



INTO THE BREACH



A STUDY GUIDE FOR COLLEGE MEN
on Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted's
Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men

Credit: Shutterstock. Russo, Alex. *Saint Michael Archangel statue on the top of Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome, Italy.*

Into the Breach

A Study Guide for College Men

We live in a time of crisis for religious faith and family life that must be met by men with a heartfelt embrace of masculine virtue. To outline the challenges we face and devise a plan of battle, Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted has written the groundbreaking document, *Into the Breach*. Addressed originally to the men in his Diocese of Phoenix, it is here made available to all Catholics by the Knights of Columbus. The Knights are pleased to partner with Bishop Olmsted in making this document more widely available and to provide the following study guide on the important issues he raises.

Bishop Olmsted begins his analysis with the shocking fact that 14 million Catholics nationwide have left the Church in recent years, with a corresponding drop in baptisms, church weddings and other sacramental participation. There is an enormous breach in the battle line of faith that is causing disruptions in the Church and wider society.

While this crisis concerns the whole Church, men in particular are missing from the battlefield of faith. Consider that men make up only about 40 percent of Mass attendees in the average parish — this is an enormous loss for the Church and for the men themselves, many of whom vainly seek fulfillment by conforming to the world's false images of manhood.

In this document, Bishop Olmsted calls men to something better, something great. He identifies the enemies of the faith — both spiritual and temporal — and draws up a battle plan for men to fight for their own souls and for the salvation of their families and loved ones. Here you will find a sure guide for stepping into the moral and cultural breach. Let us join our brother Catholics on the front lines and take up the battle anew, to spread the joy of the Gospel, heal the wounds within ourselves and others, and steadily transform the world.

Outline for Meetings and Reflections

This study guide examines the questions raised by Bishop Olmsted. This guide is segmented into eight reflections covering the document's eight sections. In consultation with your council Chaplain, you should decide how your council will approach this document. Based on his insight, your council may spend a week per section or decide to cover multiple sections each week. You may also consider holding a weekend retreat to examine the document in a more compressed period.

Regardless of the timeframe your council sets for exploring this document, make sure you stay in order and remain on track. You should complete your examination of this document in a timely manner, ideally within a semester or less. One section should be read and discussed before moving on to the next section. Guide your reading by the insights presented in the following sections:

Understanding the Breach

Questions designed for individual reflection or group discussion after reading the assigned section.

Bricks for the Breach

Quotes from the document that provide a solid guide or “brick” for repairing the breach in the Church.

Sword of the Spirit

Scripture passages or verses that are related to the content of the text. These passages can be considered “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17) that confronts and conquers evil.

Consider reflecting on the passages using the traditional practice known as *Lectio Divina* (divine reading) by first reading the verse aloud slowly and with reverence. Then, read the verse a second time; while it is being read, begin to meditate on its meaning. Next, pray to God that he will reveal which sentences or words from the passage apply to your own life. Finally, contemplate these words or sentences and ask God to speak to you through them.

Call to Battle

Practical goals for implementing the message of the document. Those using this guide in a group setting should discuss their progress on these goals at each meeting.

Prayer

Meditations and petitions taken from the Church’s tradition or the writings of a saint. These prayers, which may be offered individually or in a group, are provided to help men become familiar with the Church’s spiritual treasures. Through prayer, we raise our minds and hearts to God and prepare ourselves for spiritual battle.

In addition to these five sections, there is an appendix at the back of this booklet with additional resources to aid you in spiritual combat.

Using This Guide for Group Discussion

Whether you meet with only men from your Knights of Columbus council or with another men's group on campus, appoint a person to organize and lead each gathering. The leader informs the group about the weekly reading and moderates the meetings and reflections. If possible, your Chaplain or another priest on campus should serve as your leader. If your council or campus ministry is large and lots of men express interest, it may be beneficial to divide into several groups. This can also allow multiple days and times to be offered so that more men can share in the discussion.

Structure of the Meeting (60 to 90 minutes):

- Begin with a simple prayer — *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* or *Glory Be*.
- Show the promotional video that is available on the Diocese of Phoenix website. [Omit this step after the first week.]
- Talk over progress on spiritual goals found under the section “Call to Battle” and the difficulties encountered. [Omit this step for the first week.]
- Discuss the text using the questions provided under “Understanding the Breach.” As part of this discussion, the leader could share some of the key quotes from the “Bricks for the Breach” section; these may also be used to provide motivation after discussing the questions. The leader should also encourage members to write down their thoughts about these quotes and share them at the appointed time.
- Meditate upon the suggested scriptural passage under “Sword of the Spirit” by having someone read it aloud using the *Lectio Divina* format, or else simply read and discuss the text.
- Announce the practical spiritual goals for the week, based upon the study of the text under the “Call to Battle” section, and tell members that you will discuss progress on these goals at the next meeting.
- Conclude with the suggested prayer for the section and encourage this prayer for each day between meetings.

