



INTO THE BREACH

THE MISSION OF THE FAMILY

Couple Study Guide



Faith in Action

Faith

Into the Breach: The Mission of the Family

Couple Study Guide

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Rest on the Flight into Egypt, painted by Luc Olivier Merson (1846-1920), 1879, Oil on canvas,
Source: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

Introductory Letter from Patrick and Vanessa Kelly

Thomas Edison once said: “genius is 5% inspiration and 95% perspiration.” Something similar could be said of a good family. But we might change the ratio a bit — because in the end, a good marriage depends first on the grace of God and second on our cooperation. We couldn’t do it without him, but if we don’t do our part — with attention and commitment — things won’t go well.

Like every couple that has ever taken the mission of marriage seriously, the two of us have experienced this reality personally. That is why this series on the mission of the family is so important. A family takes a lot of work, and we all need help and encouragement — and good advice.

The challenges to the family today are profound. Not only are we facing the normal pressures — the need to provide financially, the ups and downs of personal relationships, the tragedies that inevitably come — but our culture is also rife with attacks on marriage and the family itself. In an increasingly secular culture, raising children in the faith is even harder. This is no small thing. The family is the cell of society. It is the primary place where we learn what it is to be human. It’s where we encounter the love of God and understand his vision for every one of us. If the family is at risk, so is humanity.

But today, as in every age, God continues to pour out his mercy and grace. He desires that we have strong families, and he will help us.

And so, we come to this short study *Into the Breach: The Mission of the Family Couple Study Guide*. Easy to use, and touching on the deepest truths about family life, it also offers very practical wisdom

for strengthening our marriages, protecting and educating our children, and living love in generosity and forgiveness.

We hope that the video series and the prompts found in these pages will not only spur fruitful discussions but will be a source of grace and focus for you and your spouse as you undertake your all-important mission as a family in our time. We'd also urge that you consider watching and working through *Into the Breach* with other couples you know.

The world needs faithful families who, by our simple acts of love and by our clear witness, can be a sign of hope to a weary world. The world needs faithful couples willing to step together, "Into the Breach!"

Vivat Jesus!

Patrick and Vanessa Kelly

How to Use this Study Guide

While not to be used in the *Cor* initiative with the council (another *Into the Breach: The Mission of the Family Study Guide* was developed for men's discussions for this purpose) the idea for a unique Couple Study Guide arose due to the particular topic—Marriage and the Family.

Two uses come to mind for this Couple Study Guide:

1. Individual married and engaged couples could use it with the videos fruitfully over a series of days or weeks with private discussions of the themes and their practical application in the couple's relationship and family.
2. Groups of couples at the parish could use it, led by a facilitating individual or couple, with some time for both private and group discussion of the content.

Lent or Advent would be ideal, but not essential, for a five-session experience.

Discussing as a Group

Before beginning a small group discussion, a discussion leader (or lead couple) should be selected to moderate the sessions. Good small group leaders are active listeners with strong habits of prayer who are faithful to Church teaching. Each small group leader should lead a group of no more than four couples, though larger groups can work if needed. Each session should be 1 to 2 hours in length.

An important step in group study and discussion of the topics in the videos is to guide the couples to spend ½ hour or so discussing a few key questions privately prior to the small group discussion. Some questions and topics may be quite challenging—the cultural attack

we face as Catholic married couples requires some challenging content and discussion—and it is best that the couple not be put on the spot without time alone together to discuss the topics.

The Five Episodes and Using the Study Guide

This study guide is intended to help facilitate reflection and discussion on the themes of the episodes. The episodes and study guide have been developed for maximum flexibility of use: they can be viewed and discussed in any order, and participants might choose to go through all five episodes, a couple, or even only one.

Each episode has a study guide chapter with several segments to help guide the discussion. **We have highlighted material within each section that we believe is particularly helpful. These can be used as a ‘short form’ if you have time constraints.**

Success for these sessions does not necessarily mean covering all the material, but rather means engaging in meaningful conversation that calls participants to continued conversion and enables them to have couple conversations more effectively. The most successful discussion sessions will include the following segments in this order:

Opening Prayer

Begin each discussion with a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for his guidance. Follow this with a few moments of silence and meditation.

Introductions

Start with an introduction discussion before you watch each episode, even if everyone in the small group knows each other. The purpose of an introduction is to prepare the group for discussion by making them comfortable with each other and disengaging them from whatever might be on their minds. Having prepared for this small

group conversation, consider beginning each session by asking questions in line with the topic of the video. Questions that prompt individuals to share experiences and thoughts connected to them are best for this. Come up with some of your own, or consider one of the following:

- Is there a married couple, individual husband or wife, father or mother in a film you can think of that you find particularly admirable? Which film and character, and why?
- Think of a couple you personally know and admire. What is it about them you find attractive as a couple?
- Share something you did as a child that taught you an important lesson.
- Name something that helped give you the confidence to get married and have children.
- If you could take some bit of wisdom you now possess back with you to the age of 20, what would it be and why?

Into the Breach: The Mission of the Family Videos

View the episode for the session as a group.



Understanding the Breach

Discuss the episode using the questions in this section. Most of your discussion time should be spent on discussing these questions. Every question is designed to help participants explore and apply the principles raised in each episode.

Feel free to vary the order of the questions, skip some of them entirely, or add some of your own. **We have highlighted questions that we believe are particularly helpful**, but the choice is up to the leader. As part of the discussion, you can incorporate some of the key

quotes from the “Bricks for the Breach” section or Scripture passages from the “Sword of the Spirit” section, both described below.



Bricks for the Breach

These are quotes drawn from the video or Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted’s exhortations that provide solid guidance or encouragement—a “brick”—for understanding or repairing the breach in the family or the culture. These quotes are meant to support the discussion and understanding of the episode.

The quotes in the “Bricks for the Breach” section can be used for open-ended discussion or to address questions brought up during the “Understanding the Breach” section discussion. Feel free to use or not use the material provided here as best serves the conversation.



Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17 refers to “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” This section features Scripture verses and passages that are related to the content of the episode and are useful for group discussion or individual contemplation and prayer.

As with the quotes from the “Bricks for the Breach” section, the Scripture verses can be used for open-ended discussion or to address questions brought up during the “understanding the Breach” section discussion. Feel free to use or not use the material here as best serves the conversation.



Call to Love

The “Call to Love” section contains challenges that offer practical goals and suggestions for participants to implement changes in their lives, marriages and families to better live out the principles expressed

in each episode. Make sure that you save at least 10 minutes at the end of your discussion to focus on the “Call to Love.”

Remind participants that they need not take on all the challenges at once. Even small shifts in prayer and family practice build habits that bear great fruit over time! Encourage couples to choose and begin one challenge, or two, and focus on these.

