

Mattie Matters
VIRTUE
OF THE MONTH
CURRICULUM

APRIL

PERSEVERANCE

Taking the steps necessary to
achieve goals in spite of
difficulties; never giving up.

"Let us *persevere* in running the race
that lies before us."

Hebrews 12:2

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Examples of Perseverance in the Bible

Galatians 6:9

“Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up.”

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

“We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”

James 5:11

“Indeed we call blessed those who have **persevered**. You have heard of the **perseverance** of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, because ‘the Lord is compassionate and merciful.’”

Romans 12:12

“Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, **persevere** in prayer.”

James 1:12

“Blessed is the man who **perseveres** in temptation, for when he has been proved he will receive the crown of life that he promised to those who love him.”

Matthew 24:12-13

“The love of many will grow cold but the one who **perseveres** to the end will be saved.”

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Examples of Mattie Practicing *Perseverance*

(From Messenger by Jeni Stepanek)

- Even though Mattie had a disability that prevented him from doing everything his friends did, he always did as much as he could, in whatever way he could. For example, when he was six, even though he had to be on oxygen, he used a long tube so that he could still swim in the pool, while remaining connected to the oxygen tank (p. 14).
- Mattie's mom, Jeni, always tried to keep a positive perspective on the situation, even when it was difficult: "We treated all of Mattie's limitations as challenges to be gotten around rather than game changers" (p. 17).
- Mattie practiced perseverance every day in the many little things he had to do just to take care of his medical needs to be ready for the day: make sure he had his inhalers and nebulizers, his syringes for liquid medicines, fill his portable oxygen tanks, check to make sure they work properly, pack a spare nasal cannula (p. 28)
- Mattie persevered through many medical crises during his short life: when he was only one month old, he stopped breathing and was in cardiac arrest for over five minutes, and this was only the first of many such instances (p. 35).
- Mattie persevered in following his "heart-song", even through many obstacles (p. 73).
- Mattie persevered in getting being a messenger for God, through his three wishes (p. 115).
- Mattie persevered in prayer, and encouraged others to pray, too (p. 143).
- Mattie persevered in his pursuit of peace, articulating three steps or choices for peace (p. 152).

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Perseverance in Poetry

About Perseverance

By: Mattie Stepanek, August 2000

From page 39, Hope through Heartsongs

No matter how hard
People strive for peace,
We are not all unified
In the goal, and so,
It is always out of reach
For the world as a whole.
But, it does not, and should not,
Have to be that way.
If we all help each other,
And work together
Day after night after day,
We can achieve a great goal:
World harmony and peace,
For you and me and us.

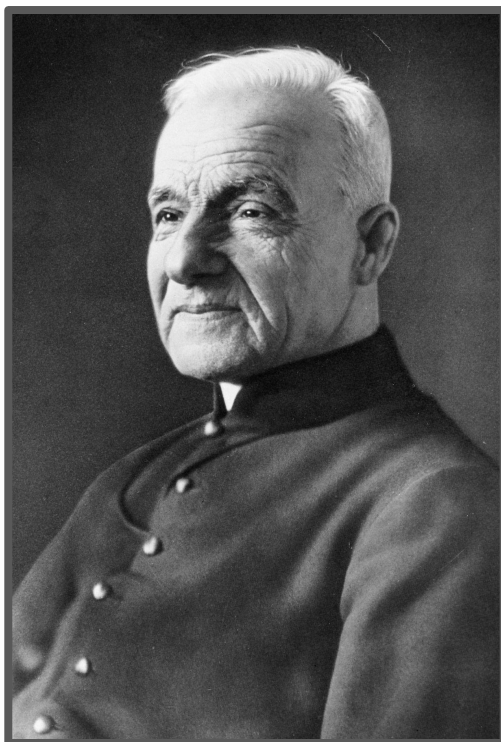


Reflection Questions:

