TOP SEVEN DECISIONS
OF SAINTLY HUSBANDS AND FATHERS

A 52 WEEK CHALLENGE TOWARD
BECOMING THE MAN GOD MADE YOU TO BE

JIM HAVENS
CATHOLICFAMILYMEN.COM
Top Seven Decisions of
Saintly Husbands and Fathers
Jim Havens, Catholic Family Men
© 2017 The Station of the Cross Catholic Radio Network

All rights reserved. Except for quotations, no part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, uploading to the Internet, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher.

Published by:
The Station of the Cross
Catholic Radio Network
6325 Sheridan Drive
Williamsville, NY 14221
1-877-888-6279
thestationofthecross.com

Layout by:
Kickstart Media
www.kickstartmedia.org
Table of Contents

**Preface**

**Decision One - God Above All Else**
1. Live the Catholic Faith

**Decision Two - Rightly Ordered Priorities**
2. Cultivate Eternal Perspective
3. Pray the Rosary Daily and Deeply
4. Go to Mass Every Day and Eliminate Excuses
5. Order All Your Responsibilities to God's Kingdom

**Decision Three - Cherish Your Wife**
6. Celebrate Your Monthly Wedding Anniversary
7. Write a Love Letter to Your Wife
8. Read the Holy Recommendation of Your Wife
9. Be Kind to Your Wife Always

**Decision Four - Take Ownership for the Formation of Your Children**
10. Be the Primary Educator in the Faith for Your Children
11. Write a Vision of Life for Your Children
12. Write a Philosophy of Formation
13. Form Each Child to Understand and Embrace Vocation
Decision Five - Step Up and Lead Your Family to Heaven
14. Schedule Family Prayer
15. Take Your Family on a Pilgrimage
16. Maximize Sunday
17. Develop a Small Habit of Penance for Generational Sins
18. Share the Rosary

Decision Six - Make the Most of Your Sufferings
19. Let Mary Console You in Your Trials
20. Freely Offer Sacrifices
21. Unite Your Sufferings with Jesus and Mary

Decision Seven - Choose Love
22. Nickname Your Children
23. Bring Life to Each Child
24. Engage the Culture with Christ
25. Serve Anonymously with Your Wife
26. Serve Anonymously with Your Child

Checklist
Preface

“Love the Lord, all you who are faithful to him. The Lord protects the loyal, but repays the arrogant in full. Be strong and take heart, all who hope in the Lord.”
Psalm 31:24-25

Introduction

It is daunting to write about how men can advance toward becoming the best possible husbands and fathers. My own weakness and sin is before me and I wonder, “Father, maybe you should ask someone more qualified to write on this subject?”

Then He reminds me that He does not necessarily call the “qualified” but He always qualifies those He calls. Without our Father’s love and direction I never would have or could have written this book. My intentions for all that you will find within these pages echo those of St. Teresa of Avila:
“In all that I shall say in this Book, I submit to what is taught by Our Mother, the Holy Roman Church; if there is anything in it contrary to this, it will be without my knowledge...If there is anything good in it, let this be to the glory and honor of God and in the service of His most sacred Mother, our Patroness and Lady...”

I consecrate every effort herein to Jesus through Mary and Joseph. All content is in agreement with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which is “a sure norm for teaching the faith and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion (Fidei Depositum, IV. St. John Paul the Great)."

**A Helpful Tool to Grow as Husbands and Fathers in Christ**

I am on a journey just like you. Far from perfect, yet by God’s grace seeking to advance toward perfection. Wherever we find ourselves, we are all falling short to some degree, so let us begin by humbly renewing our faith, hope, love, and need for Jesus.

Jesus calls us to receive Him, follow Him, and live the universal call to holiness we are made for. When I see my primary vocation as husband and father as the primary way for how I am called to live out this call to holiness in my earthly life, the
vital importance of my primary vocation becomes all the more clear and my desire to grow and live this call more fully strengthens.

In early 2015, I was praying and searching for some resource or tool that would help me to keep my eye on the ball, to keep advancing in my vocation as a husband and father in Christ. I looked around some, but I could not quite find anything to truly provide me with the practical wisdom I was seeking.

I understood the power of mentoring and so I thought, “Where can I find the best husbands and fathers of all-time and how can I learn from them?”

Immediately the lives of the Saints came to mind - the husbands and fathers that have been officially affirmed by the Church as having lived heroic lives of virtue worthy of our imitation. Moreover, what we are offered in the lives of these men is far beyond a mere historical study: these are our brothers in Christ who are not only still living, but are now fully alive in the Church Triumphant!

My investigation began in earnest. Which Saints, Blesseds, and Venerables were husbands and fathers? I had some familiarity with several of these holy men, but of many I had little or no
knowledge. As I studied their lives, all of them offered me various insights and little treasures, including specific practical examples that I could quickly apply to my life.

At the end of one year, I had compiled a collection of 26 good examples and when I stepped back to analyze all that I had learned, a simple pattern emerged. Each example was easily categorized into one of seven decisions that seemed common to these men. It is in the format of these seven decisions that I offer you the best of what I have learned from these saintly husbands and fathers.

The purpose of this book is to help build you up with practical wisdom and equip you with virtue building practices that are specific to fulfilling the responsibilities of your primary vocation. I can tell you that every time I return to these 26 good examples, I discover and learn more that is fruitful for me as a husband, dad, and disciple of Jesus.

**How to Read this Book**

I recommend reading this book in one of two ways:
1) Straight through from beginning to end, taking on each challenge along the way;
2) Jumping around to whichever new example and challenge you are most drawn to until you have completed all 26.

Path #1: Straight through, beginning to end: The main benefits of this route is that the chapters do tend to build on one another and you will be spending a good deal of time working on advancing in each decision before moving on to the next one. In most cases, I would recommend this path.

Path #2: Jumping around based on what most draws you: You may take the option of reading the chapters or sections in a non-linear fashion. Tackling the challenges in this way may better help you to follow through and gain momentum because you are starting with those areas that best fit your immediate need or interest. If you choose this route, make use of the checklist in the back of the book to keep track of your progress.

Regardless of your method, applying each good example with the recommended challenge is crucial if you want to get the most out of the information contained in this book. While it is useful to merely digest some good content, it is far more helpful to take action on what you have learned as quickly as possible.
**Preliminary Advice**

Here are some important guidelines to make the most out of what is before you:

1. **Spend two weeks with each good example.** Reading and rereading the lesson, praying with the saint as your mentor and brother in Christ, and working on applying the lesson by completing the challenge. This is why the book is structured as a 52-week challenge: 26 challenges, applied for two weeks each.

2. **Stay true to the recommended two-week method as a general rule.** To begin all of the challenges at once or to attempt living all of the challenges simultaneously would very likely be overwhelming and counterproductive.

3. **At the same time, be flexible.** Occasionally a challenge may be recommended for a different amount of time, or you may experience a prompting from the Holy Spirit to continue with some specific action even after the recommended challenge is over. Be open to exceptions in this 52-week journey. Be attentive to notice if something you are doing is particularly fruitful for you and/or those around you. Fruitfulness is a very good sign, and when it comes in abundance, it is
good to consider continuing whatever good action you are taking.

4. The challenges are meant to be simple, actionable, and complimentary to whatever good practices you have already adopted in your spiritual life. Remain faithful to your already established foundation of personal prayer. And if that foundation is weak, or even non-existent, allow your rhythm of daily prayer to come alive and find solid ground in the next 52-weeks.

Finally, I encourage you to make a conscious decision up front if this is something you really want to do. No one needs one more good intention that went unfinished in their life. If you are ready to begin, make the firm decision that you will see this through to the end and consider asking at least one other man to join you in this challenge. It would be very helpful to get together every week or two to talk about your progress and to hold each other accountable.

I pray that the process of completing this 52-week challenge will abundantly bless you, your family, and beyond.

Your brother in Christ,
Jim Havens
DECISION ONE

GOD ABOVE

ALL ELSE
Decision One - God Above All Else

There is no doubt that all of these men were convinced and convicted by the reality of Jesus and His Catholic Church. They sought to live the Catholic Faith to the full, beginning with the First Commandment which summons man to believe in God, to hope in Him, and to love Him above all else (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2134).

Several of these men even proved it to the point of earthly death (Blessed Franz Jagerstatter, St. Timothy the Lector, St. Thomas More, St. Philip Howard, and Blessed Thomas Percy the Younger).

The decision to surrender everything to Jesus and put Him at the center of one’s life is the greatest decision from which all others flow.

