

Ethics Outside of a Classroom

Quarter 2 Project -- Christian Ethics

Mr. Sanchez

Ethics is Life

Understanding ethics is more than just reading a bunch of dead guys and talking about what they thought about life. The primary purpose of studying ethics and philosophy is to help you begin to search for the truth and to take seriously the claim that history makes on what is true about life--your life! In particular, a Christian understanding of ethics begins from the concrete experience of a life lived in relationship to the truth and meaning of life. As we begin to look at Christian ethics, we must be careful to understand that Christianity assumes as a premise the fact that everything has its source and meaning in the Truth which is God and which became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. If we are to seriously look at Ethics from a Christian viewpoint, we must begin to examine the relationship of Ethics to our life in all its aspects. The classroom is an artificial experience because it does not bring together everything we are unless we allow it to do so. The aim of this project is precisely to push ourselves beyond these limits and to try to understand what we find when we do this.

In order to take the discussion of ethics beyond the confines of our classroom, this project is designed to bring together the life that you have outside of school with the life you have inside of school and to see what impact they have on each other. The experience of this project is meant to be a little discomfoting. You are being asked to invite your classmates and teacher into your life and to invite your family and friends into your classroom. Unfortunately, our experience of life is a bit dualistic, that is, divided. We live one way in one place, and a different way in another. We have compartmentalized lives in which the "me" that exists at school is separate from the "me" that lives with my friends, the "me" that lives with my family, or the "me" that lives at work. The Christian is not a conglomeration of "me's," rather he is a person who is engaged in various things (family, friendships, schools, jobs) all for the purpose of coming to know and understanding the meaning of life, that is, of Christ. In the attempt to strike at this dualism I am inviting you to risk the adventure of something new, different, and a little bit disconcerting. The hope is that you will discover something great in this.

Your project for the 2nd quarter is to organize a discussion outside of the classroom on an ethical theme found in literature. You are being challenged to do this in an adult way, that is, to think about how adults would organize something like this and venture to make your discussion a *mature* expression of human life. The suggested idea is a discussion over dinner or some other meal. Christians have, for millennia, approached discussion, education, correction, and exploration in common familiar meals. The mass was born in such a context, and meals have been important in Christian life because they are an imitation of the way that Jesus gathered with his disciples. Still, the discussion can take many different shapes, the "how" is not as important as the "why" or the "what" but, it is through the way that we approach hosting this discussion that we begin to understand what it's all about.

What follows is an attempt to outline the requirements of the project, and to allow you the freedom to do it in a way that best fits your attempt to live a mature expression of your humanity.

Requirements

1. In a group of 3-5 students (which can be from your class or students in another one of Mr. Sanchez's Ethics classes) you must choose, discuss within your small group, and understand together a piece of literature from the list provided. A brief 1 paragraph essay should be prepared by each student highlighting the main concepts of the story, the ethical themes that are present or the ethical questions it raises, and how you see these themes present in the current culture/society that you live in. It is important here that you highlight where in your experience you have had to deal with a similar question or how a question might be considered by your peers/community.
2. You must host a discussion on the piece of literature and the ethical themes it raises in a group outside of your classroom and small group. Each of you must invite *at least* one person. Your invitees must include someone that would represent the following groups: an (mature) adult, a person of the opposite gender, a peer not from DeMatha, and another member of the DeMatha community not in Mr. Sanchez's Ethics classes.
Please note that one person might fulfill several of these roles, you do not have to find a different person from each group. All of these are negotiable EXCEPT the presence of another adult.
3. Your invitations to this discussion must be formal, written invitations requesting an RSVP. You should do everything possible to ensure that on the day of the discussion each of you has a guest present. You are not to invite people casually to join you. The care and attention you take for your guests is a sign of the seriousness that you approach your project with and the value of your guests. You should take care to ensure that every guest feels that they have been considered thoughtfully and are going to be an important part of the discussion. You should share with them the short story and encourage them to read it and think about it ahead of time. The invitations you choose to make for your guests must be included in your final project portfolio.
4. As indicated above, this discussion would ideally be held over some type of meal. The elaborateness of the meal is not relevant. You can do a simple coffee/donut or a formal dinner. Your creativity is encouraged here, and you are not being evaluated on what you serve. However, you are being evaluated on what kind of care you give to the event. You are all gentlemen and scholars, and as such gentlemen it is important that show a concern for hosting your guests and providing them some refreshments. You want to take care that the entire event is planned and well taken care of. You should put together a planning sheet (what your group is planning to put together for the event) that will be included in your project portfolio.
5. You are responsible for the discussion. It is important that all members of your group contribute to the discussion and are ready with provocative questions, ideas, or comments that can help the conversation along. You should think about how you will help to include your guests in the conversation if they are reticent, and do your best to make everyone feel relaxed and included.
6. You should thank your guests formally for their participation in your project and a copy your thank-you note should be included in your project portfolio.
7. Each member of your group should write a one-page reflection on the project sharing what you have learned, what value you think the project was trying to communicate, and what role you think that ethical discourse has in community life.

** If for any reason you cannot participate in this project you may choose an alternative writing assignment. Please make an appointment with Mr. Sanchez to discuss this and agree to the assignment and respective due date.