Section 1

A Call to Battle; Purpose of this Exhortation

Understanding the Breach

1. The document begins with a quote from the biblical prophet Ezekiel that inspires the title “Into the Breach.” In the passage, God warns that the people will perish for their sins unless one man is willing to “stand in the breach” to forestall destruction.

What evidence does Bishop Olmsted give that there is a battle being waged today against Catholics and the Church? Who is the primary enemy? How must the battle be fought?

2. According to the document, a key reason that “the Church is faltering” is that Catholic men are not stepping into the breach.

Do you see this “faltering” in your own parish or experience with the Church? What remedy is proposed to support the Church? What suggestions would you make?

3. Bishop Olmsted uses terms that we don’t hear too often today, such as “deeper and deeper into sin” and “the fires of hell.”

Do you think these words are still useful today in instructing people in the faith? Is the Church faltering because strong words have not been used to describe sin and hell?

4. The document was written to “encourage, challenge, and call men to mission.”

Do you know Catholic men who need encouragement? What sort of challenges do they seek? Do Catholic men today have a sense of mission in the faith, or have they retreated into a private religion or given up religion entirely?

Bricks for the Breach

“God constantly overcomes evil with good. The joy of the Gospel is stronger than the sadness wrought by sin! A throw-away culture cannot withstand the new life and light that constantly radiates from Christ. So I call upon you to open your minds and hearts to Him, the Savior who strengthens you to step into the breach!” (2).

“A true Catholic man stakes his whole life on this proposition — that all is made new in Jesus Christ” (5).

“The Church is, and has always been, a school that prepares us for spiritual battle, where Christians are called to ‘fight the good fight of faith’ (1 Timothy 6), to ‘put on the armor of God,’ and ‘to be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil’ (Ephesians 6:11)” (6).

“The complementarity of masculinity and femininity is key to understanding how human persons image God. Without knowing and appreciating this, we cannot know ourselves or our mission as men...” (7).

Sword of the Spirit

Ezekiel 22:30 — *“And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land ...”*

Call to Battle

- Commit to reading *Into the Breach* and to the adventure of bringing Christ to the world.
- Seek out men of faith to form a “band of brothers” in your council or parish who will move forward to fill the breach in the Church.
- Make a plan to read a portion of the Bible daily. Those who are new to this practice might start simply with a few lines of the Gospel each day or reflect on the readings for the day’s Mass.

A Prayer of Surrender to the Holy Spirit

By Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier

*O, Holy Spirit, beloved of my soul, I adore you.
Enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, console me.
Tell me what I should do. Give me your orders.
I promise to submit myself to all that you desire of me
and to accept all that you permit to happen to me.
Let me only know your will. Amen.*

Section 2

Contexts

Understanding the Breach

1. The new evangelization challenges us to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with “competing cultures” on our campuses through daily faithful witness to Christ.

How is this “New Apostolic Moment” different from past evangelizations? How might the new evangelization be more challenging than previous ones? What is the proposition on which a Catholic man should stake his whole life?

2. Pope Francis has described the Church today as “a field hospital after battle.”

What physical and spiritual battle wounds are specifically mentioned in the text? Can you think of others that exist on your campus? What is Bishop Olmsted getting at when he says we are to “live lives where sins do not cause festering wounds”?

3. He also calls the Church a “Spiritual Battle College.”

In what two ways does the Church form us to “fight the good fight of faith”? Can you think of other ways the Church prepares us for spiritual battle?

4. Bishop Olmsted explains that human persons reflect God through the “complementarity of masculinity and femininity.”

Why is this complementarity so important in understanding what it means to be a Catholic man? What biological facts are mentioned in the text to illustrate the beauty of sexual difference and the complementarity of man and woman? How might sexual difference be a challenge to how men and women relate to each other? What is the root of the conflict between the sexes?

5. Bishop Olmsted observes that “gender ideology” has “infected societies around the world,” causing many problems.

What is gender ideology? According to Pope Francis, how does it make for competition rather than harmony between the sexes? How should we respond to those who experience confusion about their sexuality?

Bricks for the Breach

“There is no solution to our cultural decline apart from the Gospel of Jesus” (5).

“The Church is the powerful source of Truth to heal men and prepare them to battle another day for Christ” (5).

“Our time calls for a renewal of the Church’s genius for physical and spiritual healing, given to her by the Holy Spirit. As Pope Francis says, the wounded are all around us, and ‘it is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars. You have to heal the wounds’” (6).

“The struggle between the sexes is not the fault of God’s creation; it is the result of sin” (8).

“The difference between man and woman is not for opposition, or for subordination, but for communion and procreation, always in the image and likeness of God” (8).

Sword of the Spirit

Romans 12:1-2 — *I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.*

Call to Battle

- Find additional time for prayer or reading of Scripture this week and ask Jesus and the Holy Spirit to form your mind and heart in the light of the Gospel. Identify several areas of your life that are “old and tired, sinful and broken” that may be made new in Jesus Christ.
- Taking into account your station and vocation in life, think of at least three ways that you can embrace “more deeply the beauty and richness of the sexual difference” by following Pope Francis’ admonition to men and women to “speak to one another more, listen to each other more, get to know one another better, and love one another more.”

