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CHRISTIAN MARTYRDOM NEVER EXPIRES: SOME THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF OBEDIENCE *USQUE AD SANGUINEM*

Abstract

Both in the past and today an act of bearing witness to faith in God through martyrdom has been a unique sign and testimony of love for Christ who himself was obedient to the Father *usque ad mortem*. It is at the same time a clear judgment against those cultures, which acknowledge *odium fidei*. In his moral encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* John Paul II points to several arguments in order to emphasize that the way of martyrdom has lost none of its relevance and significance for Christians nowadays. The Pope's claim is grounded on the fact that "faith possesses a moral content" and so it is false to separate faith (*credenda*) from moral life (*agenda*) of those who believe. Consequently, in particular circumstances Christians are called to be ready to lay their lives both for love of God and acceptance of his commandments. Through imitating their Lord *usque ad sanguinem* his disciples demonstrate and defend their human dignity received from the Creator, the holiness of God's law as well as the holiness of the Church.

Keywords: martyrdom, Christian faith, Christian ethics

CHRZEŚCIJAŃSKIE MĘCZEŃSTWO NIGDY NIE TRACI WAŻNOŚCI. KILKA TEOLOGICZNYCH I ETYCZNYCH ASPEKTÓW POSŁUSZEŃSTWA *USQUE AD SANGUINEM*

Abstrakt

Poprzez całe dzieje chrześcijaństwa męczeństwo było szczególnym znakiem wierności wierze w Boga i wyrazem posłuszeństwa na wzór samego Chrystusa. Zarazem było i jest znakiem miłości "do końca" i sprzeciwu wobec każdej kultury, która głosi *odium fidei*. Jednocześnie w nauczaniu Kościoła dostrzega się ewolucję rozumienia tego *odium*, które coraz szerzej obejmuje również kontekst kulturowy czy społeczny. W swojej encyklice moralnej Jan Paweł II wskazuje na kilka szczególnych argumentów na rzecz aktualności i znaczenia postawy męczeństwa, które stają na straży nie tylko samej wiary, ale również życia moralnego tych, którzy wierzą. Wiara i moralność są bowiem nierozdzielne. Dlatego świadectwo męczeństwa potwierdza blask prawdy moralnej, a więc zobowiązującą wierność wymaganiom prawa moralnego wpływającym z godności osoby ludzkiej, ukazuje świętość prawa Bożego, a zarazem jawi się jako znak świętości Kościoła.

Słowa kluczowe: męczeństwo, wiara chrześcijańska, etyka chrześcijańska

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INTRODUCTION

Two millennia of Christian history have proved that those who believed and followed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour learnt to believe “God is always greater” (*Deus semper maior*). Many of them have matured in their faith to the point of offering their lives for the sake of the One they believed in. Undoubtedly various religions have known such radical ways of belief but for Christians martyrdom encompasses their witness *usque ad mortem* specifically for the sake of Christ. In whatever historical circumstances Christian men and women have lived, martyrdom “has always accompanied and continues to accompany the life of the Church even today” (John Paul II 1993, 90). It is then right to say that it has been part of Christian history and Christian life both in the early days of the Apostles and most recently when Jesus’ disciples profess their faith being ready to lay down their lives.

1. FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF THE CRUCIFIED LORD

When the Risen Lord appeared to the Apostles in the cenacle he sent them to be his “witnesses” (Greek: sing. *martyrs*, pl. *martyres*; see Acts 1:8.22). Hence the initial meaning of “martyr” was a witness to Christ’s life and resurrection. Later the term was reserved to those of Christ’s disciples who experienced hardships and sufferings for their faith in him. Its meaning was finally modified and limited only to those who suffered death for their faithfulness to Jesus Christ (Middleton 2014, 120-121; *Martyr* 1997, 1046)².

