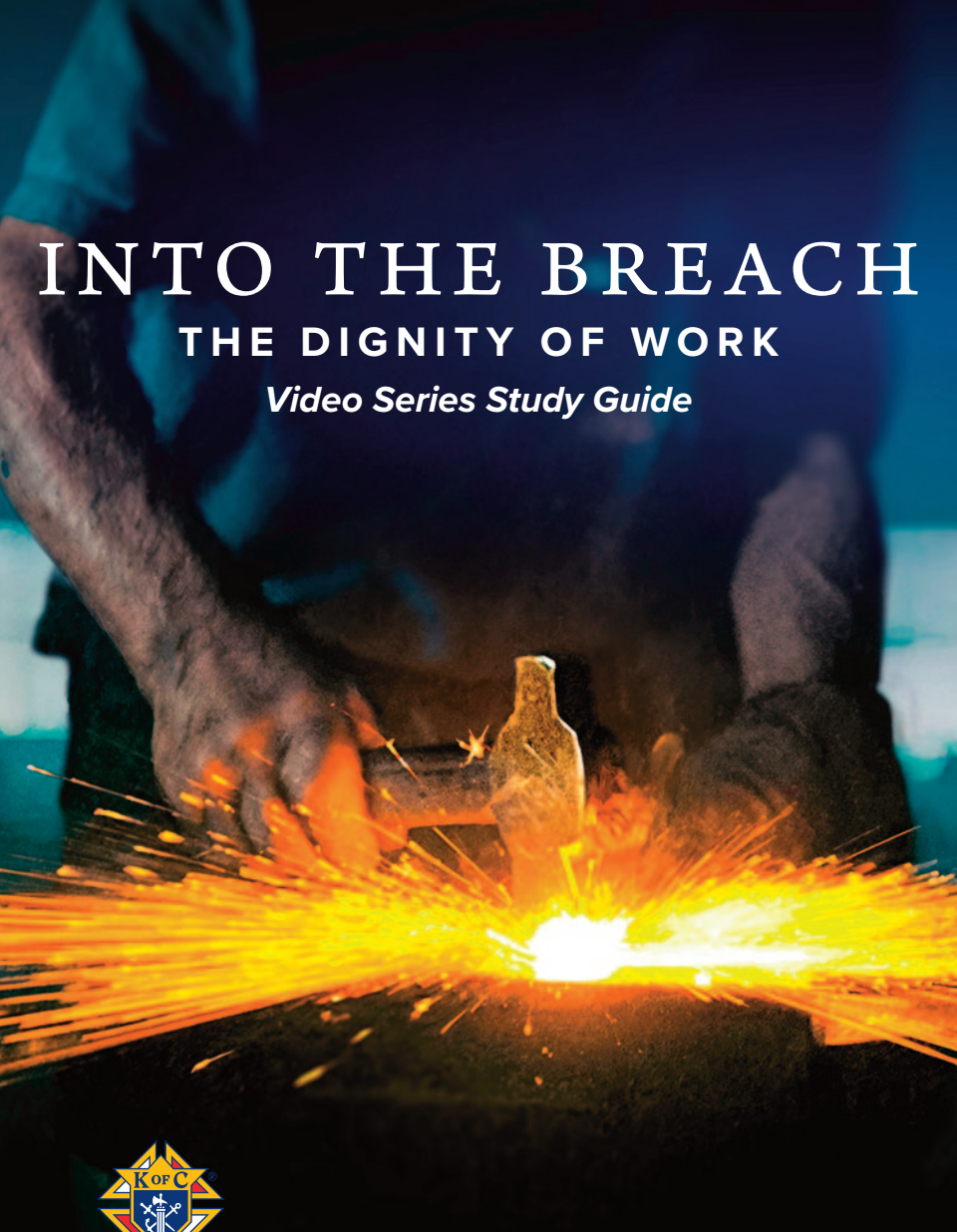


INTO THE BREACH

THE DIGNITY OF WORK

Video Series Study Guide



Faith in Action

Faith

Into the Breach:

The Dignity of Work

Video Series Study Guide

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INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

Introduction

“The word of God’s revelation is profoundly marked by the fundamental truth that man, created in the image of God, shares by his work in the activity of the Creator...”

St. John Paul II

In the Book of Genesis, God gives mankind the command to “fill the earth and subdue it,” to guard and care for his Creation (1:28). From this command comes man’s vocation to work, which is fundamental to his identity.

But there are many misconceptions about what work is, what it is for, or even if it is a good or an evil. For the Catholic man, work is much more than the narrow – and often contradictory – vision contemporary society often provides.

In St. Joseph, we find an exemplar of a man fully living the Catholic vision of work. He was a *tekton*, which is traditionally translated to carpentry, but may also suggest construction. Out of all the men in the history of humanity, God chose this humble worker to be foster father to his incarnate Son.

Descended from the House of David, Joseph did not live in an opulent palace but in the town of Nazareth, in Galilee, a backwater part of the Roman province of Judaea, a descendant of royalty living among a conquered people. Though there is no recorded word of his in the Bible, he provides a silent witness of a husband and father who promptly responded to the will of God communicated to him by angels. When an angel told him in a dream that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, Joseph accepted Mary as his wife and Jesus like

his own son. When an angel warned Joseph to take the Holy Family and flee to Egypt, to escape the murderous wrath of King Herod, Joseph did so, courageously risking his own life to protect the Blessed Mother and the young Christ. And when an angel told Joseph that Herod was dead and they could return from Egypt, Joseph again responded with a humble and devout “yes.” He was no weakling or pushover, but a man capable of protecting his family from threats and providing for their welfare.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, the long-awaited and prophesied savior of Israel, did not avoid work, but instead humbled himself, learning the carpentry trade under the apprenticeship of St. Joseph in their home in Nazareth – a place filled with love and joy and a daily acceptance of honest labor.