Prayer of St. John Paul II to the Holy Spirit

St. John Paul II kept this prayer on a handwritten note and prayed it every day for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, offering a Hail Mary and an Our Father for each of the sevens gifts.

*Holy Spirit, I ask you for the gift of Wisdom
to better know You and Your divine perfections,
for the gift of Understanding to clearly discern
the spirit of the mysteries of the holy faith,
for the gift of Counsel that I may live
according to the principles of this faith,
for the gift of Knowledge that I may look for counsel in You
and that I may always find it in You,
for the gift of Fortitude that no fear or earthly preoccupations
would ever separate me from You,
for the gift of piety that I may always serve Your Majesty with a filial love,
for the gift of Fear of the Lord that I may dread sin,
which offends You, O my God. Amen.*

Section 3

Ecce Homo - Behold the Man; Saints, Our Heroes of Faith

Understanding the Breach

1. There are many influential counterfeit images of masculinity that we are tempted to adopt as the basis of our masculine identities.

What counterfeit masculinities does the document mention that the secular world holds up as “manly”? Have you allowed these distorted images to influence your thoughts, words and actions?

2. Bishop Olmsted speaks of a need to come to a “mature acceptance and understanding of what it means to be a man” and proposes Jesus Christ as the fullness of masculinity upon which to build our identity.

What must Catholic men be prepared to do to embrace the fullness of their masculinity in the image of Christ? Where may we look to encounter and be transformed by Jesus? How might our encounters with Jesus transform how we live out our masculinity?

3. The Church offers the saints as examples of how to pursue virtue and holiness.

What saints can help us live our masculinity in the image of Christ? What devotional practice relating to the saints does Bishop Olmsted propose to Catholic men as a help to root out sin and build up virtue?

4. Bishop Olmsted reminds us that we are called to holiness, to show Christ to the world in this time of “evil’s growing boldness.” He asks this important question: “How is the Lord inspiring you, right now, to cast aside concerns for your own comfort, to serve your fellow man, to put out into the deep, to step into the breach?”

What is the Lord calling Catholic men to do on this campus?

Bricks for the Breach

“Nowhere else can we find the fullness of masculinity as we do in the Son of God. Only in Jesus Christ can we find the highest display of masculine virtue and strength that we need in our personal lives and in society itself” (10).

“Just as an aspiring baseball player is inspired at the Baseball Hall of Fame, so must we men look to those {saints} who have gone before us, to look to them for inspiration and encouragement in fighting the good fight” (11).

“Men, we must never believe that holiness and courage are things of the past!” (12).

“Our concern is not if the Lord will give us the required strength, but how He is doing so right now” (13).

Sword of the Spirit

Galatians 2:19-21 — I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Call to Battle

- Identify the core sin in your life and the core virtue with which you need to replace it. Write down two ways you can put this virtue into practice in your own life and perform these actions in the coming week.
- Consider Bishop Olmsted’s list of saints, along with the particular virtues they exemplified and the vices they overcame. Consider the particular virtue you need; choose a patron saint that has exemplified this virtue.

Morning Offering

*O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day
for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart,
in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world,
in reparation for my sins, for the intentions of all our associates,
and in particular for the intentions of our Holy Father for this month.*

Section 4

The Catholic Man's Identity; Beloved Free Sons, Called to Battle Within; the Practices of a Committed Catholic Man

Understanding the Breach

1. Bishop Olmsted quotes this statement from the Second Vatican Council: “Jesus Christ reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear.”

In what sacrament do we first receive our identity in Christ? How might we be tempted to look elsewhere for our identity? Why is the devil “waging a fierce battle on masculinity and fatherhood in our day”?

2. Sin strikes at our dignity and makes us feel worthless. When we live a life of grace, however, we become more certain of our dignity as a man created in the image of a good and loving God.

What is conversion and sin, according to the text? How does each relate to our identity and relationship with God? How do you experience the reality of sin and grace in your own life?

3. Bishop Olmsted reviews the temptations of Jesus in the desert to illustrate that the spiritual battle begins with an interior struggle with evil.

What are the three core temptations that every man must continually battle? Of these three, which temptation do you principally struggle with and in what ways? Christ's example shows that there are three ways to overcome these temptations: self-mastery, simplicity of life, and humility rooted in prayer. Is there a way to put into practice these virtues more often in your own life?

4. College is a time for us to learn about ourselves to discover our strengths and to discern our vocations.

What do our actions tell others about who we are? What are the differences between putting one's identity in Christ versus putting one's identity in social, academic or professional success?

5. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati is quoted as saying, "To live without faith, without a patrimony to defend, without a steady struggle for truth – that is not living, but existing."

Bishop Olmsted asks pointedly: "Are you and I merely existing? Or are we living our Christian faith as men fully alive?" What is your answer?

6. There is a difference between calling oneself Catholic and actually being a committed Catholic.

What is the difference between these two? How do the seven practices outlined in the text relate to this difference? How can you grow in relation to these seven practices?

Bricks for the Breach

"Our identity is caught up in the identity of the eternal Son of God" (15).

