

Engaging

Read the Mercy reflection on Courage and highlight the words, phrases or ideas that speak to you.

Read the following texts:

- Josh 2:11
- Num 32:7-9
- Ps 31:24
- 2 Chron 15:7
- Ezek 22:14
- Lam 1:16
- John 16:33
- John 14:16,26
- Matt:14:27
- Mark 6:50

What do the scripture passages and the words of Catherine McAuley reveal to you about the nature of God's courage.

Reflecting

Take a moment to make yourself comfortable and allow yourself to be still.

When did you find yourself needing to be courageous (in taking a stand) for yourself, for others, for the environment? How did you feel at the time and afterwards?

What was the source of your courage?

Reflect on a time when you have witnessed courage? How did you feel and what difference did it make to your life?

Acting

To act with courage takes strength, resilience and often the right words.

What do I feel passionate about and when do I take a stand:

- at home
- at school
- in community?

It takes courage to change especially when the change needed is counter-cultural. God can provide us with the courageous heart that is needed for change.

Growing

How can you become more skilled in your capacity to act with courage? How can you gain a better understanding of the areas about which you feel passionate?

What attitudes or social barriers stand in your way to being courageous? How can you cope with or overcome these barriers?



Mercy Education Values



COURAGE



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Courage



In her *Familiar Instructions*, Catherine McAuley has this to say of courage: “Should we not then undertake our duties with great courage, for infinite is the love God has for those who repose in [God’s] protection?” Shortly before her death, she advised her founding companion, Mary Ann Doyle: “Speak as your mind directs, and always act with courage” (Letter of July 1841). For Catherine, courage is the gift of the God in whom we trust. In other words, it is God who gives us the strength to face the demands of the mission, to counter injustice, to work tirelessly and to endure in the face of hardship or adversity. In Catherine’s letters, we meet a person of unflinching courage and resilience who inspired generations of others to trust in God for the strength they needed to be steadfast, no matter what difficulties they might encounter.

Courage in English derives from the Latin word for heart (*cor*): to take heart is to have courage; to lose heart is to lose courage. In the biblical tradition, heart and courage are often synonymous: “Our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us ...” (Josh 2:11). Lack of courage or discouragement is sometimes expressed in terms of a “frustrated” heart (Num 32:7-9). The psalmist urges the people to trust in God: “Be strong and let your heart take courage: all you who wait for God” (Ps 31:24). Strong or weak hands are also metaphors for courage or lack of courage. There is a story of Asa, king of Judah, who listened to the advice of the prophet Azariah: ‘But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded’ (2 Chron 15:7), and the prophet Ezekiel has the God of Israel questioning the people: “Can your courage endure, can your hands remain strong...?” (Ezek 22:14).

When the prophet Haggai addresses God’s message to the Judeans who have returned from exile in Babylon, he urges the people of the land and their leaders to take courage. They have no need to fear for God’s spirit is with them (Hag 2:4-5). The Book of Lamentations has a telling comment about the need for a comforter if one is to have courage: “My eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my courage;” (Lam 1:16). In John’s gospel, Jesus urges his disciples to have courage: “In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have overcome the world!” (John 16:33). For John, “world” has several meanings: it refers here to those who reject God’s Word. Jesus has already spoken of the comforter or advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom God will send “in my name” (John 14:16, 26). In both Matthew and Mark, the disciples are urged to take heart or to have courage (Matt 14:27; Mark 6:50). In the letter to the people of Colossae, we find courageous hearts linked with knowledge of God’s mystery, of Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:2-3). For Mercy people, then, courage is a way of life grounded in a strong faith and in God’s providential care.

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