



The gifts of the Holy Spirit (3/7):

The gift of fortitude

"So long as a strong man fully armed guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed" (Lk 11:21).

The gift of fortitude is responsible for strengthening the soul to be ever more courageous in the service of the Lord. It gives us the strength to follow the motions and impulses of the Holy Spirit, to accept everything and to want everything that God wants.

The virtue of fortitude alone reaches its limits when confronted with the highest demands of the spiritual life. It can happen, for example, that we want to give ourselves completely to God, but we are still afraid to let go completely and abandon ourselves entirely to Him. Although we recognise what God wants from us, and in principle we want it ourselves, we are too weak to realise it. God then intervenes directly with the spirit of fortitude, thus helping us to take the decisive steps. The strengthened soul is then ready to do the will of the Father, even at the cost of great sacrifices.

Because of our weak nature, the virtue of fortitude is insufficient. The gift of fortitude, on the other hand, can permanently strengthen us to persevere in doing good and make us willing to make the great sacrifices that this might entail: for example, to confess the faith in a world hostile to God, to hold fast to Christian morality in an environment of growing immorality, to remain faithful to the traditional doctrine and praxis of the Church even when everything seems to be crumbling, to be ready for martyrdom....

God wants courageous souls, who, at the same time, are free from any kind of presumption or adventurous spirit. While the latter attitudes lean optimistically on human nature, the courageous soul trusts in God's strength. She is well aware of her own weakness, and that is precisely why she puts all her hope in the Lord. She has understood that even the virtue of fortitude alone is not enough for her to remain steadfast in God's way without wavering. Thus she asks for the help of the spirit of fortitude and receives it with gratitude, so that her humility is also strengthened. Such

a soul is filled with a burning thirst for holiness and has no room for any refusal of grace. She always has the impression that what she does for God is still too little. The thirst for the glory of God burns in her, and she is always ready to make new and great sacrifices and efforts.

With the gift of fortitude, the spiritual life becomes constant and persevering, and the obedience more ready to follow the Lord's instructions as they present themselves to the soul. Duties of the state of life are more conscientiously fulfilled, and the same is true of religious obligations in the consecrated life. Fickleness is overcome and the whole person becomes more stable and persevering. In this way, he or she will also be able to help others in their weakness.