



THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE *cont'd...*

What is it most that God loves about zealous people? They are serious about religion, salvation and the glory of God Himself; like Mary, their souls are always ready to magnify the Lord, to sing His praises, to do His will, to serve their fellowman for love of God and Christ. They have a total single-mindedness, a love of Christ and His Church and a self-effacing love like that of St. John the Baptist who could say, "He must increase and I must decrease." That's the love of zeal. He was the friend of the bridegroom. The zealous adhere to God in holiness. They are loyal to God even to the excess of giving their lives in the honor of God in martyrdom. It was the perfect self-effacement of love. "Greater love than this no man has than to lay down his life for a friend." The zealous are willing to give away the most precious possession they have, their lives, for the love of God. The zealous face up to responsibilities courageously, persevering like the three youths in the fiery furnace that Nebuchadnezzar threw them into when they said, "we will not bow down to your idol of gold and our God will protect us..." God protected them and sent an angel into the furnace with them.

The zealous practice the zeal of Christ Himself for He displayed it His entire life, "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me." That was a total example of true zeal. He left His father and mother at age twelve and stayed in the temple and then Mary and Joseph found Him. They ask Him, "Why?" Christ answers, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" This is a giving of His total life to God. Then when the temple was desecrated because of the money changers in the temple, many of whom were defrauding their own people in God's house, well, He whipped those money changers and said, "My house is a house of prayer and you have made it a den of thieves." The apostles remembered the prophecy, "The zeal of his Father's house has eaten him up."

Zealous persons are not scoffers. They are unlike Galiel, the Roman Counsel of Achaia who did not care for any of those things. They are not like Pilate, who couldn't wait to hear the answer to his question "What is truth?" but rushed off to take care of the affairs that came with being the governor.

For the scoffers of our time it doesn't matter whether God exists or not, whether they worship the idol of gold today or the idol of pleasures tomorrow. God is nauseated by their very religious neutrality, by their lukewarmness and indifference. He has proclaimed a severe judgment against these spiritually anemic uncommitted so-called Christians. We read in the Apocalypse, "I know your works, they are neither hot nor cold but because you are tepid I am vomiting you out of my mouth."

The devotee's of the Gnostic religion of our times displayed dissent against revealed sacred realities. In the game of ridicule they say one religion is as good as another. They reject God's word and they order their lives according to their own whims. We now come to the virtue of fortitude.

THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE

The virtue of fortitude is that precious gift we receive from the Holy Spirit to the Apostles after they had their nine days of prayer at Pentecost. The Church needs that virtue today more than ever before. Fortitude, according to St. Ambrose "is not lacking in courage, for alone fortitude defends the honor of the virtues and guards their behests. Fortitude is that which wages an inexorable war on all vice. It is undeterred by toil, brave in the face of danger, steeled against pleasures, unyielding to lusts, avoiding covetousness as a deformity that weakens virtue."

St. Thomas Aquinas says "fortitude is a firmness of mind and will in the face of assaults of all kinds."

St. Augustine says "fortitude is that intensity which has a relationship to love which dreads no hardship, not even death."

More next week. God bless you.

