



# Into the Breach

## Video Series

## Study Guide



Faith in Action

Faith



# Into the Breach

## Video Series Study Guide

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# INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

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## Introduction

*“And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land...”* (Ezekiel 22:30)

In 2015, Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted issued a challenge to the men of his diocese—to step into the breach. His exhortation, *Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men*, identifies the crisis of faith facing the Church today and presents a vision of the role of Catholic men in combatting it.

Inspired by Bishop Olmsted’s vision, the Knights of Columbus and the Diocese of Phoenix have joined together to produce a 12-episode video series, also titled *Into the Breach*.

Each episode focuses on a different aspect of authentic Catholic masculinity and features interviews with well-known Catholic commentators and follows the personal story of a man whose life illuminates each theme.

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.

By joining together in brotherhood, men receive the support they need to grow in virtue and to take action to serve Christ and others. We hope that this series, and this study guide, help you and all of us to step into the breach.

## **A Man Who Can Stand in the Breach**

To step into the breach, we must begin by recognizing an important reality: that we are engaged in a battle for the hearts and souls of every person.

This battle is real, and it is spiritual. It began before we were born and will continue until Christ comes again. It is larger than any of us can see. It includes angelic beings, the men and women who have gone before us in the faith, as well as each of us. As Knights we have committed in a special way to engage in this battle in defense of our families, our parishes, our communities and our world. And yet, since the turn of the millennium, millions of men have left the Catholic faith. There is a sizeable breach in the lines.

But the mission of the Church goes beyond mere defense. Christ commissioned his disciples, and that includes us, to preach the Gospel to all nations. We are all called to evangelization. On this front there is also a great need, and the sizeable number of young people leaving the faith indicates we need to step into this offensive campaign as well.

This series is an invitation to join this battle, to step into the breach and to join the evangelical offensive. It challenges men to seek greatness, to be heroically virtuous and to develop a character marked by goodness and truth, strength and courage. It helps prepare men to be capable of standing in the breach and fighting for Christ.

To be a man who is willing and able to step into the breach requires certain commitments, including:

- Striving for a life of holiness and virtue
- Praying daily and frequently receiving the sacraments



- Fulfilling the duties of fatherhood and family life
- Supporting one's brothers in Christ
- Serving others, especially the most vulnerable, such as the poor and unborn
- Supporting the Church, especially through the parish

The *Into the Breach* episodes and study guide are meant to help men deepen their understanding and practice of these commitments.

## **How to Use this Study Guide**

Though the episodes can be viewed individually, they should ideally be viewed with a small group of men who subsequently reflect on the episode and discuss the themes.

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 a group might choose to go through all 12 episodes, a handful 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 a strong prayer life 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. **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 of the material, but rather means engaging in meaningful conversation that calls men to continued conversion and enables them to more effectively step into the breach. The most successful discussion sessions will include the following segments in this order:

### ***Opening Prayer***

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

### ***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 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 that are 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 first quarter of your life, what was a significant event that impacted you either positively or negatively? During that time, what was your perception of God?
- What is a movie you have seen recently that really moved you? Why would you recommend it to a friend?
- What was your first job? In what ways—either personal or career—do you continue to use skills learned in that role?

- If you won the lottery, and no longer had to work, how would you spend your time? If someone you knew won the lottery, what would you like to see them do?
- Do you have a favorite story from the Bible? If so, what is it and why? What does it teach you about who God is?
- Who were your role models growing up? What about them did you admire the most, and how do you think that impacted you?

### ***Into the Breach***

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 from Bishop Olmsted’s exhortation *Into the Breach* that provide solid guidance or encouragement—a “brick”—for repairing the breach in the Church. These quotes are meant to support the discussion and understanding of the episode.

The quotes in “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 provided 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.”

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.

When discussing your “Call to Battle” challenge, consider using the acronym HABITS to help lead discussion and track success. Each letter of the word “HABITS” refers to a particular type of spiritual commitment:

- H**–Holy hour (commitment to daily personal prayer)
- A**–Accountability (commitment to honest accountability with a trusted friend)
- B**–Bible (commitment to praying with Scripture)
- I** –Invest (commitment of time, treasure, and talent)
- T**–Tell (commitment to telling others the difference Jesus has made in your life)
- S**–Sacraments (commitment to frequent reception of Eucharist and reconciliation)

The “Call to Battle” challenges are intended to focus on different aspects on the HABITS acronym with concrete ways for participants to grow in a particular practice. Use the “Call to Battle” notes page at the end of each episode chapter in the study guide to write down your commitment and take notes on your progress.

Some challenges might not be practical due to your participants’ current prayer life, personal situation or stage in life, so encourage them to consider ways to adapt the challenges accordingly.

### ***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 to St. Michael, a powerful prayer perfectly suited to prepare men for the struggle and spiritual warfare we all face.

## **How to Lead a Small Group Session**

A small group session is an opportunity for a group of men 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 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 is therefore different than if you were a lecturer or panelist.

A small group is successful when there is meaningful discussion that helps men 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 is a framework for you to build upon that best meets the needs of the men 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 the men 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 men 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's 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.** In concert with listening skills, use these techniques to ensure each contribution to the discussion is heard and understood. Sometimes boiling down a participant's idea to a sentence or two will help others in the room understand his contribution. Summarizing the course of the discussion occasionally 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 as inclined to share.

**Adapt the questions.** Be aware throughout the small group discussion that the men 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 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.** 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 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 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 men in your small



group another opportunity to develop their faith, strengthen their brotherhood and participate in service. An invitation is especially important following your last small group session to keep your group active in their faith and the life of your council. The Faith in Action program model is the perfect way for men in your small group to take the lessons they have learned from *Into the Breach* and put them into practice.

# MASCULINITY

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## 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) Authentic masculinity pursues virtue. The strength of a man's character is dependent upon the virtues he has acquired. A man has the respect of others when they perceive strength in him.

- *Who is a man that you respect and why?*
- *What characteristics or virtues (such as courage, honesty and loyalty) define a "great" man? Describe a few men from history, from contemporary culture or from your own life who exemplify these virtues.*
- *The episode also says that to be masculine is to embrace responsibility. How is embracing responsibility related to living for excellence? What are specific ways many men in today's culture fail to embrace responsibility?*

2) Matthew James Christoff says that we are facing a “man crisis” today in the Catholic Church. Many people also talk about a crisis concerning masculinity in the larger society.

- *Consider this “man crisis” in light of something Dr. Tim Gray says: “A man is defined by the ability to act.” How has this crisis affected your own life or the lives of individuals or families you know? How does this crisis manifest itself in popular culture?*
- *What are some obstacles in our modern culture that make it difficult for boys to know they have become men?*
- *Can you recall an event or experience where it was evident to you that you had become a man?*

3) Father Burke Masters says that the difference between men and boys is that boys are concerned about themselves, while men are concerned about others.

- *Boys become men in the company of men. Can you think of some examples from your own life where this is the case?*
- *What are specific examples of putting others before self that you have experienced or witnessed in your own life? What is hardest about this sacrificial leadership?*
- *Virtue is like a muscle. It can become stronger or grow weak. What concrete steps can men take to develop and strengthen these virtues?*

4) Mike Phelan discusses how meeting his future wife helped him develop direction in life, a stronger faith and a better understanding of what it means to be a man.

- *What relationships in your own life have helped you understand what it means to be a man, or challenged you to become a better man? What relationships have drawn you away from authentic masculinity?*
- *Who are some men in your life whom you could ask for guidance on how to become a better man of God?*
- *What role can men play in helping other men we know—our sons, our brothers, our friends, our coworkers—grow in their understanding of true manhood?*

5) The episode discusses how the challenge of living as a man of God can be intimidating for men who feel unqualified or unprepared for the task. Mike Phelan, however, says they “were made for this fight.”

- *Why might a man feel unqualified or unprepared to fully embrace authentically masculine roles, particularly those of husband and father?*
- *In life, have you ever experienced a moment where you thought, “I’m in over my head here”? How did you get from there to “I’ve got this”?*
- *What tools are available to help men better prepare to grow in their faith and fulfill their roles as men, Catholics, husbands, fathers and leaders?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

*“I love St. Joseph. His model speaks volumes because he doesn’t say anything. I would much rather watch a man and see his actions because that’s going to tell me who he is. And he was the one who trained the Savior in living, in being a man.” (Dave DiNuzzo)*

*“Christian masculinity is always going to take as its most basic point of reference the mystery of Jesus Christ who gave himself unto death. He’s making that gift as the perfect man, but he’s also making that gift to the Church. He’s also showing us what it means to be father, a husband, and he’s showing us the kind of the love that God has for us—a love that seeks communion, a love that seeks and serves the good of the other in a fruitful union.” (Dr. Nicholas Healy)*

*“Authentic masculinity is found in fatherhood. Fatherhood is the end of masculinity. And so within that context, then, masculine love takes the form of being a protector, being a provider.” (Father Sean Kilcawley)*

*“Herein lies the fullness of masculinity; each Catholic man must be prepared to give himself completely, to charge into the breach, to engage in spiritual combat, to defend women, children, and others against the wickedness and snares of the devil!” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“We have to attack Satan. We don’t sit back and just try to ward him off, but we go forward with our faith. We put on the armor of God, and every single day try to slay that dragon.” (Matt Birk)*

*“Will the Lord not continue to inspire men? Of course He will, and He continues to do so! Our concern is not if the Lord will give us the required strength, but how He is doing so right now. How is His Spirit moving us to rise up and reject passivity in a culture of fatherlessness?”*

*How is He now giving us interior strength in a culture of pornography? How is He now inspiring us to look beyond ourselves and our technology to the peripheries where Christ is needed? How is the Lord inspiring you and me, right now, to cast aside concerns for our own comfort, to serve our fellow man, to put out into the deep, to step into the breach?" (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

## **Sword of the Spirit**

*Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this concerns all humankind; because God will bring to judgment every work, with all its hidden qualities, whether good or bad. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)*

*[Jesus said:] "Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'" (Luke 17:7-10)*

***"Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground." (Ephesians 6:13)***

## **Call to Battle**

**Fast one day a week for a month.** St. Paul writes, "Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear

that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:25-27). Exercising self-control over the body builds self-control over the will, and therefore resistance to bad habits and temptations.

**Read about the life of one of the saints who exemplified manliness.**

St. Joseph, St. George, St. Thomas More, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Isaac Jogues, St. Maximilian Kolbe and Pope St. John Paul II come to mind, but there are many others. Identify how this saint exhibited manliness and write down specific, concrete resolutions on how you can emulate him. Biographies can be found online or purchased at Catholic bookstores—some parishes even have libraries where you can borrow religious books.