Start every “Call to Love” section by talking over the progress on the challenges from the previous session (omit this for the first session). Then read and discuss the challenges suggested for the current episode. Consider picking one or more of those challenges and make a commitment to do it individually or as a group. If a couple needs more time to consider this commitment, or is uncomfortable making a commitment in a given area, this should be respected.

In cases where the “Call to Love” challenge will involve a discussion with one’s spouse ahead of embracing a family challenge, having this discussion is the first step. It is of great importance that we are patient and listen to each other as husband and wife in implementing family prayer and other important decisions. When children are older, this may involve a discussion with our older teen children as well.

Equally important is the readiness to apologize for and to offer forgiveness for any negligence or sins of the past that we have committed. We all have been and remain sinners, even as we seek holiness as individuals and as married couples. As G.K. Chesterton famously said about sin along our earthly journey, “Not only are we all in the same boat, but we are all seasick.” How do we move forward, then, in the face of our periodic failures as Catholic couples? Apologize, forgive, communicate, listen, pray together. Do not let fear, in the end, deter you from bringing up the changes you would like to see in your family and moving forward. Trust that you, as spouses, are

given the grace necessary to love each other and your children and make these decisions. Your unified leadership, if you move forward with trust in God's grace, patience, persistence and love of your family, will bear good fruit.

St. Paul's encouragement is also true of us, "I am confident that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus." As God's baptized children, we can have this same confidence!

Closing Prayer

End each session with a request for prayer intentions so the participants can join in prayer to support each other. Then close with the Prayer for the Family, written by St. John Paul II, a powerful prayer perfectly suited to lift up our families, and all families, to God in this challenging time.

How to Lead a Small Group Session

A small group session is an opportunity for a group of participants to gather and discuss their thoughts, questions and takeaways from a shared conversation that begins and ends with prayer.

The task of a small group leader/lead couple is to facilitate and direct the conversation, elicit contributions from all willing participants, resolve any conflicts that may arise, and summarize what is discussed.

As a small group leader/lead couple, you are not called to teach but to make sure the conversation stays focused and respectful, and that it includes all participants. Preparation as a small group leader/lead couple is therefore different than if you were a lecturer or panelist.

A small group is successful when there is meaningful discussion that helps participants connect with each other and apply the concepts and themes to their daily life. You do not have to cover all of the material or questions. This is a framework for you to build upon that best meets the needs of the couples you are leading.

General Tips to Lead a Small Group Session

Review and reflect before the session. As the small group discussion leader, make sure you review and reflect on the episode and study guide chapter ahead of the session to familiarize yourself with the content.

Bring pens and paper. Consider providing paper and writing implements for the participants. This might help them jot down their thoughts, reactions, and questions during the video for sharing afterward.

Ask questions that invite participants to reflect on their experience. These small groups are designed for reflection, not a quiz on the content. Avoid yes-or-no questions unless you have a thought-provoking follow-up question. Make it comfortable for participants to share their personal stories, but don't try to force them to do so.

Listen well. To facilitate a discussion, a leader must understand what everyone is saying. Sometimes it is easy to begin formulating your own response while another person is speaking, but that can compromise how well you are listening.

Rephrase, repeat, summarize, clarify. Along with listening skills, occasionally using these techniques will also help ensure that everyone processes what has been said as a group and encourage them to take the discussion to the next level.

Include all participants. In any group discussion, some members will speak up willingly, perhaps even dominating the conversation, while others will tend to be quiet. Not everyone processes information the same way or at the same speed. Some may need you to encourage them to share. Respect those who take time to process and who may not be inclined to share.

Adapt the questions. Be aware throughout the small group discussion that the members in the group might be at different stages in their lives and relationships. In such instances, adapt the question or encourage the participants to adapt their reflections accordingly.

Return to questions later if the answer is unknown. If a particular question arises in a session involving Church teaching and the correct answer is not known, you can simply state you will ask your pastor, or look to the Catechism, for clarification and share the answer during the next session.

Keep emotional discipline and mediate conflict. Watch your own emotions as well as those of group members. Some topics can be sensitive, so be prepared to diffuse anger and redirect the discussion in a constructive way. Diffuse the situation and help the disputing members find common ground or principles. If necessary, simply table the issue that is causing the tensions and move along to a new topic.

Know when it's time to advance the discussion. Moving a discussion forward too soon can lead to missing some good observations or contributions, but keeping a discussion going on too long can make the session boring or repetitive. Be mindful of how the discussion is progressing; when it seems to stall, it's time to move it forward.

Seek help when necessary. Sometimes, questions and situations occur that require outside assistance. A participant or couple might

have a particularly difficult question, require fraternal correction, or argue against Church teaching. In situations like this, it is best to talk to the participant or couple out of the group setting. Most importantly, remember that it is best to reach out to your pastor for help in a situation you are uncomfortable with.

End with an invitation. If there are more group sessions to come, re-invite the members of the group and remind them of the date and time. These personal invitations offer the members in your small group another opportunity to develop their faith. An invitation is especially important following your last small group session to keep your group active in their faith.

EPISODE 1: CONFRONTING THE POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD

Opening Prayer

St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.



Understanding the Breach

- 1) Times have changed for the family, for our families. We no longer live in a “Christendom” culture which thinks in a Christian way about everything. Rapidly, we are changing to an “apostolic age,” where, like the first apostles, we face assumptions, pressures and even institutions arrayed against the Faith, as well as against a happy and holy family life.
 - a. Dr. Jeanne Schindler states, “*In an earlier age, the entire culture was suffused with a Christian rhythm, Christian symbolism, Christian meaning, and that simply isn’t the case now.*” What are some examples of the loss of the “rhythm” or symbols of Christian faith and family life in our culture?
 - b. *In a Christendom age, the temptation for Christians is hypocrisy, to pretend faith, because it is socially advantageous to be Christian. In an apostolic age like our own, the temptation for Christians is cowardice – to back away from faith, from the tough stands the breaches facing our families will require of us. Do you sense this temptation*

in your own life and family? How? Where? What specific actions can you do to strengthen your courage in these areas?

