



## **Worship Service Theme: Courage**

### **Helpful elements:**

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

**Welcome:** Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is \_\_\_\_ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Our theme for today is **courage**.

How would you describe courage? [*pause for any feedback*] I think it's interesting that the Catholic catechism lists courage as one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit – a gift from God.

Here's how the Catholic catechism describes courage: "With the gift of courage, we overcome our fear and are willing to take risks. A person with courage is willing to stand up for what is right in the sight of God, even if it means accepting rejection, verbal abuse, or even physical harm and death. The gift of courage allows people the firmness of mind that is required both in *doing good* and in *enduring evil*." What a great definition!

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

**Opening Prayer:** Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

### **Opening Hymn: Doxology**

**Statement of Faith:** Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd," together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

<sup>3</sup> He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup> Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

### **Suggested Hymns:**

**For the Beauty of the Earth**

**Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us**

**Amazing Grace**

### **First reading: Joshua 1:1-9**

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, Moses' assistant, <sup>2</sup> "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel ... Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

<sup>6</sup> Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. <sup>7</sup> Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ... <sup>9</sup> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

### **Suggested Hymns:**

**Holy, Holy, Holy**

**Jesus Loves Me**

## Second reading: Matthew 10:29-31

Jesus said to his disciples, ...<sup>29</sup> “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

## Suggested Hymns:

### Softy and Tenderly

### Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

## Interactive Homily: Let's talk more about courage.

- What or who have you seen in your life that you thought was courageous? Think about examples at home; in your school; on the world stage... *[let people give examples; prompt with ideas like “where might you see courage in the world of sports ... in a schoolyard ... in the military ...?”]*
  - Young men and women volunteering for wartime.
  - Moms or dads raising kids alone.
  - Someone standing up to a bully (schoolyard, politics, anywhere).
  - Civil Rights era: nonviolent lunch counter protests, bus boycotts, going to jail.
  - Women protesting for the right to vote.
- Does strength equal courage? Does having the most weapons mean you're courageous?
  - No! Just having a lot of power or weapons doesn't make you brave.
  - Courage is a condition of character.
- If you're courageous, does that mean you have no fear?
  - No; courage is acting bravely *despite* fear.
  - Courage enables us to stand up for what's right.
  - Courage helps us follow God's leading even in tough circumstances.
- *Why* does God say that we can be courageous? Do we just need to muster it up on our own? Let's read the passage from Joshua again:
  - Joshua 1:9: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, **because the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**”
  - Is everything always going to go well? No...

- But what does God promise?
  - “I will not leave you or forsake you.”
- We can have courage because God is with us – always, in every circumstance.
  - In Matthew 10, Jesus says, “Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” God knows you intimately and watches you carefully; he even knows how many hairs are on your head! (Maybe fewer than their used to be 😊)
- Courage having trusting where God is leading and stepping forward in faith, knowing the path may be hard and holding God’s hand the whole way.

Let’s take a moment to silently pray and reflect on the miracle and blessing of courage, and that we would be people of courage in faith.

**(Silent Prayer)** ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

**Lord’s Prayer:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

### **Suggested Hymns:**

**This is My Father’s World**  
**It is Well with My Soul**  
**Standing on the Promises**

### **Third Reading:** Quotes on Courage

Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because courage is the quality that guarantees all other qualities. –WWII British prime minister Winston Churchill

Courage is the most important of the virtues, because without courage you can’t practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage. –American poet Maya Angelou

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear. – South African president Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison for standup up against apartheid

**Suggested Hymns:**

**Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing  
Shall We Gather at the River**

**Fourth Reading:** The Courage of Burnell Cotlon and Lillie Cotlon<sup>1</sup>

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina destroyed most of the city of New Orleans. For many years after the storm, the Lower Ninth Ward, the neighborhood hit hardest, still did not have a single grocery store. Ninth Ward resident Burnell Cotlon set out to change that. Using money saved while working at fast-food restaurants and dollar stores, he bought a broken-down building on an empty block. And in 2014 he opened the Lower Ninth Ward's first grocery store since the hurricane nine years earlier.

"I was in a FEMA trailer [emergency housing] for almost three years," Burnell said. "And as I drove around the Ninth Ward, we didn't have no stores, no barber shops, no laundry rooms. [You had] to catch three buses to get to a store. And I always was taught if there's a problem, somebody's got to make a move. So I decided to open up a grocery store. I remember when I first bought the building, everybody thought that I was crazy."

His mother agreed with him. She said to her son, "When I peeked in the door before you started working, I said, 'This is nothing but junk! How can he make anything out of this?'" But you were one of my very interesting sons, always jumping into things you had no business doing." (*Burnell laughs.*)

Burnell said, "It was hard, it was real, real hard. And those 8-hour days turned into 14, 15 hours a day. But what motivated me the most was seeing the people that was walking by with the groceries .... That made me work harder. We finally did the ribbon cutting ceremony and that day I will never forget. The very first customer cried 'cuz she said she never thought the Lower Ninth Ward was coming back."

"You saw something that I didn't see," his mother said. "I'm glad you took the chance."

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from <https://storycorps.org/stories/burnell-cotlon-and-lillie-cotlon-150821/>

What a great example of courage! This man took a risk, not knowing if his plan would work out, but doing the right thing to help others.

**Suggested Hymns:**

**Blest Be the Tie that Binds**

**I Need Thee Every Hour**

**Closing Blessing:** (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

And now please receive the closing blessing:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)**

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Extra material:

2 Corinthians 5:5-8

The apostle Paul writes: “We know that if the tent that is our earthly home [that is, our body] is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup> For in this tent [the body] we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling ... <sup>5</sup> He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. <sup>6</sup> So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, <sup>7</sup> for we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”