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On fortitude

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Abstract

A comprehensive coverage of Saint Thomas Aquinas' elucidation of the virtue of fortitude is presented. It is revealed that fortitude is needed to strengthen human persons in the good of virtue in the face of danger, chiefly the danger of death. The principal acts of virtue are endurance and attack, and enemies fear, fearlessness, and daring. The annexed virtues of magnanimity, magnificence, patience, and perseverance as well as the vices opposing these potential parts are also identified and taken up.

Keywords

St. Thomas Aquinas, cardinal virtues, fortitude

Introduction: the virtue of fortitude

In Aquinas' theological anthropology human beings possess the faculties of intellect ("knowing") and will ("loving") needed to fulfill their God-given vocation. Gifted with these properties, human beings alone are persons, "the peak of cosmic perfection."[1] Aquinas begins his discussion of fortitude, the ability to face difficulties well, by asking if it is a virtue and whether it is a cardinal virtue. He concludes that it is, but relays that it is a secondary virtue. It is not the greatest of virtues, nor does it stand by itself. The virtues form a unified whole. Thus, Aquinas begins his exposition of fortitude by explaining where it ranks within the cardinal virtues and the role it plays in safeguarding the good of reason.

Human virtues are those qualities of character that make us good and our acts good. As rational animals, our good is to live in accordance with reason. Our sensible appetites or desires must be controlled for this good to be realised. A mapping of the cardinal virtues follows from this understanding of the basic powers of the human constitution.

Power	Cardinal Virtue
Practical Intellect	Prudence
Rational Will	Justice
Irascible Appetite	Fortitude
Concupiscible Appetite	Temperance

This illustration makes it possible to follow Aquinas' explanation of where fortitude properly fits within the cardinal virtues.

> Augustine says (*De Trinitate*, vi, c. 8), "In things that are great, but not in bulk, to be great is to be good:" wherefore the better a virtue the greater it is. Now reason's good is man's good, according to Dionysius (De Div. Nom., iv, 4) prudence, since it is a perfection of reason has the good essentially: while justice effects this good, since it belongs to justice to establish the order of reason in all human affairs: whereas the other virtues safeguard this good, inasmuch as they moderate the passions, lest they lead man away from reason's good. As to the

[1] R. E. Brennan, *Thomistic psychology*, Cluny Media, Tacoma (WA) 2016 (reprint of 1941 MacMillian Company edition), p. 217.

> order of the latter, fortitude holds the first place, because fear of the dangers of death has the greatest power to make man recede from the good of reason: and after fortitude comes temperance, since also pleasures of touch excel all others in hindering the good of reason. Now to be a thing essentially ranks before effecting it, and the latter ranks before safeguarding it by removing obstacles thereto. Wherefore among the cardinal virtues, prudence ranks first, justice second, fortitude third, temperance fourth, and after these the other virtues.[2]

Every person knows from experience that life can be hard. Every person must weather certain storms in his life. Every person encounters obstacles and hurdles in the pursuit of good. These difficulties engage the irascible appetite. We become irate at the barriers that have been placed in our way. Fortitude moderates this anger, moderates the powers of the irascible appetite, so that we can act with steady resolve.

Aquinas defines fortitude variously as "the deliberate facing of dangers and bearing of toils," "bearing and withstanding grave dangers,"[3] "standing firm against all kinds of assaults."[4] He brings forward the profound Christian perspective on the virtue by presenting the definitions given by Church Fathers Gregory and Augustine. For Gregory, the special virtue of fortitude is "to love the trials of this life for the sake of an eternal reward."[5] For Augustine fortitude is "love ready to bear all things for God's sake."[6] As a general virtue or condition of every virtue, fortitude denotes a certain firmness of mind—i.e., it is requisite for every virtue to act firmly, so fortitude is integral to all virtues.

Virtues are moral habits. In possession of a virtue, one's acts become so habitual as to be second nature. For example, the honest man immediately returns an overpayment of change at the cash register without any hesitation or deliberation. Similarly, the courageous man faces danger without flinching. He does not fold in the face of trouble. He refuses to be defeated by what comes his way. He continues to do good despite difficulty because fortitude is his second nature.

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2 Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, transl. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Benzinger Brothers, New York [1911] 1948, Work completed 1265–1273 [hereinafter: ST], II-II, q. 123, a. 12.

3 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 2.

4 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 2, ad. 1.

5 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 3, ad. 1.

6 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 7, obj. 3.

In defining fortitude, its subordinate nature as a virtue becomes immediately evident. Again, fortitude is the virtue that directs the passions of the irascible appetite, fear, anger, and daring, in the face of a good that is difficult to achieve. Good alone causes the virtue not the difficulty. So, the brave man must first know what the good is. Also, difficulties are not to be surmounted in any way whatsoever but "according to reason."[7] It belongs to prudence to apply "right reason to action."[8] Prudence is the guide and director of fortitude no less than the other moral virtues. This is too blunt a description, however. Pieper plumbs the philosophical profundity of the matter.

> In truth, fortitude becomes fortitude only through being "informed" by prudence. The double meaning of "inform" is here very apt. "Inform" in the current usage means primarily "instruct"; secondly, as a technical term of scholasticism, taken directly from the Latin *informare*, it means "to give inner form to."[9]

Without prudence, there is no special virtue of fortitude.

For Aquinas, the good presupposes the true. Prudence, lodged in reality, informs by grasping the truth of real things. Only by seeing things rightly, including knowing the relative importance of different goods for human existence, is virtuous action possible. Prudence decides "in what manner and by what means man shall obtain the mean of reason in his deeds."[10]

Fortitude is also dependent on the cardinal virtue of justice, or, said another way, prudence works through justice to inform fortitude. Fortitude is only fortitude when it is just. The bank robber who risks his life to steal the bank's money is not courageous. The actions are a mere simulacrum of genuine fortitude. Fortitude is firmness of the soul, a moral virtue, not the insensible blindness to danger of the hardened criminal. Aquinas makes the point that fortitude is only praiseworthy, only a virtue, if justice is present, if what is sought is truly good. "Hence Ambrose says (De Offic. i) that 'fortitude without justice is an

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7 ST, II-II, q. 126, a. 2, ad. 1.
8 ST, II-II, q. 47, a. 4.
9 J. Pieper, *The four cardinal virtues: Prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1966, p. 123.
10 ST, II-II, q. 47, a. 7.

occasion of injustice; since the stronger a man is, the more ready he is to oppress the weaker.'"[11]

In review, prudence cognitively confers the good of reason. Justice is charged with bringing about the actual realization of this good. Fortitude clears the path to this realization by removing or working through any obstacles that arise.

