

## **Fortitude**

The cardinal virtue of *Fortitude* (courage) involves practicing what is good and just when it is difficult or even dangerous. A person of fortitude practices patience when meeting obstacles while working to do what is right, even when others criticize them or remain silent. Fortitude is visible in our Catholic schools whenever we see persons defending truth and kindness in challenging situations.

Fortitude is about making good choices every day. Think about the mother or father who constantly chooses to put their family first, even when she or he is tired. Often, it takes fortitude to do the right thing. For example, playing fair when others are not following the rules, standing up for someone who is being bullied in the schoolyard, patiently doing difficult homework, helping a student or classmate over and over until she or he understands.

We need good examples of fortitude. As Christians, we look first to Jesus, *the way, the truth and the life* (Jn 14, 6). He always did what was right, even when it cost Him His life. He trusted that God the Father would take care of Him, and was raised from death to resurrection. We have the saints, who were people of great fortitude. Many of them endured years of suffering as they worked and prayed for love of God and neighbour. Think about parents who wake up every night to look after their crying babies or sick children – this too is fortitude, as is when a weary soldier faces their fear and goes out to meet the enemy in battle. Immigrants and refugees are often people of great fortitude. Much fortitude is required in leaving one's homeland to live, study and work in a new language and culture.

We, the followers of Jesus walk in the footsteps of the saints. The Holy Spirit helps us with the grace we need to make this journey, and with the gift of fortitude at Confirmation. The Spirit calls all of us lead by our example of fortitude in many different ways: to speak the truth, even when others are pressuring us to lie; not to gossip when others speak badly about someone and expect us to do the same; to say no to inappropriate language, drinking or drugs, even if it means we might be laughed at; to stand up for those who have no one to stand up for them. Fortitude is about doing what is right, even when it is much easier not to.

Practicing fortitude is challenging, but it brings deep peace that comes from knowing we have done the right thing. Imagine a world where everyone practiced fortitude! We would be nations of quiet heroes – what Pope John Paul II called a “civilization of love.” This is what God has called to be, and His help is there for us – in the spiritual food of the Eucharist; in the forgiveness and healing power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in our parish community of faith, whose members pray for us every day.

As members of Christ's body (the Church), we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to live as sons and daughters of God. With the help of His Church, we can practice fortitude to transform our school, community and world. We can be sure that every act of fortitude for love of the Gospel glorifies God in our humanity and stores up for us treasures in heaven!