**Imitate Christ.** Jesus Christ shows us the fullness of what it means to be a man. Pick one of the Gospels and read a short portion, at least a few verses, each day. Meditate on these passages to discover the ways in which Christ exhibits true manliness and better understand how to true be a man.

## **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

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# BROTHERHOOD

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## 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) The “Brotherhood” episode tells us that men need a “band of brothers”—other men they can rely upon. The twelve apostles were such a band.

- *Men bond together in “brotherhood” through various experiences, such as team sports, a college fraternity or military service. In what ways are such “band of brothers” experiences positive? In what ways can they be unhealthy?*
- *Men sometimes act like “lone rangers” who want to be self-sufficient, taking on burdens without assistance, not wanting to admit any weakness or need of others. Why is it important even for such “rugged individuals” to form bonds of male friendships?*
- *In what ways do the Apostles provide a model for a “band of brothers” today?*

2) Dr. Tim Gray says, “We want tolerance, which is very soft and sounds good, but oftentimes is dishonest. What we need is prophets and men to stand up for the truth and fight for reform.”

- *In what ways can tolerance—in this context, ignoring the poor moral choices, sinful tendencies or spiritual apathy of a friend—be dishonest? How does standing up for the truth require courage?*
- *A movie has the famous line, “You can’t handle the truth!” Why is it sometimes difficult for us to hear the truth about ourselves? Why is it sometimes difficult to tell others the truth about themselves?*
- *Think of an occasion when you felt challenged to stand up for the truth—in a discussion on a sensitive subject, or when the Catholic faith was being questioned or attacked, for example. How did you handle that challenge, and what were the results? In retrospect, what might you have done differently, if anything?*

3) Fraternal correction is the act of one friend challenging another to amend his ways, urging him to give up or avoid a particular sin, habit or attitude. “What’s required for fraternal correction is an honesty that will engender conflict,” Dr. Tim Gray says in the video, “but we’re afraid of conflict.”

- *Stereotypically, it is a manly thing to want to join a fight, to defend a cause. So what kind of conflicts are men “afraid of”?*
- *What qualities must exist in a male friendship in order for one man to offer the other fraternal correction?*
- *If a close male friend has ever admonished you with a fraternal correction, what was your initial reaction? Did this encounter*

*change your friendship moving forward? How would you approach having to fraternally correct a friend?*

4) Curtis Martin explains, “If you look through history, one of the things that’s striking is when there is a group of saints that come forward, they come in clusters, there’s groups. We inspire each other on. Life is designed to be a team sport. We’re supposed to be traveling together. And in a world of social media, we have a lot of friend contacts, but not a lot of human interactions.”

- *Have you ever been inspired by others, particularly as part of a group?*
- *Sometimes faith or the path to holiness can be seen as a totally personal or individualistic experience. How is growing in faith at least in part a shared experience?*
- *How has social media undermined the design of life to be a team sport? How can we fight the tendency of social media to isolate us, fragment our lives, and lead to more shallow relationships?*

5) **Speaking from a military perspective, Master Sergeant Sompaul Vorapanich says that “standing in the breach is the most dangerous part of any mission.” He goes on to say, “When someone stumbles, we need to be able to carry them. We never leave a man behind.”**

- *What does it mean to “stand in the breach”?*
- *How is standing in the breach related to brotherhood? Why do men need to stand in the breach for others?*

- *How does a man “stand in the breach” for his friends and family? How can you do this in your own life?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

*“We see that Jesus called His disciples to Himself in such a way that they would form deep bonds of friendship and brotherhood. At the Last Supper, He specifically said to them, ‘No longer do I call you servants. For the servant does not know what the Master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you’ (John 15:15). This friendship with God is possible, a true brotherhood with Jesus, because we have the same Father. Do you, my sons, have true brothers in Christ in your life?” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“Studies have shown that many men today are living friendless lives. This has its effect on marriages, where men have no emotional support apart from their wives, as well as on children, who should see true friends in the lives of their parents but often do not. What a blessing to have the presence of good faithful friends to provide the encouragement and accountability we need to be free! Indeed, as the Scriptures tell us, ‘as iron sharpens iron, so one man must sharpen another’” (Proverbs 27:17). (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“What people don’t realize is that when iron is sharpening iron, sparks fly. It’s not a pat on the back. It’s metals heated and beaten and then pulled up against another piece of metal, and it’s sharpened and it’s sparks are flying. It’s intense. I’m a beaten-up piece of metal, and I need you, Father, and I need you, brothers, to come alongside of me and help sharpen me to be used by God as a sword. And when that sharpening’s taking place, there’s going to be sparks that are*

*flying. It's going to take vulnerability on my part and vulnerability on yours. Be a chunk of metal with me. Help sharpen me to be a sword used by Christ.” (Mike Sweeney)*

*“A great Catholic friend is someone who is not afraid to tell you when you're wrong, when you're doing something that's out of line with your faith or when you are doing something that's unethical. They're the ones that're going to pick you up when you fall. They're the ones that're going to move you forward when you're slowing down. And they're the ones that're going to push you to move past your limits.” (Master Sergeant Sompaul Vorapanich)*

## **Sword of the Spirit**

*Iron is sharpened by iron; one person sharpens another.  
(Proverbs 27:17)*

*A friend is a friend at all times, and a brother is born for the time of adversity. (Proverbs 17:17)*

*There are friends who bring ruin, but there are true friends more loyal than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)*

*The just act as guides to their neighbors, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. (Proverbs 12:26)*

*Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one finds a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price, no amount can balance their worth. Faithful friends are life-saving medicine; those who fear God will find them. Those who fear the Lord enjoy stable friendship, for as they are, so will their neighbors be. (Sirach 6:14-17)*

*“This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”*  
(John 15:12-13)

## **Call to Battle**

**Join in prayer with fellow Catholic men.** An important way to strengthen fraternity with other men is to pray for them, for their struggles and for their material and spiritual needs. Ask a Catholic man or group of Catholic men you know to pray for a specific intention (or intentions) you have. Ask if he or they have any intentions for you to pray for and commit to praying for them every day until the intention is answered. Try to form an informal group of men who share prayer intentions on a regular basis, either in person or using social media.

**Strengthen the bonds of faithful friendships by serving others.** One way that our faith is expressed is in works of mercy. Men united by a shared faith can often serve their neighbors and their communities far more effectively than as individuals alone. Ask your pastor if there is an unmet need at your parish and gather a group of men to address that need. Alternatively, identify some other need in your community, like homelessness, elderly loneliness or crisis pregnancy support, and work to address these needs.

**Build fraternity with other Catholic men.** Much of friendship simply consists in spending time with others. Find a specific way to meet socially with your brothers in Christ, whether watching a sports game or going fishing, to build your bonds of fraternity. Open your time together with a prayer and use some of the time together to talk about the most important things in life as well as enjoying the activity at hand.

## **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.*

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## 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.*

Pause for a few moments of silent recollection.

## Understanding the Breach

1) In the “Leadership” episode, Alexandre Havard says that leadership “is not about temperament, but about character. Leaders are not born; they’re made because they have practiced character.”

- *What are some character traits you might expect or want in a leader? Why?*
- *How would a man who wants to become a leader go about “practicing character”? What does this mean in real terms?*
- *Consider the character traits expected of a leader. Which traits are your strongest? Which can you improve upon? Come up with practical ways to “practice character” so as to build these leadership traits in yourself.*

2) The episode suggests that if a man has a false idea of humility, he might become spineless, a “pushover,” and abdicate his responsibility of service and leadership.

- *How can we distinguish false humility from true humility?*
- *What does the right kind of humility in leadership look like? Who are leaders either from history or today that exemplified humility?*
- *Cameron Thompson says meekness (control over anger) and zeal (“love in action”) must go together in leadership. How do these traits relate to the idea of servant leadership?*

3) **Matt Birk describes how the “it’s all about you,” “do what you want,” “you deserve to be happy” message the culture sends communicates a perspective that we should “take care of me first and everyone else second.”**

- *What do you think servant leadership means? Who is a man in your life who exemplifies servant leadership?*
- *Robert Yates makes clear that leadership includes the “willingness to do those unpleasant tasks... to sweat and bleed and suffer with others.” What unpleasant tasks are your leadership responsibilities facing you with? How can you prepare to take on those tasks and not shirk them?*
- *In your own life—in your marriage, your family, among those for whom you are a leader—in what specific ways can you do a better job at putting others ahead of yourself?*

4) The episode discusses the virtue of magnanimity. Merriam-Webster defines magnanimity as “loftiness of spirit enabling one to bear

trouble calmly, to disdain meanness and pettiness, and to display a noble generosity.” Cameron Thompson describes it as “the habit of striving for greatness” and “the recognition that you were made worthy to accomplish great things.”

- *What does it mean to be “great,” to strive for greatness or to be a great man? What sort of things does a great man do or not do? What kind of characteristics does he have?*
- *What are some concrete ways you can practice magnanimity in your marriage, your family life and at work?*
- *Alexandre Havard says it is Christians who truly consider themselves worthy of great things because they are sons of God, and “there cannot be something higher than that.” How does being a “son of God” make us capable or worthy of achieving greatness?*

5) Cameron Thompson says leadership is “pursuing and achieving greatness by bringing out the greatness in those that I lead.”

