

V. OPAL - FORTITUDE

SYMBOL: The Hand

SAINT: Saint Joan of Arc

FEAST: May 30

MOTTO:

O Lord, afford us Fortitude in Difficulties

1. Another obvious choice – St. Joan of Arc for fortitude. If ever there was a saint who stood strong against all odds it would be her. Her story rivals even the story of many military heroes. Take time to read her story (perhaps Mark Twain's *Joan of Arc*) and remind yourself again that she was not much older than you, perhaps even younger. Make a commitment of prayer to St. Joan that you will face all the challenges of living a Catholic life with as much fortitude as she did as she faced the armies of England.
2. St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us that this virtue, one of the Cardinal Virtues, along with Justice, Temperance and Prudence) is what enables us to face the danger of battle. You may never face a military battle but living a Christian life in today's society is a daily struggle and for some people in the world a true battle of life and death. Make a list of the battles you face every day in trying to live a faithful life. What armies do you face – the media, peer pressure, adverse family members or friends? Each of these armies may require a different strategy to overcome them. What are some tactics you can employ to defeat Satan in the many ways He comes against you and your faith?
3. Our convert is someone who may be almost familiar, Hazel Tolkien. Mrs. Tolkien, mother of the famous author J.R.R. Tolkien, converted against much family pressure when her boys were quite young. With the popularity of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy, there has been much written about her in Catholic magazines and on the internet. Investigate her story and its impact on the life and writing of J.R.R. Tolkien himself. Share what you discover with your family and yourself. If you have read the series, take time to discuss some of the Christian themes found – such as the gift of fortitude. If you haven't read the books consider taking the time to do so.
4. Throughout Church history both Popes and saints faced true military situations which required fortitude to bring about victory and rescue for the Church. Some historic instances include the early Christian persecutions, the battles of the Crusades, the individual struggles of such saints as St. Ignatius of Loyola or St. Clare or the many battles both large and small that took place during the Reformation. During almost any time in history you will find Catholics who fought heroically for the right to worship. Select such a struggle from your history and make note of it in your book. Imagine yourself during those difficult times and how you would handle it. Share what you discover with your family or group.

_____ 5. It has been said that more Christians (not just Catholics) have died in modern history than in all the early persecutions combined. Our Holy Father has worked diligently to recognize some of these contemporary martyrs. Investigate one of these saints, such as the priests who died during the Cristero Revolution in Mexico during the 1920's. Consider adding one of these new saints to your list of favorites. Perhaps one of them might become a new patron for you as they faced some of the same modern challenges that you do. Share their story with your group or family in the hopes that their names may become as common as St. Joan of Arc. Their death and witness is worthy of such recognition.