1. Live the Catholic Faith – Example from Saint Philip Howard

Early on in his marriage, Philip neglected God and his wife because he valued his career and worldly advancement above all else. For Philip’s efforts he received the title of Earl, became a favorite of Queen Elizabeth I, and was a frequent guest in England’s royal court. Philip was “successful” by worldly standards.
In 1581, while enjoying a seat at the queen’s court, Phillip witnessed a theological dispute between Anglican theologians and a Jesuit priest named Edmund Campion (the future Saint Edmund Campion). The dispute resulted in Campion’s martyrdom and the episode had a massive impact on Philip.
The grace flowing from Campion’s witness eventually led Philip to receive and profess the Catholic Faith. Subsequently, Philip’s values found right order – rising to the top of his list of priorities: Jesus, the Catholic Church instituted by Jesus, and Philip’s vocation as husband to his wife Anne.

Caught in the context of a culture hostile to Catholicism, the consequences of Philip’s ongoing conversion were grave. Philip lost the worldly status of "success" that he once treasured. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London for more than 10 years and was refused request to see Anne who was pregnant at the time of his arrest. Philip’s earthly life ended in the Tower of London on October 19, 1595. He never set eyes upon his only child, a son, in this life.

St. Philip Howard could have been released from imprisonment at any time, if only he would renounce Catholicism and convert back to Protestantism; however, Philip freely chose to live the Catholic Faith regardless of the personal cost. He realized that, above all else, fidelity to Jesus and His Catholic Church was the greatest gift that he could give to his wife and child. Philip found true success.

St. Philip scratched the following words in the Tower of London and they can still be seen by
visitors today: “(in Latin) The more afflictions we bear for Christ in this world, the more glory we attain with Christ in the world to come.”

Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Prayerfully answer the question – “In truly living the Catholic Faith, where am I most in need of conversion?” (If you need help finding the answer, scan the index of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and notice when something strikes your conscience.)

Step 2: Find the topic in the index of the *Catechism* and humbly read the paragraph(s) referenced – place the truth of the Magisterial teaching above your own pride.

Step 3: From the passages read, identify one quote that best embodies the truth you need to more greatly receive and profess with your life. Write it down on an index card, along with St. Philip’s words: “The more afflictions we bear for Christ in this world, the more glory we attain with Christ in the world to come.”

Step 4: Carry the card in your pocket at all times for the next two weeks with the commitment to read the words and think deeply about them at least twice per day (Bonus Tip: Use a concrete
trigger to remind you, such as brushing your teeth).
DECISION TWO

RIGHTLY ORDERED PRIORITIES
Decision Two - Rightly Ordered Priorities

These men had prayer lives that were authentic, deep, and included a rich Sacramental life. They knew the secret of seeking first the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt. 6:33) as a living reality that blessed their entire perspective and all their priorities.

2. Cultivate Eternal Perspective - Example from Blessed Bartolo Longo
The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as “the first fruits of eternal glory (CCC 1832).” These twelve fruits listed in the tradition of the Church are charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity (Galatians 5:22-23). Nearly all of these fruits are evident in one small habit that Blessed Bartolo Longo cultivated to combat episodes of unhealthy aggression from his wife.

At times, Bartolo’s wife would verbally attack him with harsh, unkind, and injurious words. Bartolo would remain silent as the storm raged. Once it had passed, he would kindly and lovingly admonish his wife saying, “all things pass, let us always think of heaven.”

Blessed Bartolo Longo’s focus was so fixed on the reality of earthly life within the context of eternity that he did not fall into the temptation to win arguments with his wife or feign virtue with passive aggression. Bartolo actively loved his wife during her times of weakness by waiting until the most effective moment to speak into her heart by reminding her of their shared purpose and goal: Heaven.

The earthly bodies of Blessed Bartolo Longo and his wife Countess Marianna de Fusco rest side by
side, entombed in the crypt of the Basilica of the Holy Rosary in New Pompeii.

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

**Step 1:** At the end of each day for the next two weeks, prayerfully examine your actions and your heart by asking: “God, where today did I lose sight of the eternal purpose and goal of Heaven that I share with others? Please show me this truth in my relationship with my wife and then in my relationships with all others.”

**Step 2:** As you reflect on these moments where you neglected the bigger picture and therefore fell into a distorted view of the smaller picture, look acutely for those instances where silence would have been the better choice and where a few loving words at the opportune time would have had a greater impact.

**Step 3:** Follow-up by asking: “God, how can I do better tomorrow to authentically live this shared purpose and goal of Heaven with others? Please prepare me for greater love in my relationship with my wife and then in my relationships with all others.”
3. Pray the Rosary Daily and Deeply - Example from Blessed Bartolo Longo

Blessed Bartolo Longo is a somewhat unconventional family man in that he entered marriage at an older age (44) and then lived the married state while remaining faithful to a previous vow of celibacy he had made (he and his wife even slept in separate rooms). Longo received counsel from Pope Leo XIII who encouraged him to marry his longtime friend and charitable collaborator Countess Mariana di Fusco.

Considering that not too many men discern a call to enter into a Josephite marriage after consulting with the Pope, Blessed Bartolo Longo may seem quite unrelatable at first glance. Nevertheless, Longo lived an earthly life that included an enormous amount of responsibility and facing the challenge of fulfilling many responsibilities well is very relatable to men in our time.

Bartolo Longo was a lawyer, fundraiser, property manager, teacher, writer, Lay Dominican, and servant of the poor in both material and spiritual poverty. Longo led the building of a grandiose basilica, established orphanages and homes for children of imprisoned convicts, founded a religious order of sisters, created and edited a
newspaper, and was faithfully married for 39 years. How did Longo accomplish so much, so well?

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI shared the following thoughts on 10/19/2008:

“I paused briefly before the tomb of Blessed Bartolo Longo and, praying, I asked myself: ‘Where did this great apostle of Mary find the energy and perseverance he needed to bring such an impressive work, now known across the world, to completion? Was it not in the Rosary, which he accepted as a true gift from Our Lady’s Heart?’ Yes, that truly was how it happened! The experience of the Saints bears witness to it: this popular Marian prayer is a precious spiritual means to grow in intimacy with Jesus, and to learn at the school of the Blessed Virgin always to fulfill the divine will. It is contemplation of the mysteries of Christ in spiritual union with Mary...”

Blessed Bartolo Longo was known to pray the Rosary daily. One could also expect that he did not merely rush through a recitation of the vocal prayers, but rather he would keep a reflective pace in the vocal prayers while investing his heart deeply in pondering the mysteries.
Blessed Pope Paul VI described this vital aspect of the Rosary in *Marialis Cultus*, 47:

“Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation is in danger of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas and of going counter to the warning of Christ: ‘And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words’ (Mt. 6:7). By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord’s life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are unfolded.”

Blessed Bartolo Longo’s own words further affirm the reality of the riches available to us:

“Just as two friends, frequently in each other’s company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them and can learn from these supreme models a life of humility, poverty, hiddenness, patience and perfection.”
It is in this way that Blessed Bartolo Longo not only accomplished much, but also accomplished much very well.

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

Step 1: Commit to praying the Rosary every day for the next two weeks at a time that is most suitable for you.

Step 2: Set aside 45 minutes daily for this time of intimacy with Jesus and Mary in order to be free from any sense that you are in a hurry and need to rush through the prayer.

Step 3: Look forward to your daily appointment, show up, and follow through.

**4. Go to Mass Every Day and Eliminate Excuses - Example from Saint Isidore the Farmer**

Isidore and his wife Maria had one child, a son, who died very young. After his death, this peasant farming couple devoted themselves entirely to prayer, the Mass, and work.
Saint Isidore prayed hard and worked hard. He committed himself to go to Mass every day as the high point of his prayer. When Isidore invested himself into daily Mass, his work was more abundantly fruitful. His pray hard, work hard rhythm of life provided Isidore with an intimate relationship with God, strong virtues, and an income with which his family always had their
needs met and was able to give generously to the poor.

A quick story: Isidore had earned the complete confidence of the property owner he worked for, but his co-workers were envious of him and so they bore false witness to the property owner that Isidore was neglecting his work by praying and going to Mass too much. Isidore explained to his boss that he had to serve God first of all and that God then took care of him and helped him with his work through the ministry of the holy angels. One day when Isidore was at Mass, his employer saw two angels plowing the portion of land Isidore was responsible for.

After predicting the hour of his death, Isidore died at 50 years of age on May 15, 1130. Saint Isidore was canonized in 1622 and his wife Blessed Maria was beatified in 1697.

Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Go to Mass every day for the next two weeks.

Step 2: When you are tempted to think that you cannot possibly go to Mass because you are too busy that day, ask the intercession of St. Isidore
to help you to pray hard, work hard, and get to Mass as the high point of your daily prayer.

5. Order All Your Responsibilities to God's Kingdom - Example from Blessed Laszlo

Ladislaus, a.k.a. Laszlo, was born into the lineage of Hungarian nobility in 1870, the sixth of ten brothers. Material wealth enveloped him, think castles and vast lands, and at the age of nine his parents divorced when his father left the family and converted to Protestantism in order to marry another woman. His mother died when Laszlo was 12.

In his late twenties, near the end of his university years, Laszlo was indifferent toward God and mired in a sinful life that was far from the moral law. He graduated as a physician in 1900, specializing in surgery and ophthalmology, but he described his student years as “unhappy” until he entered into a period of engagement with Countess Maria Theresia Coreth in 1898. It was then that Laszlo experienced a major conversion to faith in Christ.
Laszlo and Maria built their marriage and family upon Jesus and the truths transmitted by His Catholic Church. Thirteen children resulted and Laszlo became a faithful and contented man by God’s grace.
True faith impacts the whole person and so it is no surprise that Laszlo’s faith impacted the entirety of his life. He gave of himself to his work with great dedication and generosity, becoming known as the “doctor of the poor,” and at the same time, he also took great care in his marriage and in the formation of his children.

Laszlo “had a real partnership with his wife and used to discuss all his concerns with her. She was his assistant, not only in his practice as a physician but also within the family in dealing with the children or the domestic help. They were not at all haughty about their rank; both of them showed respect and Christian courtesy to all people, even to gypsies, beggars, and others who were marginalized by society at that time. Each spouse encouraged the other to make generous donations to charities and often to perform heroic services for the needy.”

As one son has stated, “Daily Mass and the Rosary were just as much a part of our daily routine as mealtimes.” Regardless of whether Laszlo’s attention was on personal concerns, family, society, or the world at large – “Thy Kingdom Come” was the dominant note in his prayers. According to one nurse who used to assist Laszlo, “God was, so to speak, the air he breathed.”
Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: For the next two weeks, seek to live with the simple focus of Blessed Laszlo in your heart and on your lips: “Thy Kingdom Come.”

Step 2: Seek to maintain this simple focus in all things. If/when you are aware of drifting away from this touchstone, refocus your attention upon it and begin again.
DECISION THREE

CHERISH YOUR WIFE
Decision Three - Cherish Your Wife

Rather than take their wives for granted after their wedding day, these husbands continued to pursue their wives with actions that demonstrated their ongoing love and affection. They also listened and were habitually kind.

6. Celebrate Your Monthly Wedding Anniversary – Example from Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Blessed Frederic Ozanam is best known as the founder of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, yet he was also quite an excellent husband. He wrote
the following letter to his future bride prior to their wedding:

“I cannot offer you the conveniences of an amiable life of leisure or the prestige of a large income or tranquility or anything especially remarkable, none of the things that seduce most people. Nevertheless, I hope that my gift, as modest as it may be, will be accepted kindly, for it is the thing that God’s eternal majesty wants of us, that it prefers to everything else, the only thing that it desires, the only thing that deserves to be presented to you: I give you the will of a man, an upright and honest will, the will to be good so as to make you happy.”

Blessed Frederic’s actions proved his firm will to be good. One small sign he leaves us – on the twenty-third of each month, Blessed Frederic gave a bouquet of flowers to his wife Amelie in remembrance of their wedding day (June 23, 1841).

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

Step 1: Circle or somehow mark the day of your monthly wedding anniversary on your personal calendar for the next several months.
Step 2: Intentionally decide right now on some specific act of love that you can do for your wife to celebrate your anniversary each month. Something small, yet something you know she would enjoy.

Step 3: When the day arrives each month, follow through on the plan and take action.

7. Write a Love Letter to Your Wife – Example from Blessed Franz

Blessed Franz Jagerstatter was a Catholic Austrian under Nazi German occupation during World War II. Franz believed it would be a sin to fight on the side of the Nazis and so he refused to do so. He chose to stand firm in the truth of his Catholic faith and, as a result, was imprisoned and ultimately beheaded by guillotine on August 9, 1943. Franz was 36-years-old at the time of his earthly death. He left a wife and three daughters (the oldest being only five).

Blessed Franz Jagerstatter spent months in prison prior to his execution. During his captivity, he wrote a series of letters to his wife, often beginning with the salutation “Dearest wife, Love of my heart!”
Here is an excerpt of one such letter, written on April 9, 1943 (their seven year wedding anniversary):

“Dearest wife, exactly seven years ago today, in the presence of God and of the priest, we promised that we would love each other and be faithful. I believe that we have faithfully kept this promise to this day, and I believe that God will continue to grant us the grace, even though we are now separated, to remain true to this promise until the end of our life...Dearest wife, why should the future be so dreadful for us, since he who has preserved and blessed us thus far will not abandon us now, if only we don’t forget to thank him and don’t grow weary in striving for heaven. Then our happiness will endure into all eternity. Even though I am now sitting behind prison walls, I nevertheless believe that I can continue to build upon your love and fidelity, and even if I depart from this life before you, then even beyond the grave as well.”

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

Step 1: Write down and commit to a definite day and time (within the next 48 hours) when you will sit down and write a love letter to your wife.
Step 2: When writing, follow the format of Blessed Franz in his letter above: gratefully remember your time together from your wedding day until now, offer some present encouragement, and share your dreams for your time together from now into eternity.

Step 3: Give the letter to your wife as a sincere sign of your love and affection for her.

8. Read the Holy Recommendation of Your Wife – Example from Blessed John Colombini
Blessed John Colombini was a wealthy businessman with a wife and two children. Before the age of 50, he was greedy for material gain, focused on worldly ambition, and prone to anger. Blessed John’s conversion began in his 50th year, the result of a seemingly ordinary interaction with his wife Biagia.

One day, John was waiting for his lunch, which his wife was preparing for him as usual. When food was not on the table at the proper time, John’s impatience swelled into a passionate outburst. In response, his wife gave him the biography of Saint Mary of Egypt to read. John read it and the book had a deeply profound impact on him.

Blessed John began to see things very differently. His ambition and anger yielded to incredible humility and meekness. John began sharing his wealth with the poor, taking up works of mercy, and spending more and more time in prayer.

Blessed John Colombini’s conversion to Jesus Christ and His Catholic Church continued to progress in remarkable ways throughout his life. And it all began with a holy book given to him by his wife.
Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Before this day is done, ask your wife to recommend to you the life of a saint whom she believes would be particularly helpful to you.

Step 2: Prayerfully read a good biography of the saint she recommends (Here are two good sources: TAN Books, Ignatius Press).

9. Be Kind to Your Wife Always – Example from Saint Homobonus

Homobonus Tucenghi (from the Latin homo bonus literally meaning “good man”) lived in Cremona, Italy in the 12th century. Even though he and his wife were unable to have biological children of their own, Homobonus gave himself as a father to the care of abandoned children. Moreover, “he entirely devoted himself to the practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and, at the same time, he safeguarded the integrity of the Catholic faith faced with heretical infiltrations, with the same fervor with which he participated daily in the Eucharist and devoted himself to prayer.”
At first, Homobonus’s wife did not understand or share in his zeal for living the Gospel. She objected to her husband’s choices and even had a hatred in her heart toward him. Homobonus did not give up on his wife or resign himself to this division in his marriage as something that would never change, rather he fought for his wife and marriage by continuing his good works and seeking to win his wife over to the Gospel with kindness. Homobonus persevered and eventually
his wife began to help him with his charitable projects.

St. Homobonus’s earthly life came to an end while he was contemplating the Crucifix at Mass, prostrating himself in the form of the Cross, as was his daily custom. He was canonized a short 14 months later. “He is the first and only layman of the faithful, not to belong either to the nobility or to a royal or princely family, to be canonized during the Middle Ages.”

All quotes are taken from a 1997 Letter of St. John Paul the Great to the Bishop of Cremona.

Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Notice how St. Homobonus persevered in kindness toward his wife, even when he knew he was 100% right, and ponder: In what circumstances is it good for me to be unkind to my wife, or to anyone? (After being convicted in the truth that there is no such circumstance, move to step two.)

Step 2: Notice how kindness can be sustained even when exercising the firmness that is very often demanded by authentic love for others, and ponder: In what circumstances is it good for me
to be firm and how can I be both kind and firm in those moments? Write down answers.

