**The Relationship Between Barre3 and Christianity: An Exploration of Catholicism and Psychology**

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Throughout my past, striving for an unattainable ideal image of fitness and success was the forefront of my focus. Training as a classical ballerina required hard work and determination, often at the cost of my mental and physical wellbeing. I constantly lived in a state of working towards, yet never quite reaching, perfection while persistently comparing myself to my peers. Why wasn’t my extension as high as hers? Why couldn’t I just be skinnier to fit into that costume? Although I was not aware of my mindset at the time, I am now able to identify that my thought patterns surrounding my body image and what “success” meant led me to a feeling that I was not enough.

While I was still training and performing as a dancer, I began to explore alternative fitness activities. At first, this was simply a way to crosstrain and maintain my endurance level. However, my personal journey with Barre3 began in July of 2016. From the moment I walked into the doors at Barre3, I heard positive messaging surrounding body image that was not a part of fitness classes I had taken before. I learned to approach my practice by honoring my present truth, including how I was feeling physically and emotionally, rather than pushing through pain in pursuit of perfection. This experience sparked a change in my mindset as I shifted the purpose behind *why* I was working out from attaining external results to improving my internal dialogue about myself. As I directed my focus inward and away from external measures of success, I also found stronger roots in my faith. I found greater happiness by appreciating my body as a masterpiece from God, rather than looking for ways to improve it. Fast forward to 2019, after three years as a dedicated client, I felt called to audition to become a Barre3 instructor. The journey to certification was full of vulnerability, challenges, and triumphs as I dove into the community and culture of Barre3. At the time, I never could have imagined the profound ways this opportunity would shape my character.

Barre3 is a company created by women, for women. 100% of barre3 studios are owned by women, 87.7% of barre3 corporate employees are women, and 96.7% of all studio clients are women. Throughout this paper I will address the values that we hold as a community. “We” represents every owner, mentor, instructor, and client that steps into the doors of any Barre3 studio. Our vision is collective, and united in the pursuit to be balanced in body, and empowered from within.

 The Barre3 workout was created to provide functional fitness training that strengthens imbalances, rather than isolating muscle groups. Instructors curate classes that focus on strengthening the core muscles to ensure that your body is prepped and ready to engage the correct muscles, therefore reducing your risk of injury, when you perform daily activities such as picking up your baby off of the ground, or lifting a heavy box onto a high shelf. This workout is safe for everybody because the instructor provides modifications that help you to be curious about what limits you can push yourself to while protecting the safety of your body. The instructors maintain a positive environment by encouraging you to listen to the cues your body provides when you feel negative tension or pain. Whether you are a college student looking for a way to relieve stress, or a pregnant mama-to-be, Barre3 is a safe space to explore and take time for *you*. The practice of focusing inward to find measures of success extends far beyond the walls of the Barre3 studio, into every choice you make to stand up for yourself in your daily life. Being empowered from within is a core message that resonates within the studio, and beyond.

I love Barre3 because the mission is “to teach people to be balanced in body and empowered from within.” My primary role as an instructor is to cultivate a community space where everyone feels safe to take risks with curiosity and compassion towards their bodies. I am proud to work with a company that is pioneering a shift in how we view success based upon the fact that our *relationship* with fitness as a society is broken. The media that we consume in television, magazines, and music tells us that success in fitness is defined by a number on the scale and a size of clothing. As women, we are led to believe that we are not enough in our current state, but we would feel more attractive, confident, and worthy if we worked hard enough to become a “better” version of ourselves. At Barre3, we disagree with the way success in fitness is defined. As an instructor, I encourage clients in my class to ask themselves how they feel, and remind them that making modifications and edits to adapt to that authentic feeling in their body is a sign of strength, not weakness. Rather than comparing numbers on a scale, we ask if you feel different after you leave class. Are you in less pain? Do you feel less stress? A shift to *internal* measures of success is fundamental to honoring the body soul connection that is strengthened in each and every Barre3 class.

Barre3 is founded on six core values, Committed to Real, Everybody Matters, Humbly Confident, Give Generously, Love of Learning, and Make It Happen that shape the positive atmosphere and supportive community both inside and outside of the studio. My individual experience as a female Psychology student at a Catholic university and a Barre3 instructor has allowed me to uncover the parallels between Christianity and the foundation of beliefs surrounding Barre3. In my thesis, I will demonstrate the relationship between Barre3 and Christianity in light of man as a psychosomatic unity through consideration of published works in my primary field of study, Psychology, in addition to Christian texts.

