



How to Be a Hero

Train with the Saints

Written by
Julia Harrell

With Illustrations by
Chad Thompson

How to Be a Hero

Train with the Saints

by Julia Harrell

with illustrations by
Chad Thompson



Library of Congress Control Number: 2016958842

CIP data is on file.

ISBN 10: 0-8198-3453-X

ISBN 13: 978-0-8198-3453-9

Many manufacturers and sellers distinguish their products through the use of trademarks. Any trademarked designations that appear in this book are used in good faith but are not authorized by, associated with, or sponsored by the trademark owners.

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright © 1989, 1993, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Excerpts from the English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use in the United States of America, copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

Design by Mary Joseph Peterson, FSP

With illustrations by Chad Thompson

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

“P” and PAULINE are registered trademarks of the Daughters of St. Paul.

Copyright © 2017, Julia Harrell

Published by Pauline Books & Media, 50 Saint Pauls Avenue, Boston, MA 02130–3491

Printed in the U.S.A.

HTBH VSAUSAPEOILL12-1210080 3453-X

www.pauline.org

Pauline Books & Media is the publishing house of the Daughters of St. Paul, an international congregation of women religious serving the Church with the communications media.

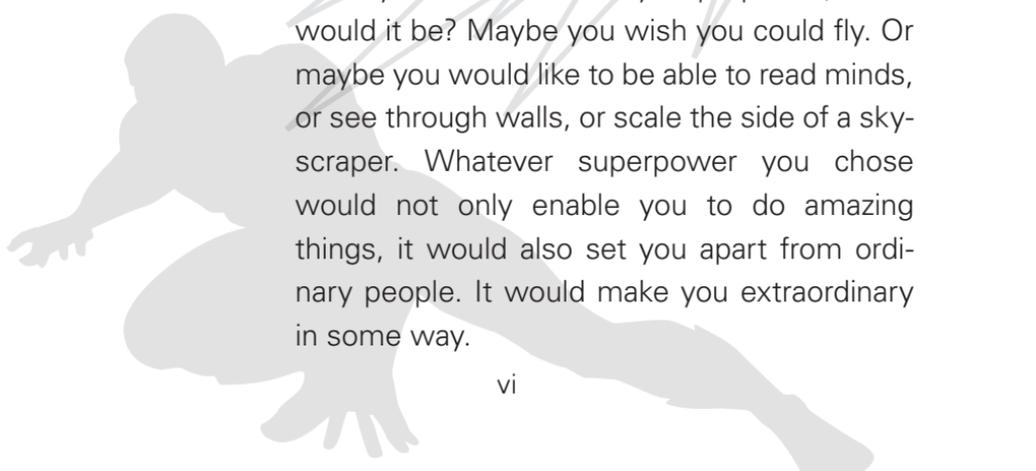
Contents

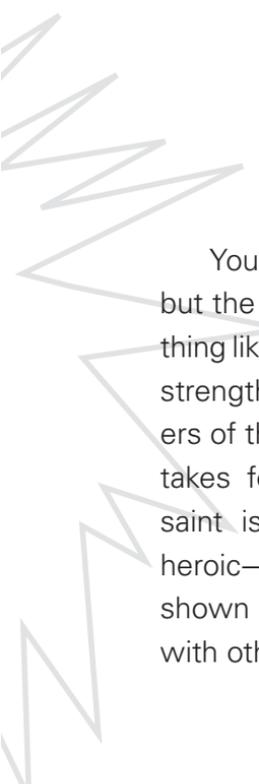
Introduction	vi
Part I: The Cardinal Virtues	1
Chapter 1: Prudence and Pope Saint John Paul II	5
Chapter 2: Justice and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati	17
Chapter 3: Fortitude and Saints Peter Yu Tae-chol and Agatha Yi	29
Chapter 4: Temperance and Venerable Matt Talbot	41
Part II: The Theological Virtues	53
Chapter 5: Faith and the Children of Fatima	57
Chapter 6: Hope and Saint Josephine Bakhita	71
Chapter 7: Love and Blessed Chiara Badano	83
Part III: The “Little” Virtues	95
Chapter 8: Humility and Saint Joan of Arc	99
Chapter 9: Obedience and Blessed Dina Bélanger	111
Chapter 10: Patience and Saint Monica	123
Chapter 11: Gentleness and Saint Charbel Makhlouf	135
Conclusion: You Can Be a Hero	146
Appendix: Brief Biographies	152



