

# LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



## A Column by Fr. Tom

### Life in Christ – Part 14: Fortitude – The Good Is Always Worth The Cost

We have already discussed the Cardinal Virtues of Prudence and Justice. Now our study takes us to the exploration of the Virtue of Fortitude.

When we discussed the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Love, we discovered that not only do Faith and Hope spring from Love, but that all three work together to build up the Christian in God's love. We will find a similar interaction between the Cardinal Virtues as well. This reality is most prevalent in the Virtue of Fortitude.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), "Fortitude 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." [CCC, 1808]

We can see from this definition that Fortitude relies, first of all, on Prudence, as do all the Cardinal Virtues. Fortitude ensures "firmness" and "constancy" in doing what is right, and we have seen that Prudence helps us to know and do what is right. [cf. *Looking Through Stained Glass*, "Life in Christ – Part 12: Dear Prudence, Open Up Your Eyes," May 19, 2019] When one possesses both Prudence and Fortitude, one perseveres "in the pursuit of the good." If Prudence helps us know and do what is right, Fortitude helps us *keep* doing what is right, even

if that requires great effort on our part.

The practice of Fortitude relies also on the Virtue of Justice. We can especially see this dynamic in the last line of the above definition: "[Fortitude] disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause." We discovered last week that Justice means giving both God and neighbor what is due and includes promoting the common good for all persons. [cf. *Looking Through Stained Glass*, "Life in Christ – Part 13: Justice is NOT Blind," May 26, 2019] It is Justice that helps us determine "a just cause," and it is Fortitude that helps us to pursue that just cause, even to the point of giving up our lives. As an example, one might think of Jesus giving up his life for the salvation of our souls. Certainly Jesus' act of self-sacrifice for our redemption exemplifies both Justice and Fortitude. Indeed, Jesus is always our model for all the Virtues.

We will discuss Temperance next week, but this Virtue too works together with Fortitude and can be seen in the definition. You may already know that Temperance helps us to moderate pleasure in order to keep our values in the right order. In the definition of Fortitude above, we read, "[Fortitude] strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life." One can easily see how the Virtue of Temperance would assist in the work of Fortitude. In next week's column on Temperance, we will discuss in further detail how these two Virtues work together.