1. Fortitude's acts

Fortitude has two basic acts: endurance and attack. To attack a danger is to seek to eliminate it or remove it. This is the fortitude of the soldier charging enemy lines. To endure is to "stand immovable in the midst of dangers."[12] Of these two, attack and endurance, endurance is the principal act of fortitude. This may seem wrong since we are quite familiar with the bravery involved in attacks, but, as he always does, Aquinas clears up the matter with a lucid explanation.

> Endurance is more difficult than aggression for three reasons. First, because endurance seemingly implies that one is being attacked by a stronger person, whereas aggression denotes that one is attacking as though one were the stronger party; and it is more difficult to contend with a stronger than with a weaker. Secondly, because he that endures already feels the presence of danger, whereas the aggressor looks upon danger as something to come; and it is more difficult to be unmoved by the present than by the future. Thirdly, because endurance implies length of time, whereas aggression is consistent with sudden movements; and it is more difficult to remain unmoved for a long time, than to be moved suddenly to do something arduous.[13]

Attack is, of course, not ruled out. The brave man will eliminate evil when it is reasonable to do so. But there are times when evil must be born with equanimity. There is simply no possibility other than endurance. The soul must cleave "most resolutely (*fortissime*) to good"[14] to get through.

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[11] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 12, ad. 3.
[12] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 6.
[13] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 6, ad. 1.
[14] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 6, ad. 2.

The supreme instance of fortitude is martyrdom. Martyrdom is the "due endurance of death,"[15] that is, suffering "death for Christ's sake"[16] or for "any human good so far as it is referred to God."[17] Fortitude par excellence is making the ultimate sacrifice of one's life for the personal God who becomes man in Jesus Christ. Readiness to die for one's faith must mark a Christian's life. "Man must be ready to let himself be killed rather than to deny Christ or sin grievously."[18]

It must be noted that laying down one's life for God or for the moral good is praiseworthy but not suffering or injury itself. It is not the suffering that makes the martyr but what he dies *for*. It is wrong to extoll suffering for its own sake without considering the cause involved. Neither is martyrdom to be sought out. Life is a precious gift from God. One's primary intention can never be to extinguish it. Martyrdom is to be accepted, if called to it, and endured with God's help. It is not that life has no value, just that it isn't the greatest good.

Martyrdom is extremely difficult to accept precisely because of the great love we have for our present life. "Of all the goods of the present life man loves life itself the most and hates death more than anything especially when it is accompanied by the pain of bodily torment."[19] Satan uses this fact to achieve his diabolical purposes. In answering God, he says, "all that people have they will give to save their lives."[20]

Truth is the proper object of the reasoning mind. Martyrs witness to the truth that our time on earth is a time of exile. Human beings are created at once material and spiritual. They are in possession of immortal souls that live on after physical death. This life is not all there is. There is life on the other side of the grave as well. Right reason tells the Christian believer that he must endure bodily evils, even death, rather than lose his soul.[21]

True prudence accurately grasps the relative importance of different goods in life. The brave person does not set aside genuine goods, even the good of one's life, easily or esteem them lightly. But he is willing to sacrifice these goods to preserve the inmost core of his being and ensure his eternal destiny with God.

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15 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 3.
16 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 4.
17 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 5, ad. 3.
18 Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, 4, 20.
19 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 3.
20 Job 2:4.
21 Mk 8:35–37.

> It belongs to martyrdom that a man bear witness to the faith in showing by deed that he despises all things present in order to obtain invisible goods to come.[22]

Martyrdom is the perfect of human acts, the sign of the greatest charity. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."[23] Martyrdom, through its demonstration of love for God and for objective moral truth, inters the idea that right and wrong are just opinions. Remaining faithful to God's holy law to the point of death strikes a blow at the nihilism that threatens to swamp our civilization.

The examples of those dying in patient endurance so that good might be realized are many. Aquinas mentions the "holy martyrs who through zeal for the faith or brotherly love gave themselves up to martyrdom of their own accord"[24] before referring to "the martyrdom of Blessed John the Baptist, who suffered death, not for refusing to deny the faith, but for reproving adultery."[25] Countless saints and Christian martyrs have provided this perfectly clear witness throughout the years.

In remaining "obedient unto death,"[26] the Christian martyr follows the example of his Lord, Jesus Christ. Pieper observes that Christ's "earthly life was entirely permeated and formed by His readiness for sacrificial death, to which He went 'like a lamb to the slaughter.'"[27] Yes, dying for one's faith must be agonizing. In doing so, the faithful follower of Jesus Christ is only imitating his Lord and Savior.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ was up front with his disciples about the reality they would face, a reality that those living a Christian existence still face today. That reality would be one of persecutions. The servants would not be above their master.[28] By his life, Jesus Christ testifies against evil works[29], exposing these deeds to the light.[30] The wound of original sin causes men to meet this testimony with deadly force. Aquinas says that this opposition is to be expected.

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22 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 4.
23 Jn 15:13.
24 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 3, ad. 1.
25 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 5.
26 Phil. 2:8.
27 J. Pieper, *The four cardinal virtues*, p. 132.
28 Jn 15:18–19.
29 Jn 7:7.
30 Jn 3:20.

