A while ago, a friend emailed me a list entitled, "Reasons It’s Great to be a Guy." Some of the reasons were:

- you can be showered and ready in ten minutes.
- you can go on a five-day vacation with only one suitcase.
- your bathroom lines are 80% shorter.
- your phone conversations seldom last more than thirty seconds.
- Wedding dress: $3,000; tux rental $200.

But there was one reason that really caught my attention. It said, it’s great to be a guy because "You get extra credit for the slightest act of thoughtfulness." I’m not going to argue here whether women are more thoughtful than men. Rather, I am raising this question for all of us: Are we thoughtful on a regular basis or only on rare occasions?

The renowned Jewish Rabbi, Abraham Heschel, wrote: "A good person is not one who does the right thing, but one who is in the habit of doing the right thing." When we hear the word habit we sometimes automatically think of bad habits—like biting your nails, losing your temper, or leaving your dirty dishes in the kitchen sink. Many of us struggle our whole lives trying to rid ourselves of bad habits. But maybe we don’t take enough time to acknowledge and appreciate those good habits we have developed.
When in a crowd of strangers, have you ever sensed peoples' basic goodness?

over the years. Remember, one classic definition of the word *virtue* is this: it is a good habit!

I think it is a wise practice to take stock of the good habits we (and others) have developed that make life not only safer and more morally sound, but also more pleasant. What good habits? Here are a few to ask yourself about:

- Do you get out of bed in the morning even when you don't feel like it?
- Do you perform the tasks involved in good hygiene?
- Do you show up on time for work?
- Are you basically a responsible person?
- Do you help others?
- Do you try to be patient and kind?
- Do you drive safely?
- Do you pay your taxes?
- Do you stay within your budget?
- Do you contribute to charities?
- Are you honest?
- Do you exercise your right to vote?
- Do you smile regularly?
- Do you wait your turn in line?
- Do you volunteer your time for a good cause?
- Do you recycle?
- Are you saving with the use of water and electricity?
- Do you have some good friends?
- Do you pray?
- Do you practice your religion?
Sometimes when I’m out and about, I pause and marvel at the good people I rub shoulders with every day—especially strangers. I sense they are responsible, kind, generous, hard-working people. You meet them everywhere. The other day I was buying some ears of corn at the grocery store. This store has a large garbage bin next to the corn so you can husk your corn right in the store. So there I was husking my corn with a younger couple. We started chatting with each other. The conversation was pleasant and friendly. From their demeanor and their words, I sensed they were basically good people.

Or maybe it’s the cashier at the store, the guy who changes the oil in your car, the receptionist at the dentist office, the letter carrier, the person who cuts your hair. My experience has been that almost all of them seem like decent human beings. You get the impression if you suddenly needed their help (if you fell or were having a heart attack, for example), they would jump in and help you.

I’m not being naive here. I realize there are serial killers in our midst. One such person, Ted Bundy, confessed to 30 homicides in 7 states between 1974-1978! And he looked like such a nice, ordinary guy! But let’s be realistic: most of the people we encounter on a daily basis are not serial killers. They’re not even pickpockets! They are essentially good people. And basically virtuous.

Today you might want to reflect on some of the good habits you have developed over the years. Thank God for them. Then you might want to thank God for the individuals or circumstances that nourished these virtues in you.

Then pay attention to the individuals you encounter today. Do you sense their goodness? If so, thank God for them too.

About our song: In the natural world we know that great pressure can produce diamonds. So too in the spiritual life, pressure and stress can also produce diamonds—diamonds such as patience, understanding, humility, kindness, forgiveness,
prayerfulness, and love. Here is a lively song that celebrates this theme. It's called "Diamonds" and it's by Hawk Nelson. (I especially like the drums!)

Do you have any thoughts on this reflection or song that you'd like to share?

PS: Once again I ask for your prayers for a retreat I'll be leading for the Mercy Sisters in Merion, PA from June 11-18. Thank you!

