

ment of water with mysterious power. We praise thee with hearts made pure,—we that have been made a New Creature,—we that once, by nature, were children of wrath, but now Children of Grace.

O thou, the Giver and the Gift. O thou, the Creator of all that is good! make our hearts eager to praise thee, and teach our tongues to sound forth thy glory. Do thou, O Author of purity, purify us from sin! Renew us in Christ; and then, give us the full joy of perfect Newness! Amen.

Aquæ ditans clementum
Virtute mysterii,
Nova facti creatura,
Te laudamus mente pura,
Gratiæ nunc, sed natura
Prius iræ filii.

Tu qui dator es et donum,
Tu qui condis omne bonum,
Cor ad laudem redde pro-
num,
Nostræ linguæ formans so-
num

In tua præconia.
Tu nos purga a peccatis,
Auctor ipse puritatis,
Et in Christo renovatis
Da perfectæ novitatis
Plena nobis gaudia!

Amen.

THE GIFT OF FORTITUDE.

The gift of Knowledge has taught us what we must do and what we must avoid, in order that we may be such as Jesus, our divine Master, wishes us to be. We now need another gift of the Holy Ghost, from which to draw the energy necessary for our persevering in the way he has pointed out to us. Difficulties we are sure to have; and our need of support is proved enough by the miserable failures we are daily witnessing. This support the Holy Ghost grants us by the gift of *Fortitude*, which, if we but faithfully use it, will enable us to master every difficulty, yea, will make it easy to us to overcome the obstacles which would impede our onward march.

When difficulties and trials of life come upon him, man is tempted, sometimes to cowardice and discouragement, sometimes to an impetuosity, which arises either from his natural temperament or from

pride. These are poor aids to the soul in her spiritual combat. The Holy Ghost, therefore, brings her a new element of strength ;—it is supernatural Fortitude, which is so peculiarly *his* gift, that when our Saviour instituted the seven Sacraments, he would have one of them be for the special object of giving us the Holy Ghost as a principle of energy. It is evident, that having to fight, during our whole lives, against the devil, the world, and ourselves, we need some better power of resistance than either pusillanimity or daring. We need some gift, which will control both our fear, and the confidence we are at times inclined to have in ourselves. Thus gifted by the Holy Ghost, man is sure of victory ; for grace will supply the deficiencies, and correct the impetuosities of nature.

There are two necessities, which are ever making themselves felt in the Christian life ;—the power of resistance, and the power of endurance. What could we do against the temptations of Satan, if the Fortitude of the Holy Spirit did not clad us with heavenly armour and nerve us for the battle ? And is not the World, too, a terrible enemy ? Have we not reason to dread it, when we see how it is every day making victims by the tyranny of its claims and its maxims ? What, then, must be the assistance of the Holy Ghost, which is to make us invulnerable to the deadly shafts that are dealing destruction around us !

The passions of the human heart are another obstacle to our salvation and sanctification ; they are the more to be feared, because they are within us. It is requisite that the Holy Ghost change our heart, and lead it to deny itself as often as the light of grace points out to us a way other than that which self-love would have us follow. What supernatural Fortitude we need in order to *hate our life*,¹ as often

¹ St. John, xii. 25.

as our Lord bids us make a sacrifice, or when we have to choose which of the two *Masters* we will serve!¹ The Holy Spirit is daily working this marvel by means of the Gift of Fortitude: so that, we have but to correspond to the Gift, and not stifle it either by cowardice or indiscretion,—and we are strong enough to resist even our domestic enemies. This blessed Gift of Fortitude teaches us to govern our passions and treat them as blind guides; it also teaches us never to follow their instincts, save when they are in harmony with the law of God.

There are times, when the Holy Spirit requires from a Christian something beyond interior resistance to the enemies of his soul:—he must make an outward protestation against error and evil, as often as position or duty demands it. On such occasions, he must bear to become *unpopular*, and console himself with the words of the Apostle: *If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*² But the Holy Ghost will be on his side; and finding him resolute in using his Gift of Fortitude, not only will he give him a final triumph, but he generally blesses that soul with a sweet and courageous peace, which is the result and recompense of a duty fulfilled.

Thus does the Holy Ghost apply the Gift of Fortitude, when there is question of a Christian's making resistance. But, as we have already said, it imparts also the energy necessary for bearing up against the trials, which all must go through who would save their souls. There are certain fears, which damp our courage, and expose us to defeat. The Gift of Fortitude dispels them, and braces us with such a peaceful confidence, that we ourselves are surprised at the change. Look at the Martyrs; not merely at such an one as Saint Mauritius, the leader of the Theban

¹ St. Matth. vi. 24.

² Gal. i. 10.

Legion, who was accustomed to face danger on the battle-field, but at Felicitas, a mother of seven children, at Perpetua, a high-born lady with everything this world could give her, at Agnes, a girl of thirteen, and at thousands of others like them ; and say, if the gift of Fortitude is not a prompter to heroism ? Where is the fear of death,—that death, the very thought of which is sometimes more than we can bear ? And what are we to say of all those lives spent in self-abnegation and privation, with a view to make Jesus their only treasure and be the more closely united with him ? What are we to say of those hundreds and thousands of our fellow-creatures who shun the sight of a distracted and vain world, and make sacrifice their rule ? whose peacefulness is proof against every trial, and whose acceptance of the cross is as untiring as the cross itself is in its visit ? What trophies are these of the Spirit of Fortitude ! and how magnificent is the devotedness he creates for every possible duty ! Oh ! truly, man, of himself, is of little worth ; but, how grand when under the influence of the Holy Ghost !

It is the same Divine Spirit who also gives the Christian courage to withstand the vile temptation of human respect, by raising him above those worldly considerations which would make him disloyal to duty. It is He that leads man to prefer, to every honour this world could bestow, the happiness of never violating the law of his God. It is the Spirit of Fortitude that makes him look upon the reverses of fortune as so many merciful designs of Providence ; that consoles him, when death bereaves him of those who are dear to him ; that cheers him under bodily sufferings, which would be so hard to bear but from his taking them as visits from his heavenly Father. In a word, it is He, as we learn from the Lives of the Saints, that turns the very repugnances of nature

into matter for heroic acts, wherein man seems to go beyond the limits of his frail mortality and emulate the impassible and glorified spirits of heaven.

O divine Spirit of Fortitude ! take full possession of our souls, and keep us from the effeminacies of the age we live in. Never was there such lack of energy as now, never was the worldly spirit more rife, never was sensuality more unbridled, never were pride and independence more the fashion of the world. So forgotten and unheeded are the maxims of the Gospel, that when we witness the Fortitude of self-restraint and abnegation, we are as surprised as though we beheld a prodigy. O Holy Paraclete ! preserve us from this anti-christian spirit, which is so easily imbibed ! Suffer us to present to thee, in the form of prayer, the advice given by Saint Paul to the Christians of Ephesus : “ Give us, we beseech thee, “ the armour of God, that we may be able to resist “ in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. “ Gird our reins with truth ; arm us with the breast-plate of Justice ; let our feet be shod with the love “ and practice of the Gospel of peace ; give us the “ shield of Faith, wherewith we may be able to exting- “ guish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one ; “ cover us with the helmet of the hope of salvation ; “ put into our hand the spiritual sword, which is “ the Word of God,”¹ and by which we, as did our Jesus in the Desert, may defeat all our enemies ! O Spirit of Fortitude ! hear, we beseech thee, and grant our prayer !

¹ Eph. vi. 11-17.