> Though dangers of death are of rare occurrence, yet the occasions of those dangers occur frequently, since on account of justice which he pursues, and also on account of other good deeds, man encounters mortal adversaries.[31]

Jesus goes even further with his followers in his extraordinary declaration to them that they are to consider themselves blessed if they are persecuted.[32] The same message is repeated elsewhere in Holy Writ.[33]

But how is this even possible? Is it not our experience that the pain of the senses overwhelms any spiritual pleasures we may get from acting virtuously? Aquinas acknowledges this reality but says that the overflowing grace of God lifts the soul to spiritual joy.

> Now the sensible pain of the body makes one insensible to the spiritual delight of virtue, without copious assistance of God's grace, which has more strength to raise the soul to the Divine things in which it delights, than bodily pains have to afflict it.[34]

Fortitude's true nature is revealed in martyrdom. Less heroic demonstrations of the cardinal virtue find their comparison point with this perfect human act. Whoever can do the greater can do the lesser. Whoever can endure the most terrible of bodily evils can courageously overcome the numerous little deaths—challenges, obstacles—that must be met every day. In any event, the vices opposing the virtue of fortitude will have to be contended with.

2. Fortitude's opposing vices

Aquinas identified three enemies of fortitude: *fear, fearlessness,* and *daring.* These are the main passions of the irascible appetite that fortitude must moderate. A due order of human action requires that sensible desires be subject to the rule of reason.

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31 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 11, ad. 3.
32 Mt 5:11–12.
33 I Pet 4:13–14, 16.
34 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 3.

Fear arises from love. We fear that which is contrary to what we love. Therefore, the proper ordering of fear depends on the proper ordering of love. Reason dictates that this ordering is the goods of the soul over the goods of the body and the goods of the body over external things. Aquinas presents this hierarchy of goods from the side of what is feared. "The evils of the soul are more to be feared than evils of the body and the evils of the body more than external things."[35]

Fortitude insists upon and maintains this natural order of goods. The courageous man loves what he should and fears what he should.

We should love our mortal life more than our possessions. What we have only makes sense to us, only has value to us, from the fact that we are alive. The covetous man loves money inordinately and thus fears its loss inordinately. Money has become his god. His worship of Mammon precludes his spiritual life. "No man can take up the profession of contemplation or spiritual warfare, if he still fears to be despoiled of earthly riches." [36]

Aquinas stated that "the shortening of temporal life is an evil and consequently an object of fear"[37] but the loss of our lives is not properly our greatest fear. There are goods higher than the goods of the body. There are things, virtue, wisdom, the Divine, that are worth facing danger for, even the danger of death.

Understanding fortitude's moderation of fear can aid by recalling that fortitude is informed by prudence. The virtuous person sees things as they are. He likes to live in reality. Fear is real, understandably so, but it is moderated for the sake of something higher. Fortitude's essential role is not to do away with fear but to keep it in check. In this way, both sins of commission and sins of omission are avoided. One is not forced into an evil action by fear and one is not kept from taking actions to realize the good by fear. Keeping the due order

[35] ST, II-II, q. 125, a. 4.
[36] ST, II-II, q. 125, a. 3, obj. 3.
[37] ST, II-II, q. 125, a. 4, ad. 2.

of goods keeps fear in its place. The brave man is not without fear, but he is not deterred from doing good because of it. He faces the fear he experiences directly. He considers the reasonable ground for it, and then he acts. Moreover, he does not fall prey to T. S. Eliot's last and greatest temptation, to do the right thing for the wrong reason.[38] He acts for the sake of the good.

Fear is sinful insofar as it runs counter to the order of reason. A person refuses to endure what the right reason tells him he should endure rather than lose the moral good he should pursue. Timidity keeps him back in the face of a danger that reason bids him to face. His excessive fear causes him to flee in cowardice.

Love of God is the foundation of all virtue because God is the *summum bonum*. The reverse of loving God is separation from God. This fear of what is ultimately dreadful is our greatest fear.

Fearlessness is the second vice opposing fortitude. Every moral virtue observes the rational mean—i.e., it is not corrupted by either excess or deficiency in the matter about which it is concerned. It belongs to fortitude to moderate the passion of fear according to reason. The timid man sins by excess. He fears what he ought not fear and as he ought not. The fearless man sins by deficiency. He does not fear what he should fear.

Aquinas returns to the relationship between fear and love and the hierarchy of goods he has presented to explain where the vice of fearlessness comes from. At first glance, it is difficult to see how it even arises.

Fear is born of love. Loving and serving God is the highest good and therefore the generation of our greatest fear. It is natural that we love our lives and fear what might imperil them. We ought to love temporal goods in due measure, that is, as things to be used instrumentally for the sake of our last end. Aquinas unravels the vice of fearlessness by first of all noting that "what is natural cannot be wholly lost."[39] One may love one's life and the temporal goods that support it less than one ought and consequently fear death and other temporal evils less than one ought, but one's love for one's own life never lapses entirely. Scripture is used to solidify the point that fearlessness does not arise from an entire lack of love. "No one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares

[38] T. S. Eliot's statement, "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason", is from his play *Murder in the cathedral* found in T. S. Eliot, *The complete poems and plays*, Faber and Faber, London 1969, p. 258.

[39] ST, II-II, q. 126, a. 1.

for it."[40] Aquinas then draws the conclusion that someone not fearing the loss of goods he loves must come about by that person thinking it is impossible for him to be afflicted by the evils contrary to those goods. Aquinas gives three reasons for this fearlessness.

i) Pride: The person overestimates his own excellence and cannot conceive of any danger that he would not be able to meet. Vainglory moves him, not fortitude.
ii) Lack of Love: The person cares so little about what might be lost that he will rush into danger. His actions are influenced by carelessness, not courage.
iii) Lack of Understanding: A dull or stupid person fears nothing because he is unaware of the dangers he faces. Ignorance not bravery activates him.

Daring is the third vice opposing fortitude. In referring to this passion, what is being implied is excessive daring. Daring is good when it is regulated by reason, but not when it escapes rational moderation by going to excess.

Prudence is once again critical in thinking about how to be bold and audacious, courageous, without being reckless. Prudence informs fortitude by providing a correct evaluation of what is being risked as well as what might be preserved or gained by the contemplated action. The daredevil indiscriminately courts danger risking his personhood arbitrarily and without an adequate appreciation of the infinite value of his life, of what true human greatness is.