**Natural Law**

Before diving into the relationship of Christianity and Barre3, we must first consider the foundations of natural law through the teachings of the Catholic Church. As humans, we come to an understanding of human nature, or natural law, in light of God’s divine law. John Paul II (1993) shares that “the Second Vatican Council points out that the ‘supreme rule of life is the divine law itself, the eternal, objective universal law by which God out of his wisdom and love arranges, directs and governs the whole world and the paths of the human community’” (p.24). All of creation is governed by God’s wisdom which directs everything to its end, or telos. Human nature is thus rational because God instills within us the knowledge of his divine law that leads us towards goodness. Leo XIII concludes “‘natural law is itself the eternal law, implanted in beings endowed with reason, and inclining them towards their right action and end;... the eternal reason of the Creator’” (John Paul II, 1993, p.43). The natural law is the nature of the person which under the Catholic Church’s teachings is one where reason can not be separated from the body. The understanding of the body and soul as one to form the *whole* person is known as the psychosomatic unity of the person. In this perspective, the soul is the form of the body which unites the bodily faculties (John Paul II, 2013). However, many theologians and contemporary thinkers disagree with the Church’s teaching of body soul union, and instead define the body and soul as two seperate faculties against one another.

The two primary misunderstandings of body soul unity are known as Materialism and Angelism. Materialists believe that the true self is only the physical form of the body, therefore the soul is reducible to the body (Budziszewski, 2012). This belief system reduces all of existence to material realities, which requires individuals only to discipline *bodily* desires in order to achieve a greater telos, or end. In contrast, angelists believe that the true self is a spirit or soul occupying a nonpersonal body (Budziszewski, 2012). In angelism, the body simply serves as a shell that carries the soul temporarily. Therefore, temptations such as concupiscence and sin are not important because the bodily actions are separated from the actions of the soul. Both of these viewpoints are incorrect in the opinion of the Catholic Church because they both reduce and separate the body and the soul. In the teachings of Catholic moral theology the body and the soul are *one,* inseparable in the makeup of the *whole* person which serves to be joined in a unity of marriage to lead to procreation and family life.

 Throughout this paper, I will elaborate on the relationship between the practices at Barre3 and the teachings of the Church, focused within the Catholic Church’s view of the person as a psychosomatic union of body and soul created by God. The scriptural accounts within the Old Testament and New Testament discuss man as a somatopsychic or psychophysical unity. The spiritual aspect of man, deeply related to the cognitive psyche, is an incredibly important component to understand within the larger perspective of the relationship between Christianity and Psychology. Humankind is separated from other beings, living and nonliving, because humans are created in the image and likeness of God, and thus have a responsibility to serve Him. This understanding does not assume an immortality of the soul, or a superiority of humans that gives them the omnipotence of their creator, but rather a *purpose* given to humankind. Man shows his devotion to spirituality through all of his daily activities. The ritual of prayer, following moral obligations, treating others with respect, and acting with purpose oriented towards a relationship with God are all integral parts of spiritual practice. Without even knowing it, Christians have been practicing psychology for centuries through the utilization of reason, a powerful tool endowed in humans by God. Jeeves (2006) explains, numerous studies in the field of psychology have demonstrated that “just as...mental activity or the mind is embodied in the physical workings of the brain, so the spiritual aspect of a person is embodied in his activities as a mind–brain unity” (p.115). Through *both* the Biblical perspective presented in Scripture and the scientific perspective presented in psychological studies we come to understand the complexities of human nature. According to Jeeves (2006) it is necessary to “study it from many diverse aspects or perspectives, and...recognize that essentially human nature is a unity—a unity now in this present life and, by the grace of God, a unity in the life to come” (p.116). It is not to be said that either the theological perspective or psychological perspective can stand alone, but rather that both must be considered in light of the other. It would be wrong to sum up Freud’s Psychoanalytic Theory or Kholberg’s Stages of Moral Development to a greater spiritual revelation. Although, there are many relations between theological perspectives and the works of these notable psychologists.

**Committed to Real**

The first Barre3 core value that I will discuss, *Committed to Real*, challenges us to be honest in our bodies, and realistic with our expectations. Before I learned the core values or mission statement of Barre3, this practice of mindfulness resonated with me. When I stepped into the doors of Barre3 in 2016, I had a profound realization while taking class that the community as a whole celebrated progress, not perfection. Noticing this mindset and community value was one of the aspects of Barre3 that made me want to come back to take class again and again. Allowing myself to acknowledge inevitable imbalances in my body was a drastic mind shift for me, coming from a classic ballet background that encouraged me to always strive for perfection. It was comforting to me that I was able to make the workout my own, and I did not need to compare myself to any other person in the studio. I began to shift my mindset and became more in tune with my internal feelings rather than external measures of success such as body image. This shift allowed me to honor my individual truth, rather than working towards an unattainable ideal. I acknowledged that imbalances were inevitable, and started to find ways to work with them rather than fight against them. Actively working to be balanced in body is a practice that I continue to do every single day. This practice requires me to give myself grace when dealing with difficult situations, and become more attuned with my emotions on a daily basis. It has also allowed me to practice self-acceptance which has made working out a way for me to find joy and celebrate my body as it was created by God. Now, instead of thinking “I’m not strong enough” if I’m struggling to make it through my workout, I am aware of my body and listen to my emotions so that I have thoughts like “I will try again and be stronger tomorrow”.