In order to properly understand an act of Christian martyrdom it is necessary to look to the principle example of the Lord himself who said: “No one takes my life from me, I lay it down of my own free will” (J 10:18). It was deeply in Jesus’ heart that his salvific mission meant to be one with the Father because he has come to the world not to do his own will but that of the Father who sent Him (J 6:38). In Christ’s long conversation with the Samaritan woman he expressed it again when saying that it was his “food to do the will of the one who sent me” (J 4:34). Hence obedience to the Father’s will played a central role in the life of the Son. It was this living relation with his Father that made Jesus “give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45). It is at the very heart of Christian faith to believe that “the sacrifice of Jesus ‘for the sins of the whole world’ (1J 2:2) expresses his loving communion with the Father” and consequently the “desire to embrace his Father’s plan of redeeming love inspired Jesus’s whole life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, 606-607).

Everyone’s path through life, when seen in the light of Christ’s life in this world, is to express that same relation of obedience to the Father. Thus all men and

² On *martyrium* of Christ himself and of those who remained faithful to him during the communist persecutions of the Church in Central-Eastern Europe see John Paul II’s address to the participants of the Congress of Theologians of Central and Eastern Europe entitled *Theo-logia – Boho-słowie* delivered in Jasna Góra on 15 August 1991 (John Paul II 1991).

women who have come to believe in the Lord as the source of their lives are to find in Christ the direction and shape of their earthly existence and to be guided by his example. The disciples of the Lord Jesus are thus “invited to live in the sight of the Father”³. The Son’s obedience toward the Father finds its many expressions in the Gospel. In a special way it is St. John that shows Jesus in whom “everything is a listening to and acceptance of the Father; all of his earthly life is an expression and continuation of what the Word does from eternity: letting himself be loved by the Father, accepting his love in an unconditional way, to the point of deciding to do nothing by himself but to do always what is pleasing to the Father. The will of the Father is the food which sustains Jesus in his work” (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life 2008, 8)⁴.

Christians, when following their Lord, must remember that Christ was “obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). Obedience may be defined as another name of Christ and similarly the same may be said about those who follow him. Being obedient to God who is love (1J 4:8) a Christian makes love his own way through life even *usque ad sanguinem* and so will become until the end “fully obedient and fulfilled (...) with him and in him”⁵. Christians believe in the truth of the Lord’s words about love that finds its paramount expression in the act of laying down one’s life for one’s friends (J 15:13). Thus martyrdom when originated from the love for Christ and offered for brothers and sisters is considered by the Church as a *supreme testimony* of this love. Therefore every act of martyrdom is „an exceptional gift and (...) the fullest proof of love”, by which a „disciple is transformed into an image of his Master by freely accepting death for the salvation of the world – as well as his conformity to Christ in the shedding of his blood” (Vatican II 1964, 42).

Consequently, Christian martyrdom is not just being ready to give life for the sake of some good cause but rather being ready to lay down one’s life for God – like our Lord himself did for the Father. It is then right to claim that “at the centre of the

³ „Christ Jesus always did what was pleasing to the *Father*, and always lived in perfect communion with him. Likewise Christ’s disciples are invited to live in the sight of the Father ‘who sees in secret’, in order to become ‘perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, 1693).

⁴ “So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him’” (J 8:28-29); “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work’” (J 4:34).

⁵ „With an act of obedience, even if unaware of it, we came to life, accepting that good Will that has preferred our existing to non-existence. We will conclude our journey with another act of obedience that hopefully would be as much as possible conscious and free but above all an expression of abandonment to the good Father who will call us definitively to himself, into his reign of infinite light, where our seeking will have found its conclusion and our eyes will see him in a Sunday without end. Then we will be fully obedient and fulfilled, because we will be saying ‘yes’ forever to that Love that has made us happy with him and in him” (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life 2008, 29).

experience of martyrdom is a testimony on behalf of the martyr's faith and love for Christ" (Pinckaers 2016, 4). Thus, to be precise, authentic martyrdom requires not just the fact that "the prosecutor inflicts death explicitly and uniquely because of belief in Christ"; the essential and "decisive component is rather the conscious and courageous affirmation by the Christian of the sovereignty and kingship of Christ" (Pinckaers 2016, 71). That is why in the ecclesiastical process of the recognition of a martyr it is required that the cause be clear – that the question of faith in Christ was directly involved. One lays one's life *for the sake of Christ*.