> A man is said to love danger when he exposes himself to all kinds of dangers, which seems to be the mark of one who thinks *many* the same as *great.*[41]

The person with excessive daring puts himself in danger inordinately. The courageous person sees things rightly and acts according to reason. The soldier in battle who sees his fellow soldier fall wounded on the field of battle a short distance from his foxhole must moderate his fear of being killed in a rescue effort and summon the courage to act. But he must also moderate his daring. Excessive daring would lead to a fool hardly mission, for example, trying to run across the open territory to pick up the man and run back. Such an attempt would mean certain death from enemy bullets. Less daring but more prudent would be to camouflage oneself, crawl out to the wounded man, and drag him

[40] Eph 5:29.
[41] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 5, ad. 2.

back to safety inch by excruciating inch. To take such an action, an extreme degree of fortitude would have to be summoned.[42]

3. Fortitude's potential parts: annexed virtues

Fortitude is concerned with the danger of death. There are many other minor hardships in life. Aquinas annexes four virtues, *magnanimity, magnificence, patience, perseverance,* to the principal virtue of fortitude. These secondary virtues, called the potential parts of fortitude, strengthen men in the face of danger and evils less than the danger of death.

Magnanimity is derived from the Latin *magnus* "great" and *animus* "soul." The literal meaning of magnanimity then is greatness of the soul. Magnanimity is the "stretching forth of the mind to great things."[43] A man is said to be magnanimous because he is minded to do great things. Because great deeds usually bring great honors, magnanimity is concerned with great honors. "The proper matter of magnanimity is great honor, and that a magnanimous man tends to such things as are deserving of honor."[44]

Aquinas is careful to distinguish the Christian meaning of magnanimity from the secular one. As a Christian, as one belonging to God, everything that one is and everything that one has, are gifts from God. That is, our greatness comes from what God has endowed us with or made possible in our lives.

> There is in man something great which he possesses through the gift of God; and something defective which accrues to him through the weakness of nature. Accordingly magnanimity makes a man deem himself worthy of great things in consideration of the gifts he holds from God.[45]

Christians need to be great souls longing to do great things for God. Public or societal honors will not be declined, but neither will they be sought. The Christian ultimately seeks honor only in the eyes of God. The accomplishment

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[42] This example is adapted from Walter Farrell and Martin J. Healy, *My way of life*, Confraternity of the Precious Blood, Brooklyn 1952.

[43] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 1.

[44] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 2.

[45] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 4.

of something great is to be used to bring glory to God. [46] Christians are to be the "light of the world,"[47] not hiding their gifts but using them to do great things for God and for their fellow travellers.

Aquinas added several characteristics or dimensions to the portrait of the great souled person. The magnanimous person does not run about frantically trying to accomplish many things but is intent only on great things. He attends fully to completing these few things. He is able to speak calmly and learnedly about what he is doing because of the focus he has. He does not get drawn into needless quarrels about little things. The magnanimous man avoids anything contrary to "his excellence or greatness."[48] He deems himself worth great things in consideration of the gifts he holds from God.

The magnanimous man knows that he is not an island unto himself. He understands that "man is naturally a social animal."[49] He accepts that besides Divine assistance he needs human assistance and he prepares accordingly. He plans "to have at hand those who are able to be of service to him."[50] The great souled person is grateful for the help of others and tries to repay them with even greater help in return. He associates with others as he ought to, authentically and genuinely, and he shuns flattery and hypocrisy. He "cares more for truth than opinion."[51] The magnanimous man is "confident in himself."[52] This allows him to be modest. He does not feel the need to call attention to himself or to disclose everything he is trying to do. The magnanimous man does not deem human praise to be something great and so he cares little for it.

The magnanimous person sees that great things can be more easily accomplished by having the wealth to bring them about. He also understands, however, the resistance to reason that arises from the love of money.[53] Therefore, he despises "riches in such a way as to do nothing unbecoming in order to obtain them nor have too great a desire for them."[54] It is contrary to the excellence or greatness of the magnanimous man that for the sake of external goods "he

[46] Mt 5:16.
[47] Mt 5:14.
[48] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 4, ad. 2.
[49] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 6, ad. 1.
[50] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 6, ad. 1.
[51] ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 2, ad. 1.
[52] ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 2, ad. 1.
[53] 1 Tim 6:10.
[54] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 1, ad. 3.

abandons and gives up justice or any virtue whatever."[55] The goods of fortune are esteemed as useful organs or instruments, conductive to magnanimity only if they are kept in their place as means and not idolized as an end themselves.

Aquinas goes on to cover the vices opposed to magnanimity. He lists three such vices, which deviate from the mean of virtue by excess, *presumption, ambition, vainglory,* and one that moves away from the mean by deficiency, *pusillanimity*.

The presumptuous person strives to do things that are beyond his power. Aquinas explains why presumption, indeed any vice, is a sin. Nature "is ordered by Divine Reason."[56] Human reasoning and action ought to imitate Divine Reason, that is, respect the natural order of things. Whatever is done "in opposition to the order established in general throughout natural things is vicious and sinful."[57] Natural things act commensurate with their power. A rabbit does not try to fly, for instance. Presumption violates the natural order by believing oneself able to reach what is above one's head.

Perfect virtue, union with God, is to be sought and is not above human capability because we are in possession of a natural power, the intellect, that makes such a union possible. Furthermore, the faithful can be confident in God's assistance being available to reach this state.

Aquinas goes on to say that a man is presumptuous "when he thinks himself great, and worthy of great things, by reason of something that does not make him so, for instance by reason of riches or goods of fortune."[58] Things like wearing costly clothes are deemed great only in the minds of fools. They do not make one magnanimous.

