

PRAY Holy One,
we trust the words you
speak to us through Jesus.
We rely on your presence
in us to empower us in
choosing and doing good.
Amen

November 17, 2024



Vol. 37, No. 7, 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

SPIRIT

WILBUR WANTS 2 NO

by Diana R. Jenkins

I just wanted to have an actual personality—that's all. I was sick of being this boring guy who couldn't make his own grandmother laugh. I wanted to be fun—and funny. Who knew things could go so wrong?

Everything started out okay. Oh, it wasn't easy to admit to myself that I had the dulllest page on Facebook. (It was so me.) But once I faced the truth, I realized I could change—online, at least. If I set up a new page with a secret identity, it would be like trying on a new personality. How fun would that be?

For the new me, I used this obvious photo of an underwear model. Then I called myself "Wilbur" to be ironic. I included good music and enough popular stuff to show I wasn't a loser, but I threw in some freaky old junk for laughs. My details included my real school but nothing else true.

To start Wilbur's blog, I turned on these girls at school who call themselves the Divas:

**Total eclipse!
Sun blocked by
ginormous heads!
Wilbur's not
impressed by D
girls with D egos.**

HOW 2 TLK F2F MAKE EYE CONTACT.

It will help to focus your attention and communicates respect.

LISTEN!

Understanding others' ideas and thoughts is just as important as expressing your own. Check if you're really listening by paraphrasing (restating in your own words) what the other person just said.

EXPRESS YOUR VIEWS.

Communication is a two-way street. The more you talk out loud, the easier it gets.

USE "I" STATEMENTS, ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING DIFFICULT TO SAY.

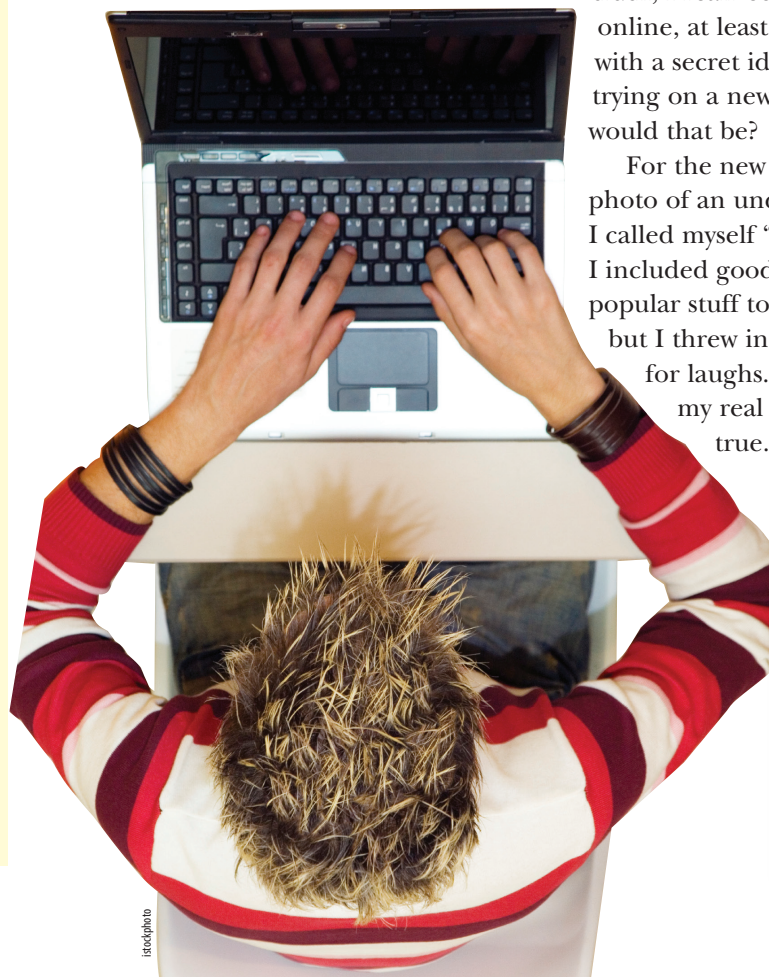
Instead of, "You embarrassed me," say, "I was embarrassed when you made a joke about me in front of everyone." Tell the person how you feel, but don't blame him or her for your feelings.

AVOID USING WORDS LIKE ALWAYS AND NEVER.

Always and never statements are rarely true. Stick to the issue at hand.

PRACTICE!

Pledge to stop text messaging for a week. Talk to your friends in person instead of through social networking websites.



SUNDAY GOSPEL

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

My words will not pass away.

NARRATOR: Jesus spoke to his disciples about the coming of the Son of Man.