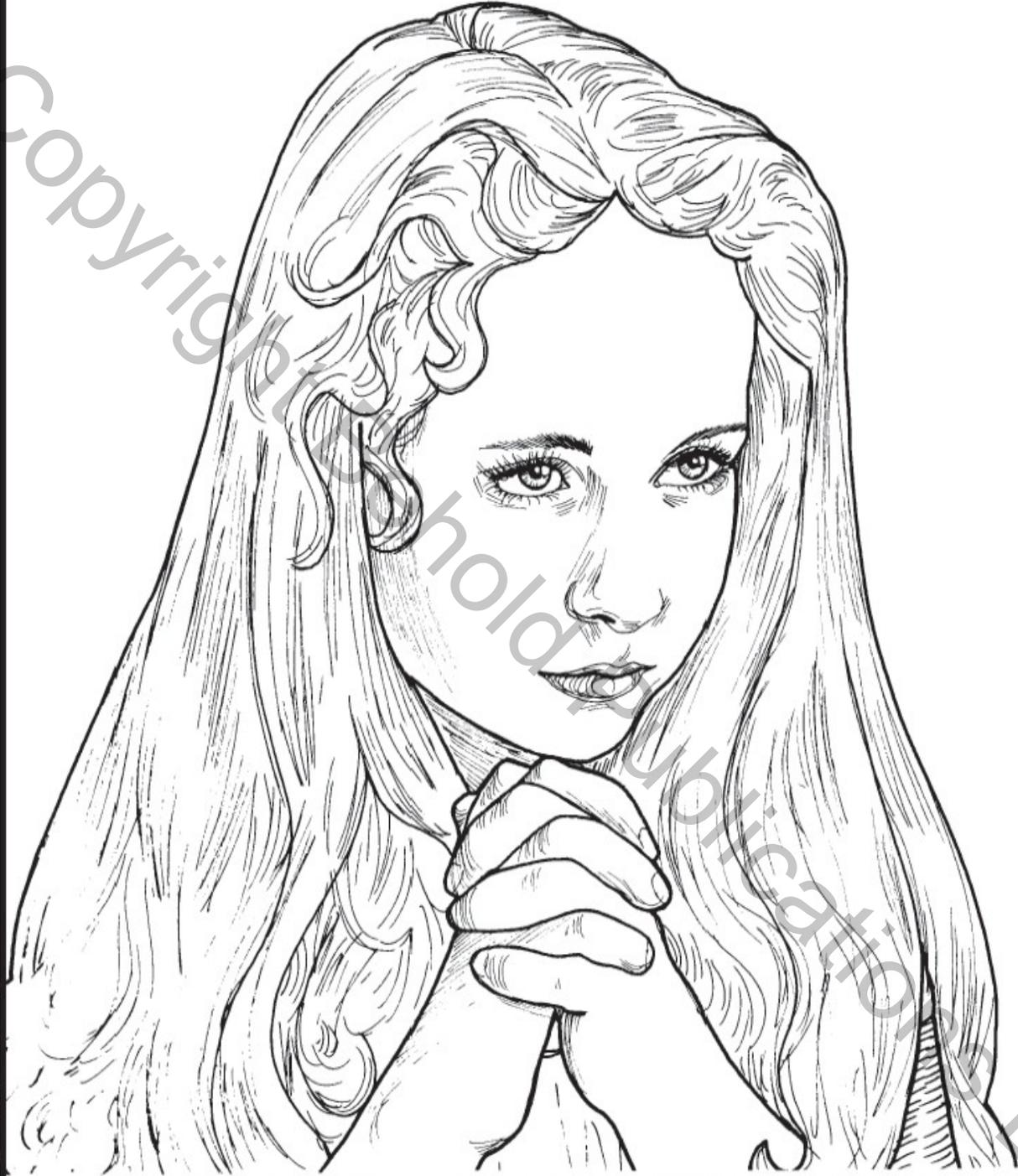
_____ 6. The Old Testament has many stories of the military battles the Israelites faced as they worked their way to the Promised Land. Read such a story from 1st or 2nd Chronicles, the story of Joshua and the walls of Jericho or the story of Judith who was key to a defeat of the enemies of Israel. In your group or within your book rewrite the story as a modern newspaper piece or reenact the story with your family and/or friends. Enjoy recreating the story but do not forget that their victories, along with your own, are due to God's loving protection.

_____ 7. Our movie, *The Scarlet and the Black*, (1983) with Gregory Peck is a wonderful telling of the Nazi occupation of Rome during WWII. There has been much written lately inaccurately accusing the Catholic Church and Pope Pius XII did little to help the Jews during this time. Our movie tells otherwise. You may wish to read more about the time period to discover all the ways, both secretly and publicly that the Church showed true fortitude when literally surrounded by the enemy.

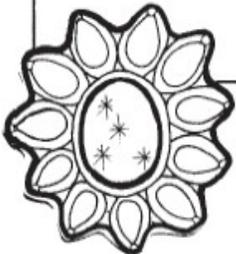
_____ 8. Our jewel is the opal. This gem has some unique characteristics including color variations and a condition called 'crazing'. Find out more about this beautiful stone and the care it must receive to insure its continued beauty. You are much like this same stone; developing and relying on the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as fortitude will help you remain as the treasure you until your return home to heaven. Add this new jewel to your book.

Date of Completion

Signature of Parent/Adult Supervisor



O LORD, AFFORD US FORTITUDE
IN DIFFICULTIES



Saint Joan of Arc

St. Joan of Arc (1412-1431)

Virgin, Soldier, Martyr

Joan was born a peasant girl in Domremy in the south of France in 1412. When she was 13 years old, she began to hear the voices of St. Michael the archangel, St. Catherine and St. Margaret. When she was 17, her voices told her she would be the one to save France which was losing the 100 years war with England.

Joan's task, her voices told her, was to have the prince of France, the Dauphin Charles, crowned king of France. When she was brought to Charles' court, he tried to trick her by disguising himself as a lord and had someone else stand in his place. She recognized him anyway. She asked to lead the army. Charles, impressed by her, but a weak man and leader, eventually gave her the army. For the next four months, she won victory after victory, simply by leading the French army with her standard that read, "Jesu et Maria" (Jesus and Mary). At the end of the four months, Charles was crowned King.

Joan now wished to return to her family, but the King wanted her to win more victories for him. She ended up being captured by the British and the new King, who owed his crown to her, did nothing to get her back. The British tried her as a heretic, and burned her alive at the stake. Her last words were, "Jesus, Jesus." Her burning was a political statement by one country against their enemies. Years later, Joan was found innocent of the charges brought against her by the people who burned her. She was canonized in 1920.

Together with St. Therese of Lisieux, Joan is the co-patroness of France.