 Being committed to real is rooted in the heart of Salesian Spirituality and the mission of DeSales University. According to Butterworth (2004) the Salesian tradition “ gave rise to a spirituality which was humane, confident, optimistic, reposeful...and above all open to endless diversification and development” (p.32). The leaders who shaped the practices and values within the Salesian tradition, most notably Saint Jane Frances de Chantal and Saint Francis de Sales, were unwavering and committed to sharing the Catholic mission, even when their beliefs were met with contradictions or disapproval. Madrid (2013) cites Pope Pius XI’s encyclical on St. Francis de Sales where he shares that:

Repulsed brutally, he never gave up the struggle; when threatened he only renewed his efforts. He was often put out of lodgings, at which times he passed the night asleep on the snow under the canopy of heaven. He would celebrate Mass though no one would attend. When, during a sermon, almost the entire audience one after another left the church, he would continue preaching. At no time did he ever lose his mental poise or his spirit of kindness toward these ungrateful hearers. It was by such means as these that he finally overcame the resistance of his most formidable adversaries. (p.15)

 The steadfast determination of Saint Francis de Sales is not only related to the core value committed to real, but also to the core values at DeSales University. Everyday since the start of my collegiate career I have been reminded of the wise words of Saint Francis de Sales encouraging us to, “Be who you are and be that well. So that you may bring honor to the Master Craftsman whose handiwork you are.” This quote has been a guiding force for me since I first heard it at orientation week my freshman year. It has allowed me to find ways to give myself grace as I continue in my learning and growth as a student, and reminds me daily that being who you are is a *unique* experience. God did not intend for us to possess the talents that anyone else has, or even to achieve a specific list of tasks in order to be loved. Instead, we are all guided and encouraged to find our own purpose. This is the exact reason that we celebrate many Saints just like Saint Francis de Sales. They all have unique attributes and values that make them worthy of praise.

**EveryBody Matters**

The second Barre3 core value that I will explore is *Everybody Matters*. At Barre3, we believe that a culture of good health requires putting people first, and honoring diversity. One of the reasons I am incredibly passionate about Barre3 is because our workout is inclusive for *everyone*. As an instructor, I offer modifications that help people feel empowered in their own bodies, without judging or evaluating their success based on whether or not they are doing the same move as the person next to them. In contrast, workouts that encourage competition provide a different culture and relationship between participants. Often, individuals who are just starting a fitness journey feel left out or discouraged in these types of workout environments because they are not given individual accommodations that take into account their current abilities.They are left with feelings of not being enough, because they do not fit into the community. On the other hand, the culture of self empowerment and choice at Barre3 ensures that it is a safe space for everyone regardless of athletic ability, shape, size, age, or gender. The inclusivity of every class promotes body diversity, which is supported by “qualitative studies [that] have highlighted the value of positive body attitudes, such as body appreciation, body acceptance, and functional corporeal orientation, when discussing women’s bodily experiences” (Swami et al., 2015, p. 706). At Barre3, we acknowledge that despite the known psychological and physiological benefits of maintaining a positive relationship with your body in its current state, a vast majority of women experience body dissatisfaction. Park et al. (2009) state, according to the Tripartite Model of Influence, parents, peers, and media are the three most influential sources that impact body image and related behaviors such as self harm, bulimia, anorexia, and obsessive exercise. However, this model does not consider a possible critical element, one’s relationship with God which can serve as a mediator towards negative notions of self and body image. As a Christian woman, I believe it is important to explore this relationship.