Step 3: Commit to kindness at all times without compromise, most especially toward your wife, and examine your actions and conscience at the end of each day in this regard for the next two weeks.
DECISION FOUR

TAKE OWNERSHIP
FOR THE
FORMATION OF
YOUR CHILDREN
Decision Four - Take Ownership for the Formation of Your Children

These fathers understood the importance of forming their children well. They actively engaged this responsibility as one of their highest priorities.

10. Be the Primary Educator in the Faith for Your Children – Example from Blessed Laszlo

Blessed Laszlo was hands-on in the formation of his children. His dedication to their spiritual growth was rooted in the conviction that there was nothing more precious that he could foster in his children than a contemplative spirit that treasured Jesus and His Catholic Church.

“The whole family took part in Holy Mass every day. After Mass, Ladislaus would give the children a catechism lesson and assign to each one a concrete act of charity for that day. Every evening after they prayed the Rosary they would review the day and the assigned act of charity.” (from the Vatican website)

Blessed Laszlo was whole-heartedly engaged in the responsibility of every parent to be the primary educator in the Faith for his or her
children. He did not look to outsource this essential component of evangelization known as catechesis, but rather applied himself to it as a top priority. Handing on the Faith was not merely one more thing to be done on his parental to-do list, it was a way of life that permeated the entire life of the family.

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

Step 1: Before this day is done, pray over the daily rhythm that Blessed Laszlo provided for his family (Mass, catechetical lesson, assign a concrete act of charity to each child, evening Rosary, review the day and the assigned act of charity), assess where you currently are in providing the primary catechesis your children need, and discern what is the next step for adjusting the rhythm of your family life to this end.

Step 2: Talk to the entire family about this (within the next 48 hours), build consensus around the best resolution, and seek to move forward together by putting it into practice.
11. Write a Vision of Life for Your Children – Example from Saint Louis IX
King Louis VIII died in 1226, leaving the throne of France to his 12-year-old son Louis IX. St. Louis IX of France married in 1234 at the age of 19. His marriage to Margaret lasted 36 years and resulted in 11 children, nine of whom reached adulthood. Louis and Margaret were very deliberate to provide a strong Catholic formation for their children.

On his deathbed, St. Louis IX of France wrote the following to his son Philip who would go on to inherit the throne and would be known as Philip the Bold:

“My dearest son, my first instruction is that you should love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your strength. Without this there is no salvation. Keep yourself, my son, from everything you know displeases God, that is to say, from every mortal sin. You should permit yourself to be tormented by every kind martyrdom before you would allow yourself to commit a mortal sin.

If the Lord has permitted you to have some trial, bear it willingly and with gratitude, considering that it has happened for your good and that perhaps you well deserved it. If the Lord bestows upon you any kind of prosperity, thank him humbly and see that you become no worse for it, either through vain pride or anything else,
because you ought not to oppose God or offend him in the matter of his gifts.

Listen to the divine office with pleasure and devotion. As long as you are in church, be careful not to let your eyes wander and not to speak empty words, but pray to the Lord devoutly, either aloud or with the interior prayer of the heart.

Be kindhearted to the poor, the unfortunate, and the afflicted. Give them as much help and consolation as you can. Thank God for all the benefits he has bestowed upon you, that you may be worthy to receive greater. Be just to your subjects, swaying neither to right nor left, but holding the line of justice. Always side with the poor rather than with the rich, until you are certain of the truth. See that all your subjects live in justice and peace, but especially those who have ecclesiastical rank and who belong to religious orders.

Be devout and obedient to our mother the Church of Rome and the Supreme Pontiff as your spiritual father. Work to remove all sin from your land, particularly blasphemies and heresies.

In conclusion, dearest son, I give you every blessing that a loving father can give a son. May the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity and all the
saints protect you from every evil. And may the Lord give you the grace to do His will so that He may be served and honored through you, that in the next life we may together come to see him, love him, and praise him unceasingly.”

Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Before this day is done, sit down to write a similar letter of vision to your child(ren).

Step 2: Prayerfully consider the following outline based on St. Louis’ work:

- Paragraph 1 – Instruction to love God above all else and to never commit a mortal sin.
- Paragraph 2 – How to handle times of trial and times of prosperity.
- Paragraph 3 – Advice on prayer.
- Paragraph 4 – Encouragement to live a life of service.
- Paragraph 5 – Be obedient and lead well.
- Paragraph 6 – Final blessing and prayer.

Step 3: Write a quick sentence to capture the essence of what you would like to impart in each paragraph.
Step 4: Flesh out each paragraph until you have a final draft.

Step 5: Read it to your children (within the next 48 hours) and keep it somewhere where you will all see it frequently.

12. Write a Philosophy of Formation – Example from Saint Thomas More

Saint Thomas More took his fatherly responsibilities very seriously. Thomas had an unyielding intention to provide for the needs of his children, especially in the area of formation. This formational provision was extra-challenging for Thomas since besides his responsibilities as a father, he also felt called to take on many professional duties that kept him away from his home for substantial amounts of time.

In the summer of 1511, Thomas’ wife Jane died after only six and a half years of marriage, leaving Thomas with four young children. Soon after, Thomas decided it would be best to remarry Alice Middleton for the sake of his children. Alice has been described as hard-working, enterprising, respectful, and competent. She was also described by Thomas’ friend Erasmus as
“not especially beautiful and no longer a little maid, either.” Erasmus also made clear that Thomas remarried “for the sake of his family rather than for pleasure.”
St. Thomas More also enlisted tutor William Gosnell for his children. He wrote the following to William, a kind of philosophy of formation:

“...to put virtue in the first place among goods, learning in the second; and in their studies to esteem most whatever may teach them piety towards God, charity to all, and modesty and Christian humility in themselves. By such means they will receive from God the reward of an innocent life, and in the assured expectation of it will view death without dread, and meanwhile possessing solid joy will neither be puffed up by the empty praise of men, nor dejected by evil tongues.”

Thomas clearly placed a high value on education, yet he viewed education to be at the service of a broader human formation that seeks the development of virtue as the greatest good. He specifically mentions four virtues: piety, charity, modesty, and humility. Thomas also explains the value of acquiring these virtues by describing a few clear outcomes: an innocent life (the peace of a clear conscience), a firm expectation of a good death (free from fear of death), and a solid and secure joy that is not shaken by praise or ridicule.
Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Before this day is done, reflect on what St. Thomas More has written here and ponder two questions in light of it – If I were instructing a tutor on how to form my children, how might my instruction be similar? How might my instruction be different?

Step 2: Write a similar short philosophy of formation as if writing to your own William Gosnell. Write only three sentences and follow Thomas’ general format

- Sentence 1 - Write a statement on the rightful place of education within a broader formation that puts virtue first.
- Sentence 3 - List the most important outcomes for the formation of my children.
- Sentence 2 - Identify the 3-4 key virtues that when acquired will most assuredly lead to those outcomes.

Step 3: Read this philosophy of formation every day for the next two weeks to keep focused on the mission of providing whatever is necessary to form your children in the key virtues identified.
13. Form Each Child to Understand and Embrace Vocation – Example from Saint Ferdinand III
St. Ferdinand III was married twice (his first wife Beatrice died after 15 years of marriage) and had a total of 13 children. Two of Ferdinand’s children entered the call to consecrated life. His son Sancho received the Sacrament of Holy Orders and became a priest, he would later serve as Archbishop of Toledo (Spain). His daughter Berengaria took solemn vows, became a nun, and entered a Cistertian convent. It is said that Ferdinand rejoiced at the response of his children to enter their vocations to consecrated life.

Surely it is no stretch to imagine that Saint Ferdinand formed all of his children in a deep understanding of what a vocation is, the varied and specific paths of holiness that God calls us to, and a knowledge of how to prayerfully discern one’s vocation. In order to do this, Ferdinand must have been very well formed in a deep understanding of vocation himself.

Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Before the day is done, read the following article: *Know Who You Are: The Importance of Vocation.*

Step 2: Within the next 48 hours, spend 30 minutes reading through the 53 various
paragraphs in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that mention the word “vocation.”

Step 3: Spend at least 20 minutes in prayer asking God, listening, and pondering the best way to form your children in a deep understanding of vocation.

Step 4: Write out any concrete fruits from your prayer time and take some appropriate, immediate action.
DECISION FIVE

STEP UP AND LEAD YOUR FAMILY TO HEAVEN
Decision Five - Step Up and Lead Your Family to Heaven

There was no passively allowing their families to go with the flow of the world in these men. They firmly decided to lead their families to Heaven by making choices that wisely and thoroughly impacted family life.

