



MEETING SIX

THE CALL TO FORTITUDE

INTRODUCTION

Fortitude in the natural sense means a firmness of spirit and vigor of character so that we can, for example, endure the rigors of mountain climbing, a difficult hike or a difficult situation with good Spirit.

The virtue of fortitude is natural fortitude infused with sanctifying grace so that our will is strengthened and our desires (the irascible appetites) are controlled as we pursue some arduous or difficult good, even when faced with danger, including the danger of death.

THEOLOGY

Fortitude presupposes our vulnerability to injury of any sort. It may be an assault upon us, a violation of our inner Peace or what happens to us or is done against us by a stronger power. If there is no vulnerability, there is no fortitude.

The ultimate injury is death and it is reflected in every lesser injury. Therefore, all fortitude is ultimately referable to death.

The virtue of fortitude means the control of daring and of fear so that we are able to pursue the difficult good: heaven/our sanctification. The acts of fortitude deal either with during or attacking and how we behave and the motive for which we suffer injury.

Enduring or in a slightly different context, to continue on lastingly, means clinging to good during physical and/or spiritual suffering. It is not passive, it means preserving serenity and cheerfulness in spite of the injury being done. When we endure well, we keep out sadness and confusion of heart and grow to hold on to a good and, in the process; we acquire a deeper and more essential intactness. Therefore, fortitude, though in endurance may seem passive, it does presuppose an inner and growing healthy vitality.

Attacking means to act to fight an evil. It may be in taking a quick, brave action against all odds it may mean shedding one's own devil it does involve risks but it has nothing to do with a daredevil spirit, which acts imprudently. Nor does it have anything to do with an arrogant spirit, which expects other, including God, to follow what the person seeks. The attacker bravely faces injury and risk for good; there the person must have the virtues of justice and prudence to guide and temper the acts of fortitude.

In either endurance or attack, the person must also have constancy and perseverance to carry through and finally defeat the enemy.

THE VICES OPPOSED TO THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE ARE:

- a. Cowardice of the refusal to suffer.
- b. Fearlessness or an indifference to fear that is not avoiding the dangers we ought to avoid.
- c. Recklessness or the attack when we cannot overcome fearlessness and recklessness both evidence lack of prudence.

The true Christian loves his/her own life and loves it with the natural, self-asserting forces of the body and with the moral forces of the spirit as well. One loves life because and to the extent one is good. Therefore, we love joy, health, success, happiness, etc. We can only give these up for a higher good which, if lost, would injure our inner integrity even more.

We see, we know, we value these goods and our own life amid them. As we perceive more deeply, we see created things with an insuperable sadness unless we appreciate the paradox of the human condition: we die to live.

The integral parts of fortitude always refer ultimately to the dangers of death. The potential parts or related virtues refer to lesser dangers St. Thomas gives us six:

1. Magnanimity - this is a greatness of soul or nobility of character of a superior sort of person who neither envies or is embarrassed or humiliated by the good of others. The person is calm, leisurely and follows a few pursuits of greater importance. He or she is truthful, loyal, reserved; yet open and frank; objective in friendship, the person is disinterested in social life of its own sake. The inner calm makes the person neither overjoyed by praise nor saddened by criticism, nor overcome by what is lacking, but rather learns to do without. There is integrity of spirit that demands that other virtues work together to accomplish this nobility - no wonder it is a rarely found virtue among us.

THE VICES OPPOSED TO MAGNANIMITY ARE:

- a. Presumption or going beyond one's strength or ability.
- b. Ambition or seeking honors we do not merit or are not due us.
- c. Vainglory or seeking fame for its own sake.

d. Pusillanimity or an unreasonable lack of confidence; a defect in which we do not use our talents.

2. Magnificence-this virtue, which undertakes splendid and difficult tasks without being disheartened by the magnitude of the effort. Since it deals with material things, such as buildings, universities, chapels hospitals, etc., it is a virtue, which should characterize the wealthy. They are doing good to their neighbors in a way that only they can.

THE VICES OPPOSED TO MAGNIFICENCE:

- a. Meanness or stinginess on what ought to be done.
- b. Wastefulness or spending to excess and without care.

Both of these vices reflect a lack of proportion in what one is attempting to undertake.