- *What are some of the positive gifts, interests and potentials that your family, friends or co-workers possess? What are some particular ways that you might encourage them to develop and exercise those gifts, interests and potentials in a manner that leads them to greatness?*
- *At work or in your larger role in your community or society, what are some ways you can bring out greatness in your neighbors and fellow citizens?*
- *Additionally, Thompson says we not only need to restrain evil passions, but also “to energize noble passions.” What sort of*

*noble passions can a man energize? How do you do this? Are there times in your life when others' excitement about an idea or initiative helped you become passionate about it?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

*"If you asked the average man, 'Are you a good leader and protector and provider of your family?' The vast majority are doing their best. They are trying to lead and protect their families. But the goods in the material world are temporary. If we really want to do the best for our wives and our children, we have to lead them to eternity."* (Matthew James Christoff)

*"So as fathers, I think you can have two extremes. You can have the extreme of 'I just bark orders and expect you to follow.' Or this idea of 'I'm just not connected. I just kind of go through the motions.' And that idea of servant leadership looks at the virtue, the middle ground, of saying, 'What do I need to do to help my children excel, to know Christ, but also how do I shape them as a human being?' And so it's really looking to say, 'What do I need to do to serve?' and then doing it." (Thomas Wurtz)*

*"Often we confuse leadership with merely being in a position of power. These are the leaders because they have power, or these are the leaders because they have influence. This isn't true leadership, necessarily. Leadership is the virtues specifically of magnanimity and humility. Magnanimity is the habit of striving for greatness. It's the recognition that you are made worthy to accomplish great things. And humility is the habit of living in the truth, which means the truth about myself, and the truth about others—that is to say, self-knowledge, which can then flow through my skills, my talents, my gifts and my virtues into service of the others." (Cameron Thompson)*

*“Self-mastery is about restraining evil passions and desires, but also I need to energize noble passions. If you simply restrain, you become boorish and tasteless. You need to be able to yourself be excited and be driven because then you can draw other people along with you and help them achieve truly great things. Life is short, and eternity is long. We may like the idea of virtuous leadership, we may be inspired by the idea of going into the breach, but so long as we remain sitting in our chairs and not jumping in, we remain just spectators. We’re not engaging in the fight.” (Cameron Thompson)*

***“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.” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)***

## **Sword of the Spirit**

*When the just flourish, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan. (Proverbs 29:2)*

***[L]earn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow. (Isaiah 1:17)***

*[F]or if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of the church of God? (1 Timothy 3:5)*

*“Now, Lord, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed David my father; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act—I, your servant, among the people you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. Give your*

*servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil. For who is able to give judgment for this vast people of yours?” The Lord was pleased by Solomon’s request. (1 Kings 3:7-10)*

*So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” (John 13:12-15)*

## **Call to Battle**

**Pray like Solomon.** One of the essential virtues of any leader is wisdom. Solomon prayed for wisdom, or discernment. Like Solomon, pray for wisdom and set aside some time each week to read the Book of Ecclesiastes or the Book of Proverbs to meditate on the nature of wisdom.

**Strive for great things.** If the virtue of magnanimity involves striving for great things, work to develop this virtue in your own life by examining what you are striving for. Are the true aims of your life things like money, pleasure, “down time,” watching sports and avoiding “hassle”? Or do you have nobler goals such as growing in virtue, fighting injustice, serving your community and leading your family? Identify one “great thing” you would like to strive for in your life and write down specific ways you can move toward that goal.

**Read about leaders.** The world is in great need of good leadership. Pick a leader from history (such as Abraham Lincoln or Pope St. John

Paul II) you especially admire and find a biography about him. As you read the book, write down leadership lessons, practices and principles you identify that you can integrate into your own life. Refer back to the list regularly (and perhaps expand it through further reading over time) to reflect on whether and how you are incorporating its contents into your own leadership style.

## **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.*

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# FATHERHOOD

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## 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.*

Pause for a few moments of silent recollection.

## Understanding the Breach

1) In the “Fatherhood” episode, Thomas Wurtz says that our culture attacks fatherhood by trying to make it irrelevant, as though it doesn’t really matter if the father is present in the home or not. Wurtz says many men make themselves less relevant to the family through their absence by way of workaholism or their addiction to self-indulgent pursuits like television and pornography.

- *What contemporary cultural trends and ideas contribute to this notion that the father is unimportant to a family?*
- *Many men’s work or leisure pursuits can come to dominate their attention to an unhealthy extent. What steps can men take to achieve a better balance in their lives?*
- *Dr. Tim Gray and Jared Zimmerer speak of a “passivity” that sets in for men when they lose their sense of mission. What can*

*men do to remain mindful of their purpose and vocation so that they don't slip into passivity?*

2) Mike Sweeney says that humility is all about asking for forgiveness. He says there have been “many moments” where he has asked forgiveness from his children.

- *Many men find difficult to ask another for forgiveness. Why is it often difficult for men to admit when they are wrong?*
- *What are the risks of asking forgiveness of someone we have hurt or wronged? What are the potential rewards?*
- *What lessons does a father convey to his children if he is able to sincerely ask them to forgive him—for example, if he lost his temper, spoke uncharitably to them or to their mother, broke a promise or displayed some other bad example?*

3) **Cristofer Pereyra speaks of the father's role in protecting his children from what they are exposed to through television, the internet and social media. He says fathers must be “guards in the doors of our children's souls.” Electronic devices and technology are not themselves bad, he says, “but the use that we give to technology makes all the difference.”**

- *Is Pereyra being too alarmist, or are there real dangers to children and young people in their use and consumption of entertainment and social media? What kinds of things are we talking about here?*
- *Some parents limit their children's access to electronics and social media through house rules, as Pereyra does, and others use technology like parenting software to set time*

*limits, filter objectionable content, or monitor what children do online. What advantages, disadvantages, and concerns exist with these various approaches to protecting the family?*

- *At what age, if any, should young people receive a smartphone? If they aren't adults, should you take away your children's smartphones if they have one?*

4) Dr. Tim Gray speaks of needing to live a virtuous life ourselves in order to pass these virtues along to our children. He mentions among these virtues “the skills and the habits to work, to be prudent, to be just, to be honest.” The Church identifies the three “theological virtues” as faith, hope, and love; the four “cardinal virtues” are justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude. There are many other related virtues that stem from these, such as patience, diligence, chastity, modesty and generosity.

- *In addition to those Dr. Gray mentions, what other virtues would you consider essential to being a truly good man? Why?*
- *Evaluate yourself in this light. When it comes to these virtues, which do you feel you best possess? Which do you most need to grow in?*
- *How can you continue to grow in virtue and avoid backsliding?*

5) The video emphasizes the responsibility of fathers to educate and form their children. Curtis Martin says that when fathers “abdicate” the responsibility to form their children, they rob their children “of one of the most significant influences in their life,” leaving them “fatherless.” Matt Birk says that things like prayer and saying the rosary in the family is the “father’s job.”

- *What does it mean to “form” your children? How do your decisions and actions as a father help shape the person your children will become?*
- *Do you do your job of regularly leading your family in prayer? Why or why not?*
- *Thomas Wurtz says fathers should be prepared to fight to ensure their children’s religious education is proclaiming the authentic teachings of the Church. What should a father do if he is concerned about what his children are being taught about the faith or morals in the school or parish?*

### **Bricks for the Breach**

*“Men, your presence and mission in the family is irreplaceable! Step up and lovingly, patiently take up your God-given role as protector, provider, and spiritual leader of your home. A father’s role as spiritual head of the family must never be understood or undertaken as domination over others, but only as a loving leadership and a gentle guidance for those in your care. Your fatherhood, my fatherhood, in its hidden, humble way, reflects imperfectly but surely the Fatherhood of God, the Father to those whom the Lord has given us to father.” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“The primary way that we as men protect our families is spiritually. It’s to be the spiritual head of the household that we’re called and created to be. They have to be able to see in us—not just hear from us—see in us a genuine spiritual life, a genuine sacramental life. And they need to see how obvious it is that dad loves his faith. We need to do our parenting on our knees.” (Steve Greene)*

*“The father’s role is to impart to his children and to image the love of God the Father. And what’s that love like? It’s unconditional. This is a great and deep longing of every human heart to be loved, to be known, to be seen, to be chosen. And God placed this love in our hearts, and he brings it to life through our earthly fathers. And this is what allows a child to flourish.” (Sister Maris Stella, S.V.)*

*“Our culture today is all about me. But being a great father is about putting the spotlight on number one Christ, number two our wives, number three our children. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less often. It’s thinking, ‘I’m a child of God. I’m called to be a saint. And I’m not going to think of myself. I’m going to pour myself into everyone else.’ That’s humility.” (Mike Sweeney)*

## **Sword of the Spirit**

*Hear, O children, a father’s instruction, be attentive, that you may gain understanding! Yes, excellent advice I give you; my teaching do not forsake. When I was my father’s child, tender, the darling of my mother, he taught me and said to me: “Let your heart hold fast my words: keep my commands, and live! Get wisdom, get understanding! Do not forget or turn aside from the words of my mouth.” (Proverbs 4:1-5)*

***“What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?” (Luke 11:11-13)***

*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)*

## Call to Battle

**Light a candle.** As spiritual leader of your family, on a regular basis make it a point to visit your parish church with your children on a day other than Sunday to visit the Blessed Sacrament, pray and light some candles for your children's intentions and those of the family.

**Watch a movie.** Watch a movie as a family where a positive vision of fatherhood is a strong theme. Discuss with your children the film's portrayal of fatherhood and what it means to be a good father.

**Look to St. Joseph.** Learn how to be a better father from St. Joseph by increasing your devotion to this great saint, the most chaste spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and foster father to the Son of God. Choose a specific prayer or devotion to Saint Joseph to say daily. Get a statue of St. Joseph to display in the home. On a weekly or month basis choose a Scripture passage featuring St. Joseph and meditate on his role in it.

## 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.*

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### 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.*

Pause for a few moments of silent recollection.

### Understanding the Breach

- 1) In the “Family” episode, Jason Evert describes a “battle for the very soul of the family” in which men must be present and engaged.
  - *What does this battle for the family’s soul entail? What are some of the key threats to healthy family life today? Who or what is waging this battle?*
  - *In what ways do some men “retreat from the battlefield altogether” in this struggle for the family? What are some reasons for this retreat?*
  - *What specific actions must men—fathers especially—take in their own families to fight this battle? What actions should men take in the larger society?*
- 2) **“The study of civilization shows us that the rise of civilizations grows out of family life, and that the collapse of civilizations also comes from the collapse of family life,” says Dr. Scott Hahn.**



- *What are some of the effects that fatherlessness and divorce often have on the children involved? What are the effects on the parents—both fathers and mothers?*
- *What effects are seen related to the stability of the broader community when fatherless and broken families are widespread?*
- *What, on the other hand, are the effects on a community when family life is strong and committed two-parent homes are the norm?*

3) The episode discusses issues that arise when the father does not set a good example of attending Mass or participating with reverence.

- *In the religious formation of their children, how important is it for a husband and wife to be united in their beliefs and practices in the Catholic faith? What challenges can arise in raising children when a married couple disagrees about these fundamental matters?*
- *The episode indicates the importance of the father's influence on his children in terms of religious practice. Why is the father's influence particularly important? How does it differ from the mother's influence?*
- *What simple things can men do to provide a better example to their children when attending Mass specifically and in their religious practice more generally?*

4) Cristofer Pereyra says being a good parent isn't about the money we spend on children, but the love and time we give to them.