Introduction

If you could have any superpower, what would it be? Maybe you wish you could fly. Or maybe you would like to be able to read minds, or see through walls, or scale the side of a skyscraper. Whatever superpower you chose would not only enable you to do amazing things, it would also set you apart from ordinary people. It would make you extraordinary in some way.





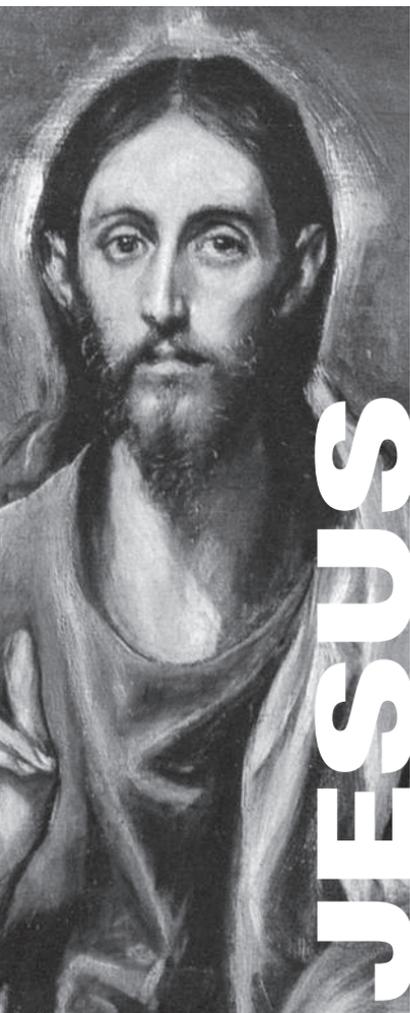
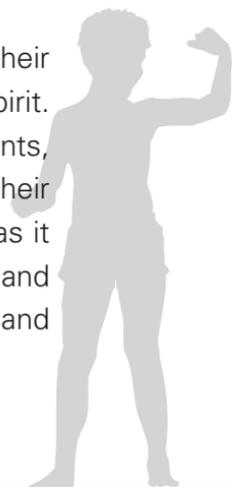
You may never have thought of it this way, but the people we honor as saints have something like superpowers. Instead of extraordinary strength or x-ray vision, though, the superpowers of the saints are the virtues. Part of what it takes for the Church to declare someone a saint is the practice of virtue in a big—or heroic—way. This means that a person has shown extraordinary virtue when interacting with other people and in serving God.

SAINTS

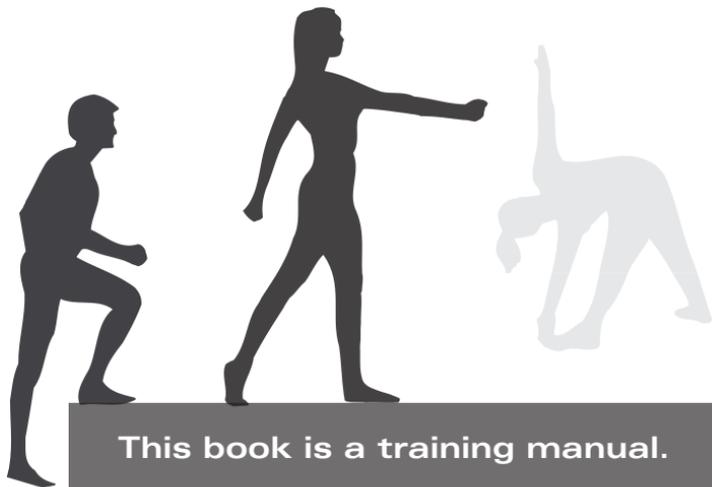
VIRTUE

All Christians are called to grow in virtue. But what is virtue? The word virtue comes from a Latin word that means strength, courage, and power. A person who possesses a virtue is in the habit of doing the right thing for the right reasons. In other words, virtue makes someone a good person who does good things. People who are virtuous want to be good and show their goodness in their actions. Christian virtues are superpowers because they come from God's goodness and give us the strength to do amazing things for him.

