



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



ordinary
time



lectionary
reading

Cycle B

Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Lectionary #125

Reading I: Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-8

God speaks through Moses to the people of Israel about his wish to establish a covenant with them, including a Law to be followed. The people are cautioned not to change the Law and are told that they need to be truthful and **sincere** in their observance of the Law. They are called to hear and obey the Law with a responsive heart so that they can have a **sincere** and right relationship with God and the community. **Sincerity** of heart is crucial to any covenant or contract we might make, especially the sacred covenant we have with God.

Reading 2: James 1: 17-18, 21b-22, 27

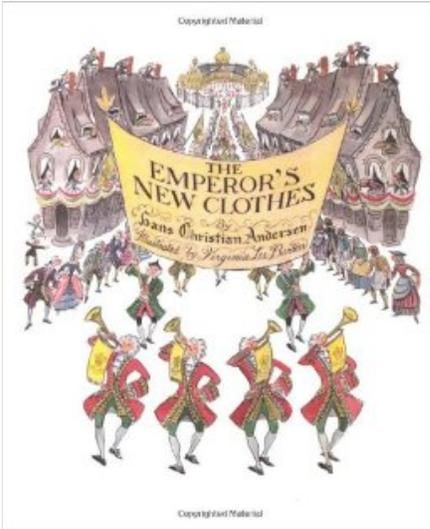
Sincerity, or agreement between word and action, is central to Saint James's instruction to the people under his care. His letter is rooted in the fact that one cannot truly and **sincerely** hear the Word without putting it into practice. For Saint James, anything less than practicing the Law is not enough. One example of using actions to be in right relationship with God that Saint James offers is to care for widows and orphans, thus responding to the needs of children of God who are most vulnerable.

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

In Saint Mark's Gospel, we see Jesus address those who follow the letter of the Law but not the spirit of the Law. Jesus calls all those who wish to be people of faith to be **sincere** in their understanding and practice of the Law. **Sincerity** is the key virtue in this passage because Jesus makes it abundantly clear that those who truly obey God's Law must hear and act. However, even action by itself means nothing unless it comes from a **sincere** heart that truly wishes to be attentive to God and to the good of others.



children's
story



The Emperor's New Clothes

Written by Hans Christian Andersen

Illustrated by Virginia Lee Burton

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character
education
activity

The Emperor's New Clothes

The Emperor's New Clothes is a tale of two weavers who promise an Emperor a new suit that is invisible to those who are unfit for their position, stupid, or incompetent. When the Emperor parades before his subjects in his new clothes, no one dares to say they don't see this new suit of clothes. It isn't until a young child, someone with a **sincere** and truthful heart, cries out "*But he isn't wearing anything at all!*" that others in the crowd then give up the act of pretending to see clothes and acknowledge that there is actually nothing there.

A Sincerity Jingle

Step One: The students are most likely familiar with some advertisements that they have seen on television or heard on the radio. This will set the stage for this activity.

Step Two: Let the students brainstorm various slogans or jingles that they have heard. Once they have some in mind, have them rewrite them to include the word **sincerity**. For example: "Got Milk?" could become "Got **Sincerity**?"

Step Three: Have the students make posters of their newly constructed slogans regarding **sincerity**.

Sincerity is that virtue that holds fast and firm to being honest and authentic in heart, to be absolutely without simulation or disguise.

**Sincerity and truth are
the basis of every
virtue**
-Confucius



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

Make a chart of behaviors that you would like to demonstrate at home and at school. The behaviors could include:

- I will be all that I can be
- I will take responsibility for my own actions
- I will respect the opinions of others
- I will always mean what I say
- I will not take advantage of other people.

One of the traditions of the Catholic faith is a daily examination that takes place at the end of each day. The purpose of this examination is to reflect on what happened during the day to evaluate how well we have done in being truthful and **sincere**. This is often associated with the Jesuit tradition known as the Examen. Doing this each night before going to sleep is a very good habit to learn and to practice. Place the chart that you have made above your bed and use it to examine your words and actions from that day. Celebrate your good accomplishments and ask God for help in areas where you would like to improve the next day.

Look Feel Know Act

For someone to act with **sincerity** means that their “walk” matches their “talk” and that both come from the heart. It means that there is a wholeness about our attitudes and actions and that everything fits together well. To be **sincere** in our actions means that we have taken time to develop **sincerity** in our heart. For example, we might know what it feels like to be lied to. Recalling this feeling encourages us to always be **sincere** when we speak so that others do not have to feel the way that we felt when we experienced someone’s dishonesty. With these kinds of recollections, we can develop a way of living that is bound in **sincerity**. One of the key ways to learn about and act with **sincerity** is to remember and learn from our mistakes so that we can become more **sincere** in the future.

In *The Emperor's New Clothes* we encounter a young boy who will not be swayed by the lies of the prevailing crowd, who claim to see something that they know is not there. The young boy speaks the truth and is **sincere** by saying exactly what he sees, or in this case, what he does not see. It is his voice that calls the others in the crowd to realize that they are fooling themselves and entering into the foolishness of peer pressure. In his honesty and **sincerity**, the little boy stands in direct contrast to the Emperor, who continues pretending that he has new clothes on when there is really nothing there. The scripture passages call us to be **sincere** and to enter into such practice daily in order to live a virtuous life.



closing tool

Pray to the Holy Spirit that your mind and heart will always be shaped by the holy presence of God in the thoughts you think, the words you use, and the actions you take. Ask the Lord to direct and guide you so that you will always be sincere in thought, word, and deed. Amen.



**Santa Clara
University**

Character Education at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics
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