



Pope Francis begins his weekly general audience with a prayer in a windy St. Peter's Square at the Vatican April 10, 2024. (CNS/Pablo Esparza)

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While intense feelings or drive — passions — are natural, Christians know they must be tamed and channeled toward what is good, Pope Francis said.

The virtue of fortitude, "the most 'combative' of the virtues," helps a person control their passions but also gives them the strength to overcome fear and anxiety when faced with the difficulties of life, the pope told visitors and pilgrims at his weekly general audience April 10.

Continuing his series of talks about virtues, the pope quoted the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions."

Fortitude "takes the challenge of evil in the world seriously," he said, and that is increasingly rare "in our comfortable Western world."

Some people pretend evil does not exist, "that everything is going fine, that human will is not sometimes blind, that dark forces that bring death do not lurk in history," the pope said. But reading a history book or even the newspaper shows "the atrocities of which we are partly victims and partly perpetrators: wars, violence, slavery, oppression of the poor, wounds that have never healed and continue to bleed."

"The virtue of fortitude makes us react and cry out an emphatic 'no' to evil to all of this," he said.

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Fortitude, he said, helps Christians say "'no' to evil and to indifference; 'yes' to the journey that helps us make progress in life, and for this one must struggle."

"A Christian without courage, who does not turn his own strength to good, who does not bother anyone, is a useless Christian," he said.

At the end of the audience, Francis asked people to pray for Ukraine and Palestine and Israel. "May the Lord grant us peace. War is everywhere," he said. "Do not forget Myanmar," where the military staged a coup in 2021 and fighting has continued since then. "Let us ask the Lord for peace and not forget these brothers and sisters who are suffering in these places of war."