The universal Church honors St. Joseph under his title “the Worker” every May 1st. Stepping into the breach, we model ourselves after him who, as St. Paul VI reminds us, “turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities.” Every man can turn to St. Joseph as an inspiration and for intercession at the start of each day.

The five-episode video series *Into the Breach: The Dignity of Work* explores the Catholic vision for work and its role in a man’s life. It looks at the nature of what work is and how it helps sanctify us and shape us into the men God created us to be. It examines how work supports the family and orders the world around us. Lastly, the series delves into the true nature of rest and leisure and how it relates to work.

This study guide is a companion to the series. Each chapter in this guide corresponds to an episode in the series and is meant to aid a group discussion. The guide can also be used for individual reflection.

We hope that this study will help men better understand God's vision for their work and how through their various roles they build up the Kingdom of God as disciples of Jesus Christ on earth.

How to Use this Study Guide

Though the episodes of this series can be viewed individually, they should ideally be viewed with a small group who subsequently reflects on the episode and discusses the themes.

This study guide is intended to help facilitate reflection and discussion on the themes of the episodes. Although principally designed to be used in *Cor* – the Knights of Columbus' flexible framework of prayer, formation, and fraternity that helps focus men on Jesus through building Christ-centered brotherhood – all Catholic men in any setting can utilize this study guide. To learn more about *Cor*, visit kofc.org/cor.

The episodes and study guide have been developed for maximum flexibility of use: they can be viewed and discussed in any order, and over a number of sessions a group might choose to go through all five episodes, a couple, or even only one.

Before beginning a small group discussion, a discussion leader 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 eight people, though larger groups can work if needed. Each session should be around one hour.

Each episode has a study guide chapter with several segments to help guide the discussion.

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 step into the breach more effectively. The most successful discussion sessions will include the following segments in this order:

Opening Prayer

Begin each discussion with the prayer to St. Joseph the Worker, asking for his intercession. Follow with a few moments of silent recollection, preparing your hearts and minds to receive what God wishes to communicate to you in the session.

Introductions

Start with introductions before you watch the episode, even if everyone in the small group knows each other. The purpose of an introduction is not only to make sure everyone in the group knows each other, but 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:

- In the history of your work, which boss made the most positive impact on you? How did they do that?
- What was your first job? In what ways – either personal or career – do you continue to use skills learned in that role?
- What was your favorite job, and why? Was it because of the value that you created, your coworkers, or some other aspect?
- If you won the lottery, and no longer had to work out of financial need, how would you spend your time?

Into the Breach: The Dignity of Work Videos

View the episode for the session as a group. All episodes in the series are available to both stream and download at kofc.org/intothebreach.

Understanding the Breach

Discuss the episode using the questions in this section. Most of your discussion time should be spent 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. 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 episodes that provide solid guidance or encouragement—a “brick”—for understanding or repairing the breach in how we view work. 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 prayer and either group discussion or individual contemplation.

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 Battle

The “Call to Battle” section contains challenges that offer practical goals and suggestions for participants to implement changes in their lives 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 Battle.”

Remind participants that they need not take on every challenge or take one all at once. Even small shifts can build habits that bear great fruit over time!

Start every “Call to Battle” 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. Pick one or more of those challenges and make a commitment to do it individually or as a group.

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 St. Michael Prayer, a powerful prayer perfectly suited to prepare men for the spiritual warfare we all face.

How to Lead a Small Group Session

A small group session is an opportunity for a group 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 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, you are not asked to teach but to make sure the conversation stays focused and respectful and includes all participants.

A small group is successful when there is meaningful discussion that helps people connect with each other and apply the concepts and themes to their daily life. You do not have to cover 100 percent of the material or questions. This guide provides a framework for you to build upon that best meets the needs of the group 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 reading/video ahead of the session to familiarize yourself with the content.

Bring pens and paper. Consider providing paper and writing implements for the participants.

Ask questions that invite the 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 people 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, and clarify. Together with listening skills, use these techniques to ensure each contribution to the discussion is heard and understood. Sometimes, rephrasing a participant's idea to a sentence or two will help others in the room understand his or her contribution. Occasionally summarizing the course of the discussion will also help ensure that everyone processes what has been said as a group and encourages 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 as inclined to share.

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

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

Keep emotional discipline and mediate conflict. 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 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 outside the group setting. Most importantly, remember that it is best to reach out to your pastor for help in an uncomfortable situation.

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 members of the small group another opportunity to develop their faith. An invitation is especially important following your last small group.

GOD'S MISSION FOR MAN

Opening Prayer

Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker

O Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in a spirit of penance for the expiation of my many sins; to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations; to work with thankfulness and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, never shrinking from weariness and trials; to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, keeping unceasingly before my eyes death and the account that I must give of time lost, talents unused, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God.

*All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thine example,
O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life
and in death. Amen. (Often attributed to Pope St. Pius X)*

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.

Understanding the Breach

- 1) Many people think of work as their job or something they do to make money. In this episode, Dr. Benjamin Akers defines work as “any human activity that builds up the common good and respects human dignity. And so work includes more than just labor, things that we work for to earn a living. Work can include studying. It can include volunteering. It can include work at home, caregiving.”

a. How does this expanded definition challenge or change your understanding of work?