Magnanimity could be referred to as praiseworthy ambition. The magnanimous person strives to do great things in the right way, at the right time, for the right reasons, and so on. He duly receives great honors for this. But he is clear to whom this honor is principally due and why it is important to get. Our gifts are given to us by God.[59] God gives us these gifts so that we may build his Kingdom by serving others. We recognize that we can only excel because of something divine in us.[60] Therefore, the reverence shown to us in witness

[55] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 4, ad. 2.
[56] ST, II-II, q. 130, a. 1.
[57] ST, II-II, q. 130, a. 1.
[58] ST, II-II, q. 130, a. 2, ad. 3.
[59] 1 Cor 4:7.
[60] Jn 15:5.

of our excellence is chiefly owed to God. We are pleased to receive honor because the receipt of honor enables us to serve others even better.

Ambition, as the vice opposing the virtue of magnanimity, is the inordinate desire for honor and this happens in three ways. Aquinas lays them out:

> First, when a man desires recognition of an excellence which he has not; this is to desire more than his share of honor. Secondly, when a man desires honor for himself without referring it to God. Thirdly, when a man's appetite rests in honor itself without referring it to the profit of others.[61]

Inordinate desire for a position of stature also pertains to ambition.

Honor and praise give rise naturally to renown in the minds of others or glory. Glory is the effect of honor and praise. "Praise and honor stand in relation to glory as the causes from which it proceeds, so that glory is compared to them as their end."[62] Glory is something that we desire predominantly. We enjoy the appreciation and approval of others. The desire for glory itself does not denote a sin, and glory may even be desired for its usefulness.[63] But it is easy to forget that true glory comes from God. God commends our work. We ought to do virtuous deeds for the glory God promises, not human glory.[64]

The problem with human glory is that it is a frail thing that exists outside ourselves. Since our renown is in the minds of others, it can be withdrawn by those same others. Self-knowledge is requisite for perfection, but being known by others is not. Yet, our desire for glory easily becomes inordinate, and when it does, it is a sin, vainglory, and directly opposed to magnanimity. Aquinas gives three ways in which glory becomes vain or empty.

> First, on the part of the thing for which one seeks glory: as when a man seeks glory for that which is unworthy of glory, for instance when he seeks it for something frail and perishable: secondly, on the part of him from whom he seeks glo-

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61 ST, II-II, q. 131, a. 1.

62 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 4, ad. 2.

63 Aquinas gives three things glory may be useful for. "In order that God may be glorified by man, or that men may become better by reason of the good they know to be in another man, or in order that man, knowing by the testimony of others' praise the good which is in him, may himself strive to persevere there in and to become better" (ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 1, ad. 3).

64 2 Cor 10:17–18.

> ry, for instance a man whose judgement is uncertain: thirdly, on the part of the man himself who seeks glory, for that he does not refer the desire of his own glory to a due end, such as God's honor, or the spiritual welfare of his neighbor.[65]

Vainglory is a mortal sin[66] and a capital vice.[67] As such, it is dangerous and harmful to the extreme. God knows our hearts, and he knows the empty pleasure we get from human praise. We should not be naïve about vainglory's destructive power. Aquinas quotes Augustine on what is at stake to the human personality with vainglory and what must be done to maintain that personality intact.

> Unless a man war against the love of human glory he does not perceive its baneful power, for though it be easy for anyone not to desire praise as long as one does not get it, it is difficult not to take pleasure in it, when it is given.[68]

A sin is mortal if it is contrary to charity. Our glory is vain and contrary to the love of God when we glory in something false that is opposed to the reverence we owe God. For example, when we falsely elevate ourselves to God-like stature.[69] Our glory is vain and contrary to the love of God when we glory in temporal goods over God.[70] Our glory is vain and contrary to the love of God when we love "human glory more than the glory that comes from God."[71]

We sin mortally when we elevate glory to the last end or greatest good of our lives. Faith is thereby denied, and everything becomes permitted, even actions against God. Wishing that all might be saved, Jesus confronts his listeners on their lack of love for God.

> How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God.[72]

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65 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 1.
66 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 3.
67 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 4.
68 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 3, obj. 3.
69 Ezek 28:2.
70 Jer 9:23–24.
71 Jn 12:43.
72 Jn 5:44.

Vainglory appropriates for oneself the glory which is proper to God. "I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other."[73] "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever."[74]

For Aquinas, a vice is designated as capital (Latin: *caput*, head) because it "easily gives rise to others as being their final cause."[75] Thus, capital vices serve as the head or source of other vices. Capital vices do this; they serve as "fonts"[76] of vice, and by the end they focus on. Certain offspring vices, or daughters, arise to assist in attaining the end-like good the capital vice pursues. Aquinas uses a military metaphor to drive home the idea. "Capital sins are commanders, and the sins arising from capital sins are the army."[77]

The end of vainglory is the manifestation of one's own excellence. Aquinas reckons the seven daughters of vainglory, those vices directed to the end of the capital vice, to be *boasting, love of novelties, hypocrisy, obstinacy, discord, contention,* and *disobedience.* Aquinas explains how these daughters act as the army of the commander, vainglory.

> [To the end of manifesting one's excellence] a man may tend in two ways. In one way directly, either by words, and this is *boasting* or by deeds, and then if they are true and call for astonishment, it is *love of novelties* which men are wont to wonder at most: but if they be false, it is *hypocrisy*. In another way a man strives to make known his excellence by showing that he is not inferior to another, and this in four ways. First, as regards the intellect, and thus we have *obstinacy* by which a man is too much attached to his own opinion, being unwilling to believe one that is better. Secondly, as regards the will, and then we have *discord*, whereby a man is unwilling to give up his own will and agree with others. Thirdly, as regards speech, we have *contention*, whereby a man quarrels noisily with another. Fourthly, as regards deeds, and this is *disobedience*, whereby a man refuses to carry out the command of his superiors.[78]

