

Dear St. Columbkille family:

Greetings from the Iona area in great Fort Myers hoping that you and your family are doing well and are in good health. I am doing well after my back injury, and I think that it was a reaction to my body on turning 50, I know some of you said I am still a kid but I am doubting that now.

As Florida's news surprises us every day with more positive cases of Covid-19 we hope that the death rates will not increase and we will be able to overcome the impact in our lives, with the help of God.

I would like to share a reflection about the virtue of fortitude which we certainly need at this time in our lives. Fortitude is a virtue that is admired by even the non-religious. Even people who think temperance is for the overly pious, or consider meekness a weakness, and scoff at humility, believe that fortitude is a laudable attribute. For thousands of years, cultures have honored the courageous, recognizing the hero that finds the balance mean between fear and impetuosity.

The Catechism tells us, "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". (CCC1808) Living a virtuous life requires courage. This is something we need to teach more frequently. The call to fortitude is not just in tales about knights or the stories of the martyrs, but in the life of every believer.

God gives the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Jesus possesses the gifts in their fullness and shares them with us, as he shares his messianic mission. God does not call us to a mission without giving us what we need to accomplish it. The gift of fortitude strengthens and perfects all the virtues, because practicing the virtues requires strength and perseverance.

The Catechism tells us that fortitude helps us face that which terrifies us most: death. "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" (CCC1808).

In his General Audience on November 15, 1978, St. John Paul II spoke about the hidden acts of courage we may not see: a woman who rejects advice to have an abortion or a man who chooses his ethics over a promotion. Fortitude is not just for soldiers and explorers; it is for every Christian. He said: "The virtue of fortitude always requires a certain overcoming of human weakness and above all of fear. Man, in fact, by nature, spontaneously fears danger, displeasure, suffering. Hence courageous men and women need to be sought not only on battlefields, but also in hospitals wards or on a bed of pain. The virtue of fortitude proceeds hand in hand with the capacity to sacrifice oneself."

The Christian life is difficult, even if we lived in a perfect culture, because we are fallen and battle against the evil. Having all this abundant information about Christian life and all our beautiful teachings the church has collected, perfected, purified by discernment with the help of the Holy Spirit and transmitted by the magisterium we are still in need to comprehend the serious impact of the missing of virtues in our lives.

The Pandemic is helping us to see more clearly the lack of understanding of Christian principles we may have learned one day, but we were not simply acknowledging as an essential part of our lives. The abuses of power, corruption, selfishness, manipulation of consciences, public insults, blackmail, the use of intimidation, discrimination, physical and verbal violence, disrespect, fear and abuses of all

kind found at all levels of our society invites men and women of good will to search for the virtue of fortitude to resist and overcome as people of faith the current ethical and sanitization crisis. The evil of abortion is not the only problem in the world. In this context, we Catholics can make the difference expanding our defense of life to all injustice present in our society, institutions and even families, otherwise our moral fight is hypocritical and our credibility is diminished. We need the virtue of fortitude to offer to the next generation the best possible testimony of following of Jesus Christ, the savior.

May the Lord protect and bless all of you, good Christians.

Fr. Lorenzo