3. Patience - patience is bearing physical and or moral sufferings without sadness of spirit or dejection. It is bearing what is necessary and is especially essential to the Christian because all of us must suffer, but to do so without discouragement and sorrow requires this special virtue to keep us strong and firm.

Our motives may range from desire to conform to God's will. A desire to imitate Jesus and Mary, making reparation for sin cooperating with Christ in the work of redemption and finally looking toward eternity.

The degrees of patience are: resignation, peace and serenity, acceptance of our Particular cross, joy in uniting that cross with the cross of Christ, delight in suffering with Christ and sharing deeply with Him.

4. Longanimity - longanimity is simply the ability to strive for good when the good is a long way off. It is the virtue, which basically underlines our struggle to be good in order to gain the good of eternal life.

5. Perseverance - perseverance is the virtue, which enables us to persist in being and doing good in spite of the difficulties we encounter. It helps us to attain fidelity in the practice of any virtue. The special grace of perseverance is required to be perfected until the end of our lives so that we, indeed, have lived a virtuous life.

6. Constancy - constancy preserves us from the bad example of others or the special temptations, which may affect each of us in one-way or another. It enables us to stay on the path we have been called to walk on our way to eternal life.

THE VICES OPPOSED TO CONSTANCY ARE:

- a. Inconstancy of the giving up easily so that we prefer pleasure and softness of life.
- b. Pertinacity of obstinacy so that we become headstrong and self-opinionated; we may also continue to hold on to some apparent good in an unreasonable way despite the difficulties and opposition which beset us.

St. Thomas notes for us the ways that we may grow in fortitude:

1. Beg God for the virtue; without His help, we can do nothing and with it, we can do anything He wills for us.
2. Foresee the difficulties we shall encounter. If we anticipate them, we are better prepared and are able to look the dragon in the eye" and walk toward it, confident that the more we face the dragon, the smaller and less fearful it will become .
3. Accept with generous spirit the various little annoyances of daily life; for example, those of cold, heat, pain, illness, aches, confusions, etc.
4. Meditate frequently on the passion and death of Christ, knowing that whatever we endure, He endured more. If we are mindful, we can make Jesus and Mary the models of our suffering.
5. Intensify our love of God.

Fortitude presupposes a correct view of things, of the risks and the hopes for gains in the good to be or the good to be done; it is therefore governed. by both justice and prudence. Fortitude sees injury as an evil; it neither loves death nor despises life. It is afraid of a given real situation,, with good reason, but faces the situation and deals with it.

THE DECREES OF FORTITUDE ARE:

1. Political or those that deal with normal life situations.
2. Purgatorial or the power to remain undaunted as we cross the threshold to enter sanctity.

THE GIFT OF FORTITUDE

The gift of fortitude is the gift of the Holy Spirit working within us, without us, to overcome the darkness of uncertainty when we are in extreme anguish. With the gift, we have an unshakeable, though veiled, certainty of victory. It gives us a confidence that overcomes all fear.

Acting under the power of the gift, we do not reason or discourse about what we are doing, but we act as if by an instinctive, intuitive impulse which gives us a power beyond that given by the virtue of fortitude. We have confidence of success in what we do.

The gift is necessary for the perfection of the infused virtue and enables us to act with energy, promptness and perseverance so that we act without fear or indecisions and we are subject to the Holy Spirit. The gift enables us to act in a heroic way to do good or to avoid or overcome evil. The Gift of counsel and fortitude work together to aid us in attaining our salvation.

THE EFFECTS OF THE GIFT OF FORTITUDE ARE THAT:

1. We are given a restless vigor in the practice of virtue. What appears difficult in analysis, the person is able to do without analyzing, but acts with generosity and sacrifice no matter what the

temptations. The gift enables us to be victorious over error, vice etc., or to endure pain and agony without flinching.

2. Our spirit is strengthened to overcome lukewarmness in the service of God and we can do what is to be done with vigor.

3. We are given the strength to be intrepid and valiant in every type of danger and against every type of enemy even to having strength of the martyrs. If we reflect on the courage of the apostles at the time of the death of Christ when they apparently had no fortitude and then read of their lives after Pentecost, we can see clearly outstanding examples of fortitude.

4. We are given the ability to suffer extreme pain with patience and joy. Some of the saints are able to proclaim and to seek "the folly of the cross" and those who are mystics or who have the stigmata or who are like St. Catherine, who have a heroic gift of fortitude.

