

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 “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.)

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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