- b. Are there any forms of work that you do in your own life, such as volunteering or caring for a family member that you find particularly meaningful? Why do you find this type of work meaningful?*
- 2) Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly states, “When we work, we participate in the act of creation itself and really become co-creators with God. In the Book of Genesis, we hear that we’re made in the image and likeness of God. And it’s through work that we participate in God’s plan in a unique way. We’re called to subdue the earth, and when we do that through work, we are imitating God himself.”
- a. In what ways does man imitate God by working?*
- b. How can you better imitate God in your work?*
- c. What do you think it means to be a “co-creator” with God?*
- 3) In the episode, Jesse Straight shares the joys and challenges operating a farm while raising eight kids alongside his wife.
- a. How does Straight’s Catholic identity shape how he runs his farm and his servant leadership as both as a husband and father? What lessons can you learn from his example?*
- b. Straight argues that our current culture devalues physical labor, saying, “In contemporary culture, physical work is looked down upon. We do everything we can in our culture to avoid physical work, and you’re successful if you have avoided physical work.” How have you witnessed this cultural mentality in your own life? How can we cultivate a better understanding of physical work and integrate that renewed understanding into our own lives?*
- c. Speaking of stewardship and charity, Straight says that “work is collaborating with God’s world to take care of each other and to take care of the things we’ve been given.” How does*

he live out this belief? What about you? If you think there is room for improvement, how could you do better?

- 4) In the episode, Fr. Dominic Couturier says that in our present culture “work is sometimes looked upon as something that needs to be avoided, something that’s a burden, something that needs to be done away with. That’s not what Jesus Christ wants us to do. Jesus Christ wants us to understand that work is sanctifying, that work is holy, that work brings order to chaos, that work brings family together, [as well as] community, society, [and] culture.”
- a. How do you view work? Do you see it as only a burden or necessary evil? If you didn’t have to work at all, would that make your life better or worse? How so?*
 - b. What are some positive impacts on your life, the life of your family, or the life of your community that you believe are the results of your work?*
 - c. While work is good, after the Fall, man’s relationship with work changed. Work became laborious and sometimes painful. How can you strive to see the good in work while also dealing with the reality that it can also cause us to suffer?*
- 5) “If you feel trapped in a cycle of stress and overwork, my advice would be to refocus, to recenter your life on Christ,” argues Dr. Grazie Pozo Christie. “We are doing too many things, chasing too many dreams at once. It’s important to take periodic stops to reflect and look at our lives in the big picture.”
- a. What helps you see the “big picture” in your life? What are some ways that you can slow down, get away, and draw closer to God?*
 - b. Have you experienced “hustle culture” in your own life? How has it negatively impacted your life, work, or family? Are there*

any ways you can combat hustle culture to have a more balanced work life but still be successful?

- 6) David Michael Phelps exhorts us, “Whatever work you’re doing, what is our Lord doing here and now? And am I available to you, Lord? If you can put your eyes and habits on those two questions and really mean it, then you will find not the work that God wants you to do, so much as the work that he’s doing and he’s inviting you into.”

a. What work do you see God doing in your life?

b. Are you available to the Lord to do the work he is inviting you into? How can you be more receptive to doing the work the Lord is asking of you?

Bricks for the Breach

Work is essentially human. It’s a way in which man both exercises a certain care for himself, his family, [and] his community, but it always involves also a relationship to the Creator. Work involves man finding his place in the created order, receiving the things of creation, and through his own effort, offering creation back to God. (Dr. Nicholas Healy)

In contemporary culture, physical work is looked down upon. We do everything we can in our culture to avoid physical work, and you’re successful if you have avoided physical work. God created me as a human being. That includes having a body, and so for me to be connected to the reality of things and to fulfill my nature, I can use this body to do good work and to enjoy the pleasures of fresh air and a breeze and wildlife. (Jesse Straight)

Workaholism. We live in this kind of major hustle culture right now, where I don’t sleep, I only work. I always think about *Memento Mori*,

like in the end, is it going to matter that you're a billionaire? Probably not. We don't want to get lost in the idea that the only thing that brings me value is work. (Dr. Jared Zimmerer)

Sword of the Spirit

FROM THE BEGINNING, GOD GAVE MAN THE MISSION TO WORK

The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it. (Genesis 2:15)

THE FALL'S TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES ON THE NATURE OF WORK

To the man he said: Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, you shall not eat from it, cursed is the ground because of you! In toil you shall eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bear for you, and you shall eat the grass of the field. By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:17-19)

MAY GOD MAKE OUR WORK FRUITFUL

Fill us at daybreak with your mercy, that all our days we may sing for joy. ... Show your deeds to your servants, your glory to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God be ours. Prosper the work of our hands! Prosper the work of our hands! (Psalm 90:14, 16-17)

Call to Battle

1. **Pray a Holy Hour.** Complete a Holy Hour of intentional prayer dedicated to discerning how God is speaking to you through your current work – at home and in your career. During this special time of prayer, ask yourself: How is the Lord present in my work right now, and what is he calling me to do? What does he desire

to accomplish through me? What is one action point I can implement during the week ahead?