- c. *An apostolic age is also exciting. It calls us to a greater adventure of faith. This includes the adventure of marriage and family life. What might this “adventure of Christian family life” look like, beyond merely attending Mass and praying before meals?*
- 2) Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly recalls the famous striking phrase of Sr. Lucia, that “the final battle” between the kingdom of Christ and that of Satan would be over marriage and family.
 - a. *What do you think is so threatening to Satan’s plans in faithful marriage and family life?*
 - b. *Supreme Knight Kelly closes with Sr. Lucia’s admonition not to be afraid. Why? “Our Lady has already crushed the serpent’s head,” writes Lucia. What does this mean for us?*
 - c. *What do you see as the obstacles to Christian spouses and parents leading their families confidently today? What important help is available to overcome these obstacles?*
- 3) “Catholics have to be so intentional today about keeping their faith, because they’re pushing up against the culture that’s pushing against them. To stay where we want, we have to push against (this culture),” says Fr. John Parks.
 - a. *In your own marriage and family, how have you practically experienced the current against your faith and efforts to live a strong family life? Some areas to consider might be the issues of time, privacy, relationships outside of the family, technology use, and other influences.*

- b. *How did you move forward in the face of these strong currents? What are some concrete and specific things you can do in your own family life to oppose these currents?*
- c. *What does the word “intentional” bring to mind for our families and homes? Why is it important?*

Notes



Bricks for the Breach

“Men, do not hesitate to engage in the battle that is raging around you, the battle that is wounding our children and families, the battle that is distorting the dignity of both women and men. This battle is often hidden, but the battle is real. It is primarily spiritual, but it is progressively killing the remaining Christian ethos in our society and culture, and even in our own homes.” (Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted, *Into the Breach*)

“Husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, you are called to have great hearts here, counter-cultural and brave. You can build something better, freer, more generous, and nobler, beginning in your own home.” (Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted, *Complete my Joy*)

“Christendom is a culture where people see with biblical lenses. There was a time certainly in the United States where more people than not saw everything through biblical lenses. Have we left Christendom behind? I think the answer is yes. Even those who go to church on a regular basis, I would say probably have mostly worldly minds with some Catholic patches, that every once in a while somehow try to overlap.” (Fr. John Riccardo)

“To live in an apostolic age means like the early apostles, who were a small minority in a pagan society, and we have to realize that people around us have a pagan view, they don’t have a Christian view of God, and of the values of human life. And so we have to cherish and protect our values and be able to pass them on to our children.” (Dr. Tim Gray)

“Why can’t families, perhaps like they could 50 years ago, just go with the flow of the culture and be okay and stay strong in their faith and stay united as a family. We know that that doesn’t work anymore,

because the flow will not take you downstream to a good place. These families from two generations ago, the grandparents are shocked. 'We did everything we thought we had to do and our kids have left the faith and our grandkids are a mile away from the faith.' It's just a different ballgame than it was." (Mike Phelan)

"I don't think there is a philosophy, there's a religion, there's a worldview that has a higher view of sex and marriage and family than the Catholic Church." (Fr. John Parks)

"It feels countercultural, and it feels also like a great mission. So we're gonna raise our children in such a way that feels like we're on a battlefield, which you know, is scary, but in God's providence, like we were made for a time such as this." (Brittany Kemp)

"It's critical to be intentional, because it means you're striving towards something and not just waiting for something to happen, but really putting in the effort to make something become what it ought to be." (Julie Alexander)

"In order for us to believe in the good news, we have to learn what the good news is, and our Church is full of resources that allow us to come to understand what marriage and family should be in the first place." (Greg Alexander)

"Finding the encouragement that you need as a Catholic family is always so much easier if you have community. So, look out into the community and see who is trying to live life like you, who is trying to honor God in everything that they do, who is trying to teach their children the same things that you're trying to teach your children. Find those people, surround yourself by those people." (Monique Rubero, M.D.)

“When our Lord talked to the apostles, many of them, it’s safe to say, were not living a Christian existence. They came to it as adults. So, it is never too late to come to the faith as adults. Parents will say to me, ‘I regret, my children were 13 and 15 when I came to the faith, all those years I lost.’ You didn’t lose those years. You now can pray for your children. It is never too late to come to the faith. It is never too late to bring Christ into your family. Let him take the work from there.”
(Dr. Ray Guarendi)

“In a certain sense the family doesn’t need to be saved insofar as it’s real, and it’s natural, and we didn’t make it (up), so we don’t have to gin it up or create it on our own. The family is given to us; it responds to the deepest chords of our nature. So, we simply need to be faithful, listen to the way in which we’re attuned, and then make a deep dive into the Christian tradition for all the resources that are there to help us be true to this deep calling that in our heart of hearts we know to be true.” (Dr. Jeanne Schindler)



Sword of the Spirit

EVERY BUILDER WITH A SPADE AND SWORD TO REBUILD AND DEFEND

Our enemies thought, “Before they are aware of it or see us, we will come into their midst, kill them, and put an end to the work.”

I made an inspection, then addressed these words to the nobles, the magistrates, and the rest of the people: “Do not fear them! Keep in mind the LORD, who is great and to be feared, and fight for your kindred, your sons and daughters, your wives and your homes.” When our enemies realized that we had been warned and that God had upset their plan, we all went back, each to our own task at the wall.

From that time on, however, only half my work force took a hand in the work, while the other half, armed with spears, bucklers, bows, and breastplates, stood guard behind the whole house of Judah as they rebuilt the wall. The load carriers, too, were armed; each worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other. Every builder, while working, had a sword tied at his side. (Nehemiah 4:5, 8-9, 10-12b)

THE LORD IS OUR SOURCE OF HOPE IN TIMES OF TROUBLE. HE KNOWS WHAT WE ARE FACING.

*If foundations are destroyed,
what can the just one do?"
The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD's throne is in heaven.
God's eyes keep careful watch;
they test the children of Adam. (Ps 11:3-4)*

INTENTIONAL FAITH IN THE HOME

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them on your arm as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)



Call to Love

- 1. Spend an hour before the Blessed Sacrament, writing in response to the following questions: (1) Where do I sense our marriage/family is succeeding in being a strong Catholic family?**

(2) Where do we need to be more intentional? (3) What is in the way of our family's thriving in faith, hope and love? Trust that the Eucharistic Lord is helping bring the truth forward to you. Share your thoughts with your spouse.

2. **Begin the daily or weekly Couple or Family Rosary.** Prayer as husband and wife is key to breathing real "spiritual oxygen" in our relationship. But how do we begin? On a day each week that works for the family schedule, pray the Rosary as a couple or as an entire family. This prayer takes 20-25 minutes. The Rosary has a remarkable capacity, by God's grace, for increasing peace and unity in relationships, especially if prayed regularly. It is in this way that we can practically experience how Mary brings us closer to her Son. If a full Rosary seems at this time too much to ask with younger children, begin with a decade of the Rosary together. Over time, invite each child to lead his or her own decade of the prayer. Further idea: have the family's favorite dessert after the Rosary to reinforce the goodness of this time together!