14. Schedule Family Prayer – Example from Saint Louis Martin

St. Louis Martin exhibited tremendous affection and intimacy toward his children. He was a man of great tenderness, and at the same time, a man of holy firmness. Louis was very much active and engaged in the lives of his children, which included scolding them as true love required.

Celine, the seventh child in the Martin family, gives examples of how St. Louis demonstrated a rightly ordered firmness in his fathering of Therese (the youngest child):

“My father had a very special consideration for his youngest child, and was as attentive to her as a mother. But if it is true that little Therese was, as she says, always ‘surrounded with love,’ it is also true that she was never spoiled. The proof
that my father did not spoil her, and that she did not do just what she liked at home, is shown by a fact which made a deep impression on her, and which she relates in her Autobiography: how she was severely reprimanded for not wishing to leave her games at the first call of her father.”

“A little later, at Liseux – she might have been six years old – she took great pleasure in carrying
the newspaper to our father every morning. One day I wanted to take it to him; but Therese, quicker than I, had already caught it up and ran to him. This disappointed me and I showed it. Papa reproached little Therese for not having yielded to me, and he scolded her very severely, so much so that I was extremely upset myself.”

Another story from Celine relates a similar firmness toward Marie-Louise (the oldest child):

“One year at the end of the summer holidays Marie was taking a walk with our father in a small family property, which formerly belonged to a person called Roulee. Marie began to gather some flowers saying: ‘I will take these back with me to the Visitation School, as a souvenir of the Roulees.’ Our father, wishing to teach her a lesson, replied: ‘That’s it! And then you can look down on your little friends by showing them the flowers from your estate.’ Poor Marie, seeing that he had guessed her thoughts, threw away her bouquet to show that she was above vainglory.”

It was not only in correction of his children that Louis was firm, but also in the way he trained them to grow in self-discipline. Celine remarks that “without being severe, he raised his children in fidelity to all their duties.” Celine further describes how St. Louis provided a disciplined schedule of prayer for the family:
“At home, our education had piety as its chief lever. There was a complete liturgy of household life: evening prayers all together, Month of May Devotions, Sunday Offices, spiritual reading before Feasts, etc. Our father aided as much as he could the development of the spiritual life.”

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

Step 1: Answer the following questions honestly
- How well am I providing a well-ordered and disciplined schedule of prayer for my family?
What is one decision I can make to incorporate a greater firmness in this regard for the sake of my family?

Step 2: Write this one resolution on a piece of paper and commit to it by signing your name.

Step 3: Tape the commitment to your bathroom mirror for the next two weeks to help you remember to take action.

**15. Take Your Family on a Pilgrimage - Example from Saint Richard**

Saint Richard, sometimes called St. Richard the King or St. Richard the Pilgrim, and his wife Wunna are excellent intercessors for true success
in parenting as all three of their children have been canonized as saints: Saint Willibald, Saint Winebald, and Saint Walburga.

On one occasion Richard was convinced by his son Willibald to go on a “pilgrimage for Christ.” In 720, Richard set off with his two sons for Rome, intending for the Holy Land to be their ultimate
destination. After an unexpected illness, Richard died during the journey. His sons journeyed on.

In his “Modern Litany of Saints” author J. Dirnbeck writes the following about this holy English couple:

“You knew how to create a family atmosphere in which your children matured into adults who not only were hearers of the Good News but also became its messengers. Richard and Wunna, pray for us, that we will be concerned about how best to hand on our faith to the children of tomorrow.”

St. Richard taught his children how to live one’s earthly life as a pilgrimage to Heaven, our true homeland. A pilgrimage to a holy destination with his sons seems to be one good way that Richard effectively transmitted the message. All three of his children faithfully followed him all the way Home.

Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Read Pope Francis’ homily about families on pilgrimage to the house of God.
Step 2: Prayerfully ponder how to build into your family life a greater living sense of being together on an earthly pilgrimage to Heaven.

Step 3: Within the next 24 hours, seek out and find an appropriate destination for a day or weekend family pilgrimage to help further transmit the truth of your identity as pilgrims toward Heaven; sons and daughters making your way Home.

Step 4: Commit and follow through by taking your family on a day or weekend pilgrimage (within the next two weeks).

16. Maximize Sunday – Example from Saint Louis Martin

St. Louis Martin was a skilled watchmaker who owned a profitable jewelry shop. His wife Zelie wrote the following about him to a relative:

“Very often I admire the strictness of Louis, and I say to myself: ‘There’s a man who never tried to amass a fortune.’ When he was starting in business, his confessor suggested to him – so he told me – to open his jewelry store on Sundays until noon. But Louis never wanted to use that permission preferring rather to lose business. In spite of that he has become rich. I can attribute his comfortable financial position to no other
cause than a special blessing of God, a result of his faithful observance of Sunday.”

Louis’ friends believed that he sometimes went too far in his observance of the Lord’s Day. They insisted that he should open his jewelry shop on Sundays and holidays, at least by a back door, pointing out that he was losing many opportunities for good business. Louis refused to do so.

Not only did Louis abstain from selling on Sundays and holy days, but he also abstained from buying anything. On one occasion, he noticed an item on sale that he wanted, so he asked the seller to hold it for him until the following day. One of his daughters, Celine, points out that for this reason the family always had stale bread on Sundays since it had to be bought the preceding day. It was also a rare occasion for the family to undertake a journey on Sunday which would require another person to work.

St. Louis gives us an example here of a man who is intent on giving God far more than what is minimally required. For Louis, observing the Lord’s Day was not about mere obligation and avoiding sin, nor does it seem to be some scrupulous compulsion, but rather his focus seems fixed on the sacred nature of the day and
giving a free and generous response of love and reverence.

In her remembrance of St. Louis on this topic, daughter Celine offers the following lines from Scripture:

“If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from following your own pursuits on my holy day; If you call the sabbath a delight, the Lord’s holy day glorious; If you glorify it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs – Then you shall delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob, your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” Isaiah 58:13-14

Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1166, 1167, 1193, 2168-2195 and St. John Paul the Great’s Apostolic Letter Dies Domini (The Lord’s Day) in order to better understand the true nature of the Lord’s Day.

Step 2: As you read, prayerfully consider a resolution or two for how you can better lead
your family to live Sundays and Holy Days more fully.

Step 3: Follow through on your resolution(s) for at least the next two Sundays.
17. Develop a Small Habit of Penance for Generational Sins – Example from Saint Francis Borgia

Saint Francis Borgia was born into an aristocratic Catholic family and grew up in a world of high nobility and luxury. He married at 18 and became the father of eight children. Francis exhibited many strong virtues, but his concerns were of a
more superficial nature, until the sudden death of a close friend sparked a path of conversion for Francis.

While leading the funeral procession of his close personal friend Empress Isabella, he caught sight of her completely disfigured dead face. He was deeply shaken by the event and convicted by the transience of human life. Francis resolved to live the rest of his life focused on deeper concerns in light of eternity. Francis’ Catholic Faith came alive and so did he.

After 17 years of marriage, Francis’ wife Eleonor died after battling a few years of serious illness. His sorrow was bitter, but he persevered firmly in faith and found his consolation and strength in the Sacraments.

Francis went on to make the Spiritual Exercises with the founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola. Francis renounced his high worldly status and was admitted into the Society of Jesus. He was eventually ordained a priest and later was elected father general of the Society of Jesus. Francis died in Rome in the odor of sanctity.

Here is one small, interesting habit from the life of St. Francis Borgia:
“He used to sign his name ‘Francis, the sinner’, not so much on account of his own sins – throughout his whole life these were hardly serious or numerous – but rather humbly acknowledging that he was a descendant of the infamous Borgia family. He was atoning for them, seeking to make reparation for the crimes of that branch of the Spanish nobility, including those personally committed by Pope Alexander VI, who was his great-grandfather.”

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

Step 1: Schedule at least 20 minutes to prayerfully reflect upon your family tree, most specifically your parents and grandparents.

Step 2: Spend the time with these two questions: “What are the top three virtues that have been handed on to me?” and “What are the top three errors that have been handed on to me?” (The goal is to honestly see reality in order to grow in awareness and understanding.)

Step 3: Thank God for the habits of virtue handed on to you and ask God’s mercy upon your lineage for the habits of vice that have been handed down.
Step 4: In noticing the greatest error handed on through the generations, pray for healing and redemption in this area: “Come, Jesus. May I grow in the opposite virtue and hand on freedom and strength to my children in this area.”