Saints don't become virtuous all on their own but by God's grace and the Holy Spirit. Strengthened by prayer and the sacraments, they are filled with God's superpowers. Their journey of faith begins with Baptism, just as it does for every one of us. Like superheroes and star athletes, it's dedication to training and practice that makes them outstanding.

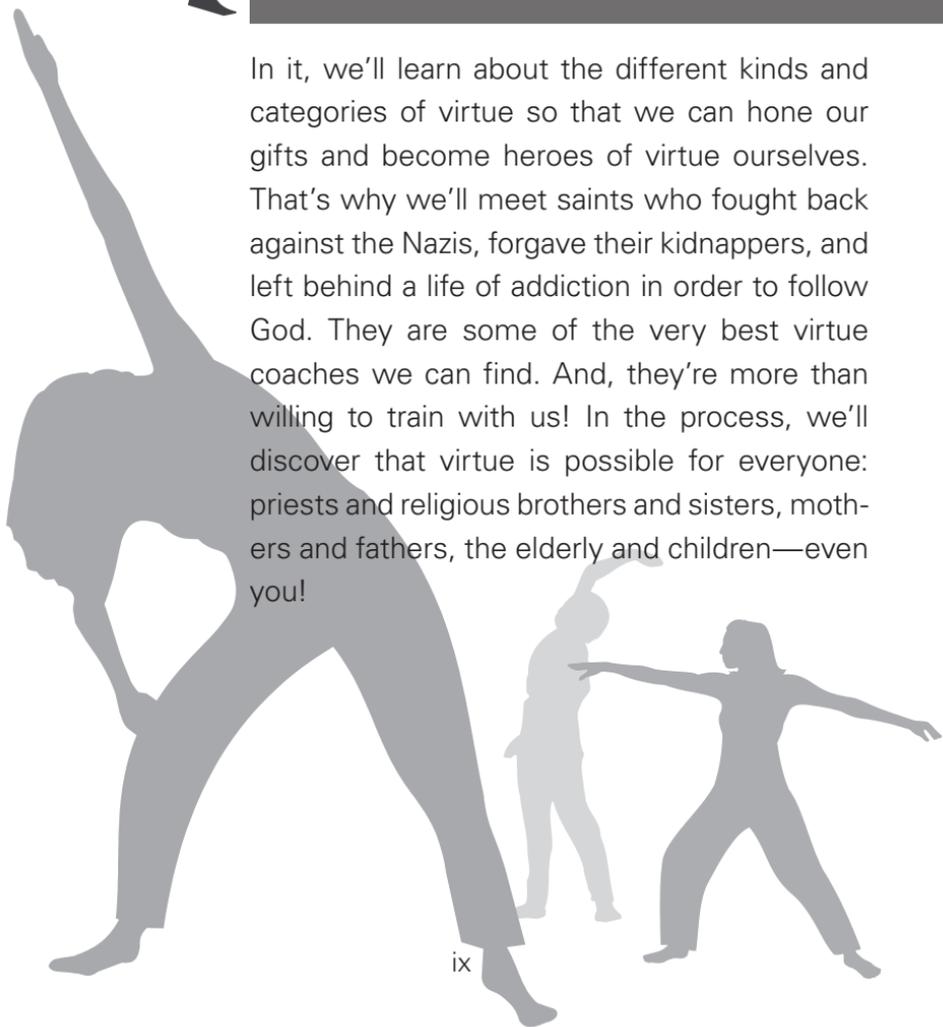


A virtuous Christian wants to be like Jesus—the greatest hero ever. There isn't just one way to be virtuous, though. The saints show us that there are many different ways to practice all of the virtues. And the way one virtue looks in one saint's life can be quite different from how it looks in another saint's life. While the saints each live the virtues in a unique way, they are united by the grace that comes from God to enable them to become more like Jesus.