5. We are given the ability to be heroic in great things and small so that we may fulfill the duties our state in life well. It may be the heroism of bearing little things or trials with a smile or it may be the gift of the ability to keep our Rule and statutes to the full.

The vices opposed to the gift of fortitude are fear, timidity or the unwillingness to try, and sloth which is the desire of comfort.

Beyond our prayers for the increase of the gift of fortitude and our fidelity to grace, we can seek to strengthen the gift by: fulfilling our duties or doing what is to be done as well as we can even, if at times, they are repugnant to us; asking for the grace to carry our cross rather than asking to have it taken away; practicing voluntary mortification with fidelity and silence and without complaint and by observing Christian politeness and fraternal charity.

BEATITUDE:

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be comforted”. (Mt5: 6)

“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall have your fill”. (Lk. 6:21)

“Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.”(Lk. 6:25)

The hunger and thirst expressed in Matthew's version go far beyond the food and drink that will satisfy those needs. Look at those needs first, however. Often what we hunger and thirst for is what society tells us we need. In its cultural messages of advertising, journalism, fads and fashions, it tells all the many things we thirst for. Our appetites are being bamboozled, being led astray.

Or, if we listen to our appetites, we draw either general principles or daydreams from them. We pray “give us this day our daily bread” and then begin to decide that having it ahead for more than one day is much better and so we develop the principle of hoarding. “Deliver us from evil” of cold, of homelessness or nakedness can become as we begin to daydream, the seeking of the right way to keep warm, perhaps a cashmere sweater or holiday in the Sun Belt areas. The right way to not be homeless is to have the perfect little house or place to live. The

right way or not being naked is to have this particular dress or suit and those contemporary accessories.

If we avoid that sort of listening, but do acknowledge that we hunger and thirst, we discover our essential humanity: we are dependent creatures. When we are realistic about this humanity, we can begin to sort out what are our essential appetites. Then we can begin to build our spiritual life on a strong foundation, which recognizes that we are human, that we do desire and that we really do prefer to have things going our way.

When we recognize that the world isn't going our way, we have some choices: we can set out to rebuild it our way - a foolhardy attack; we can resignedly conform ourselves to it and endure; or, we can recognize that is God's world and that it has beauty, love, joy, goodness and love because it simply reflect His being and the attributes of that being.

If we make that last choice, we can begin to detangle our desire, our appetites and get down to the nitty-gritty of life. We will discover that what we really basically desire, yearn for is God. With that discovery, we are like the prodigal son who, recognizing that he has filled himself with husks, "returns to himself" and looks homeward to his father's love. We, in turn can return to ourselves and look homeward to God's love.

We will no longer hunger for non-essentials; we hunger and thirst for righteousness, for God. If that hunger is uncontrolled, all compelling and grace filled, we needn't worry about any other appetites or desires; they will fall into line. We must cherish, therefore, a desire for real goodness, not what others thing, but real goodness. We hunger for it.

If we hunger, we want. We put ourselves at risk to obtain the good, knowing the joy that will be ours when the hunger is fulfilled. We are willing to risk, willing to Perdue, willing to accept that we must wait. Perhaps, we must attack and fight evil to preserve or to gain the good as we go on our pilgrim way to blessedness.

Since our hunger, our desires is for something infinite, it stretches our finite self to the limit and we are caught between the infinite desire and our finite life. That stretching, that tension is at once our suffering and it is also our joy. We know, in faith, that our joy will be fulfilled when we came before the living God.

We are already blessed in this world if we have this most essential hunger and thirst; how much more richly, deeply and overwhelmingly will be blessed when we share in fullness of the joy of the resurrection.

Exemplar: Fr. Yves Congar, O. P.

Fr. Congar was born in 1904 in France. He lived in Alsace-Lorraine. As a growing boy, he knew well the moral oppression caused by the German occupation of that area during World War I. He considered his parish church to be lithe only free place during that time. He was profoundly influenced by that oasis-like place and by reading a book by Clerissac, "The Mystery of the Church." He saw at an early age that the Christian community enabled him to find his human dignity and that the Church, as a place where people were brought together, is a sign of the freedom that all are called to rediscover in the friendship of God.

He grew, he studied, and he entered the Dominicans. By the time of his ordination in 1929, he was deeply aware of his ecumenical vocation. He was quite sure of it as a call. It drew him to his lifelong work: to study, do research and reflect on the faith. With that

groundwork, he would write and work to develop a scientific collection of works that would contribute to a renewal of ecclesiology.

