so I assert once again, that computer skills do not fall under the umbrella of the liberal arts, despite the fact that anyone living today should have such skills.

I would, however, like to take this opportunity to briefly mention my thought that certain aspects, parts, and sub-disciplines of computer science *do* pertain to a liberal arts education, namely those parts which actually do develop one's thinking. Such parts include algorithmic thinking and problem solving as learned through programming, an understanding of symbol systems and logic, computational linguistics, computing theory, and others.

Finally, if Mrs. Schmiesing means by a poor liberal arts education the kind of relativist,

deconstructionist stuff that is often done these days, then I am in complete agreement with her that we can hardly say that the student's intellect is cultivated. I would even go one step further, though, and say that it is really not even “developed” or “grown,” to use Mrs. Schmiesing's terms. In fact, to answer her question, I mean by cultivated just what Newman meant, namely developed, perfected (not absolutely, of course), fulfilled and actualized.

If, however, she means an education that is not explicitly Christian (which is what the previous debate has been more focused on), then she is going to have to show how the incompleteness therein means that we cannot call such an intellect cultivated or perfected (to the requisite degree).

To say that one's intellect must be absolutely perfected in order to say that the person is educated is to relegate the term education to meaninglessness, since no one in the history of the world has attained such a perfection. To use Mrs. Schmiesing's analogy, there neither is, was, nor ever will be an intellect so cultivated that it is free from all weeds. The question is whether the garden is fundamentally oriented towards growing food and growing it well, not how many weeds there are. Many of the best minds had some pretty towering weeds. I have the sense in the end, however, that I have somewhat missed this last point of Mrs. Schmiesing's, and if so, I hope that she will write back to clarify.

*Ben Brown*  
Contributing Editor

The next  
**COMMUNIO THEOLOGY**  
**DISCUSSION GROUP**

will be held on Wed., Feb. 9  
from 6:00 to 7:30pm in the Fireside Lounge.

The article under discussion will be  
**“Reason's ‘Rightful Autonomy’  
in *Fides et Ratio* and  
the Continuous Renewal  
of Catholic Higher Education  
in the United States”**

by William L. Portier,

in the Fall 99 issue of *Communio*  
(which can be found in our library).

All are welcome.

Contact Fr. Bramwell if you have any questions.

## Studiosness

*continued from page 1*

“those who seek to know the future through the demons.” (Now we’re getting into some other faults besides just a lack of studiosness.) However, it might be noted here that relying on infused knowledge from your guardian angel to get you through a history test would also be a violation of the virtue of studiosness.

3. A third way in which the desire for knowledge may be wrong in its nature is if one seeks knowledge of creatures without referring this knowledge to God—the beginning and end of all creatures. Thus we must try to understand the subjects we study not only in themselves but in their proper place in the universe and in relation to God. This is why it is important to study at a university that keeps these priorities, that has a strong theology department and vibrant spiritual life on campus: so that we do not forget the Ultimate Reality to which all else relates.

4. Finally, St. Thomas says, a desire for knowledge may be wrong if one seeks knowledge beyond one’s capacity, “since by doing so, men easily fall into error.” Now I think the best way to concretize this for our students would be the following: listen to your advisor. If he tells you, as a freshman, that you’re not ready for a 400 level course, believe him. In all things, be ready to humbly recognize your limits.

To summarize positively: the virtue of studiosness would have us rightly order, direct and limit our curiosity or desire to know (1) by studying first those things which are obligatory or most important, (2) by doing the work of going to the right sources, (3) by relating what we discover to God, and (4) by realistically accepting our limits.

Thus does studiosness combat an undisciplined curiosity. But studiosness also faces another foe: sloth. Now this may come in the form of sheer, crass laziness—and I’m afraid often does—but it may also take more subtle forms. For instance, as one commentator says, a student may think, “I would rather feel compunction than know how to define it”—but then feel no compunction about neglecting his definitions. Or, similarly, a student may feel the urge to do “some good work” (active charity) rather than to “waste time studying,” not realizing that studying is precisely an exercise in virtue and ultimately in charity. It is an exercise in virtue as answering the call of the moment in his life as a student. This means exercising the necessary discipline and temperance to live up to his vocation and avoid distraction from it—there is an asceticism to the intellectual life. But ultimately and rightly understood, this is also inseparable from charity. To quote St. Bernard: “There are some who desire to know

merely in order to have knowledge and this is curiosity; others wish to know in order that they may be known and this is vanity; others wish to know (only) in order that they may sell their knowledge and this is greed; (but) others wish to know in order that they may be spiritually built up and this is prudence; and there are those who wish to know in order that they may spiritually build others up and this is charity.” (Quoted by St. Thomas in 1 Cor., Ch. 8.) So, let it not be thought that it is selfish to sit and study rather than to go and do “some good work.” Certainly that depends upon the motive for the study and the nature of the “competing” good, but it is a difficult and sometimes heroic (and painful) thing to sit and study when you know you should. It can be lonely too. But be assured that it is also a virtue.