 In a study conducted by Swami and colleagues (2015), participants viewed images from the Photographic Figure Rating Scale. These consisting of ten grey scale images of women’s bodies ranging from very thin to obese. Participants were asked to select the photos that they believed best represented their current body composition and the ideal body they would like to have. This scale was utilized to determine the level of individual body dissatisfaction based upon the variance between current and ideal body image. 89% of the 9,667 women tested “experienced some form of weight-based dissatisfaction, with the vast majority wanting to be thinner” (Swami et al., 2015, p. 714). This finding is generalizable and representative of the large population of women who struggle with the desire to achieve an “ideal” body image they do not currently possess. Swami et al. (2015) also measured body appreciation and subjective happiness using the 13 item Body Appreciation Scale and the 4 item Subjective Happiness Scale respectively, each with a higher score indicating greater body positivity and happiness. Body appreciation and subjective happiness demonstrated a strong positive correlation. Body image comparison, when combined with low body appreciation, can lead to a sense of self doubt and feelings of not being enough. These negative emotional responses have profound impacts on mental health. For example, many women experience Appearance-based Rejection Sensitivity, which Park et al. (2009) defined as a “personality processing system characterized by a dispositional tendency to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and overreact to signs of rejection based on one’s physical appearance” (p.108). This system is distinguished by *affective* responses of anxiety which trigger *cognitive* responses of expectations of rejection that then shape emotions and behavior. The responses that occur as a result of Appearance-based Rejection Sensitivity are also concerning in light of the self-fulfilling prophecy, theorized by the sociologist Robert Merton. The self-fulfilling prophecy posits that individuals who expect a situation to happen are *more* likely to experience that situation because of how they act in response to their expectations (Merton, 1948). Stinson et al. (2009) explain, “if one’s expectations about acceptance from novel acquaintances can create a self-fulfilling prophecy, then unwarranted doubts about acceptance may sabotage one’s ability to satisfy one’s relatedness needs” (p. 1166). This applies to Appearance-based Rejection Sensitivity because women who experience anxiety as a result of perceived and expected rejection based on their body image are more likely to experience rejection from others due to the negative behavioral responses they exhibit in response to their expectation. Park et al. (2009) found that, “the more sensitive individuals are to appearance rejection, the more lonely and rejected they feel when asked to list dissatisfying aspects of their appearance” (p. 108). High Appearance-based Rejection Sensitivity is often combined with low self esteem and decreased self confidence. The presence of these factors are positively correlated with body dissatisfaction, and often lead an individual to self seculde because of diminished feelings of self worth.

According to Bowlby’s (1998) Attachment Theory, individuals have greater life satisfaction and self confidence when they establish strong social bonds or attachments with others, ultimately combatting feelings of loneliness. This theory was originally developed around the relationship between a caregiver and an infant. The security that is provided by the caregiver, typically the mother, fosters the positive social and emotional development of the child. However, this theory can be applied to a wider range of attachment figures. For example, a strong attachment to faith can impact emotions and behaviors. The presence of a strong bond to God can serve as a mediating factor against negative behaviors such as anorexia and bulimia that often develop as a result of negative body image. Homan and Boyatzis (2010) found that, “even when women cognitively affirmed the notion that one must be thin to be attractive, they had a much smaller increase in dissatisfaction with their bodies if they felt a secure attachment with God” (p. 252). Women who are able to affirm their self worth in light of their perfection in God’s eyes rather than through external measures of success report increased levels of body satisfaction which is directly correlated to increased levels of happiness, as evidenced in the previous studies. Homan and Cavanaugh (2013) believe the need to seek validation in others by achieving an “ideal” body image is significantly reduced because “a secure attachment with God provides a constant source of unconditional acceptance” (p.1531). As a female student at a Catholic University, I can affirm the results of this study in relation to my own experience. Although the intensity of my attachment to God has fluctuated over my lifetime, I do feel empowered knowing that my worth is not measured primarily by external influences such as the media and my peers. My body is perfect and worthy as it was created and my job is to protect and honor it to ultimately give glory to God. I release my worries and imperfections to God because I know that I will be forgiven and loved, regardless of the faults that I see within myself or the sins that I commit.

**Humbly Confident**

The third core value that emphasizes an inward focus and reflection on one’s own nature is *Humbly Confident*. At Barre3 we believe that in order to be powerfully present in our practice as well as within our daily lives outside of the studio, it is vital to be self aware. In class, embodying humble confidence looks different for each and every individual. Some days it means that you can hold longer in your plank, or dive deeper with your breath, and other days it is a celebration of simply showing up to take time just for you. Humble confidence eliminates comparison and judgement that so often becomes our focus in a fitness setting. Instead of asking, why am I not as muscular as her? We shift the dialogue to acknowledge how every choice you make that honors *your* body leads you to a *stronger* body. Trusting your intuition allows you to dive deeper into class without the need to measure your success to others. This foundation of humility is profoundly related to Christianity and the teachings of St. Francis de Sales as well as the roots of Positive Psychology. However, in our contemporary society, the concept of being humble is often associated with negative attributes such as being shy, possessing low self esteem, and a lack of self confidence.