2. **See God's presence in your work.** Prayerfully list the ways in which you see God present in your career and family. Perhaps it's a supportive co-worker who helps you get through the day. Maybe it's accomplishing a task that makes you feel like you've made a difference. Or maybe it's hearing your children's laughter as you play with them after a long day on the job. Seeing God in these seemingly small things can help us stay grateful and keep the faith on challenging days.
3. **Meditate on Sacred Scripture.** Read the full account of the Creation of mankind and the origin of work in Genesis 1:26-31 and Chapter 2. As you read, consider the episode and the conversation you had during this session.

Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group and conclude with the Prayer to St. Michael.

Prayer to St. Michael

*St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.
Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou,
O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.*

[illegible]

WORK AND HOLINESS

Opening Prayer

Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker

O Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in a spirit of penance for the expiation of my many sins; to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations; to work with thankfulness and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, never shrinking from weariness and trials; to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, keeping unceasingly before my eyes death and the account that I must give of time lost, talents unused, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God.

*All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thine example,
O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life
and in death. Amen. (Often attributed to Pope St. Pius X)*

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.

Understanding the Breach

- 1) Through our work, we not only shape the world around us – we shape ourselves. One way is by growing in holiness and virtue. As Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly states in the episode, this can be accomplished by offering our labor to God: “We can sanctify our work if we approach every task — large and small — with the idea that this task has been given to me by God. And we do that task for his greater glory — *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*. This is what so many saints have done — and this is how we should approach our work, too.”

- a. *How can you invite God into your daily tasks and responsibilities, from the most challenging or uncomfortable to the easiest or seemingly least significant?*
 - b. *What does it mean to offer your work for the greater glory of God? What are some ways you can do this?*
 - c. *How do you think the way you approach your work can help you grow in holiness?*
- 2) David Michael Phelps says, “I’ll tell my students sometimes, I’ll say, ‘If a mason is building a wall and he builds a lousy wall, what did he just build?’ And at this point in the talk, they always say, ‘well, he built a lousy wall.’ And I say, ‘No, you’re wrong. He built a lousy mason. That’s what he built. Our actions make us who we are.’”
- a. *How has your work life changed you as a person? How would you be different if you chose another different line of work or did not work at all?*
 - b. *How does our approach to work change when we see it as a path towards self-improvement and growing in holiness? What are some virtues that you have developed through your work (such as punctuality, the ability to focus, or the pursuit of excellence)? How did you go about developing these positive habits, especially those that were the most difficult?*
 - c. *On the flip side, what are vices or bad habits that you have struggled with in your work? How have you sought to combat these bad habits?*
 - d. *Consider what you would do if you were asked to do something in your job you believed to be morally wrong. How would you handle that situation? How can you prepare yourself now to handle this challenge if you encounter it in the future?*

- 3) In the episode, Col. (Dr.) Edward M. Lopez describes the role that God and his Catholic faith have played in his work as a doctor serving in the military.
- a. How did Dr. Lopez turn disappointment at not becoming an Air Force pilot into a successful military career as a medical doctor? How have you or someone you know turned a disappointing situation into an opportunity for something new, perhaps even something better?*
 - b. Dr. Lopez struggled to adjust to life at home after his deployment. He recalls, "I had to pray to [put] God in the center. And when that happened, it totally woke me up. I refocused on him and not all the other things going around me." How can you put God at the center of your life and your work? How do you see past all the possible distractions and keep God as your focus? How can focusing on God help you be happy and successful in your life and work?*
- 4) Knights of Columbus Supreme Master Michael McCusker states, "All of us, at times, have had jobs that we did not desire, and we were disappointed with where we were in life. The one thing that's absolutely true is that others are going to notice how you respond. If you embrace the disappointment, if you live your life in such a way that you make others miserable because you're miserable, then you'll reap the benefits. On the other hand, if you're willing to roll up your sleeves and get to work, even if it's not what you thought you were going to do with your life, others are going to notice that, too."
- a. What is a difficult situation you experienced in your work where you reacted poorly (for example, by complaining, lashing out, or giving up)? What would have been a more virtuous and noble reaction in those situations? What sort of reaction would you admire in others if you saw them in a similar situation?*

b. How can you seek to improve how you deal with difficult or disappointing situations in the future?

- 5) Dr. Kent Lasnoski states, Jesus “teaches us that work is often hidden, and in that hiddenness, there is still dignity. Our Lord saw fit to hide his goodness for many years in a shop, doing humble labor. One thing that Christ shows us through his work as a carpenter is that work is redemptive.”

a. How does Jesus Christ provide the premier example of the faithful worker, especially one who completes his tasks and responsibilities without concern for notice or praise?

b. How can work be redemptive, not just Jesus’ work but ours as well?

- 6) David Michael Phelps explains, “The working man par excellence is Jesus Christ himself. If you really want to think about how to form a worker, the first thing you have to understand is that you’re not the hero of the story, that the worker is not the hero of the story. Human work is about the restoration and participation of the restoration of all things in Jesus Christ. The hero is Jesus Christ. He’s the worker. We are his apprentices.”

a. How is Jesus Christ the ultimate master craftsman? How are we his apprentices?

b. One of the key tasks of an apprentice is to imitate the master. How can you imitate Christ in how you work?

c. How does Jesus Christ “teach us the trade” of holiness?