This book is a training manual.

In it, we'll learn about the different kinds and categories of virtue so that we can hone our gifts and become heroes of virtue ourselves. That's why we'll meet saints who fought back against the Nazis, forgave their kidnappers, and left behind a life of addiction in order to follow God. They are some of the very best virtue coaches we can find. And, they're more than willing to train with us! In the process, we'll discover that virtue is possible for everyone: priests and religious brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, the elderly and children—even you!





Part I



The Cardinal Virtues

Can you think of a time you set a goal for yourself—maybe you were trying out for a sports team or taking an important test? You probably have goals for the future too. Let's say your goal is to be the best swimmer in your school. If you want to be great, you have to train your body and mind.

You start with nutrition. If you put junk food into your body, you know it won't be able to perform as well. So you are careful to eat healthy, nutritious foods that will give you energy and help you grow. You know that there are many experienced and knowledgeable athletes out there with good advice for you, so you spend time talking and listening to them, absorbing their wisdom. You study the rules and theory of your sport. You read books and articles and spend time watching videos of the sport.



But, most importantly, you get out there and practice—not just when you feel like it or when it's convenient—every single day. You lift weights and run and stretch and do swimming drills. You practice the same thing over and over again until you get it right **every time**. That is how you become an excellent swimmer.

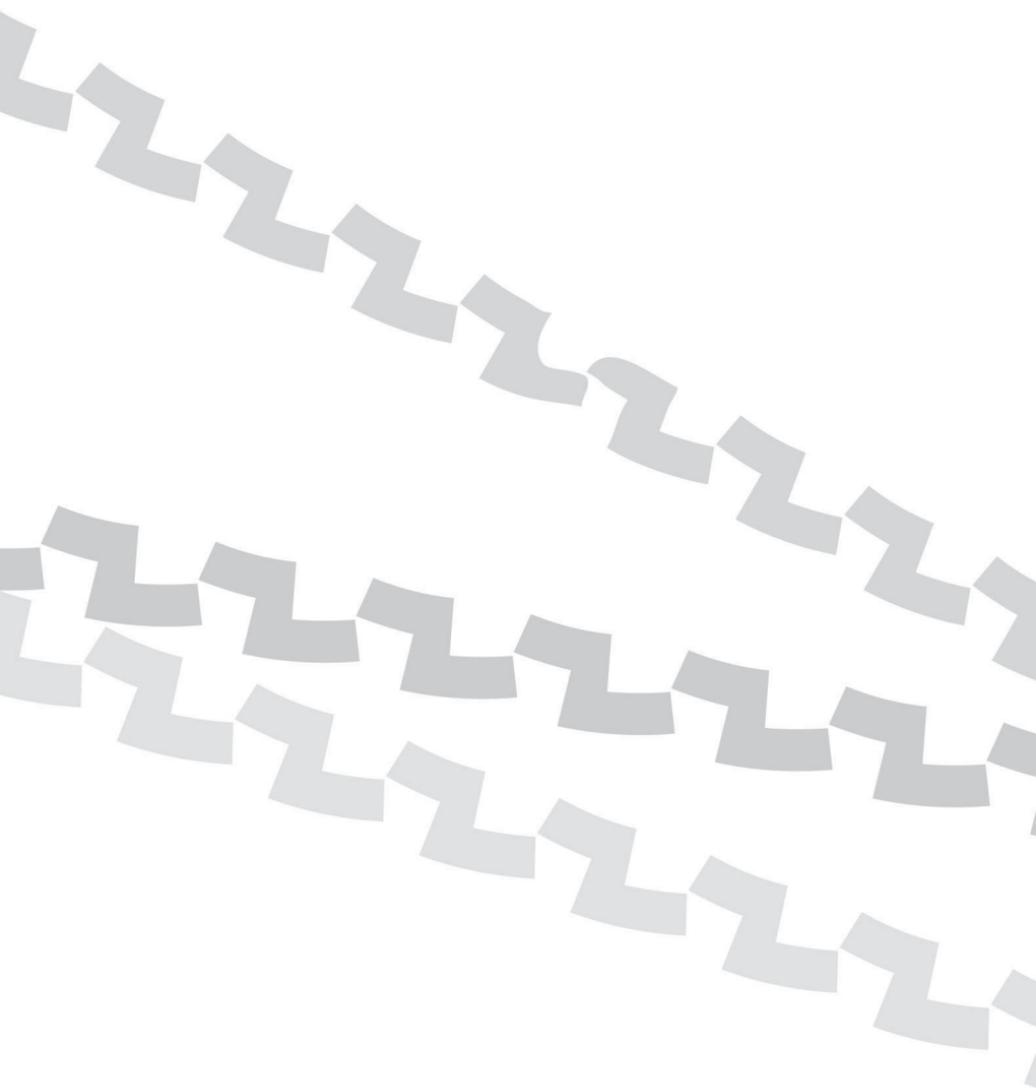


That's also the kind of dedication it takes to become a saint. If we want to learn about God, to know who he is and how he wants us to live, we need to be fully open to God's grace working in our lives. But we have to do our part too. In other words, we train to be saints, and not just when we feel like it or when it's convenient.

Of course, athletes don't become champions all alone.

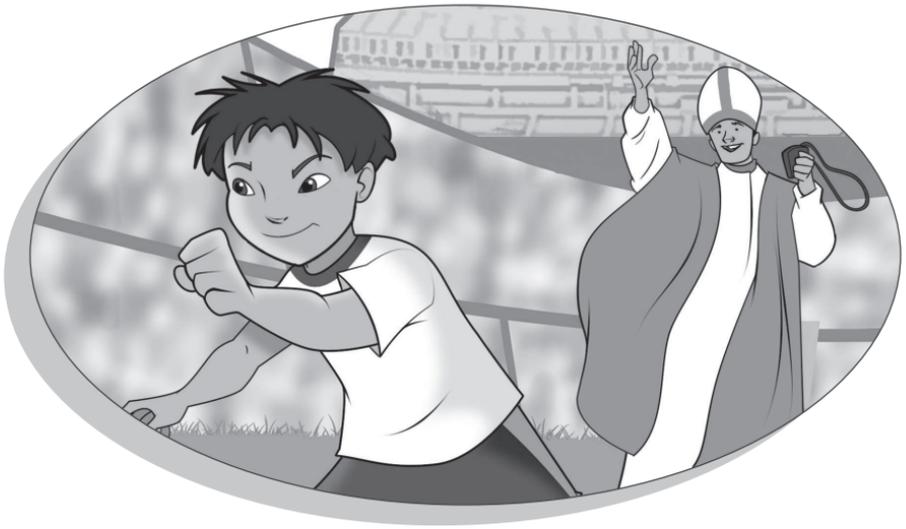
Even the very best need inspiration, coaching, equipment, and skills. Likewise, saints don't become virtuous and holy all by themselves. They do it with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the grace of the sacraments, the inspiration of the saints who came before them, the Bible, prayer, and by trying again even when they fail.

When we do what we can to learn about God, seek out the sacraments, pray, and practice doing good, we grow in the four **cardinal virtues**: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The word "cardinal" comes from the Latin word **cardo**, which means "hinge." These four virtues are the hinges of the door that opens our hearts to even more virtues. Through our human effort cooperating with God's grace, we can develop the cardinal virtues and become holy like the saints.



