



THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE – PART IV

It reads in the Book of the Apocalypse that there are stars that will fall down from Heaven. One of those stars then opens the abyss and up comes steam. Then it says that scorpions will also come out and they will run out across the earth. They have a message. They are to go out and punish and persecute all those who do not have the sign of God on their forehead. Almost all of the Fathers of the Church tell us that this refers to major people in the Church, i.e., bishops, archbishops, priests and religious who have fallen away from fidelity to God and the Faith. They are the fallen stars, and they come down and cause confusion of doctrine with heresy. An example of a fallen star would be Martin Luther and all those heretics (who deny the True Faith) who cause confusion in the Church and seek to promote false doctrines. The smoke coming out of the abyss causes people not to know what the Truth is. At the same time it darkens the sun of the teaching of the Church, and it also fights the Holy Father and the authority of the Church.

There is an answer to stars falling from heaven: It is that the stars fixed in the heavens are those that are faithful to God and the Church. So the remedy for lukewarm souls is the zealotry for the weak—the strong, for the timid—the brave, for the wicked—the holy, for the apostate—the apostle and for the fickle—the **virtue of fortitude**.

The Church in the world is sorely in need of more priests and leaders who are men of God imbued with the spirit of zeal and fortitude. (Cardinal Josef Mindszenty, Cardinal Joseph Kung, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, Fr. John Anthony Hardon, S.J., etc.) They are valued in battle. Such persons will enduringly resist difficulties of mind and body while persistently advancing, defending, and sharing the truth that makes man free. The actions are conduct that makes men saints.

St. Thomas says that fortitude is especially concerned with overcoming fear of performing difficult deeds in the cause of righteousness. This virtue will prevent a soldier of Christ (above all an officer for Christ such as a bishop or priest) from fleeing the field of battle, from betraying the brethren, when real or imaginary obstacles present themselves. The great fault of the spiritual wimps today is that they succumb easily to irrational fear and leave the field of battle to enemy forces. They rationalize their betrayal as prudence, which is another word for cowardice, for a man has an infinite capacity for self-deception. Kierkegaard once said, “God has put a limit on man’s intelligence, but He has not been able to put a limit on man’s stupidity.”

This moral deformity reveals a lack of faith in Christ and a distrust of the assurance that Christ gave His followers when He said, “Have confidence, I have overcome the world.”

Christ says to Peter, “Why did you doubt?” Christ had to give the Apostles a Transfiguration to strengthen them for the coming of the Passion. Notice Our Blessed Mother is never in those strengthening’s of the faith? Why? It is because Mary’s faith is unshakable. Mary doesn’t need all those miracles but the Apostles do. Their faith was weak and Christ was going to strengthen it for the coming Passion. We need it today more than ever before.

Fortitude is not merely a passive virtue according to St. Thomas Aquinas. It is not outside the genus of fortitude to go on the offensive for the sovereign good of man and the glory of God.

St. Joan of Arc, a mere girl of nineteen years old, unprepared by nature to do battle against hardened veteran soldiers, nevertheless fearlessly followed the will of God and drove the foreign infidels out of Catholic France. In the beginning Joan resisted and protested her heavenly voices. She said “I am a poor girl; I do not know how to ride or fight.” The voices kept repeating to her, “It is God who commands it.” Such was her **fortitude** that she courageously faced all manner of trials, humiliations and repugnance’s. She was finally sent the painful death of being burned at the stake as a witch heretic, by the order, notice, of wicked Catholic bishops. So as to remain faithful to God’s Will she went through all of that suffering and had to be reinstated by St. Pius X into the calendar of saints.

Mark Twain was attracted by her life and wrote a book on her. He was enthralled by her character.

So Joan, at the words “It is God who commands it,” rode forward to victory under the banner which bore the words “Jesus and Mary.” The banner also had a picture of God the Father, with angels kneeling presenting Him with the Fleur de Lis.