Martyrdom is possible because life for man is not an absolute value. Were it absolute, one could not give one's life for something else. God is the supreme value for the human being and so is salvation. Thus one can give one's earthly life in order to achieve God, life everlasting, salvation, life in God, Christ who is the life (J 14:6). Hence man is called to be ready to lay down his life and all he has and he is in order to achieve God himself – who is the supreme good man can achieve, and is called to achieve. Martyrs' witness to the truth originates from what characterizes man as man – it is only man that is capable of finding and choosing what should be done and not what can be done. In this the human being is open to the claims of truth and so confirms one's likeness to God (Ratzinger 2017, 637-638). A martyr's readiness to lay his life for the sake of truth makes him a true witness of conscience, in which a man is "alone with God" (Vatican II 1965, 16)⁶. Accordingly the act of martyrdom guarantees one's likeness to the Creator and one's lasting dignity.

In all its realism two basic orientations may be distinguished in martyrdom. While on one hand it is a sign of a choice that displays one's faithfulness to the Gospel, on the other hand it is an act of a "prophetic judgment against any culture which professes an *odium fidei*". As a result, three important issues are being emphasized and expressed in the act of martyrdom: "one's sense of what it means to be a human being, liberty in the face of death, and the prospect of eternal life" (Cunningham 1999, 536). Vatican II saw martyrdom within the universal call to holiness and so it belongs not only to the mystery of Christ but also to the ecclesial tradition as the history of Christianity has demonstrated. Every Christian martyr can be said as the one who – in the words of Nicholas Lash – "performs' and 're-enacts' the Word of God by imitating the example of Christ even unto death" and thus explains the Word of God "not by reflection but by action" (Cunningham 1999, 536).

At the very heart of the Christian message and tradition lies the Gospel principle of charity that "never ends" which over the centuries has been handed down from one generation to another. Those who received it in faith became capable of laying down their lives in an often complex and demanding reality of their earthly pilgrimage to God. This act of offering oneself would apply and fulfil in all sorts of different circumstances, including those "in the field of justice and peace" which

⁶ "[Conscience] bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, 1777).

has been “attested by the saints and by those who gave their lives for Christ our Saviour” (Benedict XVI 2009, 12). A particular example of martyrdom was found by the Church in the case of St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Franciscan friar who offered to go to death of starvation for his fellow prisoner in the concentration camp in Auschwitz in 1941. In his homily for St. Maximilian’s canonization John Paul II saw in that death “a clear witness borne to Christ” as well as “the witness borne in Christ to the dignity of man”. Thus “Maximilian did not die but gave his life (...) for his brother” when he “offered himself up to death out of love” (John Paul II 1982). It is interesting to note how understanding of the *odium fidei*, a necessary criterion for ascertaining an act of Christian martyrdom, has developed in the doctrine of the Church in this context. While in the light of testimonies one could not see a clear indication that Maximilian was starved and finally killed with a lethal injection out of hatred of the faith, the Pope declared him martyr seeing in the Nazi ideology a systematic hatred and rejection of the sanctity of human life and thus implicit *odium fidei*⁷. Pope Benedict XVI later pointed out to the changing “cultural contexts of martyrdom and the strategies *ex parte persecutoris* that (...) stimulate different reasons, for example, of a political or social nature” (Benedict XVI 2006)⁸.

2. FAITH – MORALITY – MARTYRDOM

Christian faith, when taken in its entirety, encompasses both its doctrinal and moral content. Hence being a Christian cannot be reduced to believing in what has been revealed to us (*credenda*) but has to include moral consequences of the faith

⁷ Interesting remarks about understanding of *odium fidei* have been recently made by Card. Gerhard L. Müller in his short essay about Oscar Romero whom he called a “true martyr for Christ” who “proclaimed God’s love and was prepared (...) to give his life for his sheep”. Because some questioned the Christian nature of Romero’s violent death claiming he had been killed for political reasons, Müller explained: “In martyrdom, the motivation of the perpetrator is never decisive. Even if those who murdered Romero believed they were doing so not out of *odium fidei* but for political reasons, this would be irrelevant. What matters is Romero’s own intention. One can see this by looking at the death of Christ, the prototype of every martyrdom. The motives of the executioners were not what gave Christ’s death on the cross its redeeming dimension. If that were the case, then the soldiers who crucified him would be the priests of the sacrifice. That is impossible. Jesus Christ is the High Priest of the New Covenant, who offered himself as the sacrifice through which we are redeemed once and for all. In an analogous sense, a Christian becomes a martyr by uniting himself to Christ through his willingness to suffer and die for the faith” (Müller 2018, 52).