Chapter 1



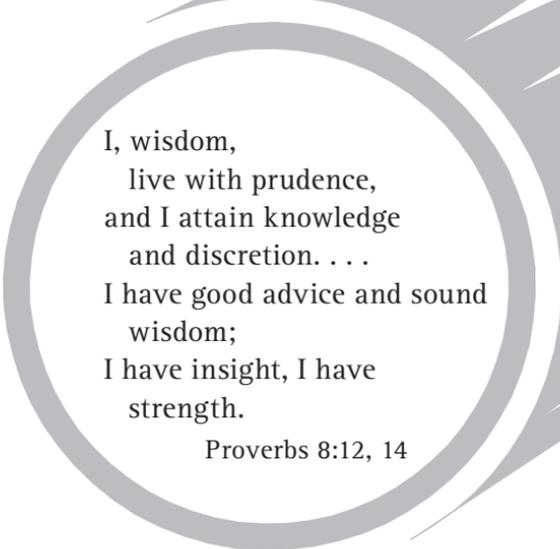


Prudence and Pope Saint John Paul II

What Is Prudence?

Prudence helps us to know what is really good and to make the right choice in any situation. Prudence is a way of looking at things with “open eyes.” Jesus taught his disciples about prudence when he told the parable of a king going to war. He asked his listeners if this king would “not sit down first and

consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace” (Luke 14:31–32). The prudent king makes a wise choice about the best way to achieve his goal, rather than rushing in without thinking.

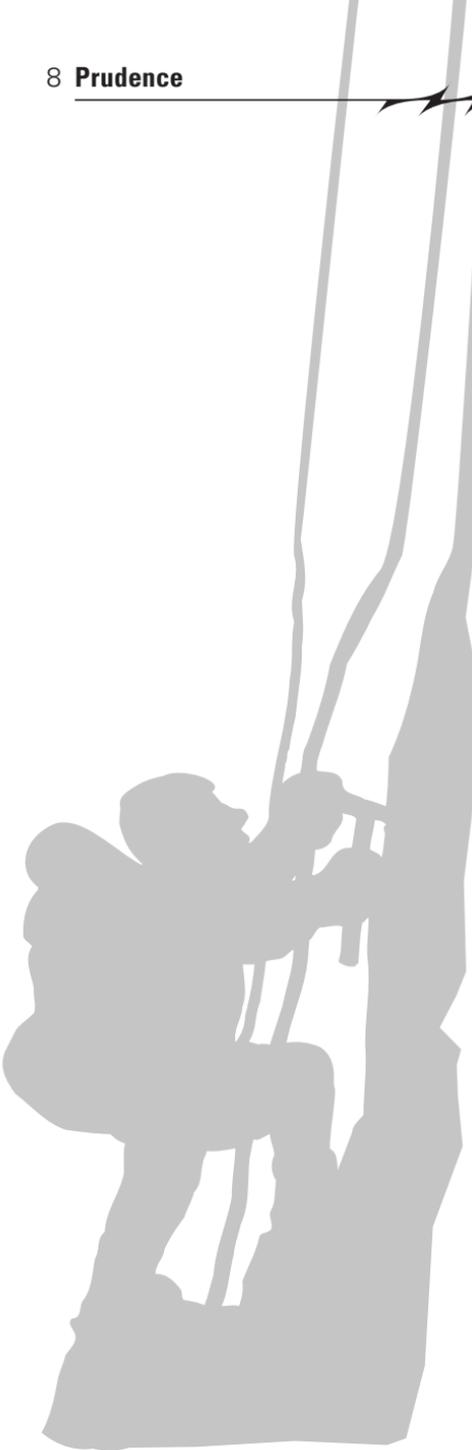


I, wisdom,
live with prudence,
and I attain knowledge
and discretion. . . .
I have good advice and sound
wisdom;
I have insight, I have
strength.