- 1. Mattie says we can't achieve peace unless we all work together. Is it easier or harder to persevere when working with others?*
- 2. Have you ever wanted to give up on a goal? Why did/didn't you?*
- 3. Why do you think Mattie titled this poem "About Perseverance" when he doesn't use the word "perseverance" at all in the poem?*
- 4. Mattie wrote about the goal of world peace. If you had to pick one goal to persevere toward, what would it be?*

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Saint Andre Bessette



Feast Day: January 6

Saint Andre struggled with health issues his whole life. He also failed at many jobs, but he never gave up. He eventually became the doorkeeper for the Congregation of the Holy Cross in Montreal, Canada. He lived to be 92 and was known for visiting people and praying for them when they were ill. Saint Andre was special to Mattie before he became a saint. Mattie was very sick; his throat wouldn't stop bleeding. Someone sent him a medal with Andre on it. Mattie prayed, "Blessed Brother Andre, you need a miracle to become a saint and I need a miracle to finish my reason for being." Mattie put the medal on his throat and it stopped bleeding. He was able to go home from the hospital!

Saint Andre, pray for us.

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Reflection Questions

- When is a time recently when I found it difficult to practice the virtue of perseverance?
- Where do I need to show more perseverance? At home? At school? At church? In my extracurricular activities?
- Who have I seen practice perseverance? How could I learn from that person?
- What might happen if I choose to give up instead of persevere?
- What might happen if others see me practicing perseverance?

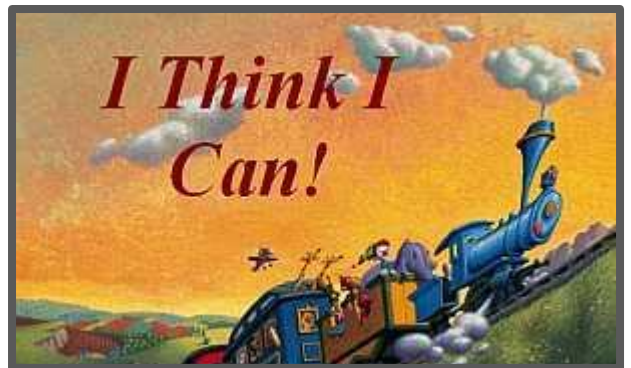
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Things we can **DO**
to show
perseverance

Things we can **SAY** to
show perseverance

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How do each of these characters or people show perseverance?



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Action Steps

1. Any time we try something new, it is usually hard at first. What is something new that you have tried recently? How many times did you have to practice it until you got it right, or until it wasn't hard anymore?
2. Harriet Beecher Stowe, a famous author, once said, "When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you till it seems as if you couldn't hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the time and place that the tide will turn." What does this quote say about the virtue of perseverance?
3. Sometimes something that we think should be easy ends up being challenging because unexpected obstacles pop up between us and our goals. Has this ever happened to you? How can you practice perseverance in situations like this?
4. Other times we have to practice perseverance just because something lasts for much longer than we expected or much longer than is comfortable. For example, we might enjoy running for a mile or two, but it takes real perseverance to run a full marathon (26.2 miles). Have you ever had to practice this kind of perseverance?
5. Learn more about saints who showed perseverance: Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Saint Peter, and Saint Monica are great saints to start with!



Recommended Reading

1. The Little Engine that Could by Watty Piper
2. Salt in His Shoes by Michael Jordan
3. The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires
4. Flight School by Lita Judge
5. A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams
6. The Noisy Paint Box by Barb Rosenstock
7. How to Catch a Star by Oliver Jeffers
8. Colorful Dreamer by Marjorie Blain Parker
9. Unbeatable Betty by Allison Crotzer Kimmel
10. Rosie Revere and the Raucous Riveters by Andrea Beaty
11. Emmanuel's Dream by Laurie Ann Thompson



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A Prayer for Perseverance:

The Morning Offering

O Jesus,
through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and
sufferings of this day
for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart,
in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
throughout the world,
for the salvation of souls, the reparation of
sins, the reunion of all Christians,
and in particular for the intentions of the
Holy Father this month.
Amen.