Bricks for the Breach

St. John Paul the Second ... [one of his] central insights is his contention that man is not for work. Work is for man. We need to break outside of the narrow version of work as we tend to understand it as modern people and get back to the essential core of what work is

and how it contributes, not only to God's work in the creation redemption of the world, but in our own formation as human persons. (David Michael Phelps)

Work sanctifies us, because it is in work, when done excellently, when done cheerfully, when done out of love and in service to others, that we participate in God's work of creation, working with him to make something beautiful of the world, to make something beautiful of ourselves. (Dr. Grazie Pozo Christie)

I think self-reliance is a trap. We have to rely on the strength that comes from God, and that requires a deep prayer life. I can't do this alone. I have to rely on God. (Benjamin O'Brien)

Sword of the Spirit

DO EVERYTHING FOR GOD

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

PLACE GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR WORK

Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others. (Colossians 3:23)

OUR SALVATION REQUIRES OUR EFFORT

So then, my beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:12)

Call to Battle

1. **Get rid of bad habits and build virtue.** Identify at least one bad habit at your professional work and identify the good habit that

you wish to replace it with. Write down specific, concrete, and actionable things you can do to achieve this. Additionally, dedicate at least five to ten minutes each day, for one month, to intentionally pray about growing in this virtue. Some examples of bad habits at work could include complaining, cutting corners, talking disrespectfully about coworkers, using others negatively to get ahead, etc.

2. **Complete an act of service.** Go out of your way this week to do an act of service that benefits someone in your community or your local parish. Look to the Corporal or Spiritual Works of Mercy for inspiration. Remember what Dr. Lasnoski says about the hidden dignity of small tasks without the desire for notice or praise. Your act of service doesn't need to be flashy for it to make a difference in someone's life. If you have children, invite them to participate with you.
3. **Go to confession monthly.** One great way to grow in holiness is by frequently receiving the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Jesus calls upon all men to repent and amend their lives. The powerful grace of this sacrament provides us with the grace to overcome our spiritual struggles and to build virtue. Prepare for confession using the Knights' "Guide to Confession" available online through Catholic Information Service, taking special note of your work.

Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group and conclude with the Prayer to St. Michael.

Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou,

O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God,

cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits,

who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WORK LIFE AND FAMILY LIFE

Opening Prayer

Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker

O Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in a spirit of penance for the expiation of my many sins; to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations; to work with thankfulness and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, never shrinking from weariness and trials; to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, keeping unceasingly before my eyes death and the account that I must give of time lost, talents unused, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God.

*All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thine example,
O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life
and in death. Amen. (Often attributed to Pope St. Pius X)*

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.

Understanding the Breach

- 1) “Work isn’t just our job that we do nine to five,” says Dr. Tim Gray. “Work is something that we do for others. [Work] relates to my job, but it also relates to my family and my vocation.” In other words, our work isn’t only our career. On the contrary, the most important work we do – living out our vocational calling – occurs especially when we are at home among our loved ones.
 - a. *How does your understanding of work compare with Dr. Gray’s? If it is different, does Dr. Gray’s definition change your understanding about the nature of work?*

- b. *Dr. Grazie Pozo Christie warns that being “selfishly attached to our own professional interests can have terrible consequences for our family.” How can you fight the temptation to prioritize career over family? If this is something you currently struggle with, what steps can you take to tangibly place your family at the center of your work?*
 - c. *“The family is a school of work in which we learn how to put our nose to the grindstone, how to endure things that we would prefer not to,” says Dr. Michael Hanby. What sort of example do you set for your children in how you do your work? What are you teaching them about work in how you work?*
 - d. *Beyond your personal example, what are some ways you can help your children become good workers?*
- 2) In the episode, Damien O’Connor explains how he made significant changes in his career to meet the needs of his wife and children. When two of his children were diagnosed with autism, he left a fulfilling teaching job for the construction industry since it provided greater flexibility and financial stability.
- a. *How have you faced sacrifices for your family? Have you ever found yourself doing something in your work you didn’t want to do for the sake of your family? How do you avoid “burn out” while caring for the needs of your spouse or family?*
 - b. *“Everything’s not sunshine and rainbows all the time,” states O’Connor. “There’s moments of grace, but you have to be a person of prayer to be able to see where God is working.” What has been your experience with prayer when facing a tough work-related decision or situation? Do you naturally turn to God in prayer?*
- 3) Mike Sweeney explains, “Whenever I make a decision on work, my relationship with God needs to always come first, followed by

my relationship with my wife and my children, and then my work. So, when rightly ordered, your work is not in a tug of war with your family. Whenever your work is destroying your family, hit the pause button and figure out if that's what you're called to do."

- a. *Have you felt this "tug of war" between your work and your family?*
 - b. *What modern pressures and dilemmas do men often face concerning work and family?*
 - c. *What can you do to better order your work life and family life?*
- 4) Katie McGrady says, "You can't have it all. You won't have it all, but you can pursue what is good and pleasing and perfect to the Lord. And that requires choices, that requires balance, that requires I'm going to say 'yes' to this, I'm going to say 'no' to that."
- a. *To pursue what is pleasing to God, what are the things you should be prioritizing in your work and in your family? What are some things you may have to say "no" to so you can prioritize what is most important?*
 - b. *In your experience, what about contemporary work culture and society – or your own individual situation – makes it challenging to find the right balance? If you feel that you have found success finding a balance, how would you advise others who are struggling to find it?*
- 5) Dr. Benjamin Akers highlights the importance of St. Joseph as a model for all fathers, husbands, and workers. "Do I think St. Joseph was a good carpenter? Yes, absolutely. But before we're introduced to Joseph and what he did, what his trade was, we're introduced to Joseph as who he was. Scripture tells us that Joseph was a 'just man.' God chose Joseph to teach Jesus what the model of a man would look like..."
- a. *Why do you think St. Joseph is called St. Joseph the Worker?*