He says fathers should work only as much as they must and give the rest of their time to their families.

- *What drives some men to become “workaholics”?*
- *Having enough time to be successful both at work and at home can be an extremely difficult challenge. What are some things men can do to find the necessary time to be a good worker and a good father?*
- *How much time per day or per week on average should a father try to spend with his children?*

**5) Steve Greene emphasizes that to give your life for your wife and family means making sacrifices and denying yourself in many little ways every day.**

- *How does the story of Greg and Julie Alexander’s marriage at one point illustrate the lack of a truly mutual and self-sacrificial love? What led the Alexanders to reexamine how they were living their marriage and start on a different path? What was this different approach to marriage, and how did they concretely live it?*
- *What are some examples of common sacrifices men can make for their wives and children throughout the day? Can it be hard to make these sacrifices? If so, what are some ways to remain committed to them?*
- *How does a man’s focus on sacrificing for his wife and family in this way help fulfill St. Paul’s instruction to husbands to “love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her” (Ephesians 5:25)?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

*“The ultimate purpose of marriage is summed up in two words: love and children. Marriage is a mission. It is a mission for populating the kingdom of God as a team, husband and wife, mother and father.”*  
(Douglas Bushman)

*“God began the whole act of redemption through a Holy Family, and I think God continues his work of redemption through holy families. That’s why the family is so much under attack. The battle that we’re facing is really a battle for the very soul of the family, and I think that the way we need to engage that as men is through our presence, through rejecting that temptation to retreat from the battlefield altogether.”* (Jason Evert)

*“There is a great confusion as to what it means to be a good father or a good mother or a good parent. It’s not the money that you spend on them, but the time and love that you invest in them. I think fathers need to work when they need to work, but no more than that, because their children don’t need them to buy more things. Their children need them to spend more time with them.”* (Cristofer Pereyra)

*“Who is more of a man, the one who runs away, or the one who can face the responsibilities and challenges of relationships, family, and intimacy? Could a man fearful of self-gift be a true disciple of Christ? In fact, can such a man love at all?”* (*Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men*)

*“If it came down to it, I would literally sacrifice my physical life to save my bride, to save my kids. But the tough thing about our vocation as men is it’s not nearly that easy, because the sacrifice is every day in the little things. My selfishness, my time, my space, to live for myself—that’s the stuff we have to die to. That’s the stuff we have to sacrifice. That’s the part of your life you have to lay down.*

***And that's way harder than jumping in front of a speeding bullet.”***  
**(Steve Greene)**

*“Men, your presence and mission in the family are irreplaceable! Step up and lovingly, patiently take up your God-given role as protector, provider, and spiritual leader of your home.” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

## **Sword of the Spirit**

*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. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth.” (Genesis 1:27-28)*

*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. (Psalms 127:3-5)*

*Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it. (Proverbs 22:6)*

***Therefore, take these words of mine into your heart and soul. Bind them on your arm as a sign, and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up... (Deuteronomy 11:18-19)***

## **Call to Battle**

**Pray for your family.** Make a commitment to pray for your family each and every day. Choose a specific prayer or devotion (such as a

decade of the rosary or a prayer to St. Joseph or the Virgin Mary) and make sure to offer it for your family every day without fail.

**Keep the Sabbath with your family.** With today's constant barrage of buying and selling and the cacophony of noisy media, the Sabbath (the Lord's Day) as a day of rest is perhaps needed now more than ever. Find ways to preserve the holiness of the Sabbath by decreasing the business of the day and increasing quality time together as a family, such as family meals and family prayer. Seek to better dedicate the day to worship and rest, avoiding any work that is not necessary. Attend Mass at your parish church as a family and spend time together, perhaps in a family outing or activity.

**Give a better "gift."** Are you more of a gift-giver or a time-giver? Consider Cristofer Pereyra's words about buying things for our children versus spending time with them. Do they apply to you? If you have children, find a specific way to spend more quality time with them on a regular basis, such as reading to them before bed or visiting the park every weekend.

## **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.*

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## Opening Prayer

### St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

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*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.*

Pause for a few moments of silent recollection.

## Understanding the Breach

1) The “Life” episode discusses how protecting the vulnerable of society—widows, orphans, the unborn, persons with disabilities, the poor, the elderly, the oppressed—is a fundamental responsibility of men.

- *How does this responsibility to defend the vulnerable fit with the natural role and masculine instincts of men?*
- *What are some practical actions you can take to help protect the vulnerable in your community or our society?*
- *Sister Maris Stella says in the video that learning to protect the vulnerable “begins within our own families.” What can fathers do in practical terms to teach and model for their children a true compassion and care for the vulnerable of society?*

2) **Sister Maris Stella tells of an experience where she was praying outside an abortion facility when a man stopped to thank her for**

being there. He explained that years before he was taking his girlfriend to have an abortion, but they changed their minds because they saw people praying outside. Sister Maris Stella says, “he wanted to be a protector... When he saw others protecting life, he then protected life. He protected the life of his daughter.”

- *Men tend to have a “protective instinct” in crisis situations, and often it takes just one courageous person to “stand in the breach” and inspire others to take appropriate action. In what real-life circumstances have you experienced this phenomenon, or perhaps have seen or heard of this happening?*
- *What would you say or do in the event your own son or daughter were to be involved in a crisis pregnancy and were considering abortion?*
- *Have you ever prayed outside an abortion facility? What was the experience like?*

3) Mother Agnes Mary Donovan says that nine out of 10 women who have had an abortion would likely have given birth instead if the father had offered support. Sister Maris Stella says it makes a big difference when men affirm a pregnant woman by telling her she will be a great mother.

- *What kind of stresses and pressures do you imagine women face when dealing with a crisis pregnancy?*
- *What kind of support do they need—from the father, from family or from the Church or other groups?*



- *How can men show affirmation and support for expectant mothers and single mothers?*

4) Father Mike Schmitz says men have been silenced on the issue of abortion because it is considered a “women’s issue.” It is not uncommon to hear that men should not have a voice on the issue because it is a woman’s choice alone.

- *Why has the popular notion of abortion as a “women’s issue” made many men hesitant to speak up about abortion?*
- *Why should men be able to express their opinions and beliefs on the issue of abortion?*
- *Suppose another man were to make the “women’s issue” argument as a justification for his inaction. How might you counter that?*

5) John Morales tells his story of his lifelong regret after having paid for his girlfriend’s abortion when he was younger.

- *Morales says he knew deep down the unborn child is a human being, but he wrote the check for the abortion out of guilt, fear and a misguided sense of responsibility. What options are available other than abortion?*
- *Morales describes how the abortion “left a hole” in his heart and he struggled with depression. Do you think that men and women who have experienced abortion in their lives realize that God desperately wants to heal them?*
- *Morales tells the story of how he became an adoptive father, as does Matt Birk. How can couples discern if they are called to be adoptive parents?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

*“This culture of death requires and demands of us a spiritual response. It requires and needs men who will stand up for life, men who will stand up for the weak, the poor, the vulnerable, the elderly, the handicapped. And that begins within our own families.” (Sister Maris Stella)*

***“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.” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)***

*“Science is catching up with Scripture, and people are actually seeing through their own eyes. All you gotta do is look at an ultrasound. Abortion will not only become no longer legal, but it will become unthinkable.” (John Morales)*

*“We need to get off the sidelines and stand up for life on the front lines. We need faith like that of our fathers who defended the children of previous generations and who gave up their own lives rather than abandon their faith in Christ. My sons and brothers, we need you to step into the breach!” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“[S]uffering gives us the option of serving and of loving. Whether it’s a handicapped sibling, whether it’s going to the nursing home, at any point we are all children of God, with his breath in us. The dignity is there.” (Ryan Young)*

## Sword of the Spirit

*You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works! My very self you know. My bones are not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, fashioned in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me unformed; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be. (Psalms 139:13-16)*

*The ear that heard blessed me; the eye that saw acclaimed me. For I rescued the poor who cried out for help, the orphans, and the unassisted; the blessing of those in extremity came upon me, and the heart of the widow I made joyful. (Job 29:11-13)*

*The word of the Lord came to me: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. (Jeremiah 1:4-5)*

*[Jesus said,] "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father." (Matthew 18:10)*

## Call to Battle

**Pray for life.** Remember to pray for the most weak and vulnerable of the world, especially for unborn children. Pray that they might be protected not only by law, but also by a renewed recognition of their human dignity. Perhaps resolve to offer three Hail Marys every day for the intention of life.

**Teach your children respect for others.** Lead a family conversation about our obligation to have compassion for the poor, the disabled,

the unborn and all members of society. Regularly discuss how every person is made in the image and likeness of God, and what we can do to reach out to the less fortunate. Teach them how to articulate the pro-life position on abortion, physician-assisted suicide and other life issues so that they will be able to defend Catholic teachings with confidence when they are challenged.

**Take an active role in defending the vulnerable.** Take action by getting involved in pro-life activities. Join your parish's pro-life group, attend or organize a trip to the March for Life, volunteer at your local crisis pregnancy center, assist single mothers or struggling families, support programs for persons with physical or intellectual disabilities, or care for the homebound or neglected elderly. (To learn more about how you can build a culture of life, visit [kofc.org/life](http://kofc.org/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.*



# PRAYER

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## 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) The “Prayer” episode emphasizes that men need to make prayer a priority in their daily lives.

- *What is prayer? Why is it important to pray?*
- *Do you presently set aside time each day for personal prayer? If not, what are some ways you can arrange your day to spend some time with God?*
- *The episode speaks of how men can integrate prayer into their daily lives. In addition to personal prayer time, what else can men do to stay mindful of God's presence throughout the day?*

2) Jared Zimmerer says, “You look at some of the most manly cultures that we admire: the Spartans, they prayed; the Romans, they prayed; the American Cherokee, they prayed; you know, the Samurai, they prayed. Like all of these warrior cultures, everyone

single one of them, prayed. Prayer, even outside of a Christian context, has always been part of what it means to be a man, because you're realizing that there is something higher than yourself, and you are called to service of that thing."

- *Is it manly to pray? Why, as Dr. David Bushman indicates, do some men feel discouraged from praying, as though prayer is unmanly?*
- *How does prayer express itself in the life of a warrior or warrior culture (whether ancient warrior cultures or in modern militaries today)? How are all of us called to pray as warriors regardless of our job or vocation?*
- *Many Christian communities have moved away from "harder," more masculine forms of prayer and piety in favor of a "softer" spirituality. How does this shift negatively affect the participation of men in churches? What types of prayer do men find most attractive and fulfilling?*

3) The episode stresses the importance of a father modeling prayer, setting an example for his children.

