



Gifts of the Spirit: FORTITUDE

A Message from the Prioress

by Sister Mary Forman

Fortitude: The Gift of Courage of the Holy Spirit

Fortitude is derived from the Latin *fortis* meaning strong, powerful, vigorous, steadfast, courageous, and brave; the noun fortitude primarily means strength, firmness, durability, courage, bravery, and being valiant.¹ Biblically, “fortitude is the strength of character that enables a person to endure pain or adversity with courage. Although the word fortitude is rarely used in the most popular versions of the Bible, the concept is addressed often. Instead of fortitude, the word endurance, strength, or perseverance is used more often in our Bibles. Not only is fortitude a great quality, but we are commanded to pursue it (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:3; 1 Peter 1:5–6).”² One of my favorite verses about fortitude, which we often read at the celebration of life of one of our members, describes the valiant woman of Proverbs 31:17: “She clothes herself with fortitude, and fortifies her arms with strength” (ISV).³ Several verses of this description of the valiant woman could describe the many women (and men) working on the frontlines of the pandemic:

“She obtains wool and flax and makes cloth with skillful hands” (NAB, v.13) – think of the cloth masks and gowns being sewn by men and women at home for our caregivers.

“Like merchant ships, she secures her provisions from afar” (14) – think of those seeking need medical supplies and PPE for the first responders, nurses and

doctors in ICUs.

“She rises while it is still night, and distributes food” (15) – think of the bakers and restaurateurs bringing food to the caregivers and to the many hungry in food lines.

“She picks out a field to purchase; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard” (16) – think of all those finding ways for the food from their fields to reach those in need.

“She is girt about with strength, and sturdy are her arms” (17) – think of all the volunteers in food banks, shelters, emergency tents, and clinics.

“She reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy” (20) – think of all the neighbors bringing food and drink, music and encouragement to the most desperate among us.

“She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs at the days to come”⁴ (25) – think of those caring for children, providing entertainment and reading stories to calm their fears.

“She opens her mouth in wisdom, and on her tongue is kindly counsel” (26) – think of those passing on wisdom about enduring hardship, hunger, war and natural disasters and what got them through.

4 The footnote in my Bible to this verse states: “Laughs at the days to come: anticipated the future with gladness free from anxiety,” The Catholic Study Bible: New American Bible (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), s.v. Proverbs 31:25 footnote, p. 781.

1 A Latin Dictionary, edited by Lewis and Short (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1879, 1987) s.v. fortis, fortitude.

2 [https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-fortitude.html]

3 Ibid.

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OUR MISSION

Eager to welcome God’s transforming power in ourselves and our world, we, the Benedictine Sisters of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, seek God together through monastic profession and respond in Healing Hospitality, Grateful Simplicity and Creative Peacemaking.

Receiving Nature's Gifts

On a sunny, fresh morning in mid-April, Sister Carlotta is in the lower gardens preparing the vegetable beds. She is well within earshot of the St. Gertrude's bell towers and in the opposite direction, can enjoy a broad view of Camas Prairie in its fields of new green under a pristine blue sky. Snow-capped mountains line the distance.

The vegetables and fruits grown at St. Gertrude's help feed the sisters and their guests year-round. Seedlings of melons, squash, lettuce, cucumbers, carrots, and tomatoes emerge in a newly restored greenhouse. In the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, she knows more and more people are inspired to plant their own gardens.

"It's a great time to think about your food supply," she explains. "Get your kids involved; even in the city you can grow food on your porch in five-gallon buckets." She adds that creating a garden of any kind is also creating a sanctuary.

If not in the garden, Sister Carlotta is often busy making soap, salve, lip balm, or teas. She calls them Nature's Gifts — and with good reason. "Our backyard is an abundant source of God's gift of healing plants to us," she says.

She received her Master Herbalist certificate from the Global College of Natural Medicine in Santa Cruz, CA, in May 2007. In this intensive, one-year program, she studied herbs and their effects on the human body. She learned how to identify and grow herbs, prepare them for use in making teas, tinctures, and tonics. While Sister Carlotta cannot diagnose or prescribe, she can make suggestions about which herbs to use for relief of specific ailments.



In 2000, Sister Carlotta experienced a life-changing trip to Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina.