3. **Keep the Sabbath Holy.** The word "holy" means "set apart". The enemy tempts us to make every day the same—work, distraction, and disconnection in our families. In order to embrace Sunday as the Lord commands—a seventh day to begin the week with Mass, rest, celebration, family and friendship—commit to keep this day free of unnecessary work, stress, and technological distractions such as excessive screen time or phone use. Instead, make it a day of worship and fun—a holy day that is different from the other six—a day of building peace and good memories as a family and with friends, as God intended it for us.

Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group, and then pray the Prayer for the Family to close:

Prayer for the Family from St. John Paul II

*Lord God, from You every family in heaven
and on earth takes its name.*

Father, You are Love and Life.

*Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman,
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity,
grant that every family on earth may become*

for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

*Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions
of husbands and wives for the good of their families
and of all the families in the world.*

*Grant that the young may find in the family
solid support for their human dignity and
for their growth in truth and love.*

*Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of
the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all the
weakness and trials through which our families sometimes pass.*

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,

*grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out
her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.*

Through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Amen.

Notes

EPISODE 2: THE PROMISE OF MARRIAGE

Opening Prayer

St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.



Understanding the Breach

- 1) “I don’t even know that the modern world has a definition of marriage. I think part of the idea is actually to eliminate the word,” says Fr. John Riccardo in this episode. Today, it can be difficult to have conversations about marriage because so many people have their own ideas of what it is and how it should be lived.
 - a. *Is there a standard definition of marriage in everyday life now? What is that definition?*
 - b. *How does the current cultural ideas about marriage affect how it is lived? How has your own understanding of marriage been shaped by our culture?*
 - c. *Why do you think we are so confused on this point of the meaning, and even necessity, of marriage?*
- 2) Marriage is God’s original plan for the human race. Because there is so much confusion regarding marriage, the Church’s teaching on marriage stands out more and more as a sign of contradiction to the culture’s plan for relationships. The Church offers a firm foundation to understand marriage, its purpose,

and how it can be lived out. What strikes you most about these three comments from the episode?

- a. *“Throughout history and across cultures, marriage has been universal, because it’s a natural reality. It’s built into God’s very design for man and woman.”* (Patrick Kelly)
- b. *“But Christ elevated marriage. So now, when a baptized man and woman marry, they enter into a sacrament. And through that sacrament, they receive the grace they need to fulfill their vocation.”* (Patrick Kelly)
- c. *“What’s grace? Grace is supernatural power. So on the day that you get married, God gives you access to his power to love each other the way he’s calling you to love each other and the way you deep down want to love each other.”* (Fr. John Riccardo)

3) Among the attacks on marriage is the persistent message that a new human life is a mere burden on the relationship, that children are a threat to love and to the planet. The normalization of contraception inside and outside of marriage, especially forms of the “pill”, have restructured the culture radically.

- a. *Dr. Monique Ruberu says this in the video: “Contraception actually puts a barrier between that couple and God by trying to cut out the beautiful fertility that he has blessed them with. It doesn’t mean that you have to have a child every time you come together. There are beautiful natural family planning methods which can be used. Natural Family Planning differs from contraception, because at no point are you ever trying to shut down your natural cycle or your fertility.” Discuss this.*

- b. *St. John Paul II, referring to Natural Family Planning, wrote: “...the difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle: it is a*

difference which is much wider and deeper than is usually thought, one which involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality" (Familiaris Consortio, 32). What differences can you see between using contraception and NFP that St. John Paul II could be referring to?

- 4) Mike Phelan says the following in the video: “Learn to pray together as spouses. That takes time. It’s a real level of intimacy, prayer together, but couples that learn to pray together do not divorce. So, Rosary in the morning together, prayer before you go to bed at night together. Whatever form that takes, because your intimacy will be something the enemy cannot divide.”
 - a. *How is our couple prayer together doing?*
 - b. *What could we add in prayer together to strengthen this key aspect of our marriage?*
- 5) Greg and Julie Alexander, experienced marriage coaches, speak clearly about “intentionality” in living our marriages. The “entropy” which constantly wears down all things, including our relationship as spouses, is a constant matter of concern. This indicates that we need to make some key decisions.
 - a. *What could be an important intentional decision that a newly married couple could make before children arrive? (Faith, neighborhood, financial, etc.)*
 - b. *What intentional steps can we take to protect the closeness of our marriage? (dates, practical conversation time, walks, etc.)*
 - c. *What could be an important intentional decision in raising Catholic children?*

Notes



Bricks for the Breach

“Throughout history and across cultures, marriage has been universal, because it’s a natural reality. It’s built into God’s very design for man and woman. But Christ elevated marriage. So now, when a baptized man and woman marry, they enter into a sacrament. And through that sacrament, they receive the grace they need to fulfill their vocation.” (Patrick Kelly)

“It’s important to recognize that because of sin, it’s difficult to live in accord with the truth of marriage. It’s also important to recognize it’s possible. And this is especially true for those who are in a sacramental marriage and have received the grace that comes with the sacrament to live in accord with the truth of marriage.” (Nicholas Healy)

The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1601)

“A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible reality, instituted by Jesus, which gives grace. What’s Grace? Grace is supernatural power. So on the day that you get married, God gives you access to his power to love each other the way he’s calling you to love each other and the way you deep down want to love each other.” (Fr. John Riccardo)

“I don’t even know that the modern world has a definition of marriage. I think part of the idea is actually to eliminate the word. Clearly one of the things which is at the center of it is this is a relationship which so long as you and I find this to be mutually beneficial, we’ll stay in it. And the moment either one of us or both of us no longer find it

mutually beneficial, then we end it. It's a consumer relationship.”
(Fr. John Riccardo)

“Marital love must be free, it must be total, it must be faithful, and it must be fruitful. And that's because the nature of love itself. Love must be free, can't be coerced. Love must be total, I can't partially love, I have to totally love. And then if I totally love then I'm going to be faithful. Love has to be faithful to be authentic love. And if in marriage the love between a man and woman, if you're going to be free, and total and faithful, then you'll be fruitful, you'll be open to children.” (Dr. Tim Gray)

“So how are men and women the same and how are men and women different? The Church has always protected that men and women are equal in dignity. But the church doesn't mean by that, sameness. So, we need difference too not just equality. The difference calls us to union as men and women.” (Mike Phelan)

“Female and male. Him being the strong, confident one. He wants to protect. He wants to guard. He wants to provide. He wants to initiate ... all these beautiful things that are so masculine. And then you have the woman who's the nurturer. She's the receiver. And her heart expands with new life.” (Sarah Swafford)

“Entropy in physics means everything tends toward decay. Sun's gonna burn out, bodies age, iron rusts, relationships can tend towards lazy. Don't let the law of social entropy decay your marriage. Who would your spouse say that you treat the best? Would they say 'Boy, I'll tell you what, I wish I got half of the consideration that he gives to those people at work.' You want your spouse to be able to say, 'My spouse treats me better than he or she treats anybody else.' That's the ideal.” (Dr. Ray Guardi)