Proverbs 8:12, 14

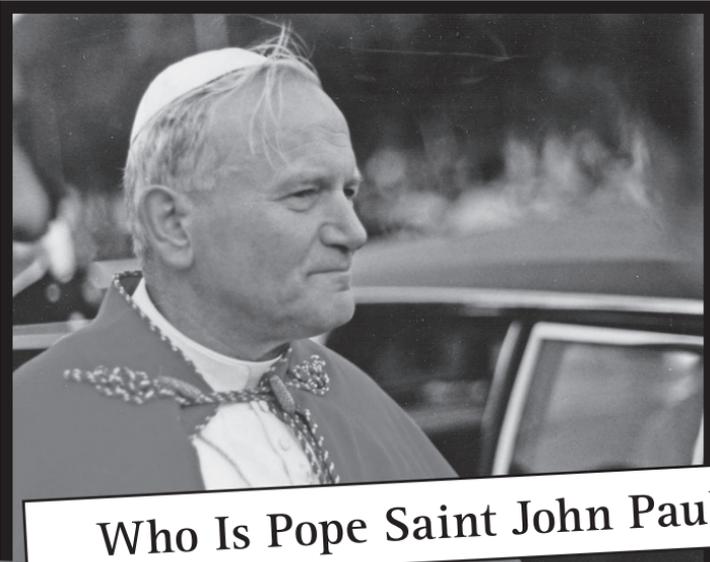
Prudence is using God's gifts of intellect and reason to make choices according to our faith. Our faith tells us what is true, and reason helps us understand why it is true. Prudence helps us use our reason to make the right choice about how to achieve a good goal. When a thinking mind and a believing heart work together, we are at our best!

People who climb Mount Everest hire professional local guides to accompany them on the journey. Climbers must be guided by a professional if they want to reach the top of the mountain and return safely to base camp. A knowledgeable guide has the experience and informed judgment to determine when a person needs medical care and when they are just tired,



when it is safe to continue climbing or when the weather is too bad or an avalanche is likely. Climbers need a guide to keep them safe, but also to push them on when they are fatigued and discouraged in order to reach their goal—the summit.

Prudence acts as a guide in the journey of life. Prudence helps us to know whether it is time to act or time to wait. Prudence warns you to run away from danger when you are not strong enough to battle against it successfully. But it also shows you when to stay and fight for truth and goodness. Prudence guides the other virtues by helping them work together and keeping them from going off-track. It is called the “chariot driver of the virtues” because it steers the conscience to practice virtue in all areas of our life.



Who Is Pope Saint John Paul II?

Poland, during the 1940s

The small group of friends moved swiftly through the pitch-black streets of Krakow, Poland. Snatches of whispered conversation passed between them as they sneaked through empty, dark neighborhoods, avoiding the roaming Nazi patrols.

After what seemed like an eternity, the friends reached their destination, an apartment in Krakow's Debniki neighborhood. Silently, they climbed the stairs and closed the door behind them. Though they were relieved to have made it safely inside, only dim lights were lit and a cautious atmosphere remained. More people began to arrive in a slow trickle, just one or two at a time. The



people closed the blinds and, once everyone had arrived, they pushed the furniture back against the walls and prepared for a secret performance by a group of actors called the Rhapsodic Theatre.

Before the performance began, a twenty-one-year-old actor named Karol Wojtyla warned, “It is essential to keep these get-togethers secret; otherwise we risk serious punishment from the Nazis, even deportation to the concentration camps.” No one doubted the graveness of the

situation or the truth of Karol’s words, but neither did they make a move to leave. Bound together by their secret and their resolve to resist the Nazis, the young people remained huddled in this little apartment, as though they were gathering around a warm, bright fire in the midst of a dark and frigid wilderness.



Because the Rhapsodic Theatre was a secret group with very little money, Karol had no costume or props. Only his authoritative presence and clear, ringing voice commanded the attention of his audience.

“Oh, my homeland!” Karol began to recite lines from a poem that told the story of how Polish villagers revolted against occupying Russian troops.

As he spoke, the sound of a Nazi tank rolling along the street below could be heard outside the window. The tank moved slowly by; Nazi slogans and propaganda boomed from a crackling megaphone into the dark night. In the apartment three stories above the street, however, the cacophony fell on deaf ears. Karol never faltered in the delivery of his lines.



The script from which he recited portrayed a man grieving the loss of his beloved country at the hands of foreign army troops. It expressed what every Polish citizen felt. Like the characters in the play, they, too, were experiencing normal everyday things while living in a very abnormal environment, under the control of a foreign military. Again, like the play's villagers, they were fighting the invaders of their day, not with guns and swords, but with words and ideas. The Nazis had closed Poland's libraries, museums, and theaters. Polish citizens could be shot for going to the theatre, or even for speaking the Polish language within earshot of the wrong person.