Two psychologists, Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest, “humility, rather than involving the presence of certain thoughts or behaviors, might better be construed as the absence of narcissism, self-enhancement, or defensiveness” (p. 465). They acknowledge that given this definition and the limitations of self report studies, humility is difficult to accurately measure. The researchers suggest that assessments that ask an individual to place themself in a scenario that prompts narcissistic and egotistical responses and explain how they would respond may give a more accurate self-evaluation of humility. For example, how would you respond if you are at a party where you are the richest man in the room? Peterson and Seligman (2004) found “a sense of psychological entitlement- in which people are preoccupied with their own rights and overestimate the amount that is owed to them- is also associated with aggressive and unforgiving behavior” (p. 468). This dominating and aggressive behavior directly aligns with what is frequently experienced as discouragement and negative competition in the fitness world. Peterson and Seligman (2004) found that individuals often create hostility and competition when they desire “to receive entitlements or to elevate their own status” (p. 464). As human beings, we should be striving to be inclusive and uplifting of others, just as God commanded us to love our neighbor. In order to let go of our judgements, we must first acknowledge that we are working towards progress, not perfection and that each of us has flaws. It is precisely in acknowledging our weaknesses and leaning into God that we can grow in our character. As the Christian conservatism strategist Wright (1993) explains, when we learn, “to love our abjections… [we] shatter the images of self-perfection we would like to project. It is thus to enter into the mystery of loving all that is human, and from there to begin to love all humans truly’’ (p. 87). The experience when an individual is willing to be vulnerable to open themself up and accept powerlessness under God allows the individual to give and receive love. At Barre3 we share that vulnerability is an experience when we step into a brave space and open ourselves up to the endless possibilities that happen when we let go of expectations. The moment we open our hearts to be vulnerable and willing to change, we break plateaus and push past boundaries, whether physical or mental, that we previously held for ourselves. Pocetto (2014) explains, “open-heartedness, that is, true humility opens us up to love, to a true self-love and love of others” (p.583). Our willingness to humbly accept ourselves opens our minds and hearts to the ways that God wants us to serve others. When we grow in the virtue of humility we can reduce the impact of external feedback on our emotions. As Peterson and Seligman (2004) explain, “the humble person...should be able to conserve emotional and psychological energy by not having to constantly defend the self-image from threat” (p. 470). By embodying humble confidence, we are able to feel empowered in our own bodies and make wise choices without the influence of others. With this strong mindset we are built on a solid foundation, as God intended, to serve and love others.

**Give Generously**

The foundation for the fourth Barre3 core value, *Give Generously* ,“is based not only on a knowledge of one’s self, but also on actions which authenticate it, in particular the virtue of generosity” (Pocetto, 2014, p.588 ). While generosity is typically associated with actions oriented towards others, I also believe that a key aspect of generosity is self care. At Barre3 we believe that taking 60 minutes of time for class where you can focus just on you is a great way to practice gratitude and self awareness to refill your own cup. When we take the time in class to focus internally, letting go of the outside distractions of to-do lists and stressors, we find a greater sense of balance in our lives. When individuals do not carve out time to find joy and move their bodies, whether that is in a Barre3 class or another type of exercise like running or yoga, it is easy to feel lethargic and depleted. Exercise not only enhances mood, but also cognitive functioning. Wolfe (2010) found, when blood is carried throughout the body at a rapid pace, such as during aerobic activity, the increased levels of oxygen in the body “increases capillary health and the growth and plasticity of the frontal lobes” involved in memory, problem solving, and communication (p.93). Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest, in addition to movement, practicing gratitude by “seeking forgiveness or keeping a gratitude journal might also be humbling, as each of these behaviors might make people more aware of their indebtedness to others” (p. 474). Overall, being mindful of your thoughts and actions draws you towards internal reflection, allowing you to seek ways to share generously with others.

 An important component of Barre3 that we discuss often is how the feelings that you experience and manifest inside the studio can carry and translate into the rest of your life. The endorphins that are released during a Barre3 class not only heighten your mood in those moments, but also carry into every moment that day after you step outside of the studio. By giving generously to yourself, you are able to harness a stronger sense of balance and empowerment from within that motivates you to show up as a better friend, mother, and spouse. In turn, Barre3 allows you to be more aware of choices that you can make in order to honor your energy and needs so that you can be present and give generously to others. This core value resonates deeply with me as an instructor and a client at Barre3. It is extremely important to me that even when I am teaching 6 or more classes a week, I continue to take classes as a student. By taking time for myself to listen to my body, I am increasingly self aware of my own emotions. This learning translates into my job as an instructor because I am able to experience the moves in my own body, and therefore can relate and help clients to find greater body awareness as they navigate what feels good and what causes negative tension in their own bodies. By taking time to learn as a student, I continue to obtain more information and experiences that allow me to be more understanding of other people’s experiences as they take my class. I give generously to others as an instructor by listening to the needs of clients within my class, and leading a workout that encourages them to feel challenged yet balanced in their bodies.