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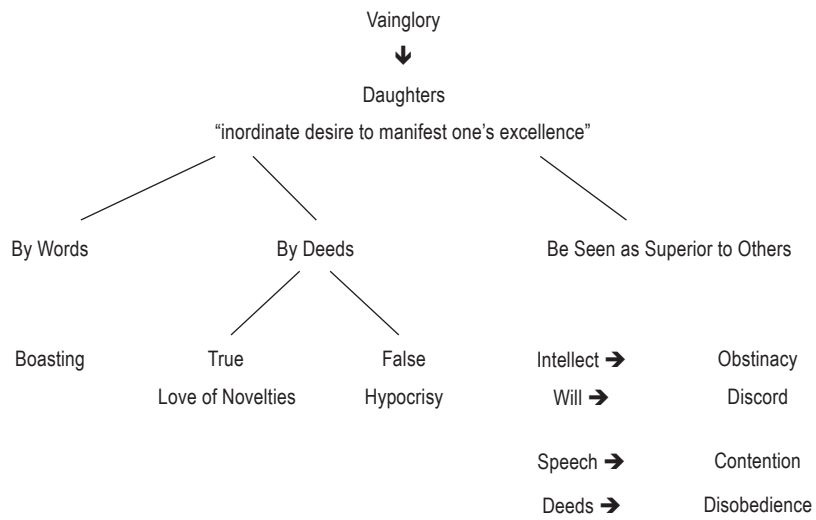
[73] Is 42:8.
[74] 1 Tim 1:17.
[75] ST, II-II, q. 35, a. 4.
[76] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On evil*, trans. R. Regan, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003, q. 8, a. 1 (originally prepared early 1270's).
[77] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On evil*, q. 8, a. 1.
[78] ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 5.



In saying the Lord's prayer, the Christian petitions God with the words, "hallowed be thy name."[79] In other words, "let all glory be yours Lord." But we know how easy it is for us to fall short of this desire. If we are honest, we acknowledge that only too often we want the glory to be ours. The daughters of vainglory Aquinas also convict us. With pinpoint accuracy, they disclose our vainglorious actions. It is as if Aquinas is peering right into our hearts, which is, of course, what the Church did for 12 centuries up to Aquinas' magisterial synthesis.

Do we not call attention to what we have done, perhaps exaggerating our success, to gain the praise of others (boasting)? Do we not like to stand out and seek ways for this to happen, for example, by behaving eccentrically or dressing unusually (love of novelties)? Do we not pretend to be something we are not (hypocrisy)? Do we not hold onto a position that ought to be abandoned because acknowledging the position of others would show us to be wrong (obstinacy)? Do we not insist on calling all the shots, having our own way in everything, and making it difficult for others to work with us (discord)? Do we not feel the need to always interject our opinion, always argue a matter, any matter, down to the last conversational drop (contention)? Do we not refuse to acknowledge the

[79] Mt 6:9.

legitimate orders of those over us lest it look like someone other than ourselves is in charge (disobedience)?

Presumption makes us exceed what is proportionate to our power by striving to do more than we can. Pusillanimity makes us fall short of what is proportionate to our power by refusing to do what we can do. Both are vices opposed to magnanimity, presumption by excess, and pusillanimity by deficiency. Indeed, pusillanimity translates from the Latin *pusillus* "very small" and *animus* "soul" as "littleness of soul" in direct contrast to magnanimity's "greatness of soul."

God does not want us to presumptuously get out over the tips of our skis since these results in our crashing. But God does not want us to sit in the chalet out of fear or out of a lack of appreciation for our gifts, never attempting a run. God is critical of those who bury their talents and do not use them to build his kingdom.[80]

God's criticism of the pusillanimous man is harsh because he is set up to crash just as surely as the presumptuous man, albeit in a different way. There are consequences from shrinking from the greatness proper to us. First, we are unable to help others as we ought. We sin by omission because we never have developed our abilities. Second, we lose sight of our true dignity as children of God and our mission, which is to advance in the perfection of the Christian life toward holiness.[81] Pusillanimity can be pushed back by remembering that God has promised to be with us always[82] and that his grace is sufficient[83] for whatever he asks us to do. The heroes of the bible receive the most challenging assignments (e.g. Moses), but they are inevitably told to "be not afraid."[84]

The next potential part of fortitude is the virtue of magnificence. Once again, it is helpful to trace the etymology of the word. The Latin roots of magnificence are *magna* "great" and *facere* "to make." Aquinas takes the meaning of magnificence directly from the literal translation of these roots, namely, "to make great things."[85] The question is no longer about *being* a great soul, as it was with magnanimity. It is now a matter of extending oneself to *do* great things. Aquinas

[80] Mt 25:14–30.
[81] Mt 5:48.
[82] Mt 28:30.
[83] 2 Cor 12:9
[84] Jn 14:27
[85] ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 1, obj. 4.

offers a beautiful treatise on what this entails, on what it means to have the moral quality of magnificence.

Aquinas begins his coverage of magnificence by noting the spiritual and social nature of the human person. Magnificence can never principally be about building lavish works for ourselves because our lives are for God and we must live in community with others.

> It belongs to magnificence to do something great. But that which regards a man's person is little in comparison with that which regards Divine things, or even the affairs of the community at large.[86]

What we do for ourselves is still important, of course. We must provide for our own good. Aquinas says that when we do this, for instance, when we build an adequate dwelling for ourselves, we ought to accomplish it magnificently. Properly speaking, however, such undertakings are not something great. We must get out beyond our own selves.

Magnificence is a special virtue, defined as a distinctive virtue, because it produces works that are great in "quantity, value, or dignity."[87] Magnificence is not about making just anything. What is being made must be something worth making in the first place. The construction of the gas chambers in World War II was not the work of magnificent men. In our own time, building a studio to make pornographic films is not a dignified or valuable work. Prudence and justice must inform the annexed virtue of magnificence just as they do the principal virtue of fortitude.

Aquinas refers to our teleological nature to clarify what constitutes a great work. Human beings act purposefully. We undertake works with an end in mind. The greatest end we can have for our works is the "honor of God."[88] Divine honor and beyond that, the common good of the community are the ends that fulfill the intention of magnificence to produce a great work. The magnificent man has in his mind the doing of great things. He thinks about completing them and gives them his inward attention. Aquinas presents the expanded definition of magnificence given by Tully (*De Inv. Rhet.* ii) to convey this understanding.

