

The virtue of fortitude for Padre Pio, was not part of some masochistic vision of life, seen simply as a battle against evil and the aberrations of our nature.

Fortitude meant for Padre Pio, and which he is teaching to us today, discovering again the significance and objective of these rules and that are part of that endless quest to orient our lives to the spiritual, and that enables us to determine and amplify more the horizon of our life.

Padre Pio's Fortitude in Suffering

"When Padre Pio was going through a trial, as all of us must, if someone demonstrated to him their joy, he was able to forget himself and to share in their joy. When he was in the midst of the faithful too, he was able very easily to change his mood to the person's state of soul: smiling with those who were happy; suffering with those who were sad; and scolding roughly those who needed a reprimand. I noticed that when he suffered great physical or moral suffering he would recollect himself in silence and not say anything. When instead he had small trials he would lament about them, perhaps to distract himself from the others." – Father Pellegrino (a spiritual director of Padre Pio)

The Virtue of Fortitude

First of all, fortitude consists in undertaking and carrying out difficult enterprises. On the road to virtue and to perfection there lie innumerable obstacles, difficult to overcome and forever recurring. They must not only not be feared, but they must be faced with the courageous effort necessary to overcome them. This is the first act of this virtue. This act implies: "determination" to arrive quickly at the decision of doing one's duty no matter what the cost may be; "courage" and generosity is putting forth all the effort that the peculiar difficulties of the case may require; "steadfastness" to prolong the effort to the end, in spite of the stubbornness and the repeated attacks of the enemy.

Furthermore, we must need to learn to suffer for God's sake the manifold and difficult trials He sends us, to bear the sufferings, the illnesses, the mockeries, the calumnies of which we may be the victims.

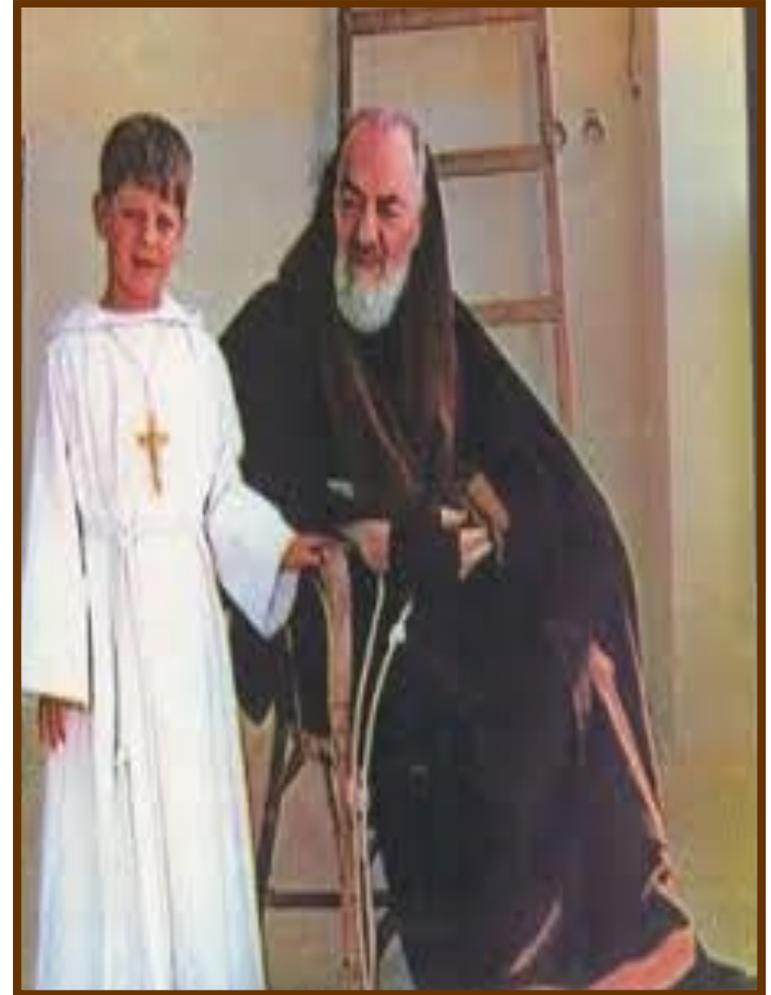
(From the Treatise on the Ascetical and Mystical Life by A. Tanqueray, chapter II).

FORTITUDE:

**Strength of mind that enables a person to encounter danger
or
bear pain or adversity with courage!**

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What does the Christian fight for? Padre Pio's Fortitude in Suffering



Padre Pio's advice to a young disciple:

***"Do not undertake the least action without first turning to
God and asking His assistance in what you do.***

I say to you with the prophet:

'Be strong, stand firm, because God is with you.'