- b. What sort of work did St. Joseph do for the Holy Family?*
- c. What lessons does St. Joseph's work hold for us in our lives?*

Bricks for the Breach

We need to put food on the table and provide for our families. And for many people that can be a struggle. There's great beauty in that sacrifice. We can take a great comfort, great satisfaction, in knowing that we're doing God's work, even if it's in work that we may not particularly enjoy. (Benjamin O'Brien)

Prayer and spiritual discernment should be the central, or the foundational point at which to start making important decisions about the family, especially decisions that involve certain trade offs between professional ambition or professional goals and the needs of the family. If we start with prayer being always connected to God's grace then we will be able to make the right decisions for our families. (Dr. Grazie Pozo Christie)

It's very important, especially when one is a member of a family, to remember that nobody in the family can flourish by themselves. Everyone has to flourish together. (Dr. Grazie Pozo Christie)

We as human persons learn first how to grow in the virtues that are required to work in life in our family with little kids, where they learn to do chores and help take out the garbage or help cut the grass. Whatever they do, all that work, they're learning that I have to contribute, and that I get to contribute. I get to be part of that work. Sometimes it's easier to not let your kids work, but to work with them and help them grow, and they mature as human persons who can give back. (Dr. Tim Gray)

Sword of the Spirit

GOD BLESSES OUR COMMITMENT

Entrust your works to the LORD, and your plans will succeed.
(Proverbs 16:3)

WITH GOD WE CAN DO ANYTHING

I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.
(Philippians 4:13)

GOD WILL BLESS OUR FAMILIES

Blessed are all who fear the LORD, and who walk in his ways. What your hands provide you will enjoy; you will be blessed and prosper: your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your home, your children like young olive plants around your table. Just so will the man be blessed who fears the LORD. (Psalm 128:1-4)

Call to Battle

1. **Pray a weekly Couple or Family Rosary.** On at least one consistent day each week that works for your family's schedule, pray the Rosary as a couple or as an entire family. Pray that your family places God at the center of work and school, and that each member makes it a priority to grow and to encourage each other to grow in holiness. If a full Rosary seems too much to ask with younger children, begin with a decade together.
2. **Fast one day this week for your family.** Choose one day this week to have only one full meal and two smaller meals that combined don't equal one regular meal. Offer up the discomfort for your family members. If desired, consider a more intense fast such as bread and water only.
3. **Make St. Joseph your friend.** Read about St. Joseph in the Gospels, especially Matthew, Chapters 1-2, and Luke, Chapters

1-2. Consider what you can learn from his example. Ask for his intercession during the day, especially during moments of stress, like facing a difficult client or when stuck in traffic. Perhaps pray the Memorare to St. Joseph on your way to and from work: *Remember, O most chaste spouse of the Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who implored your help or sought your intercession was left unassisted. Full of confidence in your power, I fly unto you and beg your protection. Despise not, O Guardian of the Redeemer, my humble supplication, but in your bounty, hear and answer me. Amen.*

Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group and conclude with the Prayer to St. Michael.

Prayer to St. Michael

*St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.
Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou,
O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.*

[illegible]

WORK AND THE WORLD

Opening Prayer

Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker

O Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in a spirit of penance for the expiation of my many sins; to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations; to work with thankfulness and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, never shrinking from weariness and trials; to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, keeping unceasingly before my eyes death and the account that I must give of time lost, talents unused, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God.

*All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thine example,
O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life
and in death. Amen. (Often attributed to Pope St. Pius X)*

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.

Understanding the Breach

- 1) Dr. Kent Lasnoski states that “Pope St John Paul II define[s] work as anything man does to earn his daily bread, to extend man’s dominion over God’s kingdom, and finally, to elevate the culture, to make it closer, in connection to God, and so anything we do in our work ought to contribute to all three of these things.”
 - a. *How does your work contribute to these three domains? How does your work contribute to your community and larger society, even in a small way?*

- b. Through our work – in our careers and families – we can have an impact that lasts generations. How have you benefited from the work that others did who came before you? What lessons can you take from their example?*
- 2) Dr. Jared Zimmerer explains, “Young men are opting out and disengaging for, I think, several reasons, but I think in general, what’s happening is men are feeling marginalized from the norms of society and feeling they don’t quite have a place. It’s a loss to the world whenever someone doesn’t provide their talents; all of us are called to go out and be the light of Christ in the world by providing our talents.”
- a. In today’s economy, many men are increasingly disengaging from work because they don’t find their work to be meaningful or they find their career aspirations thwarted by circumstances. Have you experienced this reality in your own life or seen it in others you know?*
- b. How can uniting your work frustrations to Christ help you persevere with challenging or disappointing work circumstances?*
- c. How can you be “the light of Christ in the world” to support and encourage other men, especially those who feel separated from society?*
- 3) Dr. Joseph McNerney defines the virtues of magnanimity and humility. He calls **magnanimity** the “ability to recognize our God-given talents and then do great things on the basis of that recognition.” In turn, **humility** “prevents us from saying, ‘Woe is me,’ because frankly, a lot of times we have very difficult work, and we have tedious work, and we have work that’s a drudgery.” And humility tells us, “‘This is not about me, this is about my mission, this is about the task at hand, this is about helping other

people.' It's humility that enables us to focus on things outside of ourselves."

