

Leadership

Opening Prayer

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise, and ever rejoice in His Consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Pause for a few moments for silent recollection.]

Understanding the Breach

1) In the “Leadership” episode, Alexandre Havard says that leadership “is not about temperament, but about character. Leaders are not born; they’re made because they have practiced character.”

- *What are some character traits you might expect or want in a leader? Why?*
- *How would a man who wants to become a leader go about “practicing character”? What does this mean in real terms?*
- *Consider the character traits expected of a leader. Which traits are your strongest? Which can you improve upon? Come up with practical ways to “practice character” so as to build these leadership traits in yourself.*

2) The episode suggests that if a man has a false idea of humility, he might become spineless, a “pushover,” and abdicate his responsibility of service and leadership.

- *How can we distinguish false humility from true humility?*
- *What does the right kind of humility in leadership look like? Who are leaders either from history or today that exemplified humility?*
- *Cameron Thompson says meekness (control over anger) and zeal (“love in action”) must go together in leadership. How do these traits relate to the idea of servant leadership?*

3) Matt Birk describes how the “it’s all about you,” “do what you want,” “you deserve to be happy” message the culture sends communicates a perspective that we should “take care of me first and everyone else second.”

- *Sometimes we hear the metaphorical advice, “Put on your own oxygen mask first.” In what context is this good advice that supports servant leadership? Give an example from the Gospels of when Christ took time for himself and why.*
- *When is that poor advice that runs counter to true servant leadership? How can you tell when it is time to put others first and when you must take time for yourself?*
- *Robert Yates makes clear that leadership includes the “willingness to do those unpleasant tasks... to sweat and bleed and suffer with others.” What unpleasant tasks are your leadership responsibilities facing you with? How can you prepare to take on those tasks and not shirk them? How will others benefit from you bearing your burden of command?*
- *In your own life—in your marriage, your family, among those for whom you are a leader—in what specific ways can you do a better job at putting others ahead of yourself?*

4) The episode discusses the virtue of magnanimity. Merriam-Webster defines magnanimity as “loftiness of spirit enabling one to bear trouble calmly, to disdain meanness and pettiness, and to display a noble generosity.” Cameron Thompson describes it as “the habit of striving for greatness” and “the recognition that you were made worthy to accomplish great things.”

- *What does it mean to be “great,” to strive for greatness, or to be a great man? What sort of things does a great man do, or not do? What kind of characteristics does he have?*
- *What are some concrete ways you can practice magnanimity in your marriage, family life, and at work?*
- *Alexandre Havard says it is Christians who truly consider themselves worthy of great things because they are sons of God, and “there cannot be something higher than that.” How does being a “son of God” make us capable or worthy of achieving greatness?*

5) Thompson also says leadership is “pursuing and achieving greatness by bringing out the greatness in those that I lead.”

- *What are some of the positive gifts, interests and potentials that your family, friends, or co-workers possess? What are some particular ways that you might encourage them to develop and exercise those gifts, interests and potentials in a manner that leads them to greatness?*

- *At work or in your larger role in your community or society, what are some ways you can bring out greatness in your neighbors and fellow citizens?*
- *Additionally, Thompson says we not only need to restrain evil passions, but also “to energize noble passions.” What sort of noble passions can a man energize? How do you do this? Are there times in your life when others’ excitement about an idea or initiative helped you become passionate about it?*

Bricks for the Breach

“If you asked the average man, ‘Are you a good leader and protector and provider of your family?’ The vast majority are doing their best. They are trying to lead and protect their families. But the goods in the material world are temporary. If we really want to do the best for our wives and our children, we have to lead them to eternity.” (Matthew James Christoff)

“So as fathers, I think you can have two extremes. You can have the extreme of ‘I just bark orders and expect you to follow.’ Or this idea of ‘I’m just not connected. I just kind of go through the motions.’ And the idea of servant leadership looks at the virtue, the middle ground, of saying. ‘What do I need to do to help my children excel, to know Christ, but also how do I shape them as a human being?’ And so it’s truly looking to say, ‘What do I need to do to serve?’ and then doing it.” (Thomas Wurtz)

“Often we confuse leadership with merely being in a position of power. These are the leaders because they have power, or these are the leaders because they have influence. This isn’t true leadership, necessarily. Leadership is the virtues specifically of magnanimity and humility. Magnanimity is the habit of striving for greatness. It’s the recognition that you are made worthy to accomplish great things. And humility is the habit of living in the truth, which means the truth about myself, and the truth about others – that is to say, self-knowledge, which can then flow through my skills, my talents, my gifts, and my virtues into service of the others.” (Cameron Thompson)

“Self-mastery is about restraining evil passions and desires, but also I need to energize noble passions. If you simply restrain, you become boorish and tasteless. You need to be able to yourself be excited and be driven because then you can draw other people along with you and help them achieve truly great things. Life is short, and eternity is long. We may like the idea of virtuous leadership, we may be inspired by the idea of going into the breach, but so long as we remain sitting in our chairs and not jumping in, we remain just spectators. We’re not engaging in the fight.” (Cameron Thompson)

“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)

Sword of the Spirit

When the just flourish, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan. (Proverbs, 29:2)

[L]earn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow. (Isaiah 1:17)

[F]or if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of the church of God? (1 Timothy 3:5)

“Now, Lord, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed David my father; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act—I, your servant, among the people you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil. For who is able to give judgment for this vast people of yours?” The Lord was pleased by Solomon’s request. (1 Kings 3:7-10)

So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” (John 13:12-15)

Call to Battle

Pray like Solomon. One of the essential virtues of any leader is wisdom. Solomon prayed for wisdom, or discernment. Like Solomon, pray for wisdom and set aside some time each week to read the Book of Ecclesiastes or the Book of Proverbs to meditate on the nature of wisdom.

Strive for great things. If the virtue of magnanimity involves striving for great things, work to develop this virtue in your own life by examining what you are striving for. Are the true aims of your life things like money, pleasure, “down time,” watching sports and avoiding “hassle”? Or do you have nobler goals such as growing in virtue, fighting injustice, serving your community and leading your family? Identify one “great thing” you would like to strive for in your life and write down specific ways you can move toward that goal.

Read about leaders. The world is in great need of good leadership. Pick a leader from history (such as Abraham Lincoln or Pope St. John Paul II) you especially admire and find a biography about him. As you read the book, write down leadership lessons, practices and principles you identify that you can integrate into your own life. Refer back to the list regularly (and perhaps expand it through further reading over time) to reflect on whether and how you are incorporating its contents into your own leadership style.

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.