

## Assembly 2014 05 07: Superheroes and Superpower

Good morning gentlemen!

Today I would like to talk about **superheroes and superpower**. No, you were not mistaken. I did say “superheroes and superpower”! Cinema screens have been dominated by superhero movies lately. A few weeks ago, it was Captain America: The Winter Soldier. Now it is The Amazing Spider-man 2. Last year, it was Iron Man 3, and a few weeks later, it will be X-men: Days of Future Past, just to name a few. You might be wondering: does your Principal watch such movies? In fact, I do, even though I am not a diehard fan! Such movies are usually entertaining and they help me relax as I get to escape temporarily from my stressful working life.

But while the elaborate and imaginative set designs, the action sequences, the explosions, etc. are dazzling to the **eyes**, it is often when there are **human dramas** (*love and hate, trust and betrayal, human dilemmas* etc.), or references to **issues relevant to our real life** (*freedom, power, the energy crisis, terrorism, pollution, etc.*) that they **appeal also to our hearts and minds**.

I am not sure why we like such superhero movies so much. Perhaps it represents our longing to be free from our physical limitations. But the interesting thing is, our superheroes **do not get to achieve their objectives more easily** even though they are given their superpowers! Instead, they are often matched by villains with nearly equal superpowers and/or required to overcome much greater obstacles to accomplish nearly impossible tasks. And it is in **this** way that the movies get interesting. Imagine how boring a movie will be if our superheroes win each fight and accomplish every objective **super-easily**. **Perhaps there is a lesson for life here somewhere**. While we long for an easy life with no setbacks, a life in which everything is plain sailing, maybe it is precisely when things are uncertain and difficult, when we need to be really brave, work really hard,

and **to display the finest qualities of a human being in the face of adversity**, that our lives become interesting, even meaningful!

When my son was your age, he often asked me this question: "**What superpower would you want?**" Then we explored, argued and joked about the pros, the cons and the implications of different superpowers. But this is of course all fantasy. So while it is fun to fantasize about superpowers, **we might also want to realistically ponder about acquiring some less-super, but nonetheless very fine human powers:**

**For example,**

Instead of Spiderman's superpower of rapid self-healing, how about the "**superpower**" of **resilience** so that you won't give up a worthwhile fight easily despite setbacks and failures?

Instead of the physical strength of the Incredible Hulk when he is angry, how about the **emotional strength to stay calm** even when provoked?

Instead of the powerful ironman suit which is in fact an expensive toy of a rich man who never manages to grow up, how about the "**superpower**" of **maturity?**

Instead of Thor's weather manipulating hammer, how about the "**superpower**" to **bring peace during chaos and great disagreements?**

Instead of the speed of Flash, how about the "**superpower**" of **patience and slow contemplation?**

Instead of Electro's power to harness electric energy, how about the "**superpower**" to **harness our inner energies** and get them to **concentrate on tasks requiring our full attention?**

Instead Captain America's superhuman powers designed for an age when things seemed to be either black or white, right or wrong as clear cut as the

Allies against the Nazis in WWII, how about the “**superpower**” to handle **ambiguity and diversity of viewpoints**?

While such “superpowers” seem rather mundane when compared to the superpowers of superheroes, they nonetheless represent some of the finest powers human beings can possess. They can't be acquired overnight e.g. by an injection like in the movies, but with hard work and dedication, they are within our grasp. **And because we need to sacrifice more in order to get such powers, we are in fact more worthy of our powers than many superheroes of theirs.**

Speaking of superheroes, see if you can guess who this superhero is based on the following description:

She has:

- the superpower of patience,
- the superpower of enduring great pain and extended periods of inconvenience and vulnerability,
- the superpower to feel personally the need of another human being and to put that person's interest in front of hers.

**In short, she possesses the superpower to love.** Her name starts with an "M".

**Yes, this superhero is your mother.** The coming Sunday is Mother's Day so please remember to express your appreciation of her superpower of love and your gratitude towards what she has done for you **superbly**. And if you can promise to develop a “superpower” of your own, like those mentioned earlier in return for her love, then all the better!

**So once again, “what superpower do you want?”**