

EPISODE 1: THE CATHOLIC FAMILY IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD

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) Times have changed for the family, for our families. We no longer live in a “Christendom” culture which thinks in a Christian way about everything. Rapidly, we are changing to an “apostolic age,” where, like the first apostles, we face assumptions, pressures and even institutions arrayed against the Faith, as well as against a happy and holy family life.
 - a. *Dr. Jeanne Schindler states, “In an earlier age, the entire culture was suffused with a Christian rhythm, Christian symbolism, Christian meaning, and that simply isn’t the case now.” What are some examples of the loss of the “rhythm” or symbols of Christian faith and family life in our culture?*
 - b. *In a Christendom age, the temptation for Christians is hypocrisy, to pretend faith, because it is socially advantageous to be Christian. In an apostolic age like our own, the temptation for Christians is cowardice – to back away from faith, from the tough stands the breaches facing our families will require of us. Do you sense this temptation*

- b. *How did you move forward in the face of these strong currents? What are some concrete and specific things you can do in your own family life to oppose these currents?*
- c. *What does the word “intentional” bring to mind for our families and homes?*

Bricks for the Breach

“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.” (Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted, *Into the Breach*)

“Christendom is a culture where people see with biblical lenses. There was a time certainly in the United States where more people than not saw everything through biblical lenses. Have we left Christendom behind? I think the answer is yes. Even those who go to church on a regular basis, I would say probably have mostly worldly minds with some Catholic patches, that every once in a while, somehow try to overlap.” (Fr. John Riccardo)

“To live in an apostolic age means like the early apostles, who were a small minority in a pagan society, and we have to realize that people around us have a pagan view, they don’t have a Christian view of God, and of the values of human life. And so we have to cherish and protect our values and be able to pass them on to our children.” (Dr. Tim Gray)

“Why can’t families, perhaps like they could 50 years ago, just go with the flow of the culture and be okay and stay strong in their faith and

stay united as a family. We know that that doesn't work anymore, because the flow will not take you downstream to a good place. These families from two generations ago, the grandparents are shocked. 'We did everything we thought we had to do and our kids have left the faith and our grandkids are a mile away from the faith.' It's just a different ballgame than it was." (Mike Phelan)

"I don't think there is a philosophy, there's a religion, there's a worldview that has a higher view of sex and marriage and family than the Catholic Church." (Fr. John Parks)

"It feels countercultural, and it feels also like a great mission. So we're gonna raise our children in such a way that feels like we're on a battlefield, which you know, is scary, but in God's providence, like we were made for a time such as this." (Brittany Kemp)

"It's critical to be intentional, because it means you're striving towards something and not just waiting for something to happen, but really putting in the effort to make something become what it ought to be." (Julie Alexander)

"In order for us to believe in the good news, we have to learn what the good news is, and our Church is full of resources that allows us to come to understand what marriage and family should be in the first place." (Greg Alexander)

"Finding the encouragement that you need as a Catholic family is always so much easier if you have community. So, look out into the community and see who is trying to live life like you, who is trying to honor God in everything that they do, who is trying to teach their children the same things that you're trying to teach your children. Find those people, surround yourself by those people." (Dr. Monique Ruberu, M.D.)

“When our Lord talked to the apostles, many of them, it’s safe to say, were not living a Christian existence. They came to it as adults. So, it is never too late to come to the faith as adults. Parents will say to me, ‘I regret, my children were 13 and 15 when I came to the faith, all those years I lost.’ You didn’t lose those years. You now can pray for your children. It is never too late to come to the faith. It is never too late to bring Christ into your family. Let Him take the work from there.”
(Dr. Ray Guarendi)

“In a certain sense the family doesn’t need to be saved insofar as it’s real, and it’s natural, and we didn’t make it (up), so we don’t have to gin it up or create it on our own. The family is given to us; it responds to the deepest chords of our nature. So, we simply need to be faithful, listen to the way in which we’re attuned, and then make a deep dive into the Christian tradition for all the resources that are there to help us be true to this deep calling that in our heart of hearts we know to be true.” (Dr. Jeanne Schindler)

Sword of the Spirit

EVERY BUILDER WITH A SPADE AND SWORD TO REBUILD AND DEFEND

Our enemies thought, “Before they are aware of it or see us, we will come into their midst, kill them, and put an end to the work.”

I made an inspection, then addressed these words to the nobles, the magistrates, and the rest of the people: “Do not fear them! Keep in mind the LORD, who is great and to be feared, and fight for your kindred, your sons and daughters, your wives and your homes.” When our enemies realized that we had been warned and that God had upset their plan, we all went back, each to our own task at the wall. From that time on, however, only half my work force took a hand in the work, while the other half, armed with spears, bucklers, bows,

and breastplates, stood guard behind the whole house of Judah as they rebuilt the wall. The load carriers, too, were armed; each worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other. Every builder, while working, had a sword tied at his side. (Nehemiah 4:5, 8-9, 10-12b)

**THE LORD IS OUR SOURCE OF HOPE IN TIMES OF TROUBLE.
HE KNOWS WHAT WE ARE FACING.**

*If foundations are destroyed,
what can the just one do?”
The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD’s throne is in heaven.
God’s eyes keep careful watch;
they test the children of Adam. (Ps 11:3-4)*

INTENTIONAL FAITH IN THE HOME

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them on your arm as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

Call to Battle

1. **Spend an hour before the Blessed Sacrament, writing in response to the following questions:** (1) Where do I sense our marriage/family is succeeding in being a strong Catholic family? (2) Where do we need to be more intentional? (3) What is in the way of our family’s thriving in faith, hope and love? Trust that the

Eucharistic Lord is helping bring the truth forward to you. Share your thoughts with your spouse.

2. **Begin the weekly Couple or Family Rosary.** Satan hates it when the family prays. But how do we begin? On a day each week that works for the family schedule, pray the Rosary as a couple or as an entire family. This prayer takes 20-25 minutes. The Rosary has a remarkable capacity, by God's grace, for increasing peace and unity in relationships, especially if prayed regularly. It is in this way that we can practically experience how Mary brings us closer to her Son. If a full Rosary seems at this time too much to ask with younger children, begin with a decade of the Rosary together. Over time, invite each child to lead his or her own decade of the prayer. Further idea: have the family's favorite dessert after the Rosary.

3. **Keep the Sabbath Holy.** The word "holy" means "set apart". The enemy tempts us to make every day the same—work, distraction, and disconnection in our families. In order to embrace Sunday as the Lord commands—a seventh day to begin the week with Mass, rest, celebration, family and friendship—commit to keep this day free of unnecessary work, stress, technological distractions such as excessive screen time or phone use. Instead, make it a day of worship and fun—a holy day that is different from the other six—a day of building peace and good memories as a family and with friends, as God intended it for us.

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.

