

SACRAMENTAL LIFE

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.

NOTES