As demonstrated through the practices at Barre3, generosity is not only a personal experience, but one that can be heightened within community and collaboration. The moral theologian, Servais Pinckaers (1995), believes as individuals we achieve true freedom, “by what the ancients called *semina virtutum*, the seeds of virtue, which give rise to these natural dispositions...truth, friendship, and generosity” (p.357). In this light, the virtue of generosity is not only a personal perfection, but a communal practice in which we act in order to serve others in friendship, and ultimately transcend our love as we give glory to God. This multi step approach of orienting actions to give generously and serve others is the process of moral growth that is known as freedom for excellence. Pinckaers (1995) explains that this understanding of freedom enables every person to order his or her desires towards the spontaneous pursuit of goodness and happiness found within God. There are three stages within freedom for excellence, each that distinguish a new acquisition of knowledge and development of moral character. The stages of the theological concept freedom for excellence are aligned with the stages of moral development theorized by the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. In Kohlberg’s theory there are also three levels of cognitive growth that are focused on the individual’s ability to comprehend and respond to moral dilemmas (Sanders, 2005). Just as Pinckaers’ stages each account for progress towards maturity, Kohlberg’s theory is cumulative. However, this journey of freedom is not done alone.

In Pickaers’ first stage of growth, discipline is perfected through the relationship between disciple and teacher. The responsibility of the teacher is to aid in the formation of will by teaching negative precepts, guiding what the student *should not* do. Pinckaers (1995) relates this stage of moral growth to the teachings of the 10 Commandments. The task of the student is to avoid sin and fight inclinations that are opposed to charity and generosity. In Kohlberg’s psychological theory, the first level, preconventional, explains that morality is controlled by external figures who teach the individual what is right and wrong. Motivation is determined by avoidance of punishment or recieving a reward for positive behavior.

As the student learns and grows, he reaches the second stage, progress, where actions are aimed at achieving moral growth and finding internal joy. Pinckaers (1995) aligns this stage of growth with the Sermon on the Mount, focusing on beatitudes and positive precepts that guide how the student *should* act. The student is able to find internal motivations for actions such as humility and justice. The importance of a relationship with God that guides an individual’s will towards the true goods for the person and away from sin is necessary for any individual to achieve beatitude. In Kohlberg’s second level of moral development, conventional, the person is aware of the influence their behavior has on parents, peers, and friends around them. They consider their actions based on society at large, rather than just the individual perspective.

Lastly Pinckaers’ (1995) final stage, maturity, is met when we are able to live for ourselves and others equally. In maturity, the ability to recognize the contributions of our actions as part of a whole motivates us to give generously in all aspects of our lives. In Kohlberg’s final level, principled, the person is able to use reason to determine if rules can be modified with respect to other parties involved in order to serve the person’s individual purpose. According to Kohlberg, not all people will reach this level of moral growth (Sanders, 2005).

In addition to generosity, charity is a virtue that one learns early in their progress towards freedom for excellence. It is rooted in an act of the will, through the recognition that it is good that others exist. However, it is not only a desire of sheer existence, but rather a desire that others live to their fullest potential. Therefore, the philosopher J. Budziszewski defines charity as, “a permanent commitment of the will to the true good of the other person” (p.71). While this type of dedication might seem only related to the permanent commitment of marriage, charity is actually an act that a person can have for *everyone*. It manifests in different ways, from how you lovingly hug your children, intently listen to your coworkers, and kiss your spouse, but the common link is loving the other person for their own sake. It is our responsibility as children of God to love others as a *bonum honestum*, or a good in itself. Individuals can not be reduced to goods that are simply pleasurable or useful. The respect that we must give others is ultimately honoring their perfection in their creation and relationship with God.

**Love of Learning**

 The fifth Barre3 core value that is most aligned with my current experience as a college student is *Love of Learning*. This core value is incredibly important to me because I believe that as humans we are constantly growing and evolving in our endless pursuit of knowledge. I am a lifelong student in many aspects of my life from my academic studies, to my personal relationships, my faith, and my role as a leader.

As an instructor at Barre3, I am committed to serving clients in alignment with the needs of their bodies as well as the demands of the ever changing fitness world. As new research and developments emerge about best practices in activating specific muscle groups and preventing injury, it is my responsibility to adapt my classes to accommodate and improve. Continual education is a core aspect of Barre3 that allows us to be flexible and open to change as strong leaders. Adaptability and openness to change are also qualities that are associated with long term cognitive growth and maintenance. The Barre3 Lehigh Valley instructor team meets several times each quarter for team workshops, classes with master trainers, and evaluations that serve to help us grow as instructors as we identify areas in our own teaching practices that we can enhance. The vulnerability that comes along with identifying my weaknesses and being open to criticism and constructive feedback has made me a more resilient and open minded person. It can be very nerve wracking and intimidating when master trainers from the home office in Portland, Oregon come to our studio to evaluate our teaching. However, opening myself up to hearing the feedback of others has allowed me to learn and grow. The commitment to being a lifelong learner means being willing to be a critical thinker when considering new information, rather than someone who is closed off and believes they have mastered their craft. Without being open to change, my growth as a person and a leader would plateau.