⁸ „The martyrs of the past and those of our time gave and give life (*effusio sanguinis*) freely and consciously in a supreme act of love, witnessing to their faithfulness to Christ, to the Gospel and to the Church. If the motive that impels them to martyrdom remains unchanged, since Christ is their source and their model, then what has changed are the cultural contexts of martyrdom and the strategies *‘ex parte persecutoris’* that more and more seldom explicitly show their aversion to the Christian faith or to a form of conduct connected with the Christian virtues, but simulate different reasons, for example, of a political or social nature. It is of course necessary to find irrefutable proof of readiness for martyrdom, such as the outpouring of blood and of its acceptance by the victim. It is likewise necessary, directly or indirectly but always in a morally certain way, to ascertain the *‘odium Fidei’* [hatred of the faith] of the persecutor” (Benedict XVI 2006).

that shape the life of those who came to believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour (*agenda*). Not only in the context of ecumenical dialogue the Church continues to point out to the “moral principles of the Gospel and their implications” (John Paul II 1995, 68). It is worth noting it is precisely in weakening the essential link between the Gospel and moral teaching that Catholic moral theology has repeatedly suffered fundamental crises both in the past and nowadays. What always needs to be reasserted is an integral perception of Christian faith, which is based on believing in Christ and living out one’s faith in all circumstances (Pinckaers 1999, 13)⁹. Faith cannot be separated from morality because faith “possesses a moral content [and] it gives rise to and calls for a consistent life commitment” (John Paul II 1993, 89). Consequently Christian faith does not appeal just to human intellect, which is to accept some propositions. It is to embrace the whole life. In this sense Christians understand their faith as “a lived knowledge of Christ, a living remembrance of his commandments, and the truth to be lived out” (John Paul II 1993, 88).

It has been repeatedly proved in the history of the Church how essential it is to remain faithful and to bear witness to the entire truth of the faith. Not only Catholics but also other Christians have had martyrs in their communities of faith who “have preserved an attachment to Christ and to the Father so radical and absolute as to lead even to the shedding of blood” (John Paul II 1995, 83)¹⁰. It is an important dimension of the ecumenical commitment now so generously present among the followers of Christ. It also proves that despite the divisions among them the grace of God has not been withdrawn from anyone who shows perseverance in Christian life and thus becomes a witness to the faith in Christ. A Christian then becomes united to the crucified and risen Lord by true charity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, 2473). It was stressed by St. Thomas Aquinas that martyrdom as an act of bearing witness *unto death* is an act of charity as well as of fortitude (Clark 2010, 146)¹¹.

It should be obvious to everyone that the way one lives out one’s faith – which is moral life – turns into “confession”. St. Paul reminds all Christians it is love that makes one’s life true and authentic and allows to make life a witness just like the Lord himself did. His was the supreme witness through a *total gift of self* on the Cross when he “loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). In this context

⁹ „An essential condition for any true renewal of the teaching of moral theology is the reestablishment of a profound and sustained contact with the primary source of inspiration for Christian life and theology that is the Word and Person of Christ” (Pinckaers 1999, 13).

¹⁰ “In a theocentric vision, we Christians already have a common *Martyrology*. This also includes the martyrs of our own century, more numerous than one might think, and it shows how, at a profound level, God preserves communion among the baptized in the supreme demand of faith, manifested in the sacrifice of life itself. The fact that one can die for the faith shows that other demands of the faith can also be met” (John Paul II 1993, 84).