Step 5: Prayerfully consider a small and appropriate act of penance you can do regularly for the next two weeks as an action to intentionally counteract the error handed on and as a prayer for God’s mercy, healing, and strengthening upon your lineage past, present, and future (Notice: Saint Francis Borgia was making an act of humility in signing his name “the sinner” as a direct opposition to his family’s root sin of pride).

18. Share the Rosary – Example from Blessed Bartolo Longo

In our last post, we examined Blessed Bartolo Longo’s good example of praying the Rosary daily and deeply. Longo also generously shared the Rosary with others to such an exemplary degree that St. John Paul the Great called him “a true apostle of the Rosary” (Rosarium Virginis Mariae, 8). While Longo never had children of his own, we can reasonably infer from his actions that he would have certainly taught them how to effectively pray the Rosary.
Blessed Bartolo Longo received Catholic schooling in primary and secondary grades growing up, but as a young college student studying law at the University of Naples, he was drawn further and further away from his faith. A lively anti-Catholic movement on campus influenced Bartolo tremendously and resulted in his involvement in the occult and then his “ordination” as a satanic priest.

As you can imagine, the fruits were very bad and Bartolo experienced severe depression, paranoia, and ultimately a mental breakdown. In the midst of this, he heard the voice of his deceased father urging him to “Return to God! Return to God!” Also at this time, an old friend encouraged Bartolo to speak with a faithful and highly educated Dominican priest, Fr. Alberto Radente. Fr. Alberto enlisted the help of many prayer intercessors, taught Bartolo how to pray the Rosary, and eventually helped him to be reconciled to the Catholic Church.

Bartolo continued to struggle with the temporal consequences of his past sins, and one evening he experienced the following, in his own words:

“As I pondered over my condition, I experienced a deep sense of despair and almost committed suicide. Then I heard an echo in my ear of the voice of Friar Alberto repeating the words of the
Blessed Virgin Mary: ‘If you seek salvation, promulgate the rosary. This is Mary’s own promise.’ These words illumined my soul. I went on my knees. ‘If it is true. I will not leave this valley until I have propagated your rosary.’”

On October 7, 1871, the three hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Lepanto, Bartolo Longo was enrolled in the third order of St. Dominic with the name Brother Rosary. Blessed Bartolo Longo would go on to share the Rosary most generously as a means to help people draw closer to Jesus through Mary.

While Bartolo never had children of his own, we do have his remarks as a young man that point to his desire for children and what his intention would be for raising them:

“...to start a truly Catholic family and, through marriage, to provide the Church with new sons and daughters and God with new worshippers.” With this end in mind, along with Bartolo’s record as a true apostle of the Rosary, it is no stretch to infer that he would have taught his children how to effectively pray the Rosary.
Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Prayerfully read *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 41-42 on the Rosary as a prayer for the family.

Step 2: Set aside 10 minutes daily, for the next two weeks, to invest in seeking the best way to share the Rosary with your family. If you have young children, seeking an age-appropriate presentation is key.

Step 3: Write down a plan for teaching your children how to effectively pray the Rosary.

Step 4: Follow through by implementing the plan, noticing the results, and adjusting your method accordingly.
DECISION SIX

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SUFFERINGS
Decision Six - Make the Most of Your Sufferings

Hard trials were common in the lives of these men, but rather than falling into the false interpretation of events that leads to discouragement, they understood the great value of their suffering and took right action to make the most of it.

19. Let Mary Console You in Your Trials – Example from Saint Joseph

Saint Joseph is the greatest earthly husband and father who has ever lived. After Mary his spouse, Joseph is the second greatest saint of all-time, the greatest male saint ever. The Church affirms a unique category of honor for St. Joseph: God alone is to be worshipped (latria), Mary is to be venerated as the highest saint (hyperdulia), Joseph is to be venerated, after Mary, but above all other saints (protodulia), and all the saints are to be venerated after Mary and Joseph (dulia).

The greatness of St. Joseph’s vocation as spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and adopted father of Jesus is not reflected by the quantity of words with which the Gospels speak of him as they are relatively few. In fact, there are no words spoken by Joseph in the Gospels, yet “those texts that relate to Joseph are heavy with hidden meaning.
The details they give, sparse as they are, when meditated upon, become suffused with light (*Joseph the Silent*, Author’s Preface to the first edition, 7).

I recommend *Joseph the Silent* – a small, but powerful book that lends itself as a guide for meditating more deeply on Joseph. For example, the author Fr. Michael Gasnier O.P. takes the scene of Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem, the short phrase “there was no place for them in the inn (Luke 2:7),” and provides us with this gem of insight:

“Poor Joseph. The rebuffs he had received lay heavy on his heart. ‘Bethlehem,’ says Faber, ‘was his Cross.’ He blamed himself for the disappointment and refusals they (the Holy Family) had met with. He accused himself to God and Mary for his lack of foresight. But Mary was unperturbed; she tried to comfort him, to console him. She assured him that these humiliations were the mysterious workings of divine Providence. God, coming to save men from their sins, was from the beginning giving an example of complete detachment. She begged Joseph to pray with her, and they recited the verses of her Magnificat, that hymn of thanksgiving which would be always on their lips.”
Any husband and father who truly strives to live the Gospel in his earthly life is sure to understand something of Joseph’s Cross in Bethlehem. Joseph is faithful to God’s will, yet his great success appears to be a great failure. As thoroughly real as his victory is, he deeply feels as if he were failing. In this trial of faith, when the failure feels so incredibly real in spite of one’s true fidelity to God, it is a tremendous blessing to have a companion to help bring a right perspective into view; a true interpretation of events that turns discouragement into thanksgiving.

Our Blessed Mother Mary is a powerful companion who is always with us in our earthly pilgrimage. She not only witnessed, but also freely and faithfully offered herself with Jesus in His Passion and Death. Our King wore the crown of thorns on His wooden throne. Our Queen worshipped Him there, her heart pierced in perfect union with His. Mary knows the earthly trial of seeing through the perceived failure while standing firm in faithful victory. She is tender to console and direct us back to reality in such times.

Mary’s Magnificat can be ours:

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked
with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever (Luke 1:46-55).”

Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: In the next two weeks, seek to notice when the Cross of Joseph presents itself to you (when you notice that you are being faithful to God, yet you feel as if you are failing).

Step 2: Slowly pray a “Hail Mary” and invite Mary to console you and to help you to see things clearly.

Step 3: Regardless of how you feel, freely offer yourself in praise and thanksgiving to God with Mary by slowly praying her Magnificat and making it your own.
20. Freely Offer Sacrifices – Example from Saint Timothy the Lector

Diving deep into Church history, we find Saint Timothy the Lector, a disciple of Christ who lived out his earthly life in the late third century under Roman persecution. Timothy was known for being an authentic disciple of Christ, one mark of which was his strong knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures. He would often share the Scriptures with villagers after the day’s work. Timothy was ordained in the minor order of lector by his bishop, according to the custom of that time.
Timothy married Maura, a seventeen-year-old woman of great faith, yet after only three weeks of matrimony, the local governor Arianus pronounced Timothy “one of the greatest enemies of the gods.” Timothy was arrested and questioned by Arianus, “Are you not aware of the edicts of the emperors against those who refuse to sacrifice to idols?”

Timothy answered plainly, “I am aware of them, but will rather lay down my life than commit such an act of impiety.”

Arianus ordered Timothy to be tortured. Burning irons were put into Timothy’s ears, causing his eyes to bulge from their sockets. Timothy responded by giving thanks to God and by freely entering into the pain as a sacrificial offering in union with Christ to the Father. This enraged Arianus all the more. Timothy was then suspended by his feet with a large stone tied to his neck. Wood was stuffed into his mouth to prevent him from speaking. Even with this, Arianus was unable to break Timothy’s spirit, and so Arianus sent for Maura.

Maura was instructed that she alone could save her husband from death – it was up to her to convince Timothy to sacrifice to the Roman gods. Maura, seeing Timothy in such an awful condition, did her best to persuade her husband
to abandon the faith and thereby save his earthly life. Timothy’s mouth was cleared so that he might answer, “How is it possible, O Maura, that, being thyself a Christian, instead of animating me to die for the faith, thou dost tempt me to abandon it; and thus, to obtain a short and miserable existence here, expose myself to the never-ending pains of hell? Is this, then, thy love?”