 In addition to the personal aspects of my role as a Barre3 instructor, my position as a member of a larger team has been equally as important in shaping my character. I learned the importance of working with a team at a young age because of my background in dance. Every member of the production from the dancers to the set designers and lighting technicians were vital to help the show run smoothly. Collaboration, support, and willingness to learn from others helped every team member to work in harmony. I believe I am a more humble leader now because I understand the hard work that goes into supporting a team even when you are not the “star” of the show. The lessons I learned from working towards a common goal in my dance background have translated into my current role as a member of the Barre3 team in my town. The strength behind the Barre3 Lehigh Valley team is that each member is selfless in their efforts to collaborate towards a greater goal of serving the community. I have learned to communicate effectively and truly listen to others in order to create trusting relationships with all of my peers. Each team member carries personal responsibility to step up and help one another out in the event that we would be sick or injured. I do not think that our team would maintain that level of morale if we were not open to growth and learning from others.

 The lessons of collaboration and personal responsibility that I have learned as a team member at Barre3 carry into all other aspects of my life, and shape how I show up to serve others. The moral theologian Pinckaers (1995) states that “our freedom reaches maturity precisely with our capacity to balance the twofold dimension of personality and openness to others, interiority and outreach, living ‘for self’ and ‘for others’” (p. 367). Each and every day I am working towards a balance of giving generously to honor my own needs and the needs of others. As I previously discussed, I have learned that it is easier to identify with and assist in finding solutions for the problems of other people when I have a strong foundational understanding of myself and my emotions. I am a better friend, student, daughter, and partner because I exemplify compassion and care towards others when they need me, just as God intended us to love with sympathy and a tender heart.

**Make it Happen**

The sixth Barre3 core value, *Make it Happen*, encourages personal motivation, accountability and determination. In order to work towards the goals that you want to achieve, it is imperative that you have the internal drive to pursue them, without external forces telling you to do so. This is directly related to the motivation required in all of my educational pursuits from my studies in Psychology to continued education at Barre3. At Barre3, we believe that making it happen for yourself means that you are your own best teacher. Although there are instructors to guide you and suggest modifications every step of the class, it is ultimately up to you to decide what feels best in your body. Listening to how your body feels leads to greater body awareness. However, it is important to acknowledge that this assessment will change every day. It can vary depending on whether or not you worked out the day before, if you spent a majority of your day sitting, or have imbalances from previous injuries. As Barre3 instructors, we empower clients to hold themselves accountable to push to the level that makes them feel successful in their workout while staying safe in their bodies.

In addition to in studio practices, the core value, make it happen, extends into all aspects of one’s life. Our clients are not only members of Barre3 but valuable parts of many different communities from workplace teams, to religious groups and more. We believe that feeling empowered to make it happen means that you do not wait for an opportunity to come into your life, you create it! In the same way, a relationship with God requires one to actively invite God into their life rather than wait for him to exert influence or show a sign of his work. God works in many ways, even when his work is not yet apparent to the individual. But, the relationship requires diligent attention and effort on the part of the individual who hopes to deepen their relationship with Him. Through prayers and devotion one can embody the core value, make it happen. In turn, the reassurement and strength you receive through your relationship with God allows you to build value and make a difference in the communities that you contribute to.

The way that I build value, and make a difference is by being a charismatic, and adaptable leader. I believe that one of my greatest characteristics is my ability to radiate gratitude and joy that is infectious to everyone around me. By sharing my internal light, I am able to inspire others to find their own reasons to be grateful and positive. I make it happen by showing up wholeheartedly for everyone around me. In the current state of our nation, given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been challenged to make it happen in order to continue serving the Barre3 community, my friends and family. Our instructors at Barre3 Lehigh Valley have adapted to teaching in an online format via Zoom in order to maintain our commitment to stay connected with our mission. It is extremely important, given this time of social isolation that we find ways to connect, even in non conventional ways. I manifested the core value, make it happen, by adapting my home office into a studio where I set up a space to record classes. Even when presented with challenging circumstances, such as the studio being closed to follow social distancing guidelines, our team worked together to ensure that we could stay present and connected. In addition, my personal life requires me to apply the values instilled within the Barre3 principle, make it happen. It is important for me to reach out to my family and truly listen when they tell me how they are feeling so that we can maintain a strong and supported relationship. Making it happen does not always have to involve grand gestures, but rather the simple things that you do on a daily basis to fulfill your purpose.

As I approach the end of my senior year at DeSales University and look towards the future, I am excited by the ways that I can continue to create opportunities in my life. I am pursuing a Master’s of Organization Development and Leadership so that I can continue to serve others and help them along their lifelong journey of learning as they grow into their full potential as a leader. The core value, make it happen, has shown me that even when the circumstances are not ideal, it is important to adapt to continue pursuing your goals.