¹¹ „Within the act of the martyr’s endurance of death, then, Aquinas sees courage and charity working in concert, charity being the final motive cause that commands the act, and courage being the formal motive cause that elicits it. Hence, Aquinas concludes that ‘martyrdom is an act of charity as commanding, and of fortitude as eliciting’” (Clark 2010, 146).

St. John Paul II continues to point to Christ whose witness is “the source, model and means for the witness of His disciples” (John Paul II 1993, 89). Not once the Lord would stress that it is his love and obedience to the Father that lie at the heart of his witness (offering and sacrifice) because he has come to do not his own will but that of the Father (J 5:30). Being called to follow the example of the Lord all his disciples through their love and obedience “in conformity with the radical demands of the Gospel” can be led to the “supreme witness of martyrdom” (John Paul II 1993, 89)¹².

In the third chapter of his moral encyclical John Paul II offers a particular appreciation of morality as an indispensable and compelling element of Christian truth of faith. Since it is in the “splendour of truth” that the document locates the solution to the current problems with “certain fundamental questions of the Church’s moral teaching” (as the Pope puts it in the very title of the document), the Pope in the brief preamble of his encyclical reminds that it is truth that “enlightens man’s intelligence and shapes his freedom”. St. John calls Jesus Christ “the true light that enlightens everyone” (Jn 1:9). It is this truth of Jesus Christ, or the truth that Jesus Christ is (Jn 14:6), which enables a Christian to endure martyrdom. At the very centre of the argument lies the conviction that faith has to be understood as a personal “encounter, a dialogue, a communion of love and life between the believer and Jesus Christ”. In it man acquires and accepts the Lord as a “truth to be lived out” (John Paul II 1993, 88). This truth is being heard and found in one’s conscience, “the most secret core and sanctuary” (Vatican II 1965, 16), where one recognizes “truths and moral values for which one must be prepared to give up one’s life” (John Paul II 1993, 94)¹³.

Recalling martyred saints from the history of the Church John Paul II formulates several arguments for martyrdom that believers ought to perceive as a unique way of imitating their Lord who died on the Cross. Since faith and morality cannot be separated, the moral law and its demands Christians recognize in the faith become signs and proofs of their dignity that God has set in them. Over the centuries the Church has continued to teach that the God-given moral law contains norms that are universal and immutable. As such, they both make manifest and serve to protect the dignity and inviolability of every human person, “on whose face is reflected the splendour of God” (John Paul II 1993, 90). This is to emphasize that in an act of faithfulness to those moral norms to the *total gift of self* the Christian manifests and exalts the holiness of God’s law. Every act of such an affirmation of the moral order that was given by God, being an act of martyrdom, bears “splendid witness both to the holiness of God’s law and to the inviolability of the personal dignity of man, created in God’s image and likeness” (John Paul II 1993, 92).

¹² In the context of modern secularization an interesting problem does arise whether martyrdom can survive ever more common perception of the world and human life as radically secular. If God seems not to exist can one offer his life for God and for life eternal? (Smith 2008, 435-460).

¹³ “In an individual’s words and above all in the sacrifice of his life for a moral value, the Church sees a single testimony to that truth which, already present in creation, shines forth in its fullness on the face of Christ” (John Paul II 1993, 94).

The Church has never ceased to produce martyrs who remained faithful to God and his law. This is also true in the context of ecumenism. Christians of different traditions, though divided among themselves, can be proud of those who proved in their lives the power of grace. In following the Lord in his suffering and death their faithfulness and witness showed the permanence of communion of salvation, which is communion with Christ in heavenly glory¹⁴. Not only in the early centuries of Christianity but also in our times they proved to be ready to defend “moral truth even to the point of enduring martyrdom”. Those holy martyrs continue to demonstrate that the “love of God entails the obligation to respect his commandments, even in the most dire of circumstances, and the refusal to betray those commandments, even for the sake of one’s own life” (John Paul II 1993, 91). This formulation is an unambiguous assertion of the seriousness of moral life as part of Christian faith in God. St. John Paul II offers another proof of the importance and continual significance of martyrdom when he calls martyrdom an “exaltation of a person’s perfect ‘humanity’ and of true ‘life’” (John Paul II 1993, 92)¹⁵. It is so because in the act of laying down one’s life man through the affirmation of God’s law rejects as false any violation of the law by committing a sin, a morally evil act. Sin is always a *violation of man’s ‘humanity’* (as created by God in his image). In his apostolic exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* the Pope calls sin “a suicidal act” because in it man, being a creature, rejects the Creator “the very one from whom he came and who sustains him in life” (John Paul II 1984, 15)¹⁶.