- a. How can we strive for greatness in our work? What does striving for greatness look like in work that may be seen as more ordinary or even menial in the eyes of the world?*
- b. Have you struggled with the virtue of humility in your work? How can you seek to better practice this video in your daily work tasks?*

4) Luke Bourgault shares his experiences as a fire fighter, from his initial call to serve his community to the devastating 2025 Los Angeles wildfires.

- a. As a firefighter, Bourgault's work can have a dramatic impact on his community. How does your work impact your community in ways large or small?*
- b. Bourgault talks about his experience of brotherhood in his job. Have you experienced brotherhood in your job or volunteer work? What does that brotherhood mean to you?*
- c. How does your career rely on the excellence of other workers? How does your job suffer when others fail to perform their duties well?*

5) Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* established modern Catholic social doctrine in response to the Industrial Revolution, touching on subjects such as the right to a just wage. Today, his successor Pope Leo XIV has expressed concerns about the potential impact of artificial intelligence (AI).

- a. If you have been in the workforce for a number of years, how have you seen technology in the workplace change? How has it changed how you work?*

- b. What is the impact of technology in your work? How do you see this impact as positive? How do you see it as negative?*
- c. Are there any steps you can take in your work to try and ensure technology supports rather than undermines the dignity of the individual?*

Bricks for the Breach

We work for ourselves and our families, but not only for ourselves and our families. Our work also impacts our neighbors and society; it contributes to the right ordering of the world — and in all these ways we help build up God’s kingdom on earth. Yes, we work to earn a living, but our work also contributes to the common good — and that’s God’s beautiful plan for work. (Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly)

There’s no job that is too small or too insignificant, because all the small things add up to great things. ... If I don’t do my job well and I’m sloppy and it’s bad, it has an impact on others, and that impact can snowball (Dr. Tim Gray)

The refusal to work and to meet the challenges and adventure of work is saying no to being a part of this great adventure, to meet God in the work that he has created you for. (David Michael Phelps)

So often we face the challenge of embracing mediocrity in our work, and we have to avoid that. We have to be willing to do any job regardless of whether or not it’s difficult, regardless of whether or not it’s something we actually want to do. It’s very easy, especially in today’s times, for people to just say, “Well, I’m going to give it the least that I can.” And when we do that, what we do is we embrace a concept of failure, when in fact we should be embracing God’s vision for our life and how we’re going to achieve that vision. (Supreme Master Michael McCusker)

Sword of the Spirit

WE ARE GOD'S HANDIWORK, CREATED FOR GOOD WORKS

For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

STEWARDSHIP OF GRACE

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Peter 4:10)

SEEK GOD FIRST

But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. (Matthew 6:33)

Call to Battle

1. **Learn about Catholic teaching on work.** Read Saint John Paul II's seminal encyclical *Laborem Exercens* to learn more about the Church's teaching on human work.
2. **Identify and develop your own talents and skills.** God gives us natural talents and skills for the benefit of the wider Church. Read the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30). Pray and reflect on the following questions: What talents has God given you? Are you utilizing these talents in your life and your work? Are there ways you can utilize them better? Are there things you can do to grow in your talents?
3. **Consider the legacy of others.** Think about the family members, friends, teachers, and co-workers who have impacted the quality of your life and work. Reach out to one of these people, through a phone call, letter, or message, and thank them for their impact on your life.

Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group and conclude with the Prayer to St. Michael.

Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou,

O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God,

cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits,

who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Notes

[illegible]

PUTTING WORK IN ITS PLACE

Opening Prayer

Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker

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O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life
and in death. Amen.* (Often attributed to Pope St. Pius X)

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.

Understanding the Breach

- 1) After thoroughly exploring the importance of work, we may be surprised to learn that the highest point of our vocation is not work, it's leisure. As Dr. Kent Lasnoski states, "The first six days are dedicated to God... But the sixth day is not the last day. The seventh day is where it all comes to a culmination. So, worship is the real purpose of humanity. Leisure is the true purpose of human life."

- a. Consider how you currently celebrate the Sabbath. Do you prioritize attending Mass every Sunday? Do you value attending Mass and prayer? If not, what is holding you back?*
 - b. Our contemporary culture treats Sunday as just another day of the weekend, commonly filled with children's sports or household chores. What are some specific and practical steps that you and your family can take to reclaim Sunday as a day of worship, rest, and true, holy leisure?*
- 2) Dr. Scott Hefelfinger further defines leisure as “any activity that is done for its own sake. It’s an activity that is intrinsically valuable and worthwhile. We don’t do this thing in order to produce this or in order to get that, but we do this thing because, in and of itself, it’s valuable and it’s worthwhile to do. Leisure is the highest sort of activity that we can do, whether it’s prayer, whether it’s contemplation, whether it’s worship, whether it’s play or appreciating a good thing, like art or culture.”
 - a. With this definition in mind, how much time do you spend each week on leisure activities?*
 - b. What are those activities or events? Why are they valuable?*
 - c. What keeps you from participating in authentic leisure?*
- 3) According to Deacon Patrick Toole, Jesus is the best model for us to learn how to balance work and rest: “People were constantly coming to him, asking him to heal, to do this or that. And what did he do? He would go off and pray. So, if our Savior needed time to rest, who am I to try to think of a better idea?”
 - a. If Jesus, God the Son, still prioritized time to pray to God the Father, so too can we. What distractions can we remove to better prioritize prayer?*
 - b. All of us face busy lives at one point or another, and coming up with a prayer plan is helpful. Where and when can you pray*

each day? How can you invite your wife or children to pray alongside you?

c. Deacon Toole also describes his strategy to “work smarter, not harder,” both professionally in his career with IBM and in his spiritual life. What are practical ways you can “work smarter, not harder”?

d. Deacon Toole also talks about the importance of incorporating leisure activities into his life. How can you seek to balance work and leisure?