Tagged as: cultivating good habits, virtue: the habit of doing good, what is virtue?
Emmett McMahon  June 6, 2016 at 1:43 am

Yes Sister, I have to agree with you 100%. Not until when I got into my 50s or so did I really notice the difference in some people that were ‘new’s to me. I am at 75 now. If I get a ‘red light’ sense of some folks then I know to stay away from but keep on open eye where those folks are concerned. Then there are a few of the ‘feel good’ folks who are new but almost feel like family and then the vast majority of really ???.

REPLY

Kathleen  June 6, 2016 at 3:20 am

Wow! I like the song. It is good reminder that trusting God can really transform us into something beautiful.

Kathleen

REPLY

John Hopkins  June 6, 2016 at 7:53 am

Thank you, Sister Melanie. So glad you’re in the habit of writing this blog!

REPLY

Pat  June 6, 2016 at 9:33 am

My mother raised me to be a “nice person” and when I was younger I sometimes felt alone in being polite and giving people the benefit of the doubt. As I have gotten older and more outgoing I have come to see many times each day that lots of mothers raised “nice persons” and that we are a very large community who recognize the worth of each person and act with respect and charity. There
are so many people in who are in the habit of doing good and they teach us so much.

Mary Anne  June 6, 2016 at 9:56 am
Love that song! Your message is very insightful and inspiring. I hope that is how I look at life as well.

Karen  June 6, 2016 at 10:26 am
Thank you for your blog this morning! We can learn so much from being aware of the virtue of others close to us (whether living people or saints or our Lord). Seeing how my 96 year old mother-in-law treats me and most everyone she meets with a friendly, accepting and helpful attitude has had a profound effect on me. And her reward is that she is treasured not just by her family, but by her friends and the community too.
Now, I on the other hand, need to work on that driving safely part ...

Beverly Palumbo, RSM  June 6, 2016 at 10:41 am
How insightful....God offering to make diamonds out of the dust of our lives....we choose our attitude in the face of life's challenges. Thank you. We look forward to having you with us here at Merion later this week and next. Safe travels. God bless.
Dear Beverly, I look forward to meeting you this Saturday. I'm always excited to meet a reader of my blog! Melannie

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Herb  June 6, 2016 at 10:58 am

Interesting suggestion since I shure know my bad qualities. Remember SND who taught me for 8 yrs what great Ladies. Are you related to Clevelang TV person? Thanks for weekly inspirations

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Melannie Svoboda SND  June 6, 2016 at 11:06 am

Thanks for responding, Herb. No, I am not related to the TV personality Robin Swoboda. She spells her last name with a W which is Polish. Mine is with a V which is Czech. Both names mean freedom. Sr. Melannie

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Beverly  June 6, 2016 at 11:01 am

Thank you for your blog! I always get a sense of calm after reading it. A great way to start out on Monday mornings. Loved the song...nice thought to meditate on...God making diamonds out of dust (us). Safe travels and great retreat!

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Wendy Stanek  June 6, 2016 at 11:31 am

Thank you for bringing to mind my mother who was always friendly with everyone and helping out anyone in need. I was embarrassed of her actions as a
child but grew to be just like her. My boys squirmed when I was friendly and helpful to strangers when they were young also but I can see that they are becoming just like my mother and I. We don't always realize the impact that we have on others lives.

Prayers for a safe and effective retreat!

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**Patty**  June 6, 2016 at 11:32 am

Thank you, Sister. Rabbi Herschel's quote is a gem, just like your weekly blogs.

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**Patty**  June 6, 2016 at 11:39 am

...oops: Rabbi Heschel.

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**Nancy Hendricks**  June 6, 2016 at 12:16 pm

Those lucky Mercy Sisters!

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**Cathy**  June 6, 2016 at 10:18 pm

I love, love, love your positive outlook on life, Sister Melannie! Many thanks for your blog that brings so much of God's love to my life!
To borrow a phrase from Crosby, Stills, and Nash….May we adults “Teach our children well,” (and model, as well) the habit of doing good to, and for, others.
Prayers for your upcoming retreat, Sister.