- *What are some ways families can pray together? How can a father incorporate prayer into his family's life in an effective way without it seeming burdensome or boring?*
- *How do you communicate to your children how important prayer is in their life—and in your own life?*
- *Matt Birk says in the video that if a couple doesn't keep God at the center of their marriage, there's a good chance they will fail. If you are married, how much importance do you place in*

*praying with your wife (outside of Mass and grace before meals)?*

4) Bob Feeney tells the story of his experience during the Vietnam War and his turning to Mary in prayer after he was critically wounded in action while facing an overwhelming enemy force. He has remained devoted to Mary and encourages others to pray the rosary.

- *There is a wartime saying that “there are no atheists in foxholes,” suggesting that even nonbelievers will often turn to God in times of extreme danger. When have you turned to prayer in desperate or fearful situations?*
- *How do we ensure that when we turn to God in desperate situations, we don’t forget him and the help he gave us once the danger has passed?*
- *Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers notes that many saints have called the rosary a “weapon” in the fight against sin. Dr. Scott Hahn refers to rosary beads as “beads for the battle” and “spiritual bullets” against the devil. What role does the rosary play in your own prayer life?*

**5) “It’s in the silence of our hearts that we hear the voice of God,” says Mark Houck in the video.**

- ***Are you comfortable with silent meditation and contemplation as prayer? Why or why not?***
- ***This episode encourages Eucharistic adoration as an ideal way for men to pray in silence in the presence of God. What is your experience with prayer before the Blessed Sacrament?***



- *Distraction is a particular challenge with prayer. What concrete steps can you take to battle such distractions in order to engage in more fruitful prayer?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

*“[T]he Catechism says prayer is simply the raising of our mind to God. And we’re called to have a deep, intimate personal relationship with God. I couldn’t just show up on game day with no practice and hope to be a hall of famer. The same is true in our spiritual life. We need the discipline of our prayer life. We need to invest time every day in prayer.” (Father Burke Masters)*

*“A man can either walk in pride and say, ‘I don’t need anyone’s help.’ Or a man, which I believe is true masculinity, can say, ‘I know who I am in relationship to my heavenly Father and my King. And I am going to bow to him, and I am going to carry on a conversation with him and find out what does he want me to do.’” (Jeff Cavins)*

*“Indeed, the greatest protection from pride and self-reliance is turning humbly to God in prayer. The new technologies of social media where we can constantly display and discuss ourselves can lead to a type of idolatry that consumes us. Honest prayer will keep us grounded and help us to avoid this temptation.” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“Pope Benedict has said that the new springtime in the Church will come about through a prayerful reading of the Scriptures. And when we read the Scriptures, it’s not just learning more about Jesus, it’s learning Jesus from our hearts, of who he really is, coming to know him as a man.” (Father John Parks)*

*“I would strongly urge men to go to Eucharistic adoration. All you have to do is go there and be before God. I always leave with a sense of consolation. I always leave with a sense of peace. When you’re discerning something in your life as a man, there is no better place to go than in the silence of Eucharistic adoration—not to discover what you want, but what is God’s will for you.” (Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers)*

## **Sword of the Spirit**

*“But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” (Matthew 6:6-8)*

*Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. (Romans 12:11-12)*

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)*

*Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)*

## **Call to Battle**

**Plan for prayer.** Do you already set aside time each day for prayer? If not, start by setting aside a small block of time just as you might

plan to work out or walk the dog. Ten minutes in the morning and at bedtime can be a good start. Other good prayer commitments might be to attend daily Mass, or make a brief visit the Blessed Sacrament for some quiet prayer in the presence of God every day. There are great resources on how to pray, including the Knights of Columbus' *Family Fully Alive* or *Prayer Time* booklets, available online through Catholic Information Service. (For more information, see the appendix.)

**Say a Decade a Day.** Start to pray with your family daily if you don't already. Praying the rosary as a family is the perfect way to do so. If timing and schedules are an issue or some family members are resistant to this new idea, try to simply start saying a single decade of the rosary each day (perhaps right after dinner) as a family for everyone's intentions. If you already pray a decade, add a second—and keep adding a decade until your family is praying a full rosary together every night. Use the Knights of Columbus' *A Scriptural Rosary for the Family*, available online through Catholic Information Service (see the appendix).

**Be mindful of God's presence.** A good way to do this is through very short prayers (sometimes called “aspirations”) scattered throughout your day whenever the opportunity presents itself—perhaps when whenever you stand up from your chair or check your smartphone. Have an arsenal of brief phrases on hand: “Thanks be to God,” “God be praised,” “Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Write one of these aspirations down and put it somewhere you will see it regularly (in your wallet, on the refrigerator door, on your computer screen) and recite it whenever you do.

## **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

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# SUFFERING

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## 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.*

Pause for a few moments of silent recollection.

## Understanding the Breach

1) In the “Suffering” episode, Jeff Cavins says that many men simply “put up with life” most of their lives. He elaborates: “Because they’re not having a great day, they’re not getting what they want, they’re sick, they didn’t get the raise, whatever... they’re suffering; they’re just sort of putting up with it.” The key to dealing with our suffering and disappointments, he indicates, is found in Christ and in understanding the meaning of redemptive suffering.

- *How is this idea of a man just “putting up with life,” sort of going through the motions, antithetical to his vocation as a man, a husband, a father and a Catholic? How will such an attitude inevitably lead to a failure to achieve greatness, excellence, and holiness?*
- *How do you ordinarily respond or feel when you’re “not having a great day”? Who are some people you know who*

*handle adversity in a way you admire? What is their secret to this serenity amid challenges? How can you imitate them?*

- *The Bible and Catechism teach us that our suffering is not useless; it can be a powerful source of grace and hope when united to Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection. A traditional Catholic approach to everyday suffering and disappointment is to “offer it up.” In practical terms, what does it mean for a man to “offer up” his suffering?*

2) Ryan Young says that virtues—habitual and firm dispositions to do what is good—come from suffering, including the virtues of patience, fortitude, humility, compassion, wisdom, understanding, and the ability to love.

- *How does bearing our sufferings well build the virtues of patience and fortitude? How can suffering teach a man about the virtues of humility and compassion?*
- *How does bearing with suffering heroically help a man grow in his ability to love others?*
- *What does a man teach his children about suffering when he bears his own trials virtuously?*

3) Spiritual writers often refer to the “mystery of suffering,” and Scripture often grapples with this mystery. In this episode, Father Paul Sullivan articulates an aspect of this mystery when he notes how we usually ask “why” when we are suffering some particular illness or trial.

- *Christ said that God “makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). St. Paul wrote that “all things work for good for*

those who love God” (Romans 8:28). What can we therefore conclude about suffering from considering these two Scripture passages?

- *Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted says that if we notice other people are embracing their suffering with meaning and courage, we can be inspired to do likewise. Who in your own life have you witnessed suffering heroically?*
- *Mike Sweeney says he feels closest to Christ when he is suffering or going through hard times. What concrete ways can you use to draw closer to Christ during a time of suffering? How can you stay close to Christ after the time of suffering has passed?*

**4) In his moving story, Frank Ramirez speaks of the death of his young daughter Maggie. “I thought that I would be the one to show my children how to die like a Christian,” he says. “And instead, the child shows me how to die. I think the lasting gift that Maggie has left to us is the gift of supernatural joy, that as we live this life, we are to smile.”**

- *What does it mean to “die as a Christian”?*
- *Ramirez says that “when the crucifixion of Jesus manifests itself in your life, the devil will be there to say, ‘See, he’s dead.’ And our response has to be, ‘No, he’s not. Christ has risen indeed.’” Why should recalling Christ’s triumph over death help us through our trials, grief and suffering?*
- *Ramirez says that the Spirit led him to face the reality of his daughter’s death “with worship of the Triune God.” He explains, “In the midst of suffering, you worship God. And*



*that's the way in which you embrace your suffering. And as you embrace that suffering, it makes you stronger." Many people become angry with God or turn away from him in suffering. Why is worshiping God the way to face suffering?*

5) Thomas Wurtz says that suffering can teach us to be detached from our own will and trust in God more, thereby uniting our will to his will.

- *Why should we seek to do God's will, even when it is opposed to our own, even when it means suffering?*
- *"The other way that suffering can help us is by detaching us from things," Wurtz says. "It helps us understand what is the most important thing in life." When a man is going through intense suffering and difficulties, what priorities in life does the experience lead him to recognize? How does it help him see what is important and unimportant? What is the most important thing in life?*
- *How can we practice detachment in our daily lives? What actions or habits can help us discipline our own will and subject it to God's will?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

*"My daughter, she lived a life that was wisely designed by an all-wise God. He took her in such a way that he would be glorified. If I were not to tell people that, it would be like putting a lamp under a basket. The ten years of my daughter and the way in which she died is the workmanship of an all-good God. And I think that my daughter's death, and the death of all of God's people, it says that to the world."*  
(Frank Ramirez)

***“Jesus has given to all of us our own cross. We each have our own cross. But our suffering is not without purpose. Jesus’ suffering was not just arbitrary suffering. It was not random suffering. There was a very specific purpose to his suffering. It was redemptive. And so our suffering, if we embrace it, it shares in that meaning and that purpose.” (Frank Ramirez)***

*“In Christ, we see that sacrifice is at the heart of love. Only the man who has fought the interior battle of self-mastery against sterility, the man who lays down his life for others, can avoid stagnancy and self-absorption. Never doubt that this sacrifice is worth the suffering! Our Lord encourages men in saying, ‘Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ (John 15:13).” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“To teach men what it really means to love, I will have people look at a crucifix and see Jesus hanging there and I’ll say, ‘Look at his hands.” (Father John Lankeit)*

*“Archbishop Fulton Sheen said one of the reasons that we are so afraid of suffering is that we don’t practice for it... The reason we are afraid of dying is we don’t practice for it. If the only time that you’re going to experience dying is on that final day, it will scare the life out of you. But if you have been practicing all these years, buffeting your body, dying to yourself on a daily basis, putting your family first, when you get ready to take those last breaths, been there, done this. You have lived a life of sacrifice. And one of the greatest fears that men have is the fear of death, but for us it will be the victory because the greatest victory we have known in the world was the cross, and a man can be triumphant if he knows what to do with his suffering.” (Jeff Cavins)*

## Sword of the Spirit

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life?” (Matthew 16:24-26)*

*[W]e even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)*

*For to you has been granted, for the sake of Christ, not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him. (Philippians 1:29)*

*In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:6-7)*

## Call to Battle

**Mortify yourself.** “Death can be robbed of its greatest fearfulness if we practice for it,” said Bishop Fulton Sheen. He continued, “Christianity recommends mortification, penance and detachment as a rehearsal for the great event.” We can practice for suffering as well, through mortification and detachment. Mortification is the practice training and subduing bodily desires, allowing us to detach from, or be less concerned about, material things. Practice for

suffering by regular acts of self-sacrifice, willfully putting up with bodily discomfort. Two good examples of mortification are fasting or abstaining from meat.

