

# LORD, TEACH ME TO PRAY

*Praying Christian Virtues – Session 9*

## Christian Courage

What are the dangers and perils with which fortitude is concerned? All the dangers, difficulties, and strife that beset us in our Christian lives. Fortitude is the particular virtue of the soldier, the fighting-man, with this provision that military fortitude does not envisage a mere physical courage or animal tenacity, but a strong moral firmness under attack or in attack in a just war. Then there are all kinds of personal attacks, “individual wars,” that fortitude helps us to endure: slander of our character, envy from our equals, unfairness from our superiors, assaults of temptation – all of these conflicts and many others require strong fortitude. The thief, the robber, the burglar stealthily entering a house at night may show boldness, overcoming the fear of the capture, but their false courage is not genuine fortitude, because it is not placed at the service of the virtuous good. A man cannot be really brave doing an evil or unlawful act, because the moderation of virtue is absent from the very character of the act itself.

Martyrdom is the ultimate act of fortitude – the giving of one’s life in witness to the faith. We look back in admiration at the early Christian martyrs, but martyrdom has not yet vanished from the earth. The Church has canonized martyrs in our own time, missionaries, for example, whose lives have been taken by those who hated the Christian faith. Also, in the last twenty-five years of totalitarian aggression, many Catholics, notably priests and nuns, have been cruelly murdered in many countries of the world by the agents of atheism. Martyrdom takes away all guilt of sin and all temporal punishment for sin; the martyr is received into heaven immediately upon his death; and is given there a special crown of heroism.

Fortitude stands in the golden mean between two opposed vices: timidity, too much fear by which we flee danger, and foolhardiness (rashness, temerity), too much boldness by which we rush into danger needlessly. Timidity is not the emotion of fear, which is quiet, natural, and not bad at all, but the *inordinate* fear of temporal evils, especially the inordinate fear of death. Rashness is excessive aggressiveness, to attack evil when and where we should not attack, or more than we should. There are times when the bravest thing is just to sit still and do nothing.

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## DAILY PRAYER

(15 minutes of daily prayer)

**BEG FOR THE GRACE:** To live a life without fear.

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| 1. | 1 Corinthians 13: 7   | Love bears all things and endures all things. |
| 2. | Luke 22: 42           | Not my will but Yours be done.                |
| 3. | 2 Corinthians 3: 4-12 | How much more what endures will be glorious.  |
| 4. | 2 Timothy 4: 1-8      | Solemn charge.                                |
| 5. | Matthew 14: 22-32     | Take courage!                                 |
| 6. | Acts 7: 54-60         | Stephen’s martyrdom.                          |

On Sundays pray with Sunday Gospel.