“Sacrifice is absolutely essential in marriage, the mutual sacrificing of the spouses. We live in a culture that's very individualistic and self-focused. People tell you to do what you want when you want and take a selfie while you're doing it. But this isn't the path to happiness or fulfillment. And so in a marriage, husband and wife must give and sacrifice for the other. This is the mark of authentic love.” (Sr. Maris Stella)

“In today's world, it's very important that we are intentional in living our Catholic faith, because the many attacks that are waged on marriage today are just incredible. And so if we don't take the time to really focus on how it is that we're going to defend our family from those attacks we're gonna find ourselves getting lost.” (Greg Alexander)

“Learn to pray together as spouses. That takes time. It's a real level of intimacy, prayer together, but couples that learn to pray together do not divorce. So, Rosary in the morning together, prayer before you go to bed at night together. Whatever form that takes, because your intimacy will be something the enemy cannot divide.” (Mike Phelan)



Sword of the Spirit

JESUS CELEBRATES AND REVIVES MARRIAGE: THE WEDDING AT CANA

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” [And] Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, “Fill the jars with water.” So they

filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him. (John 2:1-11)

THE MAGNA CARTA OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So [also] husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

“For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:21-33)



Call to Love

1. **Consider implementing the following simple relationship-building measures in your marriage.** Choose one or two to discuss with your spouse and/or to implement as a couple:
 - a. Prayer as spouses: Beginning and ending the day in prayer together brings great peace over time in a marriage. Some options to consider:
 - i. Pray the Rosary (or a single decade if time is tight) to start the day.
 - ii. Pray Night Prayer (from the Liturgy of the Hours) before bed.
 - b. Time for the Little Things: Psychological relationship wisdom generally recommends that you must set aside 1.5 hours per week just for discussing the practical matters of your home, finances, and relationships, etc. Determine to carve out this important time to keep the anxieties of life from overtaking your marriage and to communicate well.
 - i. Option one: take a 15-minute walk as spouses once per day, using this time to go through the “lists” each of you has on their mind.
 - ii. Option two: take a coffee break in the morning once or twice per week, or in the evening when the children go to bed, to have this conversation time.
 - c. Bring back date night! Choose an evening once per week or twice per month. Take turns planning the date. This should not be for discussing practicals but for enjoying romance and sharing life together as spouses away from the kids and other distractions.

d. In all this, recognize “times of necessary imbalance” in your relationship. A newborn, a sick child or parent in need, or another challenge can seemingly forbid time together as spouses. Realize that you might need to adjust to shorter time for a while. Pray together and for each other in this “time of necessary imbalance”. It will not be this way forever. God will give you the grace you need if you ask.

2. **Prayer for renewal of the Grace of the Sacrament in times of difficulty:** Consider adding this prayer to your prayer-toolbelt and praying it in times when you are in conflict or facing difficult decisions:

a. *Dear Lord Jesus, we thank you for our marriage, and that you promise with this Sacrament your grace, your power, to help in all difficulties. We pray that You renew this grace in our marriage, right now. Give us the power to love each other (and our children) as we ought, right now. Jesus, we trust in you. (3x) Thank you, Lord Jesus.*



Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group, and then pray the Prayer for the Family to close:

Prayer for the Family from St. John Paul II

*Lord God, from You every family in heaven
and on earth takes its name.*

Father, You are Love and Life.

*Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman,
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity,
grant that every family on earth may become*

for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

*Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions
of husbands and wives for the good of their families
and of all the families in the world.*

*Grant that the young may find in the family
solid support for their human dignity and
for their growth in truth and love.*

*Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of
the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all the
weakness and trials through which our families sometimes pass.*

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,

*grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out
her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.*

Through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Amen.

Notes

EPISODE 3: THE GIFT OF CHILDREN

Opening Prayer

St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.



Understanding the Breach

- 1) This episode strongly emphasizes and illustrates the difference and complementarity of men and women, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers. At the root of our confusion is the cultural inability to hold the ideas of equality and difference together. But as Christians, we have a revealed gift from God on this point: God is one, and God is a relationship of love, the Trinity. All at once.
 - a. *Fr. John Lankeit, following our recent popes, mentions the crucial point that a human family—husband, wife, child—are an icon, or special image, of the three Persons of the Trinity. How does this comparison strike you?*
 - b. *Here we see the irreplaceable importance of the family in our world. We can also see why marriage and the family are the place of the “final battle” if our spiritual enemy, Satan, wants to ruin the image of God in the world. Imagine if the family were entirely removed from the earth. (Like in Aldous Huxley’s novel: Brave New World) What would life be like?*

- c. *Like the love of the Trinity, the Church calls spouses to seek to love freely, totally, faithfully, and fruitfully, as mentioned in this episode. The “questions of consent” in a Catholic wedding refer to all four of these essential qualities of commitment.*
 - i. *Why is freedom so important for authentic love?*
 - ii. *Totality?*
 - iii. *Faithfulness?*
 - iv. *Fruitfulness?*
- 2) As Dr. Patrick Yeung mentions, echoing the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 2378, children are “the supreme gift of marriage.” Our culture is strikingly lacking in gratitude for the gift of a child.
 - a. *In the witness segment of this video, both Patrick and Dorothy Yeung mention the pain and shock of the experience of infertility. What is most striking about their witness to you?*
 - b. *How does the story of the Yeung family testify in a special way that children are a gift?*
- 3) Several important challenges are mentioned in this episode about the formation and education of children.
 - a. *Dr. Jeanne Schindler points to the power of the “ethos” of the home. We could call this the “way the family behaves” or the “rhythm of life” in the home. How do you know without being told that a family is Catholic when you enter their home? What specific things can we do to make our home more Catholic?*
 - b. *Celebration in the home is very powerful. How did birthday, Christmas and other celebrations go in your family? What is your memory of these events? What would you like to add to celebrations? What would you like to change? How can your Catholic faith be better incorporated into these celebrations in your family today?*

Notes



Bricks for the Breach

“The Trinity has been depicted as a triangle, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And within human life, we have an icon, a smaller version of that, that is the family that is husband, wife, and child.” (Fr. John Lankeit)

“The roles of mothers and fathers are unique, they’re different, because God created us, male and female. So men and women are complementary. They’re not interchangeable.” (Sr. Maris Stella, SV)

“Husbands and fathers should be providers, protectors and spiritual leaders. We are responsible that the family is provided for. Protector – the husband is called to be the primary source of watchfulness to protect that family. And then Spiritual Leaders, If Dad is the spiritual leader of the home, and assures that we’re going to Mass, assures that we’re going to pray together as a family, he provides a shelter from the evil forces, including the evil spiritual forces.” (Mike Phelan)

“[St. Edith Stein wrote:] ‘A woman’s soul is fashioned as a shelter in which other souls may unfold.’ What that means is that as a woman ... our maternal yearning is to cherish, guard, protect, nurture the other, and we do that of course biologically, but we’re created to desire to develop and nourish the human soul in others.” (Sharon Phelan)

“Christian marriage is not fulfilled as it’s designed simply by the couple looking into one another’s eyes, though that is crucial, and that’s a starting point. But it’s also looking into the eyes of these others that they have created with God’s original help. It’s now engaged in this enterprise of bringing children forth for the kingdom of God.” (Dr. Jeanne Schindler)

“Children are the greatest gift to families. We have the opportunity as parents, to teach, to guide, to love, and then they give us back so much.” (Monique Rubero, M.D.)