**Pray the Stations of the Cross.** The Stations of the Cross are not just for Lent! This traditional set of prayers and meditation on Christ's Passion not only recalls the suffering Christ endured for us, but it also draws us to unite our own sufferings to his redemptive act.

**Offer it up.** Suffering is an inevitable part of life, including the dozens of small sufferings we all experience every day, whether it's a headache or getting stuck in a traffic jam. Instead of complaining about these small sufferings, decide to offer them up as a prayer for those experiencing great suffering instead. Choose a specific intention to offer them up for or offer them up for the souls in purgatory. God will be greatly pleased when we accept suffering willingly as he did for us, rather than grudgingly.

## **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.*



# SACRAMENTAL LIFE

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## 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.*

Pause for a few moments of silent recollection.

## Understanding the Breach

1) In the “Sacramental Life” episode, Jared Zimmerer reminds us that the grace we receive from the sacraments strengthens us to fight our spiritual battles. He compares the sacramental life to strength training or bodybuilding.

- *In what ways is undertaking an exercise or strength training program similar to preparing for spiritual battle? What is required of a man to succeed at each?*
- *What are some of the vices that can become obstacles to maintaining these types of programs—whether for strength training or the sacramental life?*
- *According to the Catechism, “The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.” Father Burke Masters says, “Grace is something that we can’t touch, it’s*

*unmerited, but it's the divine life God wants to give to us." Why is grace necessary to follow Christ? Why are the sacraments vital in the life of a Catholic?*

- 2) Zimmerer also speaks of how a man, as head of his family and domestic church, has a role as priest (in sacrificing for his family and leading the members in prayer and to the sacraments), prophet (teaching them truth) and king (virtuously leading the family).
- *What are some concrete examples of how a man exercises his priestly role? His prophetic role? His kingly role?*
  - *Examine your own experience with each of these roles. What are your strengths at each role? What are your weaknesses?*
  - *What specific resolutions can you make in order to become a more effective priest, prophet and king for your family?*
- 3) Matthew James Christoff speaks of how men, when they experience marital problems, will talk to a friend or a counselor, but "the greatest balm that can happen in a marriage is for a man and woman to kneel before Christ having confessed their sins and to receive the Eucharist."
- *If you are married, where do you turn when you encounter difficulties in your relationship, either on your own or as a couple?*
  - *How comfortable are you and your wife in honestly discussing your conflicts and receiving critique from one another, and even praying about your relationship issues together?*

- *How can a couple turning to confession and the Eucharist together help resolve discord? What steps could a couple take toward receiving the sacraments together with this purpose in mind?*

4) In this episode, Dr. Paul Thigpen characterizes confession as a “field hospital” where we can be healed of the wounds of sin in the midst of our spiritual battle. Jeff Cavins says of confessing our sins, “Be honest about what you’ve done. Own up to it as a man and take the medicine, because God wants you to be restored more than you want to be restored.”

- *Why is the honesty and humility required to confess our sins something many men find difficult?*
- *Does the image of this sacrament as a “field hospital” for healing us—restoring us for the spiritual battle—help men regard this sacrament in a more positive way? Why or why not?*
- *Jared Zimmerer refers to confession as “a sacrament of grit,” since we must keep returning to the sacrament regularly to get the full benefit, even if we confess the same sins over and over. How does that “grit” characterize a masculine approach to engaging in spiritual battle?*

5) Dr. Tim Gray says that the Mass—as the celebration of Christ’s sacrifice—reminds us that Christ is the absolute model of manhood in two stages: self-mastery (where we exercise natural virtue through self-discipline) and self-donation (where we practice supernatural virtue by making a gift of ourselves out of love for others). The Mass, he says, shows that “manhood is made for sacrifice and heroism.”



- *What are the essential aspects of heroism? How does the sacrifice of the Mass model heroism?*
- *Does the Mass help you live self-mastery and self-gift? If so, how?*
- *What practical steps can we take to live our lives according to the heroism we experience at Mass?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

*“This world is a battleground between heaven and hell, between good and evil. And so we need to put on, as Scripture says, the full armor of God. And part of that includes these incredibly powerful channels of grace called the sacraments. All the sacraments are gifts from Jesus that are powerhouses of grace that Jesus gives us to fortify us in the spiritual battle.” (Jim Burnham)*

*“A lot of people wonder, ‘How do I revitalize my marriage?’ Your marriage is also a source of unbelievable grace. So you need to unlock the superabundant graces, the gallons upon gallons of graces available in your own marriage. How do you do that? Get to confession. Get to the Eucharist. Stay in the state of grace, and your own marriage becomes a pipeline of supernatural grace. So the sacraments are some of the most powerful spiritual tools that we have.” (Jim Burnham)*

*“When a family worships together, it draws them together. It helps heal the inevitable little frictions and spats and other things that happen. So the Eucharist is a key for the whole Church, but especially for the domestic church that is the family.” (Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted)*

*“So a sacramental vision of the world is to see everything through the lens of God, to see things not just for their surface level but things that are much deeper, and what attributes of God does this thing represent. And it should guide our entire day. It should guide the fact that we are now literally representations of Jesus Christ in the world. How are you going to do that? You know, how are you going to live up to that calling?” (Jared Zimmerer)*

### **Sword of the Spirit**

*Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.” (John 6:53-57)*

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1 Corinthians 11:26-29)*

*[Jesus] said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” (John 20:21-23)*

[Jesus] said in reply, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” (Matthew 19:4-6)

## Call to Battle

**Participate in the Mass with fresh eyes.** In this episode, Jared Zimmerer challenges men to study the theology and meaning of the Mass. Take him up on that challenge. Our liturgy is filled with Scripture, symbolism and history. Understanding the rituals, gestures and prayers will enrich your appreciation of the liturgy and the Eucharist. Consider the Knights of Columbus Catholic Information Series booklets *Introduction to Catholic Liturgy*, *Introduction to the Sacraments* and *The Eucharist*. (For more information, see the appendix.)

**Tour your own parish church.** Stay after Mass at your parish and walk around the church to notice the symbolism throughout its art and structures. If you are unsure what a particular symbol or image means, look it up or ask your parish priest. If you have younger children, take them through your church occasionally and point out the parts of the church, the tabernacle, the images in the stained glass, the stations of the cross, and the statuary to help them understand what each represents.

**Make confession a family activity.** Make a habit of taking the whole family to confession once a month. Train them in examining their consciences and model for them the regular practice of visiting the “field hospital” for the spiritual battle.

## **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.*

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# SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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## 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) In the “Spiritual Warfare” episode, Ryan Young warns us that “There is a war for our souls.” Father Charles Goraieb says, “Every single person who wants to serve the Lord finds themselves at war with Satan—not because we ask for it, but because that is the nature of Satan. He detests what a good Catholic man stands for.”

- *Do you think of yourself as constantly in a spiritual war? Do you live your life as a spiritual warrior, or do you find yourself pretending it is peacetime?*
- *Father Goraieb goes on to state that temptation is our most universal experience of spiritual warfare. What are some of the common temptations Satan uses to attack men today?*
- *What are some quick strategies men can employ to combat temptation whenever it strikes?*

2) In the episode, the Eucharist, confession, prayer and the rosary are all called “weapons.”

- *What sort of “weapons” are things like the Eucharist or the rosary? What is the sources of their power?*
- *How “skilled” are you in wielding these weapons? How can you grow in your ability to use them?*
- *What does the nature of these weapons tell us about the battle we are in?*

3) Steve Greene tell a story where he went to confession and the priest looked at him and said, “The devil wants to destroy your family, but he has to come through you to get them.”

- *What do you think Greene meant by this? Do you take this threat seriously? If so, how do you respond to this threat? If not, how can you better address this reality?*
- *Bishop Thomas Olmsted says, “Not only does God have a plan for your life, so does Satan.” What is Satan’s plan for your life? How is he trying to accomplish it?*
- *How is the devil trying to destroy your family? How does a father and husband protect his family against Satan’s attacks?*

4) Don O’Mara, who in this episode tells his story of recovery from abuse and addiction, credits his prayer life and the sacraments for giving him strength in the spiritual battle.

- *How committed are you to regular prayer? How do you pray?*

- O'Mara says, "When you have a prayer life, you can take a storm and survive." What does this mean? How can a prayer life help a man survive the "storms" he may be faced with?
- O'Mara compares sins to stones that we carry on our back until we unload them in confession. How frequently do you "unload" your burden of "stones" in confession? How do you prepare yourself for receiving the grace of this sacrament?

5) This episode describes how the devil uses pornography as a tool to attack men. Father Burke Masters describes how some men who view pornography excuse it by saying it is "just a weakness that I have" or that a lot of other men also struggle with it.

- *How widespread is the viewing of pornography among men?*
- *Why has the use of pornography grown in our society? What sort of damage does it do to men, women, families and society?*
- *What concrete actions can men take to avoid temptation toward pornography and related sins?*

### **Bricks for the Breach**

*"Satan is like a military strategist or commander that will prowl outside the walls of your fortress, being your soul. And he'll look at where your defenses are weakest—you know, is it the pride, is it the anger, is it the lust—because where the defenses are weakest, that's where he wants to break in to get into the fortress itself." (Jason Evert)*

*"As Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati said, 'To live without faith, without a patrimony to defend, without a steady struggle for truth – that is*



*not living, but existing.’ Are you and I merely existing? Or are we living our Christian faith as men fully alive?” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“If we think of soldiers who do not remain in strong physical and mental shape and who fail to practice the essential combat arts, we know they will not be ready for battle and will be a danger to themselves and their comrades in arms. The same is true for Catholic men; those who do not prepare and strengthen themselves for spiritual combat are incapable of filling the breach for Christ.” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“Be bold. Know that this is real. Don’t be fearful, because Jesus Christ is far more powerful than Satan. If Jesus is the platform on which we stand, we are victorious. But there is a fight, and there’s no getting around it.” (Father Charles Goraieb)*

## **Sword of the Spirit**

*Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for battle, my fingers for war. (Psalms 144:1)*

***Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for [someone] to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings. (1 Peter 5:8-9)***

***“The Lord says to you: Do not fear or be dismayed at the sight of this vast multitude, for the battle is not yours but God’s.” (2 Chronicles 20:15)***

*Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood*

*but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:11-17)*

*But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)*

## **Call to Battle**

**Go to confession monthly.** Jesus called upon all men to repent. The powerful grace of the sacrament of confession provides us with his grace to help in our spiritual struggles. Taking advantage of this grace with a good confession monthly is an invaluable tool for staying on the right path. Prepare for confession using the Knights of Columbus' "Guide to Confession," available online through Catholic Information Service. (For more information, see the appendix.)

