

This iBelieve Essays

Manners Should Be a Religion

by Nathan Snyder

Hailing from a family that insists on good manners and believes that there are simply “proper” ways to conduct oneself, it is understandable that I’ve grown to perceive Good Manners as a religion, rather than a positive character trait. As a member of the Good Manners’ congregation, my purpose is to spread the message that I believe the entire world’s problems can be solved by practicing good manners.

Crazy, you’re thinking? Name one man-made problem in this world that cannot be solved by simply having good manners and doing the right thing. I can’t think of one either. War, poverty, unemployment, violence, crime, cheating, stealing can all be extinguished if the world would practice good manners. If people running countries and living in them focused on improving lives around them rather than their own, it seems that the horrors of this world would dwindle. We don’t need more oil, land, or money. We need to share the resources on the planet with the planet. How can we claim anything? Nature does not exist to be purchased, owned, or won. It’s here to provide for us and to create an enjoyable environment for life.

I believe in the piety of Good Manners. As I go about my daily routines, I perform small miracles when I give up my seat on the subway, pay people compliments, buy someone a treat when he/she least expects it, share an umbrella with a stranger, relinquish a parking space to an elderly driver, carry my neighbor’s groceries to the 6th floor when I live on the 4th, and genuinely listen to someone even when I’m uninterested. Do I perform these miracles for sainthood? No, helping strangers alleviate stress in their lives reminds me that, as humans, we share this planet, and we should enjoy it together as a species rather than individually.

Do I always do the right thing? No, but I hate how I feel when I don’t. I hate it enough to look behind me when I open a door for myself, not to pass a struggling stranger carrying too many bags, not to rush past someone caught in a rainstorm, or not to sit on the subway at the first opportunity. I only have a limited amount of time to do my part for humanity, so vigilance is key. Each new day births new opportunities for positive change, and the Church of Good Manners will continue to spread its message.