4) Dr. Andrew Abela explains, “Leisure you would think would be attractive, right? But many of us seem to have trouble with that. **Acedia** is a sin or a vice. It’s basically a reluctance or a denial to do the good that God is calling us to do. It’s more commonly understood as laziness or referred to as sloth. Most vices can go in sort of two directions, of sort of too much, [or] too little. And so sloth, seen as laziness, would be just not putting enough effort in. But you can also go in the opposite direction, which is kind of too much work, seen as a sort of busyness.”

a. How have you seen yourself or people you know fall into laziness or disengagement with work, perhaps even opting out from working altogether? What do you think were the reasons for this? Which of the reasons discussed in the video speak to you the most?

b. How do you encounter disordered “busyness” in your own life? How can it negatively impact a family? How can you tame this destructive impulse so many struggle with today?

5) “It’s important to remember that the root cause of acedia or sloth is a lack of love,” says Dr. Scott Hefelfinger. “It’s love that motivates us to do the good. It’s love that draws us towards the good.”

- a. *What do you love in your life? Has that love ever gone cold? What can you do to remember or rekindle it to draw you towards the good?*
 - b. *If people don't love their job, but they need their job to provide for themselves and their family, what spiritual strength can they tap into to remain engaged in their labor?*
- 6) Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly states, "It's important to remember that true brotherhood and friendship require leisure. It's no coincidence that friendship among men is declining at the same time that leisure is becoming more scarce."
- a. *The Knights of Columbus aims to provide Christ-centered brotherhood. How do you experience that through K of C? What could make it better?*
 - b. *Why do men in particular nowadays have difficulty finding community and authentic leisure? How can you support these men by providing an example of Christian friendship where there is none?*
 - c. *How can you model Christ-centered brotherhood to your children?*
 - d. *How can you be a better friend to the men whom God has already placed in your life?*

Bricks for the Breach

If I could push a button and get the results of going to the gym without having to go to the gym, would I push that button? And if the answer is, "Yes, I would push the button," then it's not really leisure. Let's say I like reading some kind of books. And if I could push the button, and all the knowledge of the book would be in my head without the effort of reading it, I wouldn't push that button, because I love reading. So, therefore, reading is true leisure for me. (Dr. Andrew Abela)

Leisure in the Christian life is embedded in our faith. Sunday is a day of rest, a day for us to give praise and glory to God. A prayer life is essential. [In] [t]oday's society, I think it's immensely difficult for men to find peace and stillness because the world is constantly trying to distract us. (Deacon Patrick Toole)

Sometimes sloth can be kind of experienced more as a sort of listlessness. You just have no energy, you just don't feel like it, you have no motivation to get stuff done. How do you get yourself motivated? (Dr. Andrew Abela)

How important is the Sabbath in relation to work? Well, we all know, right, the Third Commandment that we're supposed to keep holy the Sabbath. These Catholics know that the foundation of that day is going to Mass, participating in [the] Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Receive those graces, and then that gives us the strength to make it through Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday – when we go back out in the chaos in that crazy world to try and bring Christ into that. (Fr. Dominic Couturier)

Sword of the Spirit

GOD EXPECTS US TO WORK DILIGENTLY

The slack hand impoverishes, but the busy hand brings riches.
(Proverbs 10:4)

THE SABBATH IS A DAY OF REST

On the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing; he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken.
(Genesis 2:2)

THE SON OF GOD PRIORITIZED PRAYER TO THE FATHER

Rising very early before dawn, [Jesus] left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)

Call to Battle

1. **Rediscover a hobby or passion.** Plan some intentional time, at least once during the upcoming month, to pursue a hobby or a passion that you enjoy, perhaps one you haven't had the chance to do in a while. The activity can be individual or with others. Remember to consider the impact of any changes on your family.
2. **Plan a family adventure.** Plan a fun family day out of the house. Try to keep it simple, inexpensive, and low-key. Weekends are better, but if you choose to do this during the week make sure that all your attention can be dedicated to your family. This could be a great opportunity to show your children a place that you went to as a child and have happy memories. Maybe it's a place that you have been putting off for some time in the future. Stop putting it off. There's no time like the present.
3. **Keep the Sabbath holy and restful.** Find ways to preserve Sunday as a day of rest. Cut down on busyness and increase family time, perhaps through a family meal or family prayer. Attend Mass as a family and spend quality time together.
 - a. If your family struggles to attend Mass on Sundays, go to Confession and recommit to making Mass a top priority from now on.
 - b. If you already attend Mass on Sundays, increase your engagement. For example, make a pact with your wife and/or children to each remember at least one point from the homily to discuss together after Mass.

- c. Consider creating a post-Sunday Mass tradition, such as pancakes at home or going to eat at your family's favorite lunch spot. If your parish offers donuts after Mass or some other community-building event, consider trying that out, too.

Closing Prayer

Request intentions from the group and conclude with the Prayer to St. Michael.

Prayer to St. Michael

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May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou,
O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.*

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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.

Cor

Cor is a Catholic men's group focused on building Christ-centered brotherhood through a flexible framework of prayer, formation, and fraternity. Men growing in holiness, together.

For more information, visit kofc.org/cor.

Watch Into the Breach:
The Dignity of Work
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