Karol knew he could not simply remain silent, waiting passively for the occupation to come to an end as his country and heritage were being destroyed. He grieved the loss of art, theatre, and books in his homeland. Longingly, Karol remembered a time in which the Polish people had more to look forward to than waiting in line for food rations. He wanted to help people remember the cultural heritage that made them who they were.

Karol fought back by making a space for beauty and truth in a world filled with ugliness and lies. Karol took part in twenty-two formal performances and over one hundred rehearsals. As a teen, he had dreamed of becoming an





actor, and it seemed as though the Rhapsodic Theatre would be the beginning of his promising acting career. Eventually though, Karol concluded that the theatre was not the lifelong vocation to which God was calling him.

Nonetheless, the wartime theatre group had prepared him to answer his true calling to become a priest. Because Polish Catholics were among the groups targeted by the Nazis, young Catholic men could not study openly for the priesthood. Karol and several other men attended secret classes at the archbishop's home.

Karol had learned how to resist the Nazis in a hidden way when he was a member of the Rhapsodic Theatre. In order to keep his seminary studies and preparation for the priesthood a secret, Karol continued to work at his full-time job at a stone quarry so he would not arouse suspi-



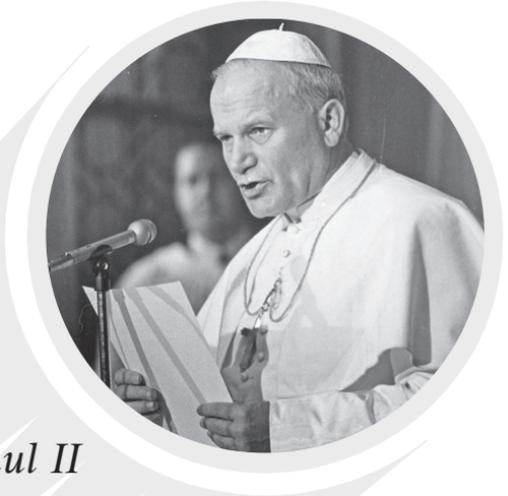
cion about what he was doing with his time. After the war ended a few years later, he was ordained Father Wojtyla, a parish priest. Eventually he became the archbishop of the large city of Krakow during the difficult period of Communist rule. Finally, Karol Wojtyla was elected to the role for which he is best known—pope. Afterward he took the name John Paul II.

Pope Saint John Paul II was a man of true prudence. Even as a young man, he understood that the occupying Nazi forces were destroying Poland, her people, and her cultural treasures. He realized that the



ideas the Nazi party stood for were dangerous and evil, and that millions of innocent men, women, and children were losing their lives in Nazi concentration camps. The man who would become Pope John Paul II believed that, as a Catholic Christian and as a man of goodwill, he was compelled to resist the Nazis in some way. He was smart enough, however, to know that standing on the street corner with his own megaphone, shouting back at the Nazi troops as they rolled through the city, would not bring peace or end the Nazi occupation.

The Rhapsodic Theatre is where young Karol first practiced the art of proclaiming powerful truths in the face of dangerous lies. Though his stage and his audience would eventually far outstrip those very first ones in a small, dark apartment, this art would serve him well as he became a parish priest, and a bishop, and, finally, the pope. As a young man, Karol Wojtyla reflected on his own personal talents and how they could be used to fight the Nazis secretly. As a gifted actor and speaker, he was well-educated and familiar with Polish literature and art. He believed that words had power and the ability to communicate beauty and truth. Prudently, he chose resistance through words.



*Pope Saint John Paul II
was prudent because
he used his individual gifts
and skills to resist
the evils of Nazism in a wise
and inspirational way.*



Prayer for Prudence

Dear God of Wisdom,
please give me the grace to listen to the voice
of your Holy Spirit and the voices of wise
people in my life when I have a decision to
make. Help me see the truth in the situations
and choices I face everyday. Give me the light
to see what is truly right and good and the
strength to follow where you call me. Amen.