Sister Carlotta was born in Taunton, Massachusetts. Her father was in the Air Force and the family lived in several places including Japan. They moved to Boise, Idaho, in 1974 upon his retirement. As an adult Sister Carlotta worked in a manufacturing company. Then, in 2000, she went to Europe, inspired by the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina. While praying in a chapel, she saw a group of nuns enter the sanctuary. "I watched them pray and felt an overwhelming sense of wanting to belong to something like that," she says.

Later, a friend brought her to the Monastery of St. Gertrude for a weekend. She continued discerning a vocation with personal reflection, talks with friends and family, and several more visits to the Monastery. Two and a half years later, she became a postulant and made her First Profession on March 21, 2006. She began learning about gardening and herbs from Sister Theresa Dvorak.

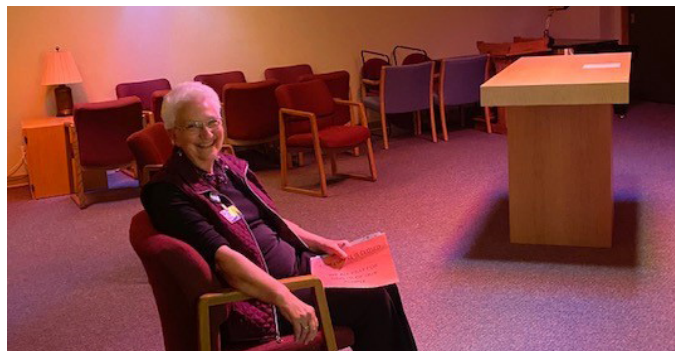
One of Sister Carlotta's favorite things about being a master herbalist is when someone comes up to her and tells her how her salve has been able to help them. She also loves to find new recipes and scents and her inspiration can come from anywhere, such as from online or by simply smelling something she likes.

Sister Carlotta leads soap-making classes and the "Herbal Wisdom for Today" retreat at Spirit Center. She also teaches classes in herbal salves and tinctures with Sister Agnes. The Nature's Gifts products can be found in the Welcome Center Gift Shop and online at www.stgertrudes.org. ✕

community



Sister Maria Elena Schaefer received a Mother's Day card from a former inmate with whom she remains in touch. She met him while serving in prison ministries in the Boise area. He is now pursuing his degree in counseling at Boise State University. Blessings to all those who mother others.



Sister Margie Schmidt, director of pastoral care at St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Lewiston, rearranged the hospital chapel to accommodate social distancing and implemented additional steps so that patients can visit safely.

We are happy to share two new podcasts (at www.stgertrudes.org) for a total of 27 episodes. **Sister Mary Marge Goeckner**, assistant prioress, offers her perspectives on ministry. "Everyone who comes here for retreat...they all have their cross. There is always something they are working on, trying to develop, or get over..... Everyone who comes here is searching for God."



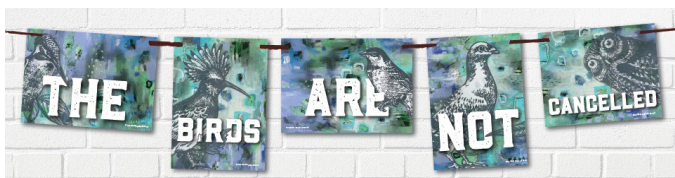
Sister Placida Wemhoff talks about her times of hermitage, explains how solitude is different from isolation, and offers advice. "You've got to let go of your own agenda and not fight solitude.... and leave it up to God. Accept where you are and let God lead. God will show you."



When Idaho's stay-at-home order went into effect, **Sister Teresa Jackson** offered a free, online, eight-week retreat on Benedictine prayer — 535 people registered. More online programs are planned for the future.



Ever-creative **Calvin Bakie** of the maintenance team has created a new striking and thematically-appropriate mailbox.



An online art show helps inspire in these times. Some artists from top, clockwise: Heather Berndt, Krista Green, Belinda Rhodes, and Mary Schmidt.



Save the date! The Historical Museum at St. Gertrude will celebrate a grand re-opening on October 8, 2020 — the culmination of a five-year remodel project. More info to come.

We are praying for all in this time of the Covid-19 pandemic. Learn the status of our closure/opening on the News Page at www.stgertrudes.org.



A FOUNDATION OF FORTITUDE

Drive along Highway 95 through the Camas Prairie in North Central Idaho and be immersed in a grand vista of rolling fields and distant, surrounding mountains. Structures seen along the highway reflect the pioneer legacy as well as years of dynamic weather. Dilapidated barns return to the earth in sculptural arrays and metal grain towers preside over long stretches of crop fields.