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[86] ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 1, ad. 3.
[87] ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 2.
[88] ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 2, ad. 3.

> Magnificence is the discussing and administering of great and lofty undertakings, with a certain broad and noble purpose of mind.[89]

The inclusion of the word administering in the definition acknowledges the reality that bringing a great work to fruition requires considered planning and careful execution. Magnificence, a potential part of fortitude, employs attack or aggression, an act of fortitude. The first requirement of aggression is preparing the mind to face the undertaking with confidence. The second requirement is the carrying out of the work so that something great actually gets built.[90]

Fortitude strengthens us in the good of virtue in the face of danger. Magnificence does the same thing. Both are situated in the emotional part of the soul. Where the two virtues differ, and the reason why magnificence is a secondary virtue annexed to fortitude, is the nature of the danger faced. Fortitude faces the danger of death. The danger of magnificence faces, venturing what one has on something great, is real but not anywhere as great as the danger that threatens a person's very existence. It takes courage to risk failure in a great enterprise.

Magnificence has the task of making an expenditure proportionate to the great work contemplated. It is a challenge to know how much is needed, to know how to access these monies, and to know how to purpose them wisely. There is no getting around the fact that magnificence is about money and its proper use.

One is hindered from being magnificent by loving money too much. Money is a requisite instrument for the production of great works honoring God or making for a more becoming existence for the members of the community. Our hold on money must be released for it to be put to good use. Hoarding money as an end in itself cuts magnificence off at the knees.

The vice opposing magnificence is meanness. Meanness, as Aquinas uses it, does not have the meaning the word presently has, namely, vicious or unkind. Aquinas specifies that "a man is said to be mean (*parvificus*) because he intends to do something little (*parvum*)."[91] This can best be seen by returning to the virtue that meanness opposes. Magnificence seeks to make something great and does not shrink from making the appropriate expenditure to realize this end. Man's good is to be in accordance with reason. Magnificence upholds this good by keeping spending proportionate to the work. Meanness is a sin, something

[89] ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 2, ad. 2.
[90] ST, II-II, q. 128, a. 1.
[91] ST, II-II, q. 135, a. 1.

"reprehensible,"[92] because the actions of a mean man are not regulated according to reason. A mean man is loath to spend the money needed. He declines from the rule of reason by spending less than the work is worth. For instance, as a builder, he tries to complete a million dollar project, spending only half of that amount. As an employer, he seeks ways to avoid fully paying what he owes his employees in wages. Just as meanness falls short of the rule of reason, *consumptio* (waste) exceeds the rule. It exceeds its due proportion by spending too much.

Patience is also annexed to fortitude as a secondary virtue or quasi-potential part. Our consideration of patience today is usually limited to having to wait for something. We get stuck in traffic, and we simply must be patient until the jam can be cleared. In minor trials such as this, we can see how patience shares fortitude's principal act of endurance. Aquinas' understanding of patience is far more profound than the popular contemporary one, however. A detailed examination of his remarkable thoughts on this virtue yields important insights for our moral lives.

Fortitude endures the most difficult thing to endure, namely, the danger of death. It falls to patience to endure or bear all other manner of hardships or evils. As a moral virtue, patience safeguards the good of reason against the impulse of sorrow that arises from the suffering occasioned by obstacles.

> A man is said to be patient, not because he does not fly [in the face of danger], but because he behaves in a praiseworthy manner by suffering (*patiendo*) things which hurt him here and now, in such a way as to not be inordinately saddened by them.[93]

All virtues are directed to the good of the soul. Patience, while not ranked as the greatest of virtues,[94] moderates the sorrow that arises from hardship.

Aquinas accesses St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians to make a critical distinction between dealing with grief leading to sorrow in a godly or worldly way. St. Paul addresses the community about the grief they have suffered at his hands.

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92 ST, II-II, q. 135, a. 1, ad. 2.
93 ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 4, ad. 2.
94 ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 2.

> Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance; for you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death.[95]

Dealing with grief in a worldly way is ultimately inadequate because human life in the secular world view ends in death, the complete dissolution of the human person. Human beings are destined for eternal life with God, a salvation made possible by Christ's atonement. This true end of life is achieved by repentance. The virtue of patience deals with grief in a godly way by turning to the beatific vision.

For Aquinas, patience, even though he situates it within the cardinal virtue of fortitude, is an infused virtue. He says unequivocally that "it is clearly impossible to have patience without the help of grace."[96] Patience is a virtue caused by charity. "Love is patient."[97] Charity comes through grace. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."[98] Patience proceeds from supernatural love.

Aquinas adds further nuance to his discussion of patience by noting that sorrow arises in the concupiscible appetite, not the irascible appetite that houses fortitude, and also by noting that concupiscence is "dominant"[99] in fallen man. Patience is a virtue annexed to fortitude because they have the same matter and form. Patience is not a part of temperance because temperance is only about sorrows opposed to the pleasures of touch. Patience, on the other hand, "is chiefly about sorrows inflicted by other persons."[100] This is a very difficult reality to accept, particularly given our fallenness. Our greatest sorrows come from what other people do to us. People disrespect us, criticize us unfairly, act unjustly towards us, lie to us, betray us, and even harm us physically. We need the virtue of patience to bear the sorrow this causes serenely and even cheerfully. It belongs to patience "to suffer with an equal mind the evils inflicted by others."[101]

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[95] 2 Cor 7:9–10.
[96] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 3.
[97] I Cor 13:4.
[98] Rom 5:5.
[99] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 3, ad. 1.
[100] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 4, ad. 2.
[101] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 4, sed contra.

The patient person knows how to retain his equanimity however great the sorrow. This does not mean that he closes himself off to the use of the other act of fortitude, attack. It is not inconsistent with patience "that a man should, when necessary, rise up against the man who inflicts evils on him."[102]

Aquinas comprises longanimity and constancy under patience. Longanimity looks to a far off good. The delay in having the good we hope for causes sorrow. Therefore, patience is required. Constancy of effort in accomplishing a good work speaks to being patient as well.