“We had dreams of a large, beautiful family, and I’m thinking, I’m just gonna trust Jesus, that he’s gonna help me, you know, raise all these beautiful kids. We had dreams of our own, and they all came crashing down on us.” (Dorothy Yeung)

“We actually had a consult with a reproductive endocrinologist. And I just remember in the room, he said, ‘I want to get you two pregnant.’ And I remember thinking, that is exactly the problem with IVF. Nobody should be getting my wife pregnant but me. IVF is not an option because it bypasses the marital embrace.” (Patrick Yeung)

“They say it takes three to create a new life, the man the woman and God. Every child has the right to be born directly out of an act of love. The baby is not a product. The baby is a gift. And the way you participate in the creating of that gift matters.” (Patrick Yeung)

“When it comes to the question of the things that you might need to consider when deciding what kind of education your children will receive, whether it be private school, public school, homeschooling; I think that with my wife and I, the biggest consideration was whether or not our faith and the truth of Christ would be proclaimed in the way that they were educated. It’s absolutely essential to remember that even if you have your children in school, do not forget you are their primary educators.” (Dallas Carter)

“For children to grow up to be men and women of prayer, mothers and fathers especially need to show the way. Prayer needs to be a natural part of the life of the home. It isn’t enough just to tell our children to pray. We as parents need to set the example.” (Patrick Kelly)

“Especially to the dads out there, you’ve got to be high profile. The unsaid witness of kids seeing you pray. That message comes across whether the kids acknowledge it or not—don’t ever underestimate the power of your influence, and the need, frankly, to live not just a bold life, a bold example, but the occasional bold word, because if we never talk about our faith, they won’t see the connection.”
(Andrew Swafford, PhD.)

“I think it happens in the ethos of the home. Is the home one where Christian references are made? Are there Christian symbols that are evident? Is there a crucifix in the home? Does the family pray together? Do they go to mass together? Do they practice the Sacrament of Confession together? All of these things communicate to the child that the Christian life is a vital one and that it’s not simply a matter of ideas, but it’s also one of lively practice and celebration.”
(Jeanne Schindler, PhD.)



Sword of the Spirit

MALE, FEMALE AND CHILDREN: THE FIRST BLESSING OF GOD

Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.

*God created mankind in his image;
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. (Genesis 1:26-28)

GOD'S GIFT OF A HOME AND CHILDREN

*Unless the LORD build the house,
they labor in vain who build.*

*Certainly sons are a gift from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb, a reward.*

*Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons born in one's youth.*

Blessed is the man who has filled his quiver with them.

(Psalm 127:1a, 3-5a)

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Train the young in the way they should go;

Even when old, they will not swerve from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Children, obey your parents [in the Lord], for this is right. “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise, “that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4)



Call to Love

1. **Children are a gift: Learning in order to form ourselves and our children.**
 - a. Read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), sections 2373-2379, entitled “The gift of a child” as a couple or family, depending on the age of children. These topics touch on the important considerations regarding God’s gift of every human life.
 - b. In particular, the issue of in vitro fertilization and other violations of the dignity of human life in the area of infertility are discussed in section 2376-2377.

2. Add an **image or symbol of the Faith** to your home. Depending on what would be most needed or helpful in your home, add one or more of the following:

a. A Crucifix—the image of Jesus' passion and death for our salvation forms our understanding of love more than any other Catholic image we can display.

i. Some Catholics have a crucifix in each room of the house.

b. An Icon of the Holy Family—many beautiful versions exist. This image speaks the beauty of unity and family, as well as masculine, feminine, and child-like virtue without a word.



3. Invite a **priest or deacon to do a formal blessing of your home** from the Book of Blessings. The Church understands each Christian home to be “a domestic church”. This blessing provides a spiritual cleansing and dignifies every room of the home in a beautiful way. It is an important step in spiritually protecting your family.



a. If your home is already blessed, consider a **Consecration of your Family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**. This entails some special prayers and the installation of an image of the Sacred Heart somewhere prominent in your home. A priest or deacon can also help facilitate this special consecration.

Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group, and then pray the Prayer for the Family to close:

Prayer for the Family from St. John Paul II

*Lord God, from You every family in heaven
and on earth takes its name.*

Father, You are Love and Life.

*Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman,
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity,
grant that every family on earth may become*

for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

*Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions
of husbands and wives for the good of their families
and of all the families in the world.*

*Grant that the young may find in the family
solid support for their human dignity and
for their growth in truth and love.*

*Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of
the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all the
weakness and trials through which our families sometimes pass.*

*Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out*

her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.

*Through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.
Amen.*



The Holy Family, by Artist, Ruth A. Stricklin,

New Jerusalem Studios, Phoenix.

For reproductions please visit: www.njerusalemstudios.com

The compositional structure features two equilateral triangles in mirror image, giving the piece a clear center of gravity, and providing symbolic representation of the “two trinities” represented – the image of the Holy Family in the horizontal plane and the Divine Family of the Trinity depicted on the vertical plane, Father, Son, and Spirit.

Symbolic representations drawn from the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of the Knights of Columbus, can also be discerned. Likewise, St. Joseph’s garments symbolically evoke devotion to Mary (inner garment) and the Lion of Judah (outer garment), indicating his model as “most chaste spouse” of the Virgin and his descent from the royal line of David.



Notes

EPISODE 4: HEALING IN THE FAMILY

Opening Prayer

St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.