**Learn more about the medal of St. Benedict.** One of the most powerful sacramentals for spiritual combat is the St. Benedict Medal. This medal is rich in symbolism and meaning and a powerful weapon against evil. Consider wearing a St. Benedict Medal, and make sure you have a priest bless the medal with the blessing of the medal of St. Benedict. Part of the blessing reads, "In the name of God the Father almighty, who made heaven and earth, the seas and all that is

in them, I exorcise these medals against the power and attacks of the evil one.”

**Make St. Michael your friend.** As a regular part of your daily prayer, or perhaps with your family at the dinner table, pray the Prayer to St. Michael for the intention of protecting your family from Satan’s influence.

### **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.*

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# EVANGELIZATION

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## 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.*

Pause for a few moments of silent recollection.

## Understanding the Breach

1) The “Evangelization” episode speaks of evangelization as invitation, as helping people come to know the “one thing that matters,” which is Jesus Christ.

- *Have you ever shared with someone why you are Catholic? Or have you ever invited a non-Catholic or a lapsed Catholic to attend Mass with you? Why or why not? Would you find asking such a question or issuing such an invitation difficult?*
- *Mark Houck recalls the “old evangelization” which left it to the priests and religious to be the “holy ones” who would evangelize the world, but Pope St. John Paul II reminded us that all the faithful are called to evangelize. Why are some men afraid or hesitant to answer that call?*
- *Thomas Wurtz says evangelization is not rooted in arrogance, but in sharing a message that brings fulfillment and salvation.*

*It is not about “winning the argument,” but about telling someone else the good news that there is a creator who loves them, has a plan for them and offers the healing power of mercy. In what ways do we share our faith arrogantly? How can we talk about our Catholic faith without sounding arrogant?*

2) The New Evangelization challenges us to share the good news of Jesus Christ with “competing cultures” in our cities and neighborhoods. “If I’m a man, I’m called to pass on the faith,” says Father Mike Schmitz. “If I’m a man, I’m called to live the faith.” Stepping into the breach, adds Ryan Young, means getting out of our “comfort zone.”

- *Steve Greene suggests men start evangelizing locally, with their own families. In what specific ways might you “start locally” within your family, or with your friends or co-workers?*
- *Ryan Young says it’s easy to hide or do nothing, but if we love the people we encounter, we will want them to know the truth about Christ. Through our presence and our friendships, we can lead others to Christ. How can we share the truth about Christ through friendship? Why is true friendship often vital in evangelization?*
- *We are all called to be disciples of Christ and to lead others to follow him. Matthew James Christoff imagines Christ at the judgment asking us, “Show me your disciples.” Who presently are your “disciples,” whom you are leading to Christ through your word and example? How do you best lead others to Christ? What is God asking you to do to better in order to lead others to his son?*

3) Mark Bartek speaks of our tendency to “compartmentalize everything,” including faith. But, he says, “Our faith is meant to motivate and inspire and encourage and impact every aspect of our life. We are called to put our faith in action in absolutely every way.”

- *Why do some men compartmentalize their faith—for example, by keeping faith out of their workplace, their business or financial decisions, or their personal relationships?*
- *In what ways have you, now or in the past, tended to compartmentalize your faith?*
- *What have you done—or what concretely can you do—to ensure your Catholic faith permeates all areas of your daily life?*

4) Ryan Young recalls asking “the big questions” in high school: What is the meaning or purpose of life? Does God really exist, and if so, does he care?

- *How would you answer those questions if asked by your teenage son or daughter?*
- *Young admits instilling faith in children is difficult, and that parents can't force it upon them. However, he also says the path can be made “as obvious and prevalent as possible.” How, then, can a man make the Catholic faith as attractive as possible so that his children are more likely to embrace it willingly and enthusiastically?*
- *Young runs a Eucharist-centered camp for teenagers. He says the attendees at the camp “are uniquely Catholic after the*

*event.” What is it about an encounter with Christ in the Eucharist that makes someone “uniquely Catholic”? How can you deepen this encounter in your own life? How can a father foster this experience of the Eucharist in the lives of his children?*

5) Dr. Tim Gray references Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Protestant theologian killed by the Nazis, as once stating that American Christians love tolerance over truth, and if we’re not willing to fight for the truth, we likely won’t be willing to fight for anything, leaving men without a mission.

- *Tolerance in moderation can be a good thing, but taken to the extreme it can lead a society to believe that there is no such thing as absolute truth, only “my truth” or “your truth”. What examples can you offer of how our culture and society today favor tolerance over truth?*
- *How does a cultural preference for tolerance over truth make it hard to discuss the truth with others? What virtues and personal skills must men exercise when discussing the truths of the Catholic faith with others?*
- *What particular strategies can men use to stand up for the truth when they encounter violations of the truth in school, the workplace or social situations?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

*“The joy of the Gospel is stronger than the sadness wrought by sin! A throw-away culture cannot withstand the new life and light that constantly radiates from Christ. So I call upon you to open your minds*



*and hearts to Him, the Savior who strengthens you to step into the breach!” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“[A] new apostolic moment is upon us at this time in the history of the Church. The Holy Spirit is bringing about what recent popes have termed the ‘New Evangelization.’ By evangelization, we mean the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by all means available, such as preaching, teaching, witnessing a fruitful and faithful family life, living celibacy for the sake of God’s Kingdom, employing media and other arts placed at the service of the Gospel.” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“Why do we evangelize? I think we can look to Jesus as the primary evangelizer. He said, ‘I no longer call you servants because the servant doesn’t know what the Master is up to. I now call you friends.’ The ancient Greek philosophers considered it impossible to have friendship with the gods. They’re just too unlike us. Well, when God comes down to our level, he does so to raise us up to his level. If friendship in fact is the message that we share, it also ought to be the way that we share it, because friendship is what makes the gospel more than rhetoric. It’s what makes it reality.” (Dr. Scott Hahn)*

***“The key to living the faith isn’t hitting people upside the head with a catechism. The key is to be Christ to others. So one of the things that we have to recognize with regard to conversion is that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. You know we can plant seeds, but it’s the Holy Spirit that causes them to flourish.” (Kevin Lowry)***

*“[N]o culture—deeply Christian though it may be—is immune to the corruption of half-truths and hidden sin. Many fruits of our Christian heritage still exist, but the roots below the soil are under siege. Much*

*about our culture remains good and must be preserved, but it would be foolish to ignore the current and growing trends that threaten the remaining good, and dangerous to risk squandering the patrimony with which we have been blessed. The answer and only ultimate solution is the New Evangelization of which we speak.” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

## **Sword of the Spirit**

*So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. (2 Corinthians 5:20)*

*But you are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)*

*Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear... (1 Peter 3:15-16)*

*When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning. (John 15:26-27)*

*The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:16-20)*

## Call to Battle

**Share your story of faith.** Take the advice offered in this episode: identify at least one member of your family or a friend with whom to better share your faith. As Darrell Miller says, simply share your story of what God has done in your life. Ask the other person about their story and if they see God as being present in their life.

**Serve the least among us.** Perhaps you already participate in a parish ministry that serves the poor or needy. If not, consider selecting a charity or ministry at your parish and begin volunteering on a regular basis as you are able. Serving the needy is a vital way to share Christ's love and witness to your faith.

**Order your time to God.** Ryan Young says that his life and time is God's. At the end of each day for a period of time (perhaps a week or a month), examine how you used your time that day. Reflect on where you used your time well, where you wasted it, and what you did and didn't do. Write down specific things you plan to do to better utilize your limited time, giving special emphasis on spending time with God in prayer and with your family.

## 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.*



# THE CORNERSTONE

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## 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) In “The Cornerstone” episode, Shane Kapler says, “We have to make sure our house is built on the rock, because honestly that’s the only thing that withstands the storm. Everything else in our life can disappear: job, our physical home, the people that are closest to us, they can be taken away. But Christ is the rock that does not move; he is stationary, from this world into the next. He’s the only foundation that will take us through death.”

- *What does it mean to build your life on Christ? What sort of things does this entail doing or not doing? What does a life built on Christ look like?*
- *What are some instances where you or people you know failed to make Christ the foundation? What was the result of this?*
- *The saints are exemplars of those who have built their lives on Christ. They lived so as to prefer nothing whatsoever to God*

*and did everything for his sake. How does reading the lives of the saints help us to understand more concretely how to build our lives on Christ?*

2) Today, the question of what is the meaning of life is often treated as an unanswerable question, a futile query. However, Jim Burnham says, “If you’re a thinking person, you’ve asked yourself that question: why am I here? And I go back to the *Baltimore Catechism*: to know him, to love him, to serve him in this life, so that we can be happy with him in the life to come.”

- *Why is it important to know the purpose of your life?*
- *Many people today would be unable to articulate any thought-out answer to the question, “What is the meaning of life?” The result is widespread confusion about why we are alive and how to live. What are some of the effects of this lack of purpose in the lives of individuals and the larger society?*
- *How do the lives of those who seek to know, love and serve God differ from those who seek other things in life? What are some specific and concrete things we can do to grow in the three areas of knowing, loving and serving God?*

3) In “The Cornerstone” episode, Father John Parks emphasizes that God’s one and only plan for every man is that he become a saint.

- *To be a saint ultimately means to be with God in heaven. So, God’s plan for every man is that he get to heaven. Is this your primary goal in life, or do you find yourself pursuing other more worldly goals, such as pleasure, wealth, fame or success? How can we better commit ourselves to becoming a saint and getting to heaven above all else?*

- *The saints are holy, which means they practice “heroic virtue.” Do you seek to practice the virtues—such as courage, justice and hope—in your own life? What does it mean to practice these virtues in a “heroic” way?*
- *Cristofer Pereyra says in the episode that striving for holiness is to imitate Christ and to do everything out of love. Recall also that Christ said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). What can a man do to make sure that he is motivated by love when it comes to fulfilling his duties (to his wife, family, employer, neighbor or God) and keeping God’s laws?*

4) Matthew James Christoff stresses the need for men to discipline themselves to a life of prayer, examination of conscience, reading Scripture, attending Mass, going to confession and building fraternity with other men of faith.