In this setting the chapel of the Monastery of St. Gertrude rises up as an anomaly, as stalwart as the day it was dedicated on July 27, 1924. The Romanesque architecture stands against a hillside that yielded the blue porphyry stone from which it is constructed. The brilliant red towers, topped with golden crosses, can be seen for miles. The two-foot thick stone walls were designed to last for centuries not decades, and make for chapel acoustics acclaimed throughout the region.

The completion of the stone structure was the realization of a dream over 40 years in the making. On September 26, 1882, Mother Johanna Zumstein, Sister Magdalene Suter, and Sister Rosalia Ruebli, three nuns from a cloister in Sarnen, Switzerland, left their home to sail to New York. A steam train brought them across the continent to Gervais, Oregon, where they first established a religious community and mission. They moved to Uniontown and Colton, Washington, and founded schools. Then John Uhlenkott offered the sisters some land and encouraged them to relocate to Cottonwood and start a school. The sisters agreed, purchased more land, and the motherhouse was founded in 1909. Their first buildings were a wooden chapel along with a school and living quarters.



This year is the centennial of the laying of the cornerstone.



*Dedication Day
July 27, 1924*

The new chapel was designed by architect Engelbert Gier. Construction began in 1919 and was completed in 1924.

Each stone was brought down the hill (often by sisters), individually chiseled, and placed by hand. The cornerstone, visible at the base of the left-hand bell tower, was laid in 1920. The windows are faced with locally-produced brick. The 97-foot-tall towers house four bells.



The original buildings were made of wood.

If you would like prayer support from our community,
please call us at 208-962-3224 or
visit StGertrudes.org

Celebrating the centennial of the laying of the cornerstone of the chapel and beginning a major remodel to serve future ministries



chapel is the center of a flourishing community of sisters and those who are partners in ministry, including nearly 100 oblates (lay members) in nine area groups throughout the Northwest.

Preparing for a New Century of Benedictine Life

In 1948 a five-story brick structure was added to the original stone building. The Annex provided housing for sisters that mostly served in ministries away from home. Now, over seventy years later, the Annex is in need of updated plumbing and electrical as well as asbestos abatement. A six-month remodel project will begin in November 2020 and the sisters will relocate to Spirit Center while the remodel takes place.

In addition, individual rooms will be enlarged and will feature private bathrooms. (Currently there are common bathrooms on each floor.) The renovations will create an energy efficient residence for those who live at the Monastery and coordinate ministries, which serve 20,000 guests, artists, and retreatants annually. With a deep commitment to the future of monastic life, according to the Rule of Benedict, we will welcome new vocations and host sisters and oblate residents in a contemporary monastery residence. ✠

Source: Nachtsheim, OSB, Mary Lucille. On the Way: The Journey of the Idaho Benedictine Sisters. Cottonwood: Monastery of St. Gertrude, 1997. Print.

The Monastery of St. Gertrude's stone building is on the National Register of Historic Places. Unlike much of historic architecture, the St. Gertrude's Chapel is still utilized for the purpose it was constructed. Monastic life centers around the chapel. For 100 years the Benedictine sisters have gathered there for daily Mass and to pray three times a day in the beautiful wooden choir stalls. Both physically and symbolically, the



Workers setting the chapel foundation in 1919.



The Annex will be remodeled starting this fall.

You could add to this litany of the valiant men and women you know, who are strengthening hope and belief in the deep goodness of their fellow human beings, by ministering to those around them.

I think of all the requests we have received here at the monastery for prayer: a young man working in a halfway house for those addicted, who have nowhere else to live; a grandmother praying for the safety of her granddaughter as she works as an ICU nurse in one of our large cities; several have lost loved ones and could not be with them in their last hours, nor are they able to celebrate their lives with family and friends. I hear the hungers in people to be nourished at this time of “sheltering in place,” or as one of my elders calls it “under house arrest,” and finding that nourishment in various places on the web, in phone conversations with friends of the heart, in connecting with loved ones in new ways, in viewing the liturgies videotaped from their parishes, yet still missing the incarnational aspect of being with each other as a gathering.