Maura was instantly converted by her husband’s words. She fell to her knees with tears of repentance and sought God’s forgiveness. Maura then turned to Timothy, asked for his forgiveness, encouraged him to remain firm in his faith, and expressed her desire to share his martyrdom.

At Timothy’s prompting, Maura retracted her first step by returning to Arianus where she publicly expressed her desire to live her faith and to die for Jesus. Following Timothy’s example, Maura freely and lovingly offered herself as a living sacrifice in union with Jesus as a gift to the Father.

It deserves to be noted that “Maura at first was afraid to trust her own weakness; but Timothy prayed for her so effectually, that the Lord granted her grace and strength to execute the
orders of her pious husband (St. Alphonsus de Liguori. *Victories of the Martyrs, 264")."

Arianus was shocked by Maura’s sudden change. He tried to tempt her back to his perspective by promising her a new and better husband to replace Timothy. Maura’s faith was unwavering. She explained that after Timothy’s death, she would have no other spouse than Jesus Christ.

Maura was tortured for her faith. Her hair was violently pulled out and her fingers were cut off. She was then immersed in boiling water, yet Maura emerged from the caldron uninjured. This had a major impact on Arianus and it would contribute to his own conversion just days after these events, but for the moment, Arianus did not quit. Maura was tortured with burning sulphur, tar, and was sentenced to death.

On the way to her execution, Maura’s mother embraced her and with many tears sought to save her. Maura freed herself from the earthly embrace and hastened to the cross. Finally, Maura and Timothy were crucified – together on one cross, opposite one another. They were fastened in such a way as to prolong their pain, and so Saint Timothy the Lector and Saint Maura spent their final earthly days praising God in their suffering and encouraging one another with
the hope of being fully united to Jesus Christ in Heaven.

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

Step 1: Before this day is done, spend at least 20 minutes in prayerful reflection on the following question – “Holy Spirit show me...where are the crosses in my life that I am called to freely embrace as a means of offering myself in union with Jesus as a gift to the Father?”

Step 2: As you identify these crosses, write them down.

Step 3: When you encounter these crosses throughout the day, choose to freely offer yourself in love by engaging in the action you are called to, rather than fleeing from it or complaining about it. When it is especially difficult to make this sincere gift of self, pray: “Jesus, help me to love like You.”

Step 4: Invite your wife to consider steps 1-3 for her own growth.

Step 5: At the end of each day for the next two weeks, spend at least one minute seeking to praise and thank God with your whole heart,
regardless of how you feel in the moment. And invite your wife to join you.

**21. Unite Your Sufferings with Jesus and Mary – Example from Blessed Jacopone**
Born as a member of a noble family in the northern Italian city of Todi, Jacomo ("James") became a lawyer and had a reputation as a worldly and greedy man. Yet, by God’s grace, he met and married Vanna, a beautiful and virtuous noblewoman.

After their wedding, Jacomo continued to indulge in great extravagance and worldly amusements, while Vanna desired a modest Christian life and committed herself to hidden acts of prayerful penance on behalf of her husband. After only one year of marriage, tragedy struck.

Jacomo took great pleasure in showing off his wife’s beauty and winning the admiration of other men. With such motivation, Jacomo organized a festival in Todi and commanded that Vanna be dressed up as a beauty queen and seated on a high platform where all could see her among the other aristocratic ladies. In the course of the raucousness of the festival, the platform came crashing down and Vanna was buried in the ruins.

When Jacomo reached his wife and pulled her badly wounded body from the wreckage, he opened her belt and loosened her bodice to comfort her. He discovered that underneath her luxurious gown, Vanna wore a girdle made of goat’s hair against her tender skin. As Vanna lay
dying she whispered into her husband’s ear, “That was for you!”

Shaken both by Vanna’s sudden death and the realization that she had been living a life of hidden penitential love for him, Jacomo was inconsolable. His only comfort came when someone reminded him of the Mother of Sorrows, beneath the crucifixion of Jesus her son. Jacomo experienced a major conversion – he gave up his successful career as a lawyer, divided all his wealth among the poor, and committed himself to a life of penance.

It must have caused quite a stir in Todi to see this former man of excess voluntarily dressed in the rags of poverty. It was during this time when former associates mocked Jacomo as a fool and gave him a new name – Jacopone or “Crazy Jim.” The name became dear to him and after ten years of penance, Jacopone was admitted into the Friars Minor (Franciscans) as a lay brother.

“(Jacopone) performed the most menial tasks in the friary and glowed with an ardent love for Jesus Christ and his sorrowful Virgin Mother. The greatest sorrow he experienced as a friar was caused by his recognition that God is loved so little or not at all and is much offended instead, particularly by married couples, whose life together is so often without love and frequently
marred by shameful abuses that disregard the real purpose of marriage.” *(Married Saints and Blesseds Through the Centuries, 222).*

Blessed Jacopone was also a songwriter throughout his life. Prior to his conversion he wrote songs to be performed at festivals, and afterward he composed songs in praise of Christ and Mary. Jacopone’s most beautiful and famous hymn is the sequence *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* (“The sorrowful mother stood”), which meditates on the sufferings of Mary during Jesus’ crucifixion. The hymn is said to have originated in Jacopone’s bitter suffering after the tragic death of his beautiful and beloved wife Vanna.

The popularity of the *Stabat Mater* has led to various translations and musical settings and the hymn is still frequently incorporated into Liturgies and devotions, especially the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15), the Friday before Holy Week, and the Stations of the Cross.

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

Step 1: Before this day is done, go beneath a crucifix and meditate on the suffering love of Jesus and the suffering love of Mary who offered
herself in perfect union with Him. Imagine them saying to you, “This is for you!”

Step 2: Answer the question – “What is the source of the deepest suffering I carry within me?”

Step 3: Freely seek to face the entirety of this suffering and to offer all of it and all of you are in love to our Father, in union with Christ crucified and His sorrowful mother Mary.

Step 4: Search out a musical version of the *Stabat Mater* that helps you to enter into the love of Jesus and Mary and use it as a frequent source of prayer for the next two weeks.
DECISION SEVEN

CHOOSE LOVE
Decision Seven - Choose Love

Love was the goal for these men (CCC 1829). Each chose to give of himself for the greater good of others, whether it was by blessing his own children with attention and affection, or by spending himself for strangers in spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Bringing it all full circle, it is most worthy to be mentioned again that several of these men gave the ultimate gift of self (see above - #1 God Above All Else). They loved to the end and with their very selves (cf. John 13:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:8).

22. Nickname Your Children – Example from St. Louis Martin

Louis and Maria Azelia ("Zelie") Martin were canonized on October 18, 2015 – the first joint canonization of a married couple.

St. Louis Martin is best known as the father of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, a.k.a. the Little Flower. Therese was the last of nine children; four died in infancy, while the other five, all daughters, each answered a call to religious life.
After the earthly death of Zelie due to breast cancer, Louis was left with his five daughters ranging in age from 4 to 17. Many of his friends, including his spiritual director, advised Louis to send the girls to boarding school. They argued that Louis was too old to change all his ways and begin an entirely new life.

Seeking the best interest of his children, Louis consulted his oldest girls and subsequently decided to move the family from Alencon to Lisieux in order for his daughters to be nearer to the good influence of a beloved Aunt. To do this, Louis chose to give up his lucrative business and devote himself entirely to his children. His daughter, Celine, explains that he desired “to take us away from influences that he considered too worldly among some of his friends, and from the liberal ideas of others.” Celine concluded, “How grateful we should be to him for a decision so wise and so disinterested!”

Saint Louis lived his fatherly vocation with a focus on the greatest welfare of his children despite the personal cost to himself. St. Therese explains: “Hard as he was on himself, he was always affectionate towards us. His heart was exceptionally tender toward us. He lived for us alone. No mother’s heart could surpass his. Still with all that there was no weakness. All was just and well-regulated.”
St. Louis Martin developed himself as a man of virtue and sought to have affection and firmness toward his children in right order. One story, recorded by Celine, explains how Zelie helped encourage Louis on the side of affection.

Louis grew up in a family where children were taught to address their parents with the more formal “vows,” instead of the more intimate “tu,” and he suggested the same practice to Zelie for their children. But Zelie objected that formal attitudes and phrases might give the impression of distance. Louis agreed immediately.

Celine further describes how in the intimacy of home life Saint Louis often called the children by affectionate or characteristic nicknames: “Marie was ‘the diamond,’ sometimes ‘the gypsy’ on account of her independent spirit. Pauline was ‘the fine pearl,’ then came ‘good-hearted Leonie.’ I (Celine) was ‘the dauntless one.’ As for Therese, she was in turn ‘the Little Queen of France and Navarre,’ ‘the Orphan of the Berezina,’ the ‘little blonde May-beetle,’ or the ‘Bouquet.’”

