

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT SERIES 5

Fortitude or Perseverance:

The gift of fortitude, also known as perseverance, is a powerful tool that enables us to stand strong in our faith, even in the face of adversity. This gift grants us the courage and perseverance to continue collaborating with Jesus in serving others. As we reflect on the gift of fortitude, let's explore its significance and examples of its application.

Fortitude helps us grow in faith, hope, and love, and to cast off doubt, despair, and destructive patterns of thinking. It prevents us from becoming half-baked Christians and sustains us in trying circumstances, enabling us to hold fast to our faith and good works. A person with courage is willing to take risks and stand up for their faith, even if it means facing rejection, verbal abuse, or physical harm.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes fortitude as a gift that "strengthens the soul against the resistance of those who oppose the good, whether interior or exterior" (CCC 1831), such as the evil spirits of our times that seek to lead us away from God's path. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, these evil influences can manifest in various ways, including improper dressing, human respect, and the tendency to seek comfort and sensual pleasures. Fortitude gives us the moral courage to stand against these influences, strengthening our souls against internal and external challenges and enabling us to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of our salvation and service to others.

Let's consider a few examples that illustrate the gift of fortitude. St Pope John Paul II shared three inspiring stories that demonstrate the importance of this gift. Firstly, think of a woman who is already a mother of a large family and is advised to undergo an abortion. Despite the difficulties and pressure, she firmly replies, "No." She knows that the new life conceived in her womb is a value too great and sacred to give in to such pressure.

Another example is that of a man who is promised freedom and an easy career if he denies his principles or approves something against his sense of honesty. Despite threats and attractions, he courageously replies, "No." This man stands firm in his convictions, demonstrating the gift of fortitude.

We can also learn from the story of St. Stanislaus Kostka, the patron saint of young people, students, and seminarians. Coming from a noble family, St. Stanislaus chose to follow Christ and join the Jesuits, despite firm opposition from his circle. With great love and firmness, he realized his resolution, contained in the motto, "*Ad maiora natus sum*" ("*I was born for greater things*"). He travelled from Vienna to Rome on foot, escaping from pursuers who tried to force him to abandon his intentions.

Dear friends, even today, there are many remarkable individuals around the world whose lives are a testament to the power of fortitude. We may know someone personally or have heard stories of people who, despite immense challenges and suffering, have remained steadfast in their faith. These hidden saints inspire us to persevere in our own struggles. Let's reflect on their examples and ask ourselves: If they can remain faithful in the face of adversity, can't we do the same? Let's humbly ask the Lord for the gift of fortitude, that we may be strengthened and empowered to live out our faith with courage and conviction.

Come, Holy Spirit, pour on us your gift of Fortitude. May we always love and follow you, come what may. Amen.