"The human being is a creature, and therefore in relation to God a receiver of love and courage before he or she can give it away to others. Nemo potest dare quod non habet is the famous term the Church developed in Latin for this fundamental truth. You cannot give what you do not have" (17).

"We may be tempted to say, 'When I get this three-fold battle behind me, I can start living the life of holiness,' but this is a lie! It is precisely in the course of this fight that we become holy" (18).

“Every Catholic man must start his day with prayer. It is said, ‘Until you realize that prayer is the most important thing in your life, you will never have time for prayer.’ Without prayer, a man is like a soldier who lacks food, water, and ammunition” (19).

“Mass is a refuge in the Spiritual Battle, where Catholic men meet their King, hear His commands, and become strengthened with the Bread of life” (20).

Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:12 — *“For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.”*

Call to Battle

- Bishop Olmsted points out that Christ instructs his disciples to fast and does not make this instruction conditional. Christ says “when you fast,” not “if you fast.” Try fasting once this week by eating only bread and water for a day, or eating two small meals and one regular-size meal. If you do not want to miss a family dinner or call attention to your fast, try fasting from the end of one dinner to the beginning of dinner the next night. Finally, offer your sacrifice of fasting for an intention, such as for your (future) wife, the young women of your campus or for all women sinned against by men.
- Start the seven practices of a committed Catholic man outlined in the text. Create a check list and mark them off daily, weekly and monthly as you perform each one. Put this list in a prominent place to remind you on a daily basis until they become a habit.

Prayer to Saint Michael

*St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.
Be our defense 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,
thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.*

Section 5

How Does a Catholic Man Love?

A Friend in Christ — Bands of Brothers

Understanding the Breach

1. Men may be uncertain about love in their life since the word “love” is often associated with passing emotions and sentimentality. Yet Bishop Olmsted challenges us to consider true “masculine love.”

What popular movie image of manhood should we reject? What is ironic about the character's name? What distorted image of masculinity does “machismo” put forth?

2. Jesus puts love at the center of his ministry, commanding his followers to love one another as he has loved them.

What is at the heart of real love? What battle does each man have to fight to love in this way?

3. As Catholic men, we are called to be examples of charitable leadership in our communities.

What does it mean to love others through leadership? How can I lead those in my life – friends, family, roommates, girlfriend – closer to Christ?

4. Bishop Olmsted says that “true masculine love always builds bonds.”

How does this claim relate to the Latin root of the word “religion”? Does “building bonds” imply making oneself vulnerable in friendship? If so, how might a “rugged individual” man feel uncomfortable with the task?

5. The document cites research that men today are living “friendless lives.” Yet Bishop Olmsted urges men to form close friendships based on faith.

Why is it important for men to be associated with a “band of brothers”? “As iron sharpens iron, so one man must sharpen another.” Does this quote

from Proverbs shed light on the topic of building bonds? What are the marks of a true friend? Are your friendships based on Christ or upon something else?

Bricks for the Breach

“Men who have bonds of brotherhood with other Catholic men pray more, go to Mass and Confession more frequently, read the Scriptures more often, and are more active in the Faith” (21).

“Christ makes clear that central to His mission is love. ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (John 15:12), He says with passion, but without a hint of sentimentality” (22).

“Who is more of a man, the one who runs away or the one who can face the responsibilities and challenges of relationships, family, and intimacy?” (22).

“James Bond’s name is the height of irony because he is a man with no bonds. Yet true masculine love will always build bonds! On the Cross and through the Eucharist, Jesus gives his very blood to bind us to Himself in love” (23).

“In Christ, we see that sacrifice is at the heart of love. Only the man who has fought the interior battle of self-mastery against sterility, the man who lays down his life for others, can avoid stagnancy and self-absorption. Never doubt that this sacrifice is worth the suffering!” (23).

“The renewal of masculinity cannot happen without banding together as brothers and true friends” (25).

Sword of the Spirit

1 John 3:14-18 — *“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.”*

Call to Battle

- Recall the seven basic practices of a committed Catholic man. Consider especially your commitment to building fraternity with other Catholic men. Reach out to a brother in Christ to discuss your new commitments and ask him to pray for you to be faithful to them. Ask him to keep you accountable to each of your new commitments by planning a monthly conversation with him.
- Identify two ways that you can build healthy bonds in your life through authentic masculine love toward your immediate family, extended family and brothers in Christ. Through an examination of conscience, ask the Holy Spirit how you can center your love on “willing the good of the other” and how you can learn to love sacrificially.

Veni, Sancte Spiritus

Adapted from the Sequence of Pentecost

*Come, O Holy Spirit, come! Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home, Shed a ray of light divine!
Come, O Holy Spirit, come! O most blessed light divine,
Shine within these hearts of thine, And our inmost being fill!*

Come, O Holy Spirit, come!

*Where you are not, we have naught, Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill. Come, O Holy Spirit, come!
Heal our wounds, our strength renew; On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away; Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill.*

Come, O Holy Spirit, come!