READER 1: In those days after trials of every kind, the sun will grow dark.

READER 2: The moon will have no light.

READER 3: The stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

READER 4: Then people will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. He will dispatch his messengers and gather his chosen ones from the four winds, from the farthest

bounds of the earth and sky.

READER 1: Learn a lesson from the fig tree.

READER 2: When the sap begins to run into its branches and the tree begins to break into leaf,

READER 3: Then you know summer is near.

READER 4: In the same way when you see these things happening, you will know the Son of Man is near, even at the door.

READER 1: I assure you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

READER 2: The heavens and the earth will pass away.

READER 3: But my words will not.

READER 4: About the day or hour when these things happen, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor even the Son, only the Father.

Mark 13.24-32



I steered my friends to “this new page I found,” and they thought Wilbur was hilarious. They spread the word, and by the next morning Wilbur had 50 messages—all positive. I couldn’t believe it!

Then when I got to school, everybody was talking about me... well, Wilbur.

“I wonder who he is,” said my friend Mike.

“Yeah,” I said in my usual clever way.

“Somebody funny,” said Ray.

“Yeah,” I said again. I was tempted to speak up right then, but it was fun having a secret identity. It would be really funny to wait and spring the truth on them later.

Other people were talking, too, and pretending they couldn’t see whenever the Divas walked by. The girls looked puzzled at first, but later you could tell they were better informed—and really mad.

The whole thing was a riot. I’d never had so many people interested in me. To keep them hooked, I needed to update Wilbur’s blog with something good—but what?

An after-school fight gave me an idea. When I got home, I posted:

Epic clash! Unarmed 4 battle of wits, combatants use fists! Wilbur wants 2 no who left their cages open?

Soon the responses came rolling in! Everyone thought Wilbur was a riot except for someone who said I was too stupid to spell I.Q. I zapped back:

Wilbur wants 2 no do mind-readers charge U half price?

The next day at school was great. Everybody was trying to guess Wilbur’s identity. One of the guys from the fight walked around glaring at people and punching one fist into the other hand. The Divas pouted all day. It was hilarious.

“Wilbur could be anybody,” said Mike.

“Yeah,” I said.

“No,” said Ray. “It has to be somebody with a laser mind.”

“Yeah,” I said. Amazingly, they never suspected me.

I kept an eye out every day for stuff Wilbur could blog about. When The Big Couple had a public fight over his cheating, I wrote:

Jack of hearts is king of lies! Queen deserves an ace! Wilbur sez discard that joker!

Which she did!

And when this big guy tripped and belly-flopped in the middle of the cafeteria, I wrote:



Careful, Shamu! Wilbur would hate 2 see U dragged back 2 the ocean.

I wrote about an obnoxious geek who was as fun as fungus, an ugly girl who scared her own reflection, and a slow guy who couldn’t get a passing grade in lunch—and I didn’t stop there. With each new post, the Wilbur phenomenon grew. Soon Wilbur had hundreds of friends on his page!

He had a few enemies, too, who wrote nasty stuff. Some people just couldn't take a joke! At first I answered them back, but then I realized why waste my time?

After a few weeks, I was finally ready to give my friends a heart-attack with my secret, but something strange happened. Mike and Ray turned against Wilbur!

"I'm sick of that Wilbur guy," said Mike.

"He's nothing but a bully," said Ray.

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

"He's cold," said Mike.

"Like saying Fred got up on the wrong side of the pig sty."

"It was a joke!" I said.

"He's just being funny."

"Then how come Fred's not laughing?" said Ray.

I shrugged. "No sense of humor, I guess."

"Right," said Mike.

I couldn't believe their attitude. Everybody else thought Wilbur was a riot. So what if some wussy farm boy got his feelings hurt? He was just one person.

But then I saw Jenna crying in a quiet corner of the library. Wilbur had said she should ignore people who told her to be herself, but she couldn't be upset over a joke like that. Or so I told myself as I hurried past.

At lunch, I wondered when I had last seen the guy who fell in the cafeteria. How long had Dave been absent? Maybe ever since Wilbur said he was a science experiment in living without a brain?

Later, I noticed the guy I compared to a fungus slinking through the halls. I tried to convince myself he didn't look depressed, but I knew better.

By the end of school, I felt depressed, too. Trying on a new personality was supposed to be fun. But Wilbur had turned into somebody who hurt people. No, I had become somebody who hurt people. I never would have said any of that stuff in person. But when I was joking around on the internet, I wasn't face-to-face with anybody. It made it easy, I guess,

to rip on people without thinking about their feelings. And isn't that what bullies do?

When I got home, I worked my brain overtime, trying to think how I could fix things.

