



Reverence

The virtue of reverence can be defined as a correct disposition of mind, heart and body to the presence of God. Reverence suggests a recognition of God in creation, places and people and responding accordingly. Reverence finds its expression within the awe and wonder which comes so naturally in young children. A lack of reverence is often a product of inattentiveness and can only be nurtured when one stops and allows time for the virtue to be realized and grounded in gratitude.

Traditionally the term used for reverence is “the fear of the Lord”. Fear used in this context is not a negative emotion but a healthy approach to an encounter of holiness. The confusion inherent in this term, however, has seen a decrease in its usage.

An example of the expression of reverence can be found in one’s behaviour in a church. The physical building of the church – its brick and mortar – contain nothing inherently spiritual, but when it is recognized as a sacred space, a place of encounter with God, it invites a manner befitting this recognition. Similarly, the realization of Christ present in the Eucharistic bread and wine will shape the reception of communion through a reverential posture and action that reflects the sacredness of this encounter.

Reverence can and should be developed in children and is a capability that underpins much of the learning that occurs in religious education. Visits to a church should be complemented with the recognition that a prayer circle is a sacred space, for example. Similarly, the reverence expected through the reception of communion is first seeded in the gratitude and blessing named and celebrated before consuming any meal.