Section 6

Man as Husband — The Purpose of Masculine Erotic Love

Understanding the Breach

1. Bishop Olmsted says, “Every man is made to live as a husband and father in some way.”

How is this possible for a priest, religious or single man? What does it mean to make a “sincere and complete spousal gift” of oneself? How does this gift bring a man to masculine maturity?

2. St. Paul talked about the one-flesh union of marriage in relation to the mystery of Christ and the Church (cf. Ephesians 5:21-33).

How should this understanding affect the way men prepare for and live out a vocation to marriage? In what ways does the sacrament itself prepare and enable spouses to fulfill the commitments of marriage? How can young men discerning the vocation of marriage properly prepare for this sacrament?

3. Bishop Olmsted argues that the Sexual Revolution promised “free love,” but provided society with neither freedom nor love, instead presenting a distorted understanding of both.

How is true freedom more than mere license, and true love more than just passions? How can making a lifelong commitment — through marriage, consecrated life or priestly ordination — be an authentic expression of freedom and love?

4. Regarding God’s gift of love and life embodied in human sexuality, men must battle to develop the virtue of chastity, which is called a “rejection of slavery to the passions.”

What is the difference between practicing continence and possessing the virtue of chastity? How might a person be celibate yet not chaste, or chaste yet not celibate? How does pornography and some forms of popular culture distort God’s gift of sexuality?

5. Men often need support from friends and loved ones, as well as frequent recourse to confession, to overcome sins against chastity.

What does Bishop Olmsted list as common factors leading to the temptation of unchastity? In addition to regularly receiving God's grace in confession, what are some practical ways that men can avoid or reject temptations?

Bricks for the Breach

"Youth was not made for pleasure, but for heroism" (27).

"Marriage in Christ is not merely a human endeavor. It is higher; it is a 'great mystery.' The human desire for love is, in a way, a longing for infinite and eternal love. In the Sacrament of Marriage, human love is caught up in the infinite and eternal love of God" (28).

"Instead of the freedom that comes with accepting the truth of God's design for human love between a man and woman, the Sexual Revolution has arrogantly rebelled against human nature, a nature that will never thrive in confusion and lack of self-control" (30).

"The Sacrament of Confession is the place of superabundant grace and support" (32).

Sword of the Spirit

Matthew 5:27-28 — *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

Ephesians 5:31-32 - *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church."*

Call to Battle

- Consider factors in your own life that may contribute to falling into temptation to lust, as well as how you might avoid this temptation in the future.
- “God assigns the dignity of every woman as a task to every man.” Think about what you can do concretely to honor the dignity of women in your life – your wife or girlfriend, your mother, sisters.
- Follow Bishop Olmsted’s instruction and imagine yourself before the throne of God at judgment and how sins against chastity will appear in that light.

Prayer for Purity

Jesus, lover of chastity; Mary, mother most pure; and Joseph, chaste guardian of the Virgin; to you I come at this hour, begging you to plead with God for me.

I earnestly wish to be pure in thought, word and deed in imitation of your own holy purity.

Obtain for me, then, a deep sense of modesty that will be reflected in my external conduct.

Protect my eyes, the windows of my soul, from anything that might dim the luster of a heart that must mirror only Christ-like purity.

Heart of Jesus, fount of all purity, have mercy on us.

Section 7

Fatherhood Is Essential

Understanding the Breach

1. Bishop Olmsted says that in past generations, fatherhood did not need to be deeply pondered or well-defined because its meaning and purpose were obvious.

Why is this no longer true today? What are some of the forces today seeking to diminish or redefine fatherhood? How does Pope Francis' definition of fatherhood as "giving life to others" highlight the inherent fatherhood of all men?

2. The percentage of children born to unmarried mothers has risen astronomically in recent years, to 41 percent of all births. As a result, too many children grow up without the regular presence of their father.

How does father absence affect children and society at large? If this pattern continues for generations, what will be the result?

3. This section is titled "Fatherhood Is Essential." Regardless of vocation, all men will have the opportunity to be a father figures for others.

How are you preparing to be a father? What fatherly virtues are you trying to build?

4. Amid the bleak statistics, Bishop Olmsted offers hope for fathers, even if they have failed to live up to their obligations.

How can the Church and her sacraments play a key role in the renewal of fatherhood? In what way can God the Father help men reclaim lost fatherhood and provide children with a positive image of fathers?

5. This document claims there is a concerted "attack on fatherhood" in our society.

How do you experience this attack in your own life? In what ways can you fight back and defend fatherhood?

Bricks for the Breach

“This is the key to interpreting reality ... original sin, then, attempts to abolish fatherhood” (35).

“Men, your presence and mission in the family are irreplaceable! Step up and lovingly, patiently take up your God-given role as protector, provider, and spiritual leader of your home” (36).

“All of us, to exist, to become complete, in order to be mature, we need to feel the joy of fatherhood; even those of us who are celibate. Fatherhood is giving life to others, giving life, giving life” (37).

“The question for every man is not, ‘Am I called to be a father?’ but rather, ‘What kind of father am I called to be?’” (37).