- *Does this level of discipline seem realistic for you to attain in your own life? How many of these disciplines do you presently practice faithfully?*
- *Which aspects of these disciplines would you find most difficult or challenging, and why?*
- *What concrete steps can you take to “build up” to this level and rhythm of attention to prayer and the interior life?*

5) Clarence Gilyard and other speakers in the “The Cornerstone” episode discuss how everything is a gift from God and we must have an outlook of gratitude. Even our achievements are the result of the talents, abilities, and help God has given us. As St. Paul said, we are powerless in ourselves and utterly dependent upon God.

- *Manhood often seems to be seen as primarily about “power,” whether it be authority and physical strength or things like one’s capacity to drink alcohol or endure hardship. Men often are tempted to think of themselves as self-sufficient and radically independent of others. Why is it difficult for some men to admit they are ultimately powerless and in need of God’s strength and guidance?*
- *So often people focus on the things that they feel are going wrong in life, rather than everything that is going right. How does one start to look at the things of life with gratitude, rather than seeing only the negative aspects or taking things for granted?*
- *Gilyard explains, “As I say in my acting classes, life is messy, man. It really is. But God’s got it all under control... I’m a lot more trusting.” How do we grow in trust of God? How do we begin to live our lives so that God is truly the foundation of everything we do?*

## **Bricks for the Breach**

***“What is the meaning of life? God created us out of nothing, in love. He loved us into existence, and the whole reason he created us was that he wanted us to have the possibility of living with him forever in perfect joy. The meaning of life is found in that.” (Dr. Paul Thigpen)***

*“If somebody says I don’t have time to pray, I would ask them how many times they’ve looked at their phone today, how many podcasts they’ve listened to, how many Netflix episodes that they’ve watched. It’s not that we don’t have time to pray, it’s that we don’t have love to pray.” (Matt Fradd)*



*“So a man needs to build in his own heart, through his own virtue, through his own daily prayer what it means to be a man of God, to really seek God's will. From there he can ask the Holy Spirit to teach me how to lead my family. And the Holy Spirit will do it. The Holy Spirit will guide him.” (Father John Parks)*

*“A true Catholic man stakes his whole life on this proposition—that all is made new in Jesus Christ. Our Lord has promised that He is and will always be with us. Thus, Catholic men across the centuries have responded to the call to enter the battle, ever ancient and ever new, and I have confidence that you will respond alike to fill the breach in our time. Be confident! Be bold! Forward, into the breach!” (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

## **Sword of the Spirit**

*“Have you not read this scripture passage: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes?’” (Mark 12:10-12)*

*This is the Lord's own gate, through it the righteous enter. I thank you for you answered me; you have been my savior. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad. (Psalms 118:20-24)*

*“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them. That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built.” (Luke 6:46-48)*

*So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)*

## **Call to Battle**

**Make time for prayer.** Matt Fradd says that it’s “just a lie that we don’t have time to pray.” You cannot make Christ the foundation of your life without regular prayer. What do you do now to “kill time” during the day or between tasks? What mindless habits or wastes of time do you engage in? Try to identify some of these things in your life—such as surfing TV channels before dinner or scrolling through social media before bed—and instead set aside that time to pray and put your focus on Christ.

**Get with the program.** Matthew James Christoff’s call to discipline your life is necessary for any man seeking to build his life on Christ. Write down a rule or plan of life with specific actions to better and more consistently practice your faith, with a special focus on prayer and the sacraments. Make the plan challenging, but realistic—there is always room to grow. Modify it at the beginning if you find certain aspects work or don’t work for you.

**List your gifts.** It can help us build our life on Christ by remembering what he has done for us, which is everything. Everything good in our life is a gift of God. Reflect on all the gifts God has given you and write them down. Add to the list and revisit it often. Try to focus on the

positives, the good things in your life, and give thanks for them constantly.

## **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.*



## APPENDIX

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### Definitions

**Abstinence** - Not eating meat or foods prepared with meat on those days prescribed by the Church as penitential (Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all Fridays of the year which are not solemnities—in the United States, not all Fridays of the year but only the Fridays of Lent).

**Apologetics** - The science and art of developing and presenting the case for the reasonableness of the Christian faith. The goal of apologetics is preparation for response to God in faith.

**Aspiration** - Short exclamatory prayer; e.g., “My Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

**Capital Sins** - Sins which give rise to other sins: pride, avarice, lust, wrath (anger), gluttony, envy, sloth.

**Cardinal Virtues** - The four principal moral virtues: prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude (courage).

**Catechism** - A systematic presentation of the fundamentals of Catholic doctrine regarding faith and morals.

**Charisms** - Gifts or graces given by God to persons for the good of others and the Church. Examples are special gifts for apostolic work, prophecy, healing, discernment of spirits, the life of evangelical poverty, here and now witness to faith in various circumstances of life.

**Evangelization** - Proclamation of the Gospel, the good news of salvation in and through Christ, among those who have not yet known or received it; and efforts for the progressive development of the life of faith among those who have already received the Gospel and all

that it entails. Evangelization is the primary mission of the Church, in which all members of the Church are called to participate.

**Fortitude** - Courage to face dangers or hardships for the sake of what is good; one of the four cardinal virtues and one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**Gifts of the Holy Spirit** - Supernatural habits given through the Holy Spirit, especially in the sacrament of confirmation. They are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord.

**Grace** - The free and undeserved gift that God gives us to respond to our call to become his adopted children. There are three kinds of grace: (a) sanctifying grace, by which God shares his divine life and friendship with us in a habitual gift; (b) actual grace, by which God gives us the help to conform our lives to his will; (c) sacramental grace and special graces (charisms, the grace of one's state of life), which are gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us live out our Christian vocation.<sup>1</sup>

**Magisterium** - The Church's teaching authority, instituted by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, which seeks to safeguard and explain the truths of the faith.

**Penance** - The spiritual change or conversion of mind and heart by which a person turns away from sin toward God through a personal renewal under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Penance involves sorrow and contrition for sin. It serves the purposes of re-establishing in one's life the order of God's love and commandments and of making satisfaction to God for sin.

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Church. (2000). Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed., p. 881). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

**Prayer** - The raising of the mind and heart to God in adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and petition. Prayer, which is always mental because it involves thought and love of God, may be vocal, meditative, private and personal, social, and official. The official prayer of the Church as a worshipping community is called the liturgy.

**Redeemer/Redemption** - Jesus Christ is the redeemer of mankind. Christ paid the price of his own sacrificial death on the cross to set us free from the slavery of sin, thus achieving our redemption.<sup>2</sup>

**Relativism** - Theory which holds that all truth, including religious truth, is relative, i.e., not absolute, certain or unchanging. Relativism is based on the idea that certain knowledge of any and all truth is impossible. It considers all religions, philosophies and sciences to have as much or as little truth as any of the others.

**Sin** - Actual sin is the free and deliberate violation of God's law by thought, word or action. There are two types. (a) Mortal sin—involving serious matter, sufficient reflection and full consent—results in the loss of sanctifying grace and alienation from God, and renders a person incapable of performing meritorious supernatural acts and subject to everlasting punishment. (b) Venial sin—involving less serious matter, reflection and consent—does not have such serious consequences.

**Theological Virtues** - The three virtues which have God for their direct object: (a) faith, or belief in God's infallible teaching; (b) hope, or confidence in divine assistance; (c) charity, or love of God. They are given to a person through the sacrament of baptism and incorporation in Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Catholic Church. (2000). Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed., p. 896). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

**Vice** - A habit acquired by repeated sin. The vices are often linked with the seven capital sins. Repentance for sin and confession may restore grace to a soul, but the removal of the ingrained disposition to sin or vice requires much effort and self-denial, until the contrary virtue is acquired.<sup>3</sup>

**Virtue** - A habit or established capability for performing good actions. Virtues are natural (acquired and increased by repeating good acts) and/or supernatural (given with grace by God).

**Vocation** - A call to a way of life. Generally, the term applies to the common call of all persons, from God, to holiness and salvation. Specifically, it refers to particular states of life, each called a vocation, in which response is made to this universal call; viz., (a) marriage; (b) the consecrated life and/or priesthood or diaconate; (c) the single state freely chosen or accepted for the accomplishment of God's will. The term also applies to the various occupations in which persons make a living.

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<sup>3</sup> Catholic Church. (2000). Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed., p. 903). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.



## **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.

In over 70 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, visit [kofc.org/cis](http://kofc.org/cis).

### **Recommended CIS Resources**

Building the Domestic Church Series: *Into the Breach* (#340)

Luke E. Hart Series: *Introduction to Catholic Liturgy* (#111)

Luke E. Hart Series: *Introduction to the Sacraments* (#112)

Luke E. Hart Series: *The Eucharist* (#114)

Luke E. Hart Series: *Penance* (#115)

Luke E. Hart Series: *Virtues and Vices* (#124)

Veritas Series: *Passion and Paradox: The Leadership Genius of Jesus Christ* (#343)

Devotional Series: *Guide to Confession* (#2075)

Devotional Series: *A Guide to Praying the Rosary* (#4772)

Veritas Series: *The Way of the Cross: Traditional and Modern Meditations* (#363)

Building the Domestic Church Series: *Prayer Time* (#309)

Building the Domestic Church Series: *A Scriptural Rosary for the Family* (#319)

## **Faith in Action**

The Knights of Columbus offers men a place to lead their families and communities in faith and service and put their faith into action.

Faith in Action is the new program model of the Knights of Columbus. This model offers a mission driven platform designed to consider the needs of men and their families in the 21st century. Knights of Columbus members, parishes, and families have the opportunity to make a meaningful difference through the 32 Faith in Action programs.

Organized into the Faith, Family, Community and Life categories, the Faith in Action program model empowers Knights to come together to share their Catholic faith, celebrate fraternity with loved ones, and do what they do best—stand shoulder to shoulder in service to the community and to defend life at all stages and in every condition.

For more info on how the Knights can help you live your faith in action, visit [kofc.org/faithinaction](http://kofc.org/faithinaction).



**Watch *Into the Breach***  
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