Understanding the Breach

- 1) This episode would be necessary even if we were in a deeply Christian, family-friendly society. The biggest wounds in family life come from sin. We hurt each other. We all have been hurt in our families growing up. This is a fundamental reality.
 - a. *If comfortable, share an experience of hurt from your family when you were growing up.*
 - b. *What has brought healing in your life from this hurt, or is it still quite present?*
 - c. *What was your experience of forgiveness in your family as a child. Was forgiveness offered and given regularly?*
- 2) Throughout the episode, a sharp contrast is drawn between the heart formed by the world and the heart forgiven and formed by Christ and His Church.
 - a. *Julie Alexander shares the painful moment where she and her husband announced their divorce, with “cold hearts” at the time, assuming counseling would be enough for their children. How does the issue of the “cold heart” strike you. Can you relate?*

b. For the Alexanders, and for the featured witness couple in this episode, the Conklins and their story of financial trouble and collapsing self-reliance, the way back to peace, and even to thriving marriages was faith, forgiveness, and knowing the teaching of the Church. Can you relate to such an encounter and conversion in your own life? How did you move from the experience of sin and brokenness to a place of healing? What specific things did you do or experience which allowed you to move forward?

3) An image of hope: In *Complete My Joy*, his document written to spouses and parents, Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted recounts an image from his time raised on a farm. “What is broken becomes stronger (than its original condition) once healed. I think of the broken equipment on our family farm, which after having been repaired by the welder’s torch, *was stronger in the place of welding than ever before, and would not break in the same place again.*”

a. Does this ring true for you? What is the implication for us as hurting and/or healed individuals and as families here?



Notes



Bricks for the Breach

“The family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love. This is why the family has been under attack because this is the bedrock where people are formed. Healthy people help heal and restore others. And this is what the family does is create this dynamic where you have people that can go out and heal and bring life to the world.” (Carrie Gress)

“When people ask me, What’s the number one thing that’s breaking marriages apart, I’d say it’s selfishness. And I also think there’s a lack of virtue in marriage and family life today, a lack of virtues like honesty, humility, courage, patience, perseverance – that when are practiced, make marriage and family life wonderful.” (Dr. Peter Kleponis)

“We were at the place of no hope and complete despair when we called our two kids in the room and told them we were going to divorce. They were huddled in the corner, crying their eyes out. Our hearts were so cold. I can remember thinking, ‘Oh, they’ll be fine. We’ll just send them to counseling.’” (Julie Alexander)

“When somebody is trying to overcome a habitual sin, or a vice, some practical things I would tell them is—number one, you didn’t get into this in a day, you’re not getting get out of this in a day. It’s probably going to be a struggle, a fight. Also, you cannot do it alone. You need grace. It’s hard to be good. If you don’t think that’s true, try being good. Then you realize, ‘Oh, this is not easy.’” (Fr. John Parks)

“(The) issue was financial. That was the start of it. But with that financial came me hiding it. Lying to my wife to cover up where we were financially. That was the crux that got it going. My whole thing was, ‘I can take care of this.’” (Bob Conklin)

“I didn’t understand why he had lied to me over and over again. And so, I got in the car and drove around the country roads screaming my head off, at God. At one point, I said, ‘What am I supposed to do with this?’ I heard a voice saying, ‘Go home and love your husband unconditionally.’ And I said, ‘You’re gonna have to do it through me.’ He was kneeling down in the room, and I knelt down, and we cried and cried. And I said, ‘I don’t understand any of this, but I’m not going anywhere.’” (Theresa Conklin)

“It’s not surprising that a lot of households struggle with addictions and compulsions, that a lot of households struggle with violence and hostility, that a lot of households struggle with depression and apathy, that they struggle with materialism and envy and ambition, that they struggle with insignificance because they lost sight. And the world is constantly trying to obscure to forfeit, to counterfeit, to replace, to diminish, to extinguish what the Church teaches.” (Fr. Mark Salas)

“So many of us, we didn’t come from the ideal families, we had brokenness in our own lives, there’s things like abuse and neglect, and all those things. They happen. But I think that’s the beautiful thing is that that’s not the last word in our lives.” (Carrie Gress)

“Forgiveness is critically important in life and especially in relationships, because without forgiveness, you cannot move forward. There are studies that show when people do not forgive, they suffer physically, spiritually, mentally. Forgiveness is releasing the other person who caused hurt and pain, and giving it all to God, surrendering it to Jesus Christ.” (Julie Alexander)

“I don’t think forgiveness is hard, so much as I think it’s impossible by our own power. We need grace to forgive. So, I would beg God to give me the grace to forgive.” (Fr. John Parks)

“God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us.”¹¹⁶ To receive his mercy, we must admit our faults. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1847)



Sword of the Spirit

Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

“If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you.” (Matthew 6:14)

Then Peter approaching asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.” (Matthew 18:21-22)



Call to Love

1. **Monthly confession as a family.** Consider beginning to go monthly to the sacrament of confession as a family. Set aside a time that works best and make the sacrifice to have sins completely removed through absolution and penance. Go together. When a child sees his parents in line, humbly and regularly, awaiting this sacramental moment of forgiveness, the lesson is clear: mom and dad have sinned too, and they are sorry; they and I need this healing and freedom from sin.
2. **Parents, demonstrate forgiveness and apology.** Consider adding an annual family ritual where, beginning with the father

and mother, the family asks for and receives forgiveness for the ways we may have hurt each other during the year. (This does not replace the need to forgive and ask forgiveness regularly but will emphasize mercy in a memorable way in the family.) Connect this ritual to a loved family meal. This is very powerful. Some ideas:

- a. On Holy Thursday, the day we remember Jesus defining leadership by humbling himself and washing the feet of his disciples, do the same. Begin with Dad, then Mom, then each of the older siblings. After washing a family member's feet, whisper words of honor and love as well as things for which you are sorry. Ask forgiveness. Play uplifting music in the background to keep conversations private. Forgive one another and head into the Passion and Resurrection of Christ with renewed relationships.
3. **If addictions, attachments or forms of mental or spiritual illness are presently crippling your family's ability to love, prioritize freedom from these obstacles.** Seek counsel and take appropriate and assertive steps to address the problem and heal.
 - a. These are areas which usually call for professional help, and appropriate means for addressing the problem can range from individual or couple counseling, to group accountability support, to full-on family intervention and hospitalization.
 - b. While non-Catholic professionals can certainly be helpful, those with faith have important insights and an awareness of the infinite grace and mercy of God, as well as the crucial grace provided by the Sacraments. Your parish staff, or Diocesan family life office should have recommendations for you on where to begin.

- c. Diocesan-approved Healing Masses offered at parishes may be available as well. These can be very powerful moments of experiencing Christ's healing.



Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group, and then pray the Prayer for the Family to close:

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Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,

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her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.*

Through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Amen.

Notes

EPISODE 5: CREATING A LEGACY OF FAITH

Opening Prayer

St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.