“Grandfathers, you are an essential and treasured gift to your families, and I encourage you to continue to be strong for them, to share your wisdom with them, to fight for them” (38).

“Through your discovery of the Fatherhood of God, our loving, eternal father, you will be witnesses to the only fatherhood that never fails” (39).

Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 3:14-15 — *For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.*

Call to Battle

- The document states that the fatherhood of each man is meant to reflect the fatherhood of God. In what areas of fatherhood do you excel? In what areas do you need to improve? Make these two questions part of your daily examination of conscience and devise ways to develop the virtues of a good father.

- Based on the claim that each man is called to exercise fatherhood in some way by giving life to others, consider how you are called to be a father. Many of you have not yet made a commitment to marriage, religious life, or the lay apostolate; pray to God for guidance and make this commitment an important focus of your life.
- A father is called to be a protector, provider and the spiritual head of his family, the domestic church. In what way should a man fulfill these roles? What abuses of these roles must be avoided?

Prayer to St. Joseph

St. John XXIII

*St. Joseph, guardian of Jesus and chaste husband of Mary,
you passed your life in loving fulfillment of duty.*

*You supported the holy family of Nazareth
with the work of your hands.*

Kindly protect those who trustingly come to you.

You know their aspirations, their hardships, their hopes.

*They look to you because they know you will understand
and protect them. You too knew trial, labor and weariness.*

*But amid the worries of material life your soul was full of deep peace and
sang out in true joy through intimacy with God's Son
entrusted to you and with Mary, his tender mother.*

Assure those you protect that they do not labor alone.

*Teach them to find Jesus near them and
to watch over him faithfully as you have done.*

Section 8

Conclusion: Sent Forth by Christ

Understanding the Breach

1. In summary, Bishop Olmsted expresses the hope that readers will reflect on his message and go forward confidently in their vocation as men.

What do you plan to do to “get off the sidelines” and live in authentic freedom as a Catholic man? Are there areas in your life you need to change? What commitments do you need to make, what bad habits or sins do you need overcome?

2. The Catholic faith is not a set of rules; it is an adventure toward the good life found in God.

Where do men find the encouragement to embrace this adventure? What is the difference between faith that is alive and faith based on religious obligation? Has reading and reflecting on this document changed your perspective on your faith in any way?

3. Earlier in the document, Bishop Olmsted suggests seven concrete practices to help someone live as a Catholic man.

Have you taken up the challenge? Which practices have been most helpful to you and which do you plan to continue?

4. You’ve spent time each week reflecting on different Bible passages through *Lectio Divina*.

Which of these Bible quotes has resonated most strongly in your life? What do you think God is saying to you through this passage? How can you put this message into action in your life?

Bricks for the Breach

“Take what is helpful in my message, bring it to the Lord in prayer, and go forward confidently in your vocation as men” (40).

“Our life in Christ is not one of ‘do’s and don’ts,’ but an adventure in authentic freedom” (40).

“We need to get off the sidelines and stand up for life on the front lines” (41).

Sword of the Spirit

Ezekiel 22:30 — *“And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land ...”*

Call to Battle

- If you do not have a friend in Christ with whom to share your faith, seek to develop such a friendship. Start a conversation about the support and accountability you can provide each other as Catholic men.
- Determine one concrete action you will take to step “into the breach” in your campus and community life. Talk with your friend, family or pastor about your plan.

Prayer to St. Joseph

Glorious St. Joseph, foster-father and protector of Jesus Christ!

*To you I raise my heart and my hands
to implore your powerful intercession.*

*Please obtain for me from the kind heart of Jesus the help
and the graces necessary for my spiritual and temporal welfare.*

*I ask particularly for the grace of a happy death
and the special favor I now implore.*

[Mention your request.]

Guardian of the Word Incarnate,

*I feel animated with confidence that your prayers in my behalf
will be graciously heard before the throne of God.*

*O glorious St. Joseph, through the love you bear to Jesus Christ,
and for the glory of his name.*

Hear my prayers and obtain my petitions. Amen.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

by Archbishop William E. Lori, Supreme Chaplain

- 1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.**
 - *Do I seek to love God with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength (Dt 6:5)? Do I put anything or anyone above God? Do I pray daily?*
 - *Have I had any involvement with the occult, witchcraft, wicca, ouija boards, seances, tarot cards, new age crystals, fortune telling, or the like? Have I put faith in horoscopes?*
 - *Have I received Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin?*
 - *Have I abused the Sacrament of Penance by lying to the priest or deliberately not confessing a mortal sin?*
 - *Have I denied a truth of the faith out of concern for the respect or opinion of others?*
- 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**
 - *Have I used God's holy name irreverently?*
 - *Have I blasphemed God, the Church, Mary, the saints, or sacred places or things?*
- 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.**
 - *Do I try to keep Sunday as a day of prayer, rest, and relaxation, avoiding unnecessary work?*
 - *Have I deliberately come late or left early from Mass without a good reason?*