In times of crisis, we seek “comfort,” which means strengthening-with-others, as we share our fears and concerns, new ways of discovering what a wonderful world we live in and how the solitude opens out into gratitude for the many acts of loving kindness we witness directly or on news channels, especially in the closing segments when the focus is on someone’s fortitude/bravery/steadfast service on behalf of another’s well-being. In a conversation with a dear friend, she shared that Catherine of Sienna was a saint because she lived her life that the good of others might be realized. That definition of a saint can be observed all around us. Let us have the fortitude to see them, to embrace what the spirit is doing in our world, and to follow the nudges of our own hearts to bring about the good of others.

Another word that derives from *fortis/fortitudo* is fortify, meaning “to make strong, as...to strengthen and secure... with fortifications”; “to reinforce by adding material”; “to impart physical strength or endurance to, to invigorate”; “to give emotional, moral or mental strength to, encourage: Prayer fortified us during our crisis”; to strengthen or enrich food...as by adding vitamins.”⁵ When I asked several sisters in my community what fortifies them during this forced enclosure, here is what they said:

- The caring and kindness of our caregivers, who care for us;
- The positive ads and news on the TV, which convey the real efforts [a word also from *fortis*] showing how people are helping;

- Making it through every day;
- Springtime with its blooms, so there is hope for the future;
- God is in control, no matter what;
- We have Eucharist on a regular basis, when so many can’t have it even once a week;
- Our community prayer and worship — it is truly us;
- The courage to face the events of the day;
- At the Divine Office, I look for a word from the psalms or reading to carry me through the day;
- To know that the people throughout the country are willing to stay home, even if it is difficult, because they feel it is necessary—it brings us closer to each other;
- The Psalms, especially Psalm 91, which is a psalm of trusting in the security under God’s protection.

Psalm 91, which contains synonyms for fortitude and many images of God’s protecting fortitude within it, is one we might choose to pray daily for the world, its peoples and all creation:

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shade of the Almighty, Say to the LORD, “My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust.” [God] will rescue you from the fowler’s snare, from the destroying plague, will shelter you with pinions, and under [God’s] wings you may take refuge; whose faithfulness is a protecting shield. You shall not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day, Nor the pestilence that roams in darkness, nor the plague that ravages at noon. Though a thousand fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, near you it shall not come. You need simply watch; because you have the LORD for your refuge and have made the Most High your stronghold, no evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent. For [God] commands the angels with regard to you, to guard you wherever you go. With their hands they shall support you, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You can tread upon the asp and the viper, trample the lion and the dragon. Because [you] cling to me I will deliver [you]; because [you] know my name I will set [you] on high. [You] will call upon me and I will answer; I will be with [you] in distress; I will deliver [you] and give [you] honor. With length of days I will satisfy [you], and fill [you] with my saving power. [<http://uscbb.org/bible/psalms/91>]

May the Spirit of Fortitude sustain you and all your loved ones during these days of staying at home, until it is safe to gather to praise the God, who is in our midst, supporting us and providing shelter and examples of goodness. ✠

5 The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition (Boston, NY, London: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992) s.v. “fortify.”

Fortitude's Success Story

Fortitude "ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good." (CCC, 1808) We develop this "strength virtue" to resist temptation, face challenges and persecutions, and overcome moral obstacles. Like other habits, we build the virtue of fortitude out of life's circumstances with assistance over time.

In 2008, Malcolm Gladwell penned the book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*. The book examines high achievers in numerous settings. Gladwell observes that merit, talent, and hard work alone do not guarantee success. Origins nurture talent, hard work develops skill, and opportunity invites success. Gladwell also notes that successful people receive help along the way. In other words, success depends on more than determination and effort.

"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise person who built a house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock." Matthew 7:24-25

Developing fortitude requires a rock solid foundation disposing one to the good. Having help doesn't hurt. Grounded support facilitates the serious effort of building interior resolve and constancy. Spirit Center assists the pursuit of fortitude — spiritual and moral strength — by providing a stable foundation in an environment grounded upon the community's core values of Healing Hospitality, Grateful Simplicity, and Creative Peacemaking.

Rooted in Benedictine spirituality, Spirit Center supports individual journeys in all faith traditions. The spiritual ministry responds to the profound hunger for the good by offering tools and opportunities to build wisdom and strength. The abiding peace at Spirit Center and the Monastery of St. Gertrude provides the sacred space and community support for the deep inner work and transformation upon which fortitude stands.

