



## Champion Coach Note: Cardinal Virtue of Prudence

In the last two weeks, we have discussed the first two cardinal virtues of justice and fortitude. This week, we highlight the third virtue of prudence. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines prudence as "The Cardinal Virtue by which one knows the true good in every circumstance and chooses the right means to reach that end." Prudence allows individuals to discern the best course of action, to use reason to best decide what to do or what to avoid, and to comprehend a problem or situation and do what they know to be right.

Athletes are forced to make critical decisions on a regular basis when they train and compete. Sports teach athletes the importance of thinking for themselves, being confident in their decisions, and taking action on their values and beliefs. In sports, athletes have hardly any time to think before they act – the margin for error is incredibly small. *Should I take this pitch or swing away? Should I shoot or pass?* Sports provide a venue for athletes to become comfortable making difficult decisions on a regular basis. In athletics, there is often a right and a wrong course of action. Your athletes will make mistakes; but teach them the virtue of prudence by allowing them to make their own decisions. Help them learn from their mistakes and teach them how to carefully consider different options and consequences before making a choice.

Beyond sports, the virtue of prudence guides an individual's conscience and shapes his or her character. Prudence, as St. Thomas Aquinas explains, is "right reason in action." As a coach, it is critical to



"You must rouse into people's consciousness their own prudence and strength, if you want to raise their character."

~ Luc de Clapiers

### Athlete Reflection:

Watch one of these clips and ask your athletes to reflect on the following questions:

Remember the Titans <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bXDarXk-JI>

ALTERNATE (Les Miserables): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2sanq2SM0k>

1. Do I think about my values and what kind of person I want to be when I make a decision?
2. What are the steps I take before making a tough decision? Does this reflect the virtue of prudence?
3. Do I act on my values and beliefs?

model right reason to your athletes by acting upon what you know to be right and true. We all have free will, but as Blessed John Paul II said, "Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought." Prudence is not about doing what is easy; rather, it is about doing what is right, with the knowledge that one is aiming at the right end or goal: for Christians, that means salvation with Jesus Christ. The Cardinal virtues help us shape our character to become better disciples of Christ.

Explain to your athletes that it is critical to look to the future when making decisions. Decisions are hardly ever black and white. But prudence encourages individuals to make decisions that align with their values; it encourages individuals to think beyond the present moment and envision the impact of their decision; it encourages individuals to take action and live out the other Cardinal virtues – prudence is *auriga virtutum* ("the charioteer of the virtues") that guides one's judgment and application of the other virtues. Continue to help shape the character of your athletes by explaining the virtue of prudence today!