4. **Honor your father and your mother.**

- *Do I honor and respect my parents?*
- *Have I deliberately hurt my parents?*
- *Do I treat my children with love and respect?*
- *Do I support and care for the well-being of all family members?*
- *Have I neglected family duties?*
- *Do I honor and obey my lawful superiors?*

5. **You shall not kill.**

- *Have I deliberately harmed anyone?*
- *Have I had an abortion or encouraged an abortion?*
- *Have I attempted suicide or seriously considered it?*
- *Have I abused drugs or alcohol?*
- *Have I led anyone to sin through bad example or through direct encouragement?*

6. **You shall not commit adultery.**

For the married

- *Am I faithful to my spouse in thought and action?*
- *Have I used artificial contraception, or been sterilized?*
- *Was I married outside the Church without proper permission of the Church?*

For the unmarried

- *Have I engaged in sexual activity with anyone of either sex?*

For all

- *Have I deliberately viewed pornographic magazines, videos or internet websites?*
- *Have I masturbated?*
- *Have I used impure language or told impure jokes?*
- *Do I dress modestly?*

7. You shall not steal.

- *Have I stolen or accepted stolen goods?*
- *Have I deliberately destroyed the property of others?*
- *Have I cheated anyone of what I owe?*
- *Do I gamble excessively?*
- *Do I share what I have with the poor and the Church according to my means?*
- *Have I pirated materials: videos, music, software?*

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- *Have I lied? Have I sworn falsely?*
- *Have I plagiarized or been academically dishonest?*
- *Have I gossiped? Have I revealed secrets or confidential information without good reason?*
- *Have I ruined the good name of others by spreading lies or maliciously revealing their faults and sins?*

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.

- *Have I deliberately and consciously permitted sexual thoughts about anyone besides my spouse?*
- *Do I guard my imagination and senses?*
- *Have I watched shows, plays, pictures or movies that contain impure scenes with the deliberate intention of being aroused by them? Am I responsible about what I read?*

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

- *Am I envious of the possessions, abilities, talents, beauty, or success of others?*

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

- *Do I love my neighbor? Is there anyone whom I do not love or refuse to love? Have I wished harm or misfortune on anyone?*
- *Do I forgive from my heart those who have hurt me? Do I harbor hatred or grudges? Do I pray for my enemies?*
- *Have I ridiculed or humiliated others?*
- *Do I seek to help others in need?*
- *Do I love myself as God loves me? Do I care for my physical, emotional, and spiritual health?*
- *Do I forgive myself for my sins after bringing them to God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?*

Precepts of the Church

- *Have I deliberately missed Mass on a Sunday or Holy Day of obligation without a serious reason?*
- *Do I go to confession at least once a year when I have serious sins to confess?*
- *Do I receive Holy Communion, at least once during Eastertime?*
- *Do I take part in the major feasts celebrating Our Lord, the Virgin Mary, and the saints?*
- *Do I abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent (for ages 14 and over) and fast on one full meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (for ages 18-59)? Do I fast for one hour before Holy Communion (water and medicine allowed)?*
- *Do I contribute to support the material needs of the Church?*

PRAYERS THROUGH MEN OF VIRTUE

In Section 3, Bishop Olmsted asks us to identify the core sin in our life and replace it with a core virtue. He offers ten examples of saintly men that offer virtues to overcome vices. Call upon these saints in your battle. The virtue of each saint, along with the corresponding sin, is listed in parentheses.

Saint Joseph

(*Trust in God* - selfishness)

O Glorious Saint Joseph,
you were chosen by God
to be the foster father of Jesus,
the most pure spouse of Mary, ever Virgin,
and the head of the Holy Family.
You have been chosen by Christ's Vicar
as the heavenly Patron and Protector
of the Church founded by Christ.

Protect the Sovereign Pontiff
and all bishops and priests united with him.
Be the protector of all who labor for souls
amid the trials and tribulations of this life;
and grant that all peoples of the world
may be docile to the Church
without which there is no salvation.

Dear Saint Joseph,
accept the offering I make to you.
Be my father, protector,
and guide in the way of salvation.
Obtain for me purity of heart
and a love for the spiritual life.

After your example,
let all my actions be directed
to the greater glory of God,
in union with the Divine Heart of Jesus,
the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
and your own paternal heart.
Finally, pray for me that I may share
in the peace and joy of your holy death.
Amen.

St. John the Baptist

(Humility – arrogance)

O God, You raised up
St John the Baptist
to prepare a perfect
person for Christ.
We call upon St John's
intercession to properly
prepare us with a true sense
of repentance to receive
Your grace and salvation.
Make us faithful to truth and justice,
as You did Your servant,
John the Baptist, herald of
Your Son's birth and death.
Lord, may You
increase Your life within us.
Amen.

St. Paul

(Adherence to Truth – mediocrity)

O Glorious St. Paul, after persecuting the Church you became by God's grace its most zealous Apostle. To carry the knowledge of Jesus, our divine Savior, to the uttermost parts of the earth you joyfully endured prison, scourging, stoning, and shipwreck, as well as all manner of persecutions culminating in the shedding of the last drop of your blood for our Lord Jesus Christ. Obtain for us the grace to labor strenuously to bring the faith to others and to accept any trials and tribulations that may come our way. Help us to be inspired by your Epistles and to partake of your indomitable love for Jesus, so that after we have finished our course we may join you in praising him in heaven for all eternity.

