

Overcoming Adversity with Fortitude

By Deacon Tim Sullivan

Perhaps one of the most important functions of parents today is helping their children overcome obstacles and difficulties. It seems that youngsters these days have a lot of trouble dealing with adversity.

My first encounter with this took place when I moved back to Tulsa in the mid-1970's. I visited my old high school and observed flyers posted on the campus notifying the students of a stress reduction seminar. I was shocked to think that anyone could think that high school was stressful enough to offer formal training on how to deal with it.

The virtue that helps us deal with adversity is fortitude. The Catechism defines fortitude as “the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life.”

One of my objectives as a father was to create what I called “good trouble” for my children. So I created situations which would stretch my children and get them out of their comfort zone. The goal was to foster more resiliency in my sons and daughters.

I would encourage parents to have their children read about youngsters who grew up in times that were very challenging. For example, Daniel Boone, at the age of 16, spent a great amount of time hunting and exploring, befriending native tribes, learning how to follow trails and live off the land. Davy Crockett, at the age of 12, helped his father pay off a debt by tending the cattle on a 400-mile cattle drive.

Our children need to know that God gives them the strength to deal with any challenge that comes their way. Fortitude comes with trust in His power working in our lives.

“The Lord stood by me and gave me strength...I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil threat and will bring me safe to his heavenly kingdom.” 2 Timothy 4:17-18