

EPISODE 3: THE GIFT OF CHILDREN

Opening Prayer

St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

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

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

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

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

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

Begin with a few moments of silent recollection.

Understanding the Breach

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

- c. *Like the love of the Trinity, the Church calls spouses to seek to love freely, totally, faithfully, and fruitfully, as mentioned in this episode. The “questions of consent” in a Catholic wedding refer to all four of these essential qualities of commitment.*
- i. Why is freedom so important for authentic love?*
 - ii. Totality?*
 - iii. Faithfulness?*
 - iv. Fruitfulness?*
- 2) As Dr. Patrick Yeung mentions, echoing the Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 2378, children are “the supreme gift of marriage.” Perhaps nowhere is our culture more tragically off-point than in this area of gratitude for the gift of a child.
- a. In the witness segment of this video, both Patrick and Dorothy Yeung mention the pain and shock of the experience of infertility. What is most striking about their witness to you?*
 - b. How does the story of the Yeung family testify in a special way that children are a gift?*
- 3) Several important challenges are mentioned in this episode about the formation and education of children.
- a. Dr. Jeanne Schindler points to the power of the “ethos” of the home. We could call this the “way the family behaves” or the “rhythm of life” in the home. How do you know without being told that a family is Catholic when you enter their home?*
 - b. Education decisions are very important. With the many choices parents make as the first educators of their children, what priorities should parents use to guide these decisions?*

- c. *Celebration in the home is very powerful. How did birthday, Christmas and other celebrations go in your family? What is your memory of these events? What would you like to add to celebrations? What would you like to change?*

Bricks for the Breach

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

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

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

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

Christian marriage is not fulfilled as it’s designed simply by the couple looking into one another’s eyes, though that is crucial, and that’s a starting point. But it’s also looking into the eyes of these

others that they have created with God's original help. It's now engaged in this enterprise of bringing children forth for the kingdom of God. (Dr. Jeanne Schindler)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sword of the Spirit

MALE, FEMALE AND CHILDREN: THE FIRST BLESSING OF GOD

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

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

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

GOD'S GIFT OF A HOME AND CHILDREN

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

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

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

*Blessed is the man who has filled his quiver with them.
(Psalm 127:1a, 3-5a)*

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

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

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

Call to Battle

1. **Children are a gift: Learning in order to form ourselves and our children.**
 - a. Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), sections 2373-2379, entitled "The gift of a child" as a couple or family, depending on the age of children. These topics touch on the

important considerations regarding God's gift of every human life.

- b. In particular, the issue of in vitro fertilization and other violations of the dignity of human life in the area of infertility are discussed in CCC section 2376-2377.
2. Add an **image or symbol of the Faith** to your home. Depending on what would be most needed or helpful in your home, add one or more of the following:
 - a. A Crucifix—the image of Jesus' passion and death for our salvation forms our understanding of love more than any other Catholic image we can display.
 - i. Some Catholic cultures regularly place a crucifix in each room of the house to emphasize Christ's redemption over all creation.
 - b. An Icon of the Holy Family—many beautiful versions exist. This image speaks the beauty of unity and family, as well as masculine, feminine, and child-like virtue without a word.
 3. Invite a **priest or deacon to do a formal blessing** of your home from the Book of Blessings. The Church understands each Christian home to be “a domestic church”. This blessing provides a spiritual cleansing and dignifies every room of the home in a beautiful way. It is an important step in spiritually protecting your family.
 - a. If your home is already blessed, consider a **Consecration of your Family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**. This entails some special prayers and the installation of an image of the Sacred Heart somewhere prominent in your home. A priest or deacon can also help facilitate this special blessing.

Closing Prayer

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

Prayer for the Family from St. John Paul II

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

Father, You are Love and Life.

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

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

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

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

*Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out
her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.*

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

Amen.



The Holy Family, by Artist, Ruth A. Stricklin,
New Jerusalem Studios, Phoenix.

For reproductions please visit: www.njerusalemstudios.com

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

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



