Study Five, Week Six

The Four Core Values represented by the Maltese Cross,

The Emblem of the SAR.

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The Four Core Values inform our basic philosophy of living, how we make decisions and how we do things. The Four Core Values also inform others about what kind of men are we.

The Third of the Four Core Values

**Fortitude**

**Fortitude** is more than the idea that we must protect ourselves against attacks. *Fortitude* assumes courage: forbearance, strength, endurance in confronting fear, uncertainty, and intimidation.

*Fortitude* is perhaps the cause of most fear among the Four Core Values. We have considered *Prudence* and *Temperance*. This study builds upon those two Core Values.

To use the vernacular of everyday parlance, this core value urges us to “put up or shut up” and to “stand tall” among men for the principles of truth, no matter what the consequences. However, we must stand in such a way that we keep our personal integrity and are careful not to harm another’s personal integrity. That can be difficult.

Fortitude is part of our Pledge of Allegiance, as well as the Oath of Office we take as members of the SAR, including the Pledge to the SAR.

“We the descendants of the heroes of the American Revolution who, by their sacrifices, established the United States of America, reaffirm our faith (belief) in the principles of liberty and our Constitutional Republic, and solemnly pledge ourselves *to defend them against every foe*.”

That last line is very powerful, “to defend them against every foe.” To make and keep our Pledge to the SAR takes a very well-developed core value of *fortitude*.

We live in a time when it is assumed that when we agree with another person, it is the same as accepting all that they stand for. That sort of reasoning is very popular today, but it is wrong, very dangerous, contrary to good reason, and very evil. The other person puts upon us the responsibility to change our beliefs to accept them and their beliefs, thus proving they are right. It seems that “being right” is a very important human need, regardless of the truth of the issue concerned.

When we do not agree with another person, he/she may take that disagreement as not only a challenge to his/her way of thinking but also a personal attack on him or her. That is not the way of true reason, and not the way of **A SAR Gentleman**.

When our founding fathers gathered at Carpenters Hall to debate and finally sign the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia in 1776, they realized it would take tremendous *fortitude*. They had no further action necessary than to rely on their convictions to make this new experiment in freedom work. From John Adams and John Hancock to the Rev Dr John K Witherspoon and Dr Benjamin Franklin, they all agreed and relied upon their *fortitude* to assist them in their convictions.

These men finally were convinced of the truth of the situation. They had studied, debated, discussed, and concluded that the truth they shared for our new nation was articulated in the Declaration of Independence from England. Witherspoon is reported to have said, “[The Colonies] are ripe for it, or they shall wither on the vine.” The time for *fortitude* and action had arrived.

As Benjamin Franklin is credited with saying,

" We Must Hang Together Or Surely We Shall Hang Separately.”

Could he have meant this statement literally since, no doubt, the signers would hang for treason?

It took the *fortitude of their convictions* to sign the document and put themselves in harm’s way against mighty England to make that Declaration public.

They saw this as a duty. Duty is higher than one’s own personal survival or selfish interest. Their duty might even exact personal sacrifices of their lives. Consequently, the declaration concludes with these words,

*“****We pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor****.”*

Honor and duty are superior to rights and personal self-interest. We as a nation seem to have lost the values of duty and honor today. It behooves each of us to relearn and teach those two values again to our Compatriots and our nation through the way we act and teach in presentations, in our chapter meetings, and in our public display of reverence for Military Veterans of all wars.

*Fortitude:* “Pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” Have you ever seriously considered the meaning of those words and your responsibility to live them?

To do live by these words we must use *fortitude*. We do not give up, we do not compromise, we do not equivocate, or capitulate. With *fortitude*, we must pledge ourselves with the well-known Scout Pledge, “On my *honor,* I will do my best to do my *duty* to God and Country.” It goes on saying that I will “keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight”. The responsibility for *fortitude* rests upon each of us to develop, grow and maintain duty and honor throughout our lives.

FORTITUDE means that we stand for something, especially something good. That attitude was present during the Revolutionary War. To some degree, the soldiers had it, the officers had it, General Washington had it, and Congress had it. They had the *fortitude* of their convictions about the right path to freedom so that they could continue to press on, keep fighting against the most powerful military machine in the world at the time, to keep fighting for freedom.

I do not doubt that many colonials were scared out of their wits. They wanted freedom more than anything else. Commitment to the principles of freedom and liberty are not negated by the emotion of fear. Fear is a hurdle that must be used or overcome in the life and death struggle of a nation that produces a long-lasting “Liberty and Justice for all.”

It takes the *fortitude* of our convictions to continue acting right, no matter the situation. We must know what we value and express those convictions. Like General Washington and those patriots serving in the Continental Congress, we SAR descendants embrace those core values of liberty, freedom, and justice expressed in the Declaration of Independence. These are the same values expressed independently on the same day in the Tiadaghton Declaration signed by the Fair Play Men few miles from Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

Do not misunderstand, fortitude is not stubbornness or hardheaded refusal to change no matter what. *Fortitude* can allow change and help us to become stronger when we are confronted with the truth, with the basic principles that support liberty and freedom itself. *Fortitude* pictures men who hold on to what they know is true in the face of many enemies.

Questions to guide your thinking.

Have your deep personal convictions been challenged by others?

Did it take *fortitude* for you to keep your head and emotions in check and not give in to what you know to be wrong?

Were you ever tempted to compromise your principles to agree with another person?

Do you see how demeaning and self-defeating it can be to compromise your very deep convictions?

Have you ever had your deep convictions challenged to the point that you are willing to change because you were convinced that the other position was right?

Look carefully at your deep convictions about life, liberty, and freedom. Make some private notes about your convictions that you may refer to later.

Then look carefully at your notes and ask yourself, “Do these convictions fit with being **A SAR Gentleman**?”

Do your convictions fit with the core principles of the SAR and its purpose and mission?

Do your core values help further the principles of liberty and freedom?

You may want to review your notes on the earlier core values of *Temperance* and *Prudence*. Think carefully about what your deepest core values are and how they help you live, act, and treat people. Does *Fortitude* play a defining role for you?

The Third of the Four Core Values

**Fortitude**



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