

# 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.*