Understanding the Breach

- 1) Dr. Ray Guarendi reflects, “One of the most common things I see is parents who come into my office and their young adults have left the faith. Then the parents are saying, ‘What happened? We didn’t raise them this way.’ And I can say, ‘I believe you, but I believe you underestimated the forces that did.’”
 - a. *Have you even gone through a struggle with your faith? What led to this struggle?*
 - b. *What, if anything, in your childhood home (for cradle Catholics) reminded you of the goodness or beauty or truth of the Faith?*
 - c. *If you could go back to that time, what would you wish would have happened in your family to help you grow in your faith?*
- 2) Fr. John Parks captures the heart of this episode: “Children have often failed to listen to their elders, but they’ve never failed to imitate them. Children know what we love and what we value by how we spend our time.”

- a. *If how we spend our time is the clearest measure of what we love, what does my own self-assessment of how I use my time tell me about what I love right now?*
- b. *The average person in the West spends 5-6 hours per day on screens—not including computer work time. Obviously this means they are being formed by whatever worldview comes through the screen most of the time. How can we counter this tendency of the dominance of technology in our homes? What should the Christian pattern of life be, ideally, in contrast to this? What concrete, specific actions can you take to better order your time and that of your family?*

3) C.S. Lewis wrote something in *Mere Christianity* that corresponds to this episode: “If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles...the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark upon Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. Aim at Heaven and you get Earth thrown in. Aim at Earth, and you will get neither.”

- a. *When it comes to our marriages, how can we prioritize focus on Heaven above all? Be specific.*
- b. *In our homes...?*
- c. *When raising our children, supporting our adult children and grandchildren...?*

Notes



Bricks for the Breach

“How do I raise my kids in this apostolic age in which the society and the world aren’t Christian? How do I do that? Well, the first thing is by loving our kids, it’s by your love. (Your witness for your children communicates that) God loves you and God wants us to live a moral life because he loves us so much. No matter what the world promises, it can’t deliver on love.” (Dr. Tim Gray)

“The moment children see their parents compromise on the Catholic faith, they learn that the Catholic faith is not the highest priority. So, it is very important that the parents are fully committed.” (Fr. John Lankeit)

“So prayer time, with the family specifically, is quite difficult. We do try to make it a daily habit and this is probably the most tiring and high impact moment of my day. I can’t say that it is ever peaceful or that there’s very much serenity at all. It is a power-through moment: it is a building habits moment.” (Jack Calcutt)

“Primary for our family, living as a Catholic family is the sacraments. We want our kids to cling to them, we want them to be in the habit of seeking them. And so, building the habits of monthly reconciliation, frequent reception of the Eucharist, always on Sundays, but hopefully throughout the week, clinging to the sacraments is an important thing that we want to model and habituate in our kids.” (Katie Scarlett Calcutt)

“There have been times when we have been more dependent on screens than we wanted, and we’ve had to pull it back. It requires really diving in as parents. So if someone wanted to wean their kid off of the dependence on an iPad or a parent wanted to wean themselves off of their kid on an iPad, my first suggestion would be

to give them other options. Most kids aren't so far gone that they won't still love or prefer to kick a ball with you, read a book with you, tell you about their day, paint a picture, do a question and answer session." (Katie Scarlett Calcutt)

"When I was a Navy Jag, I worked with a lot of young sailors who made poor choices and got into trouble. And in my experience, almost all of them lacked a strong father figure in their lives. Research shows that a father's practice of his faith is among the most important factors, if not the most important, in his children staying Catholic. That means as fathers, we cannot be bystanders. We need to be fully engaged in the faith lives of our children." (Patrick Kelly)

"So, parents have to be the primary storytellers to their children of the gospel. Which means I need to know the gospel. So, to awaken a child's imagination to the fact that God created you to be great and then you just expose children, whether it's through biblical or Christian or non, just secular stories of people who've done great things. They go, 'Oh, I want to be great, too.'" (Fr. John Riccardo)

"(To build a legacy of family life and love, prioritize) doing things together, having rituals within your family that honor God, making sure that you're having prayer before meals, prayer after meals, making sure that you have nighttime prayer, making sure that you attend Mass together, making sure that you attend confession together, making sure that as a family you go out and you enjoy the company of other families who are also trying to live out their faith. (Monique Ruberu, M.D.)



Sword of the Spirit

LOVE OVER ALL

Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor. 13:4-13)

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD

If it is displeasing to you to serve the LORD, choose today whom you will serve, the gods your ancestors served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. (Joshua 24:15)



Call to Love

1. **Imagine your personal legacy of love.** Spend time writing your thoughts down after this episode, or the entire series. Here are two prompts that can be helpful:
 - a. Imagine your funeral, taking time to feel the finality of the situation (as to your time on earth). As your spouse and each of your children rise to say a word about your influence as husband and father, or wife and mother, what would you want them to say? Imagine they say exactly that:

- i. About your spousal care and love for your wife or husband.
- ii. About your relationship with God.
- iii. About your presence in your home.
- iv. About your home itself.
- v. About how you treated each of them personally.
- vi. About how your heart overflowed into service of neighbor.

b. In the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, ask him to help you take practical steps to prioritize prayer, care for your spouse, love for your children, and service to neighbor



and community. Ask the Holy Spirit to move in you and your marriage anew, and through your love, to in some way “renew the face of the earth.”

c. Set a few simple goals that will move the needle.

- i. A prayer goal
- ii. A goal of loving your spouse practically
- iii. A goal for loving each child
- iv. A goal for service to neighbor

2. **Seek out and commit to a small group of couple-friends** who will meet regularly for prayer, fellowship and formation to continue this growth.

Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group, and then pray the Prayer for the Family to close:

Prayer for the Family from St. John Paul II

*Lord God, from You every family in heaven
and on earth takes its name.*

Father, You are Love and Life.

*Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman,
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity,
grant that every family on earth may become
for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.*

*Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions
of husbands and wives for the good of their families
and of all the families in the world.*

*Grant that the young may find in the family
solid support for their human dignity and
for their growth in truth and love.*

*Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of
the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all the
weakness and trials through which our families sometimes pass.*

*Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out*

her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.

Through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Amen.

Notes

Catholic Information Service

Since its founding, the Knights of Columbus has been involved in evangelization. In 1948, the Knights started Catholic Information Service (CIS) in response to blatant anti-Catholic bias in other religious media in order to educate non-Catholics about the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. Over time, this outreach has expanded to include publications for parishes, schools, retreat houses, military installations, correctional facilities, legislatures, the medical community and any individual who requests them.

For more than 75 years, CIS has printed millions of booklets in multiple media formats and enrolled more than 100,000 students in our courses, all in an effort to preach Jesus Christ to the world.

For more information, and for excellent ongoing discussion and study resources, visit kofc.org/cis.

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