



PROFILES IN WHOLENESS

By Father David K. O'Rourke, OP
NC News Service

Studies of integrity often focus on civic leaders and public virtues like courage. There is President John F. Kennedy's book "Profiles in Courage," for example.

Here I want to do something quite different. I want to talk about integrity. But rather than focus on courage, I want to focus on wholeness — how people bring their lives and principles together.

And I want to move the discussion of integrity out of the grand public arena into one much closer to home. I want to talk about an aspect of integrity that may surprise you: hospitality.

What could hospitality possibly have to do with integrity?

Quite a lot, I think.

Integrity has to do with making values the measure of daily life. It shows up in the way we value the people around us. That's the very foundation of hospitality.

I want to picture the human quality of hospitality as it is lived. And I do not need to search for an example, for one comes immediately to mind. I have been thinking about the life of a man who died recently at the age of 82 — a cousin, an engineer by training and perhaps the most

hospitable person I ever met.

In common parlance, he died after a rich and full life. But there was no sense of "after" during his life. He was still fully active at the time he was stricken, running his own flourishing business with the unbounded energy that marked his entire life.

Examples of his work and professional skill can be found in all corners of New York. I can still see him looking proudly with the professional's practiced eye at a difficult job that turned out particularly well, or chuckling as he recalled once how "most of my jobs are duck soup, but that one nearly made me the duck."

What stands out for me, however, is his hospitality. And it reached far beyond generosity. For deep down, graciousness and hospitality require that we decide whether people are worth the time and trouble it takes to treat them well.

In my cousin's case that decision was made time and again in the concrete. How often I saw tired waiters switch from forced, frozen smiles to the look of real pleasure as he greeted them. Business associates remarked how time spent with him was a pleasure not a duty.

From his children's young friends to his contemporaries, people looked to him as a master

in the basic human art of treating people well. He acted as though all people merited consideration and respect.

For him, the virtue of hospitality was based on genuine generosity and an attitude of respect and welcome toward others.

Integrity often seems to be equated with public courage. But I would like to think that integrity can be part and parcel of the lives of people who are not public figures.

Think of the family that is especially generous and open to people in need. A family like that is an example of faith in action.

Think of the parish community that is especially good at welcoming newcomers and outsiders — indicating the vitality of its faith.

I was lucky enough to know someone who was a master of hospitality because he tied the parts of his life together. He treated people with genuine respect regardless of their rank or success. He loved life and transmitted that appreciation to all of us.

He spelled out his faith in very concrete terms. And he made that faith believable.

(Father O'Rourke is associate director of the Family Life Office in the Diocese of Oakland, Calif.)

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By Katharine Bird
NC News Service

"The world is full of people who live lives of extraordinary self-giving and heroism, people the world never recognizes" for their integrity, said theologian Lawrence Cunningham.

As an example, he told of a woman he knows who struggles "with bouts of depression, but she soldiers along," taking care of her family as best she can. Cunningham is professor of Roman Catholic studies at Florida State University at Tallahassee.

"There's not a parish in the country without people like this, people with terrible personal crosses to bear who understand what they're about and proceed despite great hardships," Cunningham said. These unknown Christians "are the great hidden resource of sanctity in the church."

These people show in very practical ways what it means to live with integrity, Cunningham said.

The word "integrity" can be applied to organizations as well as individuals, Cunningham thinks. "We use the term all the time" in the secular arena, he said. "We say such and such an organization does not act in a spirit of integrity."

He contrasted two organizations: the Ku Klux Klan and

Esther's

By Father John Castelot
NC News Service

It is in the Old Testament story of Esther that we hear of Mordecai. His is the story of a Jew taken captive by the Babylonians.

Mordecai is residing in Susa many decades later. The Persians have defeated Babylon.

Overhearing and foiling a plot to assassinate King Ahasuerus, Mordecai is rewarded handsomely. The king decides to host a lavish dinner party for all the notables of the realm. When he and his guests are well in their cups, he sends for Vashti, his queen, to join the assembly so that all may see how beautiful she is.

She has the temerity to refuse. As a result, she is summarily deposed — lucky to escape with her life. But she maintains her integrity, her dignity as a human person.

At the suggestion of his courtiers, the king holds a countrywide beauty contest, the winner to succeed Vashti as queen. Esther, the orphaned niece of Mordecai, wins. However, on her uncle's advice she keeps her na-