In another argument for a better understanding of the significance of martyrdom St. John Paul II calls it an *outstanding sign of the holiness of the Church*. It shows its particular importance in modern society in the days of such a widespread *confusion about good and evil*. Martyrs, being faithful in their lives to God’s holy law *usque ad sanguinem*, make the moral truth shine before all people. It is a unique and valuable witness to the splendour of moral truth and a contribution that lights up, as the Pope puts it, “every period of history by reawakening its moral sense” (John Paul II 1993, 93)¹⁷. When quoting Prophet Isaiah John Paul II reminds that

¹⁴ “While for all Christian communities the martyrs are the proof of the power of grace, they are not the only ones to bear witness to that power. Albeit in an invisible way, the communion between our Communities, even if still incomplete, is truly and solidly grounded in the full communion of the Saints – those who, at the end of a life faithful to grace, are in communion with Christ in glory. These *Saints* come from all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities which gave them entrance into the communion of salvation” (John Paul II 1995, 84).

¹⁵ “as is attested by Saint Ignatius of Antioch addressing the Christians of Rome, the place of his own martyrdom: ‘Have mercy on me, brethren: do not hold me back from living; do not wish that I die... Let me arrive at the pure light; once there *I will be truly man*. Let me imitate the passion of my God’” (John Paul II 1993, 92).

¹⁶ “As a rupture with God, sin is an act of disobedience by a creature who rejects, at least implicitly, the very one from whom he came and who sustains him in life. It is therefore a suicidal act” (John Paul II 1984, 15).

¹⁷ In a similar way, when speaking about the historical role of saints, Hans Urs von Balthasar argued: “The saints are a living out of the Gospel reality by which its inner depth becomes transparent in their life and their doctrine. (...) The great saints make the Gospel real in ways pertinent to the age

this *mysterium iniquitatis* has accompanied humanity through all its history: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Is 5:20).

As the history of Christianity attests, martyrdom is not a common vocation, relatively few are called to it, but it always embodies the “high point of the witness to moral truth”. All Christians should remember, however, that Christ’s disciples must be “daily ready to make” a “consistent witness (...) even at the cost of suffering and grave sacrifice” (John Paul II 1993, 93). In this assertion the Pope clearly enhances the notion of martyrdom to “include those public acts of witness, by which Christians stand against the countervailing forces of culture” (Cunningham 1999, 535). Every Christian should not dismiss an obligation to fidelity to the moral order in ordinary circumstances, as well as with the “grace of God invoked in prayer, to a sometimes heroic commitment” (John Paul II 1993, 93)¹⁸, sustained by the virtue of fortitude.

CONCLUSION

Every Christian martyr, being a witness of Christ, whether in the first centuries of Christianity or in our own days, becomes an undeniable sign appealing to all other Christians to offer their own testimony to the truth of faith in their own life, following the Lord himself when he stood before the judges. In this sense, in the words of Servais Pinckaers, the martyrs call upon Christ’s disciples to bear witness to the faith in Jesus Christ with “intelligence and patience, faithfully and proudly, relying on the grace of the Spirit and on prayer more than on our own abilities and resources, whether personal or technical. [They invite us to bear witness] through every difficulty, contradiction, temptation, and humiliation that we may encounter, so that we too may prove to be good servants of divine Providence in the present world, good seeds planted in the soil of God for future harvests” (Pinckaers 2016, 8).

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and culture in which they live” (Cunningham 1999, 531).

¹⁸ Fortitude, being one of the four cardinal virtues, is defined as “the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. (...) It enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice one’s life in defence of a just cause” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, 1808).

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