

## Prayer

### 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.*

[Begin with a few moments for silent recollection.]

### Understanding the Breach

1) The “Prayer” episode emphasizes that men need to make prayer a priority in their daily lives.

- *What is prayer? Why is it important to pray?*
- *Do you presently set aside time each day for personal prayer? If not, what are some ways you can arrange your day to spend some time with God?*
- *The episode speaks of how men can integrate prayer into their daily lives. In addition to personal prayer time, what else can men do to stay mindful of God’s presence throughout the day?*

2) Jared Zimmerer says, “You look at some of the most manly cultures that we admire: the Spartans, they prayed; the Romans, they prayed; the American Cherokee, they prayed; you know, the Samurai, they prayed. Like all of these warrior cultures, everyone single one of them, prayed. Prayer, even outside of a Christian context, has always been part of what it means to be a man, because you’re realizing that there is something higher than yourself, and you are called to service of that thing.”

- *Is it manly to pray? Why, as Dr. David Bushman indicates, do some men feel discouraged from praying, as though prayer is unmanly?*
- *How is it manly to recognize a higher demand on your allegiance and to willingly devote yourself in service to that thing?*
- *How does prayer express itself in the life of a warrior or warrior culture (whether ancient warrior cultures or in modern militaries today)? How are all of us called to pray as warriors regardless of our job or vocation?*
- *Many Christian communities have moved away from “harder,” more masculine forms of prayer and piety in favor of a “softer” spirituality. How*

*does this shift negatively affect the participation of men in churches? What types of prayer do men find most attractive and fulfilling?*

3) The Church has been referred to as a “field hospital,” a place where we find mercy and healing from our wounds in battle.

- *Given this understanding, what should be a man’s disposition when approaching God in prayer or the sacraments?*
- *In this episode, Father John Lankeit reminds us, “We don’t pray because we’re good and because we’re holy. Going to church and submitting ourselves to the Lord, He makes us holy in the process of doing that... It’s not our effort.” He says failing to understand this fact is “probably the biggest obstacle to the Lord making us into saints.” Why is that?*
- *Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers speaks of the “Goliaths” in each of our lives—the addictions, sins or weaknesses that holds us back as men, but which can be defeated by prayer. What is the “Goliath” in your own life that you need to slay with God’s help?*

4) The episode stresses the importance of a father modeling prayer, setting an example for his children.

- *What are some ways families can pray together? How can a father incorporate prayer into his family’s life in an effective way without it seeming burdensome or boring?*
- *If you are a father, how do you communicate to your children how important prayer is in their life—and in your own life?*
- *How can children tell whether their father is just “going through the motions” in prayer?*
- *Matt Birk says in the video that if a couple doesn’t keep God at the center of their marriage, there’s a good chance they will fail. If you are married, how much importance do you place in praying with your wife (outside of Mass and grace before meals)?*

5) Bob Feeney tells the story of his experience during the Vietnam War and his turning to the Mary in prayer after he was critically wounded in action while facing an overwhelming enemy force. He has remained devoted to Mary and encourages others to pray the rosary.

- *There is a wartime saying that “there are no atheists in foxholes,” suggesting that even nonbelievers will often turn to God in times of*

*extreme danger. When have you turned to prayer in desperate or fearful situations?*

- *How do we ensure that when we turn to God in desperate situations, we don't forget him and the help he gave us once the danger has passed?*
- *Deacon Sivers notes that many saints have called the rosary a "weapon" in the fight against sin. Dr. Scott Hahn refers to rosary beads as "beads for the battle" and "spiritual bullets" against the devil. What role does the rosary play in your own prayer life?*

6) "It's in the silence of our hearts that we hear the voice of God," says Mark Houck in the video.

- *Are you comfortable with silent meditation and contemplation as prayer? Why or why not?*
- *This episode encourages Eucharistic adoration as an ideal way for men to pray in silence in the presence of God. What is your experience with prayer before the Blessed Sacrament?*
- *Distraction is a particular challenge with prayer. What concrete steps can you take to battle such distractions in order to engage in more fruitful prayer?*

### **Bricks for the Breach**

*"[T]he Catechism says prayer is simply the raising of our mind to God. And we're called to have a deep, intimate personal relationship with God. I couldn't just show up on game day with no practice and hope to be a hall of famer. The same is true in our spiritual life. We need the discipline of our prayer life. We need to invest time every day in prayer." (Father Burke Masters)*

*"A man can either walk in pride and say, 'I don't need anyone's help.' Or a man, which I believe is true masculinity, can say, 'I know who I am in relationship to my heavenly Father and my King. And I am going to bow to him, and I am going to carry on a conversation with him and find out what does he want me to do.'" (Jeff Cavins)*

*"Indeed, the greatest protection from pride and self-reliance is turning humbly to God in prayer. The new technologies of social media where we can constantly display and discuss ourselves can lead to a type of idolatry that consumes us. Honest prayer will keep us grounded and help us to avoid this temptation." (Into the Breach: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men)*

*“Pope Benedict has said that the new springtime in the Church will come about through a prayerful reading of the Scriptures. And when we read the scriptures, it’s not just learning more about Jesus, it’s learning Jesus from our hearts, of who he really is, coming to know him as a man.” (Father John Parks)*

*“I would strongly urge men to go to Eucharistic adoration. All you have to do is go there and be before God. I always leave with a sense of consolation. I always leave with a sense of peace. When you’re discerning something in your life as a man, there is no better place to go than in the silence of Eucharistic adoration—not to discover what you want, but what is God’s will for you?” (Deacon Harold Burke Sivers)*

### **Sword of the Spirit**

*“But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” (Matthew 6:6-8)*

*Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. (Romans 12:11-12)*

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)*

*Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)*

### **Call to Battle**

**Plan for prayer.** Do you already set aside time each day for prayer? If not, start by setting aside a small block of time just as you might plan to work out or walk the dog. Ten minutes in the morning and at bedtime can be a good start. Other good prayer commitments might be to attend daily Mass, or make a brief visit the Blessed Sacrament for some quiet prayer in the presence of God every day. As much as possible, do this especially at your own parish church so as to strengthen the role of your parish as your spiritual community.

**Say a Decade a Day.** Start to pray with your family daily if you don't already. Praying the rosary as a family is the perfect way to do so. If timing and schedules are an issue or some family members are resistant to this new idea, try to simply start saying a single decade of the rosary each day (perhaps right after dinner) as a family for everyone's intentions.

**Be mindful of God's presence.** A good way to do this is through very short prayers (sometimes called "aspirations") scattered throughout your day whenever the opportunity presents itself—perhaps when whenever you stand up from your chair or check your smartphone. Have an arsenal of brief phrases on hand: "Thanks be to God," "God be praised," "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," or similar prayers. Write one of these aspirations down and put it somewhere you will see it regularly (in your wallet, on the refrigerator door, on your computer screen) and recite it whenever you do.

### **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.*