

REFLECTIONS ON THE VIRTUES OF MOTHER FRANCES STREITEL

FORTITUDE



Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother
Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Assisi

I-00165 ROME - VIA PAOLO III, 9



DEFINITION

Fortitude



Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1808)

Mother Frances never gave way to despair, demonstrating a great Christian fortitude. She was courageous and determined to pursue each goal that she thought was marked by Providence; she never gave up due to difficulties, showing heroic patience for bearing any adversity. She was strong in her suffering and she did it for the love of God, emulating the Sorrowful Mother as her model. Her strength was extraordinary in bearing the exertions of founding a congregation, facing all kinds of hardships, including the journeys overseas to follow the foundations in America. She bore with humiliation, dignity and moral strength her removal from office as general superior of the congregation that she had founded.



TESTIMONIALS ... of the past ...

She was always strong in her self-denial and sufferings; she never complained. She was cheerful and patient throughout her illness. She sought comfort in prayer before the Tabernacle.

(Sr. M. Bernarda Hümpfner)

Mother Frances suffered for a long time but always with great resignation. She had a long and painful death agony.

(Mr. Augusto Grispigni)



SOURCES

SACRED SCRIPTURE: Is. 12:1-6 Jn. 16:33 Ps. 23 Ps. 46

Ps. 118:14 Rom. 8:35-39 Ps. 27

OUR WAY OF LIFE: Articles: #4, 11, 28, 39, 41, 51

WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

Letters to Fr. J. F. Jordan: Letter 2 (2), February 18, 1883, #2
Letter 7 (5), February 26, 1883, #1
Letter 15 (6), March 6, 1883, #3-5

(cont')

Letter 17 (8), March 14, 1883, #1

Letter 17 (8), March 14, 1883, #5

Letter 41 (30), July 21, 1883, # 3

Letter 96 (85), April 10, 1884, #4



REFLECTIONS

COMMUNITY QUESTION:

How and when do we as a community demonstrate living our faith through the Paschal Mystery? How do we accept with fortitude our crosses and limitations that come from communal living and ministry?

PERSONAL QUESTION:

How do I express and address my feelings during times of suffering and difficulties?



TESTIMONIALS ... of today ...

Mother Frances dared to travel to the United States and relying upon God, established especially, healthcare institutions.

She put her trust in God's help against many odds. Having almost nothing, she and her Sisters labored tirelessly to make things workable. God graced them with success.

In my early years, I also had to rely upon God's help and goodness as I was often unprepared for tasks I was sent to do. I have learned that humility and emptiness of self is a friend of failure.

When deposed of her position, Mother Frances admirably and humbly lived the emptiness of self.

Sr. Marydella (USA)



Flexible and strong faith especially in time of challenges, both spiritual and mission challenges. Mother France was flexible and very strong to accept situations in her life. She teaches me how to stand in time of distress remain in prayer by asking God's wisdom to make any decision in my spiritual and mission journey. Love of the church, Eucharist and to be able to face the new mission according to the changes of time by putting together active and contemplative live with simplicity. Simplicity that usually opens the doors for the need.

Sr. Neophita (Tanzania)



God is the source of faith.

My story related to Mother Frances.

Mother Frances was a strong woman throughout her life and mission.

Here I am. Through my yes, on February 6, 1977. I strengthened God's will in my own vocation.

Hope, especially in the face of the challenges of human life and mission.

Strengthening my friendship with God and having love as the basis of my story.

May Our Lady at the foot of the cross, together with her son, be the center of my vocation.

May God enlighten us.

Sr. Maria das Graças (Brazil)



What has influenced my faith the most, and the part of our spirituality with which I identify the most, is definitely M. Frances looking at Mary under the Cross.

There were also other elements of the charism that helped me to realize that this way of life responded to the feelings, affinities, and desires of my heart: the Carmelite element, the constant search for and centrality of God, the desire to be close to the poorest, the Franciscan element, etc.

M. Frances' devotion to Mary under the cross is certainly a result of the cultural environment in



which she lived, but I also believe that it was strengthened and grew in the different stages of her life.

She, the "lover of the cross", calls us: a humble weapon, a victorious sign, a source of salvation, of redemption. Through what she experienced, she understood that standing under the cross, like Mary, unites us and brings our own humanity and that of our neighbor closer to the humanity that the Lord loves so much in each of us and that he wants

to bring to redemption.

In my journey of vocation and human growth, this desire of Mother Frances to "be" in all these situations of poverty has helped me and kept me close to the Lord. In my daily life, she always reminds me to try to be close to those in need, to try to participate as much as I can in the sufferings and situations that cross the lives of those close to me .

Sr. Paola Elisabetta (Italy)



From the beginning of my vocation to religious life until today, I have always been deeply touched by the fact that fortitude was a virtue that accompanied Mother Francesca throughout her spiritual journey, in many different forms.

In her letters, Mother Frances often speaks of struggle: not only the struggle to let herself die in order to make room for God, but a struggle directly related to discernment, to seeking God's will and choosing His will. She did this in prayer, placing herself before the face of Jesus, at the foot of the tabernacle, nourished by His Word. She questions herself with fortitude, seeks God and carries out what the Lord makes her understand to be His will. She never seeks the easiest way or praise, nor does she try to meet the expectations of others, or pursue what seems most acceptable from a human point of view. Once she understands God's will, she is ready to start afresh and do something new.



Throughout her journey and to the end, her heroic virtue was increasingly enriched by silence, humility, and benevolence-qualities that helped her through the most difficult moments of her life.

Her commitment to living for the Lord has been and continues to be a guiding light in my spiritual life and in my experience of community and ministry, seeking God above all else.

Sr. Doriana (Tanzania)



I always remember the courage of Mother Frances when she sent our first sisters to America to beg for alms for our community in Rome. Later they stayed there and built up great works with the help of others. This very begging for alms reminds me of our "collecting" from our gardeners for our children in the kindergarten in the 1960s and beyond. Everything was collected, primarily vegetables of course, but also used oil. Sometimes we were given a sack of bones and a stick of sausage: that was a special feast for Sunday, when we were given a good soup and a slice of sausage each.

Sr. Theresa and Sr. Annemarie (Austria)



"A rock of refuge, a strong fortress" (v. 3). Hence, his abiding trust that hope in God never disappoints: "In you, Lord, I take refuge; I shall never be put to shame" (v. 1).

Pope Leo XIV,
Message for the 9th World Day of the Poor,
November 16, 2025