**Optimism**

The core values that serve as the foundation for Barre3 have also become integral parts of my personal mission statement. In this paper, I have demonstrated the ways that they are related to Christianity, the Salesian tradition and teachings of Saint Francis DeSales, virtuous living, freedom, and growth. But the impact of this learning does not stop with me, an individual who has a unique experience as a Barre3 instructor and a Christian. Rather, these principles matter and can be operated within your own life regardless of what age, sex, gender, etc. you are!

I believe the broad focus of Barre3 is rooted within the practice of optimism, mindful awareness, and gratitude. Research demonstrates that positive psychological well being is related to overall body wellness. More specifically, “dispositional optimism—the generalized expectation that good things will happen—has been linked with reduced risks of chronic health conditions, especially vascular factors and disease” (Kim et al., 2017, p. 21). There is limited research in the field of health in relation to positive attributes such as optimism, because research is typically focused on the negative results of illnesses, such as depression, on mortality rates. However, beginning in 2004, 70,021 women ranging from ages 30-55 participated in a longitudinal study conducted by Kim et al. (2017) measuring optimism. The researchers utilized the Life Orientation Test- Revised to measure optimism, rated on a 5 point Likert scale. Higher scores indicated a greater level of optimism characterized by agreeing with positive statements and rejecting negative statements. Kim et al. (2017) collected data on each participant's self reported health conditions including “high cholesterol, hypertension, type 2 diabetes mellitus, myo- cardial infarction, stroke, cancer, and body mass index” (p. 22). The study results demonstrated a strong positive correlation between optimism and decreased risk of mortality that was statistically significant across all major causes of death analyzed, including cancer, stroke, infection, respiratory disease, and heart disease. These findings are important, because they suggest that actions within our control, including choosing to be optimistic have broad impacts on health. When combined with other factors such as healthy eating, exercise, and a gratitude practice an individual may be able to reduce their risk of death from major health conditions. Kim et al. (2017) cite interventions such as “structured classroom-style instruction and...brief paper-and-pencil exercises in which people are asked to write about a best possible version of themselves” which have been researched and suggested as ways to improve optimism.

**Gratitude**

The practice of actively choosing an optimistic viewpoint can also be considered a gratitude practice. At Barre3 we practice gratitude throughout the entire class by celebrating the accomplishments of our strong bodies, but it is even more intentionally focused within the last ten minutes of class, stretch and breath. During this time, the instructor cues the clients to bring their focus back internally. They are encouraged to once again take a scan of how they feel, both physically and emotionally, after completing a workout that challenged their physical and mental stamina. Four minutes of class are devoted entirely to breathwork, which allows the mind and the body to cool down and recenter. This intentional time is just as important as the moments of push within class when your heart rate is elevated and you are dripping sweat. The quiet time allows each and every person in the room to slow down and reflect on what they are grateful for, even something as simple as showing up to take 60 minutes just for self care. At Barre3 we acknowledge that with the demands of a fast paced life these few minutes are often one of the only times throughout the day that a busy mama or stressed student gets to slow down. However, taking time for a gratitude practice does not require the absence of stressors or challenges and hardships within your life. Emmons and Hill (2001) explain “gratefulness is not a state in which suffering and adversity are selectively ignored. Rather, gratefulness makes us focus on the opportunity that adversity offers, the opportunity of authentic spiritual growth” (p. 8). We grow in character, and even further in our practice as Christians when we take time to express our gratitudes to our Creator for our gifts *and* the challenges that are set before us. Gratitude can be taking the time to admire a sunset or a work of art, or finding the guiding light or glimmer of hope that we can be thankful for in moments of tragedy and darkness. When we choose optimism, Emmons and Hill (2001) claim we see that “a ladder of gratitude exists and it leads to a heavenly state- if only we can retrieve that ladder” (p. 9). It is often a spiritual practice for Christians that guides you to seek and find positivity in the world around you. As faithful Chrsitians, we are called to humble ourselves to see the good in those around us and to work towards goodness within ourselves. Interestingly, when we practice gratitude it becomes easier to find things to be grateful for, whether big or small. Acknowledging that we are a gift from God causes us to “respond with humility, awe, and recognition of how blessed we are to have the opportunity to learn, grow, love, create, share, and help others” (Emmons & Hill, 2001, p. 19).

In conclusion, reflecting internally about our relationship with God brings us back to the foundations of Christianity and Barre3. We are individuals who are *Committed to Real*, to be honest with ourselves, and to “be who we are, and be that well”. We uphold a culture and a community where *Everybody Matters* and we practice humility by remaining *Humbly Confident* without neglecting our purpose to serve God. We *Give Generously*, not only to ourselves through self care but also to those around us, even if they are difficult to love. We continue in our endless pursuit for knowledge and *Love of Learning* that allows us to grow in character. And finally, we *Make It Happen* by actively pursuing and engaging in a prayerful devoted relationship with God and trusting that we have the power to make a difference in our communities.

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