The part that patience plays in forming a unified personality cannot be overstated. Holy Writ says that by patience we "possess our souls."[103] Patience does this by removing at the root "the passions that are evoked by hardships and disturb the soul."[104] Patience is the "radiant embodiment of ultimate integrity."[105] Patience gives us the inner strength to not lose our courage in the face of life's many trials.

The last of the potential parts of fortitude is perseverance. According to Tully (*De Inv. Rhet ii*) "perseverance is the fixed and continued persistence in a well-considered purpose."[106] By virtue, we live our lives as we ought to. Perseverance is absolutely needed because good things are difficult and take focussed effort over time to complete.

Perseverance is in the irascible appetite moderating the fear of weariness or failure on account of delay. From our experience we can recognize the truth present in the statement, "fatigue makes cowards of us all." We get tired and we want to quit. Perseverance tells us we must summon the strength to continue on.

Aquinas distinguishes two senses of perseverance by working forward from a twofold meaning of end. An end can mean the end of an action. An instance of perseverance here would be the magnificent man who persists firmly and confidently through all the difficulties that arise until his great work is completed. End can also mean the end of human life. The acts of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity must endure throughout the entire Christian's life until the end of his life. Perseverance in this sense needs God's gratuitous help

[102] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 4, ad. 3.
[103] Lk 21:19.
[104] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 2, ad. 2.
[105] J. Pieper, *The four cardinal virtues*, p. 129.
[106] ST, II-II, q. 137, a. 1, obj. 3.

of grace. Augustine says of this perseverance that it is "a gift of God, whereby we persevere unto the end, in Christ."[107]

Constancy pertains to perseverance. Both virtues have as their end the firm persistence in the good. Perseverance persists firmly against the difficulty that arises from the very continuance of the act. Constancy persists firmly against all other external impediments. Perseverance takes precedence over constancy as a part of fortitude because the difficulty arising from the continuance of action is more intrinsic to the act of virtue. Still, constancy arms us with persistence when external obstacles and hazards get in the way of our purpose to do good.

Perseverance observes the golden mean of virtue by persisting just as long as one should. The effeminate or soft man forsakes the good on account of difficulties which he cannot endure. He does not have enough perseverance. He quits too soon when victory could have been his. The pertinacious or obstinate man persists inordinately. He will not give up a resolution or a course of action even after it is shown to be wrong. He imprudently does not know when to quit.

4. The gift of fortitude / beatitude / precepts of the law

For the Christian, there is no such thing as a purely natural virtue. For sure, we strive to possess the firmness of mind to accomplish an arduous work or endure a grievous evil. This is connatural or proper to us as persons. Furthermore, the courage we have naturally is our own possession. We move ourselves interiorly to acts of virtue. For all this, however, our natural forces of endurance and aggression fail to overcome all dangers. We need perfection higher than what we can achieve by our own acts of virtue. We must be moved by God's grace.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit "dispose all the powers of the soul to be amenable to the Divine motion."[108] God in his superabundant goodness has given us the supernatural gift of fortitude, an interior prompting of the Holy Spirit that "pervades and crowns"[109] all natural fortitude.

Christian action is ultimately done in the hope of eternal life. One cannot reach the "land of the Blessed"[110] unless one is "moved and led thither by the

[107] ST, II-II, q. 137, a. 4, sed contra.
[108] ST, I-II, q. 68, a. 8.
[109] J. Pieper, *The four cardinal virtues*, p. 141.
[110] ST, I-II, q. 68, a. 2.

Holy Ghost."[111] Aquinas makes clear that the gift of fortitude, the gift of the Holy Spirit that surpasses human nature, overcomes all fear.

> The Holy Ghost works this [attaining the end of work or avoiding evils or dangers] in man, by bringing him to everlasting life, which is the end of all good deeds, and the release from all perils. A certain confidence of this is infused into the mind by the Holy Ghost, who expels any fear of the contrary.[112]

Aquinas follows Augustine's schema for linking up a corresponding beatitude to each gift of the Holy Spirit. Augustine associated the fourth beatitude, "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice," with the spiritual gift of fortitude. The congruity between this gift and this beatitude is that both are about doing difficult things. The essence of fortitude is battling for the good, including the good of justice. Aquinas notes the insatiability of the desire expressed in the words hungering and thirsting for justice.

In his final question on this cardinal virtue[113], Aquinas considers the precepts of fortitude. First, Aquinas reviews the purpose of the precepts of the law. "The end of Divine Law is that man might adhere to God."[114] The Divine Law instructs us how we ought to live. Indeed, it does so perfectly. "The Divine Law instructs man perfectly about such things as are necessary for right living."[115] Precepts of fortitude are provided in the law to direct the mind to God. We have to be taught how to fight, as it were. Aquinas points out that the fight is now spiritual. The fate of our souls is at stake, and we face a formidable and malicious enemy, the devil, that we can only defeat by submitting to God.[116]

> Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith[117]

[111] ST, I-II, q. 68, a. 2.
[112] ST, II-II, q. 139, a. 1.
[113] ST, II-II, q. 140.
[114] ST, II-II, q. 140, a. 1.
[115] ST, II-II, q. 140, a. 2.
[116] Jas 4:7.
[117] I Pet 5:8–9.

FORTITUDE

Definition:
"Strengthen man in the good of virtue, especially against dangers, and chiefly against dangers of death"

Opposing Vices (Sins Against Fortitude)

Fear (Cowardice)

Fearlessness

[Excessive] Daring

Principal Acts
Endurance (Martyrdom)
Aggression

Potential Parts

Magnanimity Rational Mean Excess: **Presumption**

Ambition

Vainglory

Boastfulness
Love of Novelties
Hypocrisy
Obstinacy
Discord
Contention
Disobedience

Deficiency: **Pusillanimity**

Magnificence

Meanness
Opposing vice: consumptio (waste)

Patience

Perseverance Rational Mean Excess: **Pertinacity**
(Headstrong: self-opinionated)

Deficiency: **Effeminancy**

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

"Spirit of Might" – Is. 11:2

Fourth Beatitude

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they will be filled." – Mt. 5:6

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