Finally, before concluding, let me just briefly mention a few prerequisites or dispositions required for study. For instance, mental dispositions for study would be such things as absence of distraction, a calm mind, and the ability to concentrate. This is why we have quiet hours in the residence halls. This is why—though it does sometimes happen—I would not normally recommend scheduling your wedding right at the end of final exam week. You need a calm mind and freedom from distraction and the ability to concentrate on academics during finals week. But, ultimately, what is it which brings a calm mind in any situation, facing any agitation, trouble, or evil? What is it but prayer and closeness to God? This is one of the ways in which a strong spiritual life helps to lay a good foundation for being a successful student. This is one of the positive ways in which the strong spiritual life on this campus helps you, our students, to be successful in your vocation.

Furthermore, there are certain bodily dispositions for study: namely, good health and all that is required to maintain it in order to support and further mental activity, which is draining. Therefore, it becomes an obligation (not a luxury) for you as students to attend to the following:

1. Diet. You have to eat enough and of the right quality of foods. So, for instance, you must watch out for doing too much fasting (either for bodily or spiritual reasons). Real study is taxing and requires strength.

2. Sleep. It must be regular and plentiful, and this is not a pampering or a luxury, but an obligation to support your vocation as a student. You need to eat and sleep adequately, like someone preparing for the Olympic games. Otherwise, you hurt yourself; you study with less efficiency and get less accomplished while taking a longer time to do it.

3. Exercise. Again, you need to stay physically



strong and healthy. One commentator, in a masterful understatement, says that the amount of exercise for a student should be “at least sufficient to maintain circulation.” (Now there’s a serious student!)

4. And finally, you must have recreation, by which is meant not “vacancy of mind,” but a change of occupation, which includes mental relaxation.

Thus, it is no good to go from intense study to intense prayer and back to intense study again. You will turn *grim* (and die!). You are not an angel and cannot yet mentally concentrate in full depth and focus for an eternity. Thus you must develop a further virtue which St. Thomas calls (in various translations) pleasantness, wittiness, friendliness, cheerfulness—the opposite of being totally *grim*—and *recreation* is needed for this. That is, to maintain a cheerful disposition, you need some healthy fun in your life. And once again, this is an obligation not a luxury (but, not a grim obligation—ok?).

Study, over time, brings a weariness of soul, and, to quote St. Thomas, “one man is more soul-wearied than another, according as he is more intensely occupied with works of reason. Now just as weariness of the body is dispelled by resting the body, so weariness of soul must needs be remedied by resting the soul...The remedy for weariness of soul must needs consist in the application of some pleasantness, by slackening the ten-

sion of the reason’s study. Thus in the Conferences of the Fathers it is related of Blessed John the Evangelist, that when some people were scandalized on finding him playing together with his disciples, he is said to have told one of them who carried a bow to shoot an arrow. And when the latter had done this several times, he asked him whether he could do it indefinitely, and the man answered that if he continued doing it, the bow would break. Whence the Blessed John drew the inference that in like manner man’s mind would break if its tension were never relaxed.” (S.Th. II-II, q.168, a.2) Thus times of play and recreation are also essential to your life as a successful student at Franciscan University. Such times are not just “goofing off” or “wasting time” but provide a necessary balance to the tensions and responsibilities of the academic life. Moreover, as Josef Pieper affirms in his great work *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, play also carries with it a certain note of joy and celebration. This reminds us that human life is not to be reduced only to “toil” and duty. Recreation and celebration are not only necessary but justified in the Christian vision of life. It is an interesting fact (and mysterious) that times of play are absolutely necessary for our growth development as children. Similarly, recreation is still necessary to our health as adults—though, of course, not quite as much playtime is necessary for adults. Yet St. Benedict, the strict father of western monasticism under the motto *ora et labora* (to pray and to work) required a full hour of recreation each day for his monks.

So, to conclude, even with “wars and rumors of wars,” even with an abortion going on every few seconds, even with all the other evils and oppressions going on in the world, if your vocation (your call from God) right now is to be a student, then you must order your life—your priorities, your time, your effort—in such a way as to concentrate successfully on your studies. You are here to learn about God and about His creation, about yourself and about each other. You are preparing yourself for the rest of your life and the contributions you will be expected to make in it.

Moreover, even with the world situation and national tragedies and other personal worries, even if you at times find your studies overwhelming with term papers, tests, special projects and journals all coming due, you must not be grim! There is still a place, in temperance and moderation, for play. ■

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