Malcolm Gladwell notes another commonality among the success stories: over 10,000 hours spent honing talent. No shortcuts exist to worldly or virtuous success. By definition, human virtues are habits developed over time. As a poster at a recent watercolor retreat read, "The secret to painting is painting." Spirit Center supports the hard work of learning, renewal, and growth in virtue. Retreats teach spiritual practices or enable creative expressions

by Timothy Oberholzer, Hosted Groups



Photo by Elizabeth Hatchel.

in pursuit of the good. Spiritual directors help retreatants recognize obstacles, face trials, overcome fears, and grow in fortitude.

Fortitude developed out of life's circumstances with help over time enables us to brave the storms and see the opportunities life presents. Promotions, lay-offs, births, deaths, new relationships, broken friendships, clean bills of health, pandemics — life offers blessings and curses every step of the way. Fortitude strengthens us in good times and carries us through challenging seasons. It transforms obstacles into opportunities. Visiting Spirit Center cannot guarantee fortitude and freedom from life's storms, but the sacred ground and dedicated tools help you write your virtuous success story. ✕





Bed & Breakfast
www.InnatStGertrude.com
Phone: 208-451-4321



"Enkindle in Them the Fire of Your Love"

Sister Sue Ellen Drexler

What does it mean to enkindle the fire of God's love? To me it seems that it means to allow God's love to dwell and guide us along the path of life. For this to happen, we must be in relationship with God. Through prayer, we enkindle the fire of that love. With this fire comes the image of a hearth. The word hearth has some wonderful words in it, (hear, heart, earth). These words bring out the areas of hearing God's word in our heart and letting our hearts, like earth, grow and develop the gift of fortitude. Fortitude is strength in the face of adversity and difficulty. This gift is needed in our challenge with Covid-19. What must be prepared in the heart of our soul are the embers of listening and the seeds of new life not yet discovered. Here in the earth of our being is where the love of God takes root.

Prayer is the way to come to a close relationship with God. Deepening our prayer life opens our spiritual ears to hear God's voice in our heart. In order to receive the gift of fortitude, we must be in relationship with God. Only then can we see with the eyes of faith that endure the challenges that lie ahead. Seeing God's presence in all things, people and situations, changes the way we see our path. Being grounded and rooted in Christ is like a tree that has good and healthy roots enabling it to survive the storm. Being in relationship with the one who created all of life is what gives us the strength and endurance to weather the storms in our life.

Only with God's help can we take the rough things in life and make of them something better. With God's help, we can learn to accept the challenges that call us to grow stronger in our skills and help us grow in our ways of being human. ✕



My Mother, My Sister

Sister Benita Hassler

After graduating from high school, Mom earned a Teacher Certificate and taught all eight grades including her own brother and two sisters in a one-room country school until she married Dad and lived in Montana. After my father died in 1960, Mom (Veronica Brost Hassler) brought her mother into her home. Mom studied to become a certified home care nurse and cared for Grandmother. After Grandmother died, Mom entered my Benedictine monastery in Cottonwood, Idaho. As Sister Veronica, she was missioned to Colegio San Carlos (Bogota, Colombia) with me, and later, she was sent to Bishop Kelly High School in Boise where I was teaching. The afternoon before she died peacefully at the Monastery on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, (her lifelong great devotion), she baked delicious cookies for the community and she and I had our last game of pinochle together. She set me free by loving me unconditionally. ✕



Extraordinary Generosity

Carrie Barton, Donor Relations Manager

I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give . . . God loves it when the giver delights in the giving.
– 2 Corinthians 9:7, *The Message*

These extraordinary times have inspired extraordinary generosity accomplished in extraordinary ways. God counts on us to share what we have, as we are able. Yes, a financial contribution is always needed and welcome; nevertheless, our ability to be generous is boundless no matter our material resources.

I wonder if one of the challenges of this moment in time is an invitation to think of generosity in new ways. Can we call on the fortitude that lies within us to overcome our fear of lack and remain steady in our concern for our neighbors? Can we express our generosity by sharing a prayer, a phone call, a song, a memory, a joke? Can we embrace one another with loving hearts and respect in a time of physical distancing?

Can we demonstrate extraordinary generosity, offering what we can, no matter the circumstances of our lives?

That is my prayer, always. ✕



Missionaries in Colombia, 1970 (left to right): Mother Regina O'Connell and Sisters Maria Elena Schaefer, Lorraine Hartnet, Imelda Bauer, Angela Uhlorn, and Veronica Brost Hassler. Kneeling: Sisters Benita Hassler and Elisa Martinez.

