

On Being a Catholic Man

Letter From Bishop Olmsted of Phoenix:



Satan Attacks Fatherhood Because Dads Should Give Us Idea of God□

A call to Catholic men was recently issued in a pastoral letter by Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of Phoenix, Arizona.

Titled “INTO THE BREACH: An Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men, my Spiritual Sons in the Diocese of Phoenix,” it starts by saying the letter is a call to battle.

“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,” said Bishop Olmsted.

The letter then went on to put its content into three contexts. First, the New Evangelization, which he said means there is no solution other than the Gospel of Jesus to our cultural decline.

Second, he quoted Pope Francis who likened the Church to a field hospital after a battle. In other words it needs to be a source of mercy and healing.

Third, men and women are complementary, not competitors. This difference, he explained, can also be a challenge as misunderstanding can occur and sin can cause us to lose respect for one another. The letter also criticized the rise of “gender ideology” that seeks to remove male and female as the normative way of understanding the human person.

Masculinity

Bishop Olmsted then went on to consider three questions. The first asked “What does it mean to be a Catholic man?” We can see the fullness of masculinity in Jesus. The high point of this revelation came with Jesus on the Cross.

Jesus came to give himself to us and Catholic men need to follow this example of giving themselves to others and engaging in spiritual combat.

The letter criticized the celebrity culture. “The idolatry of celebrities at this time is a particular temptation, but to build one’s masculine identity on such fleeting models is to build an identity on sand.”

The only certain foundation for masculinity is Jesus Christ. “We look to our Savior to be transformed in Him, to be the men we are called to be, and to let others see Him in us.”

If we look at the saints we can see that this is precisely what they did. He recommended that each man should have a patron saint. He listed 10 saints with which all men should be familiar, along with the virtue they exemplified to help overcome a defect.

For, example, Joseph was an example of trust in God, as opposed to selfishness. St Paul, adherence to truth, instead of mediocrity. St Thomas More, integrity, in contrast to double-mindedness.

The Catholic man's identity should not depend on the opinion of others, the success of our careers, our possessions, toys, etc. While these might be a part of our life our identity comes from the Son of God.

What practices can help to be an authentic Catholic man? First, he said daily prayer is vital. Second, he recommended an examination of conscience every evening before going to sleep. Going to Sunday Mass, reading the Bible, keeping the Sabbath, going to monthly confession and building fraternity with other Catholic men were other practices men should engage in.

How to love

The second question the letter dealt with was "How does a Catholic man love?"

Again he referred to Christ and how love was central to his mission. He should be our model of how to love, not film stars. He also warned against the temptation to machismo, a sort of toughness and unemotional living.

There are three main masculine loves: friend, husband, and father. Throughout the history of Christianity we can see how men have united in friendship whether in monasteries, religious orders, or as laity.

Then, as a husband and father we see how men are called upon to commit and give themselves completely.

"Through spousal love, men live out a strength that endures, a strength for which the world longs, and a strength that will stabilize a crumbling society," Bishop Olmsted affirmed.

Preparation for this should start before marriage, instead of being a time of passive waiting, much less indulgence in sin.

Too often today popular culture has reduced love to mere pleasure and self-serving ends. Contraception, abortion and pornography are some of the causes which have led to the separation of sexuality from marriage.

Importance of Fatherhood

The third question in the letter deals with why fatherhood is important for men. "Satan's primary strategy is to damage and abolish human fatherhood, in the man and relationship where each of us first glimpses what God's fatherhood might be like," Bishop Olmsted warned.

Fatherhood is giving life to others, he said. "This is why fatherhood – living out one's vocation to fatherhood, whether that fatherhood is bound up in physical marriage or spiritual marriage in the priesthood or religious life – is absolutely essential for a man to live out the fullness of his meaning in life," the letter explained.

He finished by calling upon men to read the letter, pray about it, and to go forth in their vocation.

Full text of letter: <http://www.intothebreach.net/into-the-breach/>

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