

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

FORTITUDE



Virtue of the Month:
Fortitude

Saintly Exemplar:
St. Bernadette



Painting: Lourdes, France

Sacred Scripture:

“Be strong in the Lord and **in the strength of His power**. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...

Take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to ... **stand firm**...Fasten the belt of truth around your waist and put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Eph. 6:10–11; 13-14

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

“*Fortitude* or courage is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. ‘The Lord is my strength and my song.’ Jesus said, ‘In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world’” (CCC 1808).

What is the virtue of fortitude?

Fortitude is the acquired habit of showing strength or courage, persistence, toughness, determination, a firmness of mind or spirit in the challenges of life.

- A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good. We develop virtues through education, good acts frequently done, perseverance in struggle.
- The *natural* virtue of fortitude makes people willing to be persistent over a period of time in facing setbacks, failures, and misunderstandings, in order to accomplish a goal that they have set for themselves. The ultimate goal of a natural virtue is a good, decent life in this world.
- The *supernatural* virtue of fortitude enables someone, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, to face extreme danger and endure life threatening difficulty to achieve the ultimate goal of salvation or help others achieve the same. This courage is founded upon Christ’s promise of eternal life with Him.
- Fortitude has two components – endurance and enterprise. Endurance helps us to keep going when we are fatigued, suffering, weak, exhausted, or facing discouragement. Enterprise helps us to undertake great deeds while withstanding hardship. Enterprise requires initiative to see a need and take on the responsibility to carry out a plan for the good of others.

Why do we need the virtue of fortitude?

- Fortitude allows us to push ourselves to do any difficult or distasteful undertaking especially when it is inconvenient.
- Fortitude helps us to resist fear, foolhardiness, indifference and the single focus on selfish interests for pleasure or other’s admiration.
- We need fortitude to overcome fear of bodily pain, temporal loss, ridicule, what people will think or say, and the displeasure of friends. It is not easy to go against what is popular. In some situations, through fear, we can yield to what we know to be sinful.
- It takes courage to stand up for what is right. Hope in the face of difficulty is what makes courage. The most courageous actions are based upon hope in eternal life.
- The self-confidence we gain through the development of personal God-given talents, helps to live out the virtue of fortitude.
- Our task is to ask for and cooperate with God’s grace in developing the virtue of fortitude, and allowing Him to perfect it in us.

Suggestions for teaching the virtue of fortitude at home:

Steps in learning and developing the virtue of fortitude are:

1. Provide children with opportunities not only to do things requiring effort but activities that demand that they stand firm.
2. Encourage your children to undertake, on their own initiative, a limited number of worthwhile activities that will improve them while requiring continuous effort.
3. Teach children to take a position, to accept good principles, to be people capable of practicing what they think and what they preach.
4. Parents must be examples to their children. Be aware of the need to personally improve but balance that need with family responsibilities.
5. As a family, adopt a motto such as: *God has a plan, everything happens for a reason.* In trying times, *never give up*, and *trust in God's love and provident care.*

Teach your children that a deep faith, founded on daily prayer helps strengthen the virtue of fortitude, especially when it is needed in difficult circumstances. To encourage the self-confidence that directs personal actions, teach your children to develop the talents God has given to them. Trust that if God asks or expects us to do something, He provides the graces, means and the ability to do it.

- Let your children handle their own responsibilities rather than running interference for them. Let them assume the appropriate consequences for their poor choices in behavior or academics.
- Life is not fair and success is not guaranteed. Life has its ups and downs, triumphs and failures. If you create an artificial environment where everything is perfect for your child, your child will never learn how to persevere in the face of hardship. Help them accept disappointment with family, friends, teachers and role models and defeat in contests and competitions. It is important to remember that we are loved because of who we are not because of what we do. Never fail to show unconditional love...whether in success or failure.

Fortitude has two components:

1. Endurance

- Many times the practice of fortitude involves short inconveniences or discomforts. It may be listening cheerfully to a boring conversation, doing your family chores, or completing your homework before enjoying personal activities.
- Involvement with sports, gardening, farming or other demanding activities help children learn to push on when tired, thirsty, cold or hot. Lessons and the needed practice for music, dance, art, or skating develop fortitude. Effort needs to be made to stick with a team or activity until the end of the season or completion of the project.

2. Enterprise

- When inspired by the Holy Spirit, enterprise helps us to undertake great deeds while withstanding hardship. Enterprise requires initiative to see a need, then to take on the responsibility to carry out the plan for the good of others. Think of the great missionaries, martyrs, explorers, researchers, and inventors who are examples of fortitude: St. Francis Xavier, St. John the Baptist, Sts. Perpetua & Felicity, Christopher Columbus, Marco Polo, Madame Curie, Charles Lindbergh, the Wright Brothers, and Henry Ford, Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II. www.newadvent.org.
- Encourage the initiatives of your children that serve the needs of others. You will be allowing them the freedom to 'stretch their wings' while under your supervision.

Adapted from *Raise Happy Children, Teach Them Virtue*, Mary Ann Budnick, R. B. Media Inc.

Fortitude

St. Bernadette

FAST FACTS

Also Known As:

Patron of Sick People
Patron against Illness
Patron against Poverty
Patron of People Ridiculed For Piety
Patron of the Poverty Stricken
Patron of Shepherds
Patron of Lourdes, France

Feast Day:

April 16



Prayer of St. Bernadette

O my God, when I encounter affliction, teach me to persevere. Let affliction strengthen my faith, fortify my hope, and purify my love. Grant me the grace to bear my affliction with fortitude and to desire no other comforter but You. Amen.