In 1937, he published, "Christians desunis" (Christian Disunited) in which he defined his views of the principles of Catholic ecumenism. The work was a point of departure. It brought ecumenism forward as dimension of theology and as a permanent pastoral concern. It began the path that led to the establishment in 1960 of the Secretariat of Christian Unity. The work was the seedbed of some of the important parts of the documents of Vatican II, especially "Lumen Gentium".

The work was also the beginning of a very real continuing example of fortitude because Fr. Congar was immediately subject to a period of suspicion, which lasted almost to the eve of Vatican II.

Fr. Congar taught at Saulchoir from 1931 until 1939. He was imprisoned by the Germans in War II from 1940 until 1944. As soon as he was free, he went back to teach again in Paris at Saulchoir from 1945 until 1954. He also went back to his work and in 1950; he published "True and False Reform in the Church" and in 1953, "Guidelines for a Theology of the Laity". These two works were among many others that would reappear in the Vatican II documents.

In the early 1950's, in addition to the still continuing suspicion, more severe measures were taken against him in the midst of the whole worker-priest affair in France. He was forbidden to teach and to publish. He spent his time in exile in Jerusalem, Rome and Cambridge. In 1956, he was given a fixed assignment at Strasbourg where he remained until 1968. During his early years there, he learned by living the active patience of enduring. When he was permitted to publish once more, and from the dark times he endured, in 1964, he wrote "Christians in Dialogue", his reflections on patience. He later wrote, "The Mystery of the Temple" in which he went back to the Biblical roots of ecclesiology and "The Tradition and Traditions".

Fr. Congar was asked to participate in the work of Vatican II and firmly believed that the Holy Spirit was at work and so accepted what seemed to be a limited role of participation. By the end of the Council, he was deeply engaged in the preparation of "Lumen Gentium", especially the section on "The People of God" and the documents of revelation, the Church in the modern world, ecumenism, religious liberty, mission and priestly ministry.

Once the Council was over, he set about to help Christians grasp what had happened in the Council and also to help so that its decisions would be understood and carried out.

Fr. Congar had had his bouts with illness before, but beginning in 1967, his illness became more aggravated and yet, hampered and unable to get at all, he still continued to work a 12-13 hour day.

He continued his work with the International Theological Commission as an editor of Concilium. In 1983, he published a three-volume work, "I Believe in the Holy Spirit". In the years since, his health has deteriorated and his endurance, his fortitude, is now a prayer offered to God, "For my part, I keep going so that Church may advance." He has kept going and has published more than 1500 pieces. Seriously ill in a hospital, he still works, editing and writing. His heroic fortitude in illness is now a model to all. Still alive at this writing (4/88), obviously still on the way to heaven as are we, he is a model of living fortitude, the virtue that helps us each and all get there.

**HOMEWORK
YEAR TWO
LESSON SIX**

<u>DAYS</u>	<i>SCRIPTURE</i>	<i>CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH</i>	<i>DOMINICANA</i>
FIRST WEEK	Book of Wisdom		Dialogue of St. Catherine of Sienna
MONDAY	1-2	2250-2463	Obedience pg.327-340
TUESDAY	3-5	2464-2470	
WEDNESDAY	6-7	2471-2478	
THURSDAY	8-9	2479-2487	
FRIDAY	10-11	2488-2492	
SECOND WEEK			
MONDAY	12-13	2493-2499	Obedience pg.340-361
TUESDAY	14-15	2500-2503	
WEDNESDAY	16-17	2504-2513	
THURSDAY	18-19	2514-2519	
FRIDAY	Proverbs-1-2	2520-2527	
THIRD WEEK			
MONDAY	3-4	2528-2533	Conclusion
TUESDAY	5-6	2534-2540	
WEDNESDAY	7-8	2541-2543	
THURSDAY	9	2544-2550	
FRIDAY	10-11	2551-2557	
FOURTH WEEK			
MONDAY	12-13	Part Four-2558-2561	
TUESDAY	14-15	2562-2565	
WEDNESDAY	16-17	2566-2573	
THURSDAY	18-19	2574-2577	
FRIDAY	20-21	2578-2584	

On a separate piece of paper briefly outline your thoughts or questions on the articles you have read for your homework, to be turned in next time we meet