Finally I took a breath and asked God to help me. That's when it hit me what I should do.

After I wrote Wilbur's last blog, I felt a little better. I didn't feel good, of course. How could I? I couldn't undo all the hurt, and I hated myself for being too chicken to reveal my real identity. But at least I was on the right track now:

Joker becomes jerk! But I guess that's news only 2 me. I'm sorry things got out of hand, and I deeply apologize 2 everybody I hurt. I'll B closing this space and hoping U can forgive me. Wilbur sez buh-bye.



OUR CATHOLIC FAITH:

SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, CHURCH AND WORLD

Confronting Evil

**All human life,
whether individual
or collective, shows
itself to be a dramatic
struggle between
good and evil.**

Guadium et Spes, #13

The Second Vatican Council describes our world as a place of struggle in which Christians can help good triumph over evil. No one knows when Jesus will come again. Until he comes, good and evil will struggle within us and in our world; for example, we can use the web to hurt and to help.

Sunday's gospel claims and promises that what Jesus teaches will last. His words will sustain us no matter what, even if the heavens and earth pass away. We must watch events around us, interpret them, think, weigh our choices, seek counsel, act, and keep on throughout our lives struggling to discern what is good.

In our struggles Jesus is always at the door of our lives. A door has an inside and an outside. Its threshold is the place one steps across to enter or to exit. It is a place symbolizing choice and decision.

In Jesus' time Christians wrote a kind of literature called apocalyptic to express their faith that good will triumph over evil.

QUESTIONS 1 Is Wilbur a bully? 2 What is the fun of teasing and ripping on others? What is the harm? 3 Which are more powerful—positive or negative words? Give examples. 4 In what sense is Jesus always at our door? 5 How do Jesus' words have power in our world? 6 What words endure in your mind and shape decisions you make?

Apocalyptic writing is a scary way to give hope. The word apocalyptic means revelation.

The last book of the New Testament (named Revelation) is an apocalypse, a book revealing in symbols how good will prevail over evil, how Jesus will bring forth new heavens and a new earth.

Mark 13, from which Sunday's gospel comes, is also an apocalypse. We read from this chapter at the beginning and end of the Church year. At the beginning it gives us a sneak preview of the ultimate meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection. At the end it promises Jesus' triumph over death is not just for himself but for all humankind.

At the Second Vatican Council the bishops of the world worked to read the sign of our times. In the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the bishops explain that the Church, the people of God, believe the Holy Spirit fills the whole world and leads us. "Impelled by that faith, the people of God try to discern the true signs of God's presence and purpose in the events, the needs, and the desires which the Church shares with the rest of humanity today" (#11).

Catholics believe with the bible that all creation and human beings are good but we are also free, able to help and able to harm. We struggle to do what is right. The Church sees God's law to love one another written in our hearts. The Second Vatican Council describes conscience.

"Deep within their consciences men and women discover a law which they have not laid upon themselves and which they must obey. Its voice, ever calling them to love and to do what is right and good and to avoid evil, tells them inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. Their dignity rests in observing this law, and by it they will be judged.

"Conscience is the most secret core and the sanctuary of the human person. There they are alone with God whose voice echoes in their depth" (#16).

Conscience is not about doing whatever one wants but about discerning what is right. The Church and our families teach us wisdom to help form our consciences.

To build enduring human families and communities, Jesus calls us to love one another and even our enemies, to regard every other human as our neighbor, to share our wealth, to reach out to neighbors and enemies, to share our goods, forgive, and worship God together. How are we doing by these standards?

We become who we are one choice at a time. Decisions become habits—virtues or hard-to-change vices. Do I cheat on this test? Do I have sex with my boy- or girlfriend to show my love? Do I drink at the party? Do I do the loving, truthful, faithful, forgiving thing? Do I give or do I take?

The evils around us in our society also



live within us. Confronting evil always has a personal and social dimension—an inside and an outside. We live between Jesus' first coming and his promised return. We make daily decisions at the door of faith.

FAITH in ACTION

- 1 What struggles are hardest for teens today? What issues cause stress and make our consciences work overtime? Write a statement describing one of these struggles. For example, drinking makes a lot of teens into people they don't want to be. Put the numbers plus 1 to 5 and minus 1 to 5 on the walls around your meeting space. Have each person in the group read his or her statement aloud. Every other person stands beside the number that shows how much he or she agrees (plus 1 to 5) or disagrees (minus 1 to 5). Talk about reasons. Move on to the next statement.
- 2 What evil do you see happening in your city or neighborhood? What evil might your group struggle against together?
- 3 If you have one week to live, how would your life change? What would you do each day?

