

# SHARING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

## *St. Joan of Arc & Courage*

This month's saint is Joan of Arc and our focus is courage. This means standing firm in our faith, boldly taking a stand for what is right, and facing challenges even when we are afraid.

### IN DEPTH

Courage and fortitude are important Catholic virtues. They mean slightly different things even though we often speak of them interchangeably. Courage is the readiness to first confront challenges and to act. Fortitude comes after as the ongoing strength to endure hardships for a higher good.

This month we will focus on how we can be ready to stand for the Gospel even when we are afraid. Courage is often immediate or situational—like the decision to step into a difficult conversation to defend the faith or another person. This virtue is necessary to pursue a life of holiness because you will face challenges like ridicule, insult, or even danger as you go against societal norms and choose God over the things of this world. The Christian life is not a comfortable life, we are promised a cross, persecution, hatred, and other tribulations for the Gospel. However, our Lord has overcome the world and God gives us the courage we need that we may see Him face to face in Heaven!

### CONNECTION TO THE SAINT

Joan of Arc is often remembered as a fierce female military leader, but less often remembered as a saint. She was not a saint because of her leadership skills, but because of her faith, obedience, courage, and love. St. Joan was just a young, devout Catholic girl in the 1420's who started receiving visions from saints encouraging her to do something she could never imagine herself doing—lead France to military victory over the English. Imagine God calling you to lead an army as a middle schooler! It took courage for her to travel to the French leader and convince him that she had a divine mission to lead an army in battle—completely untrained and from the peasant class. After leading the French to several victories, she was captured and put on trial by the English, which resulted in her being burned at the stake at only 19 years old in 1431. Her military accolades are impressive and required much courage in battle, but her true courage was found in trusting in the Lord as He called her to a grand task she was entirely unqualified and unequipped to do on her own. St. Joan, pray for us to have the courage to answer God's call, whatever it may be!



## WAYS ADULTS CAN PRACTICE THE VIRTUE

- **Embrace Accountability for Mistakes:** Admitting when we've made a mistake can be daunting, but being accountable helps staff grow and fosters a culture of humility. Taking responsibility and asking for forgiveness when needed builds trust and reflects courage and grace.
- **Prepare Yourself:** Seek opportunities to learn more about the Catholic faith from trustworthy sources, whether via articles, books, podcasts, local apostolates, or other mediums. Knowing more about the faith not only fosters personal growth in faith but also prepares you to defend or explain the faith whenever necessary.
- **Be a Positive Example Amidst Negativity:** Remaining hopeful and encouraging in tough times can be a courageous act. Counteract negativity by focusing on gratitude, acknowledging small successes, and maintaining an optimistic outlook, showing trust in God's goodness.
- **Embrace Vulnerability:** Vulnerability takes courage and is necessary for any kind of growth, especially spiritual growth. Scripture speaks of growing in sanctity as a battle, and much of the battle is against ourselves and unsupportive family and friends. Whatever your battle, you must be vulnerable with God and others in order to grow in virtue.
- **Model Faith for Younger Generations:** Model courage by showing younger people that doing the right thing sometimes means making sacrifices. You can even discuss challenges and how your faith guides you in work and at home, helping to shape the character and faith of those who look up to you.
- **Embrace Forgiveness and Reconciliation:** Forgiving others and seeking forgiveness, especially when someone is deeply hurt, requires courage. Practice this by seeking God's strength to release bitterness and pride, choose forgiveness, and foster healing. Approaching others to resolve conflicts, even if uncomfortable, is a brave step toward peace.
- **Nurture Faith to Inspire Courage:** Pulling yourself up by your bootstraps is impossible physically and spiritually. Seek God's grace and help through prayer, the Sacraments, and spiritual reading to bolster your courage.
- **Stand Up for the Dignity of Every Person:** Advocating for others shows a commitment to upholding human dignity, especially for the most marginalized like the elderly, immigrant, and unborn. This could mean supporting someone who is treated unfairly or simply forgotten or ignored, even when it's challenging or socially scary.