

COURAGE

Karl Barth once said, "Courage is fear that has said its prayers." There are many things that can happen in one's life that turn us to prayer and perhaps to a prayer for courage. Perhaps we are facing an illness; we might have lost a loved one; maybe we are unhappy in our job or with an aspect of our lives, but don't know how to change. Courage is not a sudden change in emotions, but the impetus that moves us - even in our fear or hesitancy - to action.

"The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong in the broken places."
Ernest Hemingway

There are also many areas in our world that call for the display of courage. We don't have to look far to see the many injustices and lack of peace in our world. People are still beaten down by poverty. They are still diminished by racism, sexism, and addictions. They are ignored, ridiculed, ostracized and killed. Our earth, too, is in need of our care.

Courage helps maintain justice for its essence is found in fighting or standing for a good that we so cherish and want to promote that we are willing to sacrifice everything for it. The call for us as Christians is to find that area in the world where we are willing to stand firm and speak out courageously. In a world where apathy has become both a social virtue and a contagious disease, we are called to imitate Christ by being the voices of justice and the action for peace.

"Science may have found a cure for most evils, but it has found no remedy for the worst of them all - the apathy of human beings."
Helen Keller

"God will either protect you from hardships or give you the strength to go through them. Either way you win."

Eugene Hemrick

For the next month we invite you to focus on courage - to pray for the virtue for yourself, to thank God for the gift, and to think of those persons you know who are examples of this virtue. Once you have identified these people, we encourage you to call them or write a note to them, telling them that you see the virtue of courage in their lives. A few examples might be:

- Persons who are battling illness and who have turned to their faith for a source of strength.
- Those who are stepping out in new relationships or jobs.
- Parents who do not give up on their children when they go astray.
- Someone who sees the world as a global village and speaks out against injustices or works to bring peace.
- Those who are willing to be unpopular or ridiculed because they stand up for what is right or good.

Prayer for the virtue of courage:

Loving God, thank you for giving me the gift of your Son who has shown me the path to you. I ask for the virtue of courage. Open my heart to any ways you might personally want me to change. Help me to develop my awareness of those areas in our world that are in need of my voice and my actions. Remove from me any apathy or desire for comfort that is standing in the way of my helping bring about a more just world. May You, speaking through my conscience, and not the examples of society, be the voice I follow. Give me the courage of Mary to say "Yes" to all that you ask of me. Strengthened in faith, may I be led to action on behalf of Your people, and may all I do or say be fueled by a desire for good. Amen.