

PURITY

A meditation given at the June 2004 State Convention

When our president asked me to reflect on purity at this convention, I swallowed very hard...I thought ...*Purity*? Oh my, we hardly ever use that word anymore. And, I secretly wished for a speech fairy.

Where to start? As any one of us would...I headed for the dictionary. When I thought about the meanings of the word found there, I mused...*Purity*...why, of course, it is a terrific subject. I found several meanings:

PURITY: free from dust, dirt or taint; spotless; being non objective and appraised on formal or technical qualities; free from what weakens, or pollutes; free from moral fault or guilt; and purity: the quality or state of being pure.

Now, think of this: our Founders gave this word a lot of respect. After all, it is considered one of the important virtues and has a special place in our star. Virtues represent strength, conformity to a standard; a particular moral excellence.

Purity, at the time of our Founders, represented all the virtues of life. Thoughts untainted, hearts in true rhythm. Spirits that soared above all else and even more than all of that: these women were so dedicated in their lives to making a better world that they had no time for the insignificant; the paths that were morally incorrect, no time for foolish improprieties.

They also chose a flower that represented the *color of purity*.

Today, we use the word *purity* very seldom.

Certainly, over the years, the word *purity* and has come and gone in its importance in many areas, but not in P.E.O.

If ever there was any doubt about what P.E.O. stood for, it is well said in the Opening Ode and in our initiatory ceremony.

Though we don't openly use the word "*purity*" in our daily language, we nevertheless strive for excellence in both our lives and our callings. That certainly reflects going for the gold, the best, the highest, the most pure.

In our strong chapters, we seek out those who best represent women for our projects and carefully select those whom we believe to exemplify all that is good in their search for higher education.

Certainly, that is searching for the pure, the good, maybe the best, but always with the highest integrity.

Now, how does *purity* relate to chapter health? When chapters are beginning to lose their effectiveness do you suppose they have lost sight of love, faith, justice, purity and truth? Have they lost sight of their mission? For, in today's world, that is exactly what our virtues are: Our mission statement.

Do you know of chapters with only older members? Do you know of chapters that are not looking for new members? Chapters with members not willing to be officers? Not planning for the future? Chapters with members reflecting they do not want change? Have "they" "we" asked ourselves what is our purpose? Are chapters floundering because they care only about themselves?

I challenge those chapters to ask themselves some tough questions. Societies, groups, or organizations that separate themselves from one another lose sight of reality.

We have something so precious in P.E.O. Are we beginning to take this for granted? P.E.O. is a true jewel. Something good has to have care. It must be sustained. It must be nurtured.

Several years ago a young Chinese graduate student spoke to our convention as an IPS recipient. She had discovered through her relationship with P.E.O.'s that women could have a caring, close, productive relationship. She determined that she was going to take this wonderful way of life back to her village to teach a new way to live.

Now, about your chapter...Don't let yourself give up a legacy that is so valuable. It is such a privilege to be a member and have the opportunity to invite others to become members. Don't let the discontent eat away and destroy a local chapter. Ask yourselves: Is there something that **I** can do so that this doesn't happen? If we work toward improving our chapters, subtle appearances begin to surface.

Often, in The P.E.O. Record there are the most encouraging stories about a chapter that turned its membership around by careful planning, by trying something new, by changing their thinking, by encouraging one another to step out and make a difference.

On the other hand, by letting go, we could begin to lose a privilege here, a privilege there. "According to the purity of its women will a nation rise or fall." Erosion wears away slowly and finally destroys. According to the strength of its women; according to the relationship of its women; according to the work of its women...shall a nation rise or fall. We are so fortunate in this country. We can make a difference. We must make a difference.

We have an awesome responsibility. Our virtues should rule our lives. Faith, Love, Purity, Justice and Truth. What higher calling is there? Let each one of us take these virtues into our own hearts and commit to keeping our chapters strong and viable.

P.E.O. members still stand by their legacy of virtues. Our faith, love, purity, justice and truth sustain us. P.E.O. is unique. I see the continuation of P.E.O. as sustaining the future of women. Where women have a strong influence in their country, that country is strong. We have an awesome responsibility.

Continuing our legacy will bring joy to the hearts of those in my generation, but even more important, continuing this legacy will keep younger generations strong. We must help being responsible for ethics...puritan ethics, if you will. Don't miss this chance to make your mark quietly in the history of our country.

Alice Bird Babb said "I have always felt that the secret of our organization lay in the earnestness of its conception." Let us take that earnestness and run with it.

And my sentiments were matched exactly by the past president of Nevada State Chapter when she said (as quoted in the Jan-Feb 2004 RECORD on the president's page) "What a blessing is the love we find in P.E.O. In these times of religious and ethnic hatred it is now more important than ever that we share the gift of P.E.O. with women of character who may be of different ethnic (and religious) backgrounds than ourselves."

There is a reason you are here at this convention. How to keep your chapter alive and well is one of those reasons. We must commit to keep Faith, Truth, Love, Purity and Justice truly alive.

Those of you who are here are strong, important members of your chapters, take the information you learn here, go back to your chapters with these messages and make a difference.

We must help make a world where love dominates our hearts, kindness guides our actions and everyone respects one another. We have a chance to do that through P.E.O. Now, more than ever, P.E.O. members can make a difference in our world.

Please take this message home with you, act on it and keep it in your hearts. What chance has *PURITY* and our other virtues without it? Keep P.E.O alive and well.

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