What does the Christian fight for?- Fortitude

by Bro Luciano Lotti

In our spiritless society without rules, we should reflect and model ourselves on Jesus Christ.

If we look closely at the person of Padre Pio we could quite easily conclude that fortitude was a natural trait of his character, and that it had cost him little to practice this virtue. Christians are called to a real, personal and unceasing battle against temptation and sin, and a strong and stubborn character is not necessarily a sign of the virtue of fortitude. There exists also a very real danger of believing the outcome to depend totally on ourselves and to the point of judging in poor light anyone not up to our standards. Fortitude for Padre Pio, was different from all this, was a virtue that originated and grew through the unceasing orientation of ourselves to the supernatural and from the continuous renewal of our lives in God, despite our weaknesses and misery and temptations that come from the devil. By consecrating attention instead on ourselves and our achievements, Padre Pio points out, there is a very great danger of vainglory: "Dear God! What a martyrdom is the temptation to vainglory. It seems to have no importance, yet we must be convinced of the very opposite. One needs to pass through this fire to understand its extreme intensity. To overcome it, one needs to keep one's gaze fixed on the humanity of Jesus" (Letters 1).

Padre Pio, consistent with his Franciscan formation, believed that the rule of life for the Christian meant the imitation of the life of Christ and that is the reason of his referring to the humanity of Jesus. And in another letter to a spiritual daughter, he wrote: "The prototype, the example on which one should reflect and model oneself is Jesus Christ" (Letters III). Jesus is the one prototype, the example upon which the believer is called to model his life and thinking.

However, the practice of the virtue of fortitude in the world of today can seem almost absurd. In a recent article printed in the Corriere della sera, the writer Susanna Tamaro spoke about the crisis of today's society that has been deprived of all those solid educational structures once provided for by the Church, the schools and the family. In place of them, we have what she calls "emasculated world" without any principles of authority and that is unable to assist the young "to see beyond the cosseted walls of the subjective self."

Padre Pio, instead was less condescending when he assisted and gave advice to a young disciple: "Do not undertake the least action without first turning to God and asking His assistance in what you do. I say to you with the prophet: 'Be strong, stand firm, because God is with you.'"

God is Fortitude. He is the One who is strong. It was God who led the Jewish nation and who leads all believers to the promised land where we encounter Him in our lives, where He enlightens, encourages and guides us in our choices, and in understanding and even justifying the injustices and evil that are our share.

He is the One who is strong, not man, He is the One who overcomes the devil, the evil one who, on the contrary, does all he can to make us fall into sin and who even seeks to obstruct (with ink stains) Padre Pio's correspondence with his spiritual director.

Giving back to God His role of leader and guide in history, in a society that rejects all rules, does not mean a narrow minded fideism nor, worse still, religious fundamentalism that is so destructive and violent, but means an opening of ourselves to God's fortitude and which makes us able to confront in a balanced and resigned manner all the adversities of life.

Vainglory means feeling strong without God. Vainglory means feeling strong without our brothers and sisters – this is where the community plays a role in "teaching fortitude." As Susan Tamaro states "the basis to building a civilized society, worthy of its name, is to encourage everyone to do their best." But this is not something easy. In fact, how can we ask the young "to behave any differently when, for example, the parks in which they play and the school buildings in which they live and work are in total degradation; a degradation that is only partly their responsibility, since the adults who have the responsibility to realize and look after these places to the best of their abilities, have failed in their obligations, thinking only of themselves." To this pessimistic consideration however, Susan makes a further reflection that is important, that despite all the outward degradation "behind it all remains the human person who possesses a specific nature, and only by taking into account this nature can any change really come about."

Here we reach the heart of the problem. For this change to come about and so that it does not remain simply in the abstract, it is necessary to denounce the inadequacy and failure of an ethics that is based simply on what is pleasing or displeasing to us and in which the determination of what is good and evil depends merely on personal whim. It is necessary to teach the virtue of fortitude in a serious way and in which the rules to govern and master oneself are not seen simply as constraints, but the means to the creation of new horizons and hopes.

Often, behind the transgression of rules and unrestrained selfishness, we discovered an emptiness and despair that comes from an inability to perceive any real meaning or direction in one's life.

When we consider Padre Pio's "fortitude" we think at once of his "strong" methods in the confessional and there is the danger that we penetrate no further than this outward aspect and so miss the very reason of his severity, the necessity to make the penitent discover again the significance of those rules that he transgresses and is called to live in the context of his life on a deeper level.