St. Michael the Archangel

(Obedience to God – licentiousness and rebelliousness)

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the malice and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls. Amen.

St. Benedict

(Prayer and Devotion to God – sloth)

Admirable Saint and Doctor of Humility, you practiced what you taught, assiduously praying for God's glory and lovingly fulfilling all work for God and the benefit of all human beings. You know the many physical dangers that surround us today often caused or occasioned by human inventions. Guard us against poisoning of the body as well as of mind and soul, and thus be truly a "Blessed" one for us. Amen.

St. Francis of Assisi

(Happiness – moralism)

O beloved Saint Francis, gentle and poor, your obedience to God and your simple, deep love for all God's creatures led you to the heights of heavenly perfection and turned many hearts to follow God's will. Now, in our day, pray also for us, in our ministry to the many who come here searching for peace and intercede for us as we come before the Lord with our special requests.

[Mention your special intention.]

O blessed Saint of God, from your throne among the hosts of heaven present our petitions before our faithful Lord. May your prayers on our behalf be heard and may God grant us the grace to lead good and faithful lives. Amen.

Saint Francis of Assisi,

Pray for us. Amen.

St. Thomas More

(Integrity – double-mindedness)

Thomas More, counselor of law and statesman of integrity, merry martyr and most human of saints:

Pray that, for the glory of God and in the pursuit of His justice, I may be trustworthy with confidences, keen in study, accurate in analysis, correct in conclusion, able in argument, loyal to clients, honest with all, courteous to adversaries, ever attentive to conscience. Sit with me at my desk and listen with me to my clients' tales. Read with me in my library and stand always beside me so that today I shall not, to win a point, lose my soul.

Pray that my family may find in me what yours found in you: friendship and courage, cheerfulness and charity, diligence in duties, counsel in adversity, patience in pain—their good servant, and God's first. Amen.

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

(Chastity – lust)

Heavenly Father,

Give me the courage to strive for the highest goals,
to flee every temptation to be mediocre.

Enable me to aspire to greatness, as Pier Giorgio did,
and to open my heart with joy to Your call to holiness.

Free me from the fear of failure.

I want to be, Lord, firmly and forever united to You.

Grant me the graces I ask You through Pier Giorgio's intercession,
by the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. Josemaría Escrivá

(Boldness – worldly fear)

O God, through the mediation of Mary our Mother, you granted your priest St. Josemaría countless graces, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found Opus Dei, a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfillment of the Christian's ordinary duties. Grant that I too may learn to turn all the circumstances and events of my life into occasions of loving You and serving the Church, the Pope and all souls with joy and simplicity, lighting up the pathways of this earth with faith and love. Deign to grant me, through the intercession of St. Josemaría, the favor of ... (make your request). Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be to the Father.

Pope St. John Paul II

(Defending the Weak – passivity)

Oh, St. John Paul, from the window of heaven, grant us your blessing! Bless the church that you loved and served and guided, courageously leading it along the paths of the world in order to bring Jesus to everyone and everyone to Jesus. Bless the young, who were your great passion. Help them dream again, help them look up high again to find the light that illuminates the paths of life here on earth.

May you bless families, bless each family! You warned of Satan's assault against this precious and indispensable divine spark that God lit on earth. St. John Paul, with your prayer, may you protect the family and every life that blossoms from the family.

Pray for the whole world, which is still marked by tensions, wars and injustice. You tackled war by invoking dialogue and planting the seeds of love: pray for us so that we may be tireless sowers of peace.

Oh St. John Paul, from heaven's window, where we see you next to Mary, send God's blessing down upon us all. Amen.

ONLINE RESOURCES

In addition to the examination of conscience and prayers above, there are many online resources that can aid you in your quest for authentic manhood.

[The Catholic Gentleman](http://www.catholicgentleman.net) – (www.catholicgentleman.net)

The Catholic Gentleman is a website that provides many resources for Catholic men. A good place to begin is the “Start Here” page, which features many inspiring articles.

[Those Catholic Men](http://www.thosecatholicmen.com) – (www.thosecatholicmen.com)

Another website for Catholic men with articles that encourage prayer, asceticism, study, and brotherhood.

[Roman Catholic Man](http://www.romancatholicman.com) – (www.romancatholicman.com)

Authored by Fr. Richard M. Heilman, Wisconsin State Chaplain for the Knights of Columbus, this faith formation website offers abundant resources for Catholic men.

[Angelic Warfare Confraternity](http://www.angelicwarfareconfraternity.org/) –

(<http://www.angelicwarfareconfraternity.org/>)

This confraternity, under the patronage of St. Thomas Aquinas, helps Catholics in the battle for chastity.

[Fight the New Drug](http://fightthenewdrug.org/) (<http://fightthenewdrug.org/>)

Fight the New Drug provides facts and resources for those struggling with addiction to pornography.



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