For all of his affection and tenderness, Louis was not weak or passive. He was very much engaged in the lives of his children and he was also quite firm when needed.
Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: For the next 48 hours be on the lookout for an occasion when your children are all in the same room and occupied with some work or play.

Step 2: When you discover such an occasion, take a seat nearby with no other agenda than to put all your attention into watching them.

Step 3: As you notice the unique characteristics of each child, think of some appropriate nickname for each that both embodies those unique characteristics and reveals your great affection.

Step 4: Use these nicknames naturally in the home to increase your intimacy for at least the next two weeks.

23. Bring Life to Each Child – Example from Venerable Pierre Toussaint

Venerable Pierre Toussaint was born into a life of slavery on a wealthy Haitian plantation in 1766. Political unrest and economic turmoil in Haiti led Berard, the plantation owner, to take refuge in New York. Five servants were taken along, including Pierre and his sister Rosalie.
After a year, the situation grew worse in Haiti and Berard took leave of his wife in New York to check on his property and affairs in Haiti. Before leaving, Berard instructed Pierre to learn the hairdressing business. Pierre did so and began serving upper class women with great success. One such woman of high society commented: “Some of the pleasantest hours I pass are in conversing with Toussaint while he is dressing my hair. I anticipate it as a daily recreation.”

Berard’s trip to Haiti was an unfortunate one. A first letter to his wife explained that all his property in Haiti was lost and that he must make the most of what he had placed in New York. A
second letter followed – Berard had fallen ill and died suddenly. Madame Berard was left a widow in New York, and while the shock of her husband’s death was still fresh, the firm in New York that had held her property failed. Madame Berard was left destitute. Debts came due and all Madame Berard could do is to beg her creditors to be patient with her.

Pierre Toussaint had compassion on Madame Berard and used his own savings to help pay off her debts. In fact, Pierre dramatically increased his workload as a hairdresser and used nearly all of his earnings to help her. Toussaint considered Madame Berard to be his responsibility by God’s providence. Even after Madame Berard remarried, then became disabled by illness, Toussaint remained faithful to freely serving her. He often read to her and sought to console her in little ways. One friend remarked: “He is a Catholic, full in the faith of his Church...always acting from the principle that God is our common Father, and mankind our brethren.”

As Madame Berard, now Madame Nicholas due to remarriage, lay dying, she executed a deed to secure Pierre’s freedom by law. She then confessed her sins to a priest, received her last Communion, and expired from this earthly life. Toussaint continued to live with Monsieur Nicholas for the next four years, during which
time Toussaint purchased his sister Rosalie’s freedom, allowing her to marry.

Pierre Toussaint married Juliette Noel in 1811. Four years later, Rosalie gave birth to daughter Euphemia, but Rosalie’s health declined and her husband was absent. Pierre and Juliette took six-month-old Euphemia into their home. Rosalie died shortly after.

Euphemia herself was sickly and weak. Her doctor did not give much hope that she would live, yet Pierre believed otherwise.

“Every day Toussaint took the feeble little creature in his arms, and carried her to the Park, to the Battery, to every airy and pleasant spot where the fresh breezes sent invigorating influence, hoping to strengthen her frame and enable her lungs to gain a freer respiration. The first year of her life was one of constant struggle for existence, but God blessed their (Pierre and Juliette’s) untiring efforts, and the rail plant took root and flourished.”

We will pause at this good example for now, and continue with the life of Venerable Pierre Toussaint in the next post.

[Quotes from Memoir of Venerable Pierre Toussaint]
Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example

Step 1: Answer the following – “How can I spend time with each of my children today that will bring each child life (help each child to become more alive)?” Notice: For Pierre, it involved his physical presence and time spent together in nature.

Step 2: Increase the priority of spending time with each child by acknowledging the fragileness of this earthly life and the unique opportunity you have to bless your children with your fatherly love this very day.

Step 3: Freely give yourself to the action(s) you identified in step one for the next two weeks.

24. Engage the Culture with Christ – Example from Blessed Erkenbert

In the lives of husbands and fathers who have officially been named Saints and Blesseds by the Catholic Church, we sometimes see the example of a sort of “second calling” later in life to enter into religious life. For some, their wives die and they experience a new vocation from God, oftentimes to enter the priesthood. For others, they discern, in union with their wives and with competent spiritual
guides, a call to separate from their wives (not divorce) in order to enter into the life of a religious community.

[The rather high density of such cases within the overall mosaic of saintly husbands and fathers who have been officially recognized by the Church does not necessarily mean that such a path is a greater source of holiness, although it may possibly be or have been. It is worth noting that over past centuries it would be far easier and far more likely for a deceased person
to enter into the long process whereby the Church considers their cause for canonization if that person was part of a religious community that was committed to investing the time and work necessary to advance their cause. It is also true that in past centuries the universal call to holiness was not widely understood and thus many falsely perceived that to live a holy life was something that was exclusively reserved to a religious vocation.]

Blessed Erkenbert was known as living a virtuous Catholic life from an early age. Erkenbert entered into the Sacrament of Marriage, near the turn of the 12th Century, with the equally virtuous Richlinde (who has also been named “Blessed” by the Church). Together they had two sons: Wolfram and Kuno.

After a miraculous recovery from a serious illness, Erkenbert’s faith grew stronger and his zeal for living it out intensified. He devoted himself to works of mercy and in 1119 he founded a chapter of Augustinian canons on his own property in Frankenthal. Erkenbert eventually entered the Order himself.

In 1225, Richlinde also founded a nearby convent of Augustinian canonesses. The canons of Erkenbert and Richlinde developed very quickly into economic and cultural centers that were
centered and soaked in prayer. These new canons served the local pastoral needs and led to a fundamental change in village life.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, 1132, Blessed Erkenbert died in the presence of his community and in the odor of sanctity.

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example**

Step 1: Notice how Blessed Erkenbert was both faithful to the demands of his vocation as a virtuous husband and father and also intensely focused on engaging the wider culture with Christ.

Step 2: Prayerfully reflect on how God may be calling you to give more of yourself to help provide a Christian leaven within the wider culture, especially by considering the already existing efforts of your parish family and Diocese, and the opportunities to bring Christ more fully to others within the circles you already find yourself in.

Step 3: Commit to continue this prayerful pondering at a specific and most personally advantageous time of day for a certain period of time (ex. every morning at 6AM for the next seven days).
Step 4: Record and commit to at least one specific resolution, whether it is a renewal and possible intensification of some area you are already engaged in, or a new area of engagement altogether.

25. Serve Anonymously with Your Wife – Example from Venerable Pierre Toussaint

Venerable Pierre Toussaint’s work as a highly sought after hairdresser for the upper class of New York provided material wealth for his family well beyond what was needed. It is written that Pierre and his wife Juliette “were conscientious Catholics; charity was for them, not only a religious duty, but a spontaneous feeling of the heart.”

On one occasion, Pierre discovered that an affluent man he was acquainted with had been reduced to material poverty. The man, sick and suffering, craved a delicacy of food that he had formerly enjoyed and grown accustomed to, but now had no financial means to obtain it for himself.

“For several months Toussaint and Juliette sent his dinner, nicely cooked, in such a way that he could not suspect from whom it came. ‘If he had
known,’ said Toussaint, ‘he might not have liked it; he might have been proud.’”

Juliette further recounts that when Pierre went to see him periodically, the man would brag about his prestige, his good friends, and how every day somebody sends him a nice dinner cooked by a French cook. Sometimes the man would even describe the various food items one by one.

“My good husband would come home, and tell me, and we would laugh very much.”

[Quotes from Memoir of Venerable Pierre Toussaint]

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example:**

Step 1: Before this day is done, pray and reflect with your wife – “Where are our hearts moved to help a specific person in a specific way?” (Note: Even if your financial resources are dramatically less than what Pierre and Juliette had access to, perhaps there is a different sort of wealth from which you can draw.)

Step 2: Answer the following: “How can we anonymously take action on the movement of
our hearts to serve a specific person in a specific way?”

Step 3: Take the anonymous action together.

26. Serve Anonymously with Your Child – Example from Venerable Pierre Toussaint

Venerable Pierre Toussaint’s infant niece Euphemia, whom he and his wife Juliette adopted and cared for as their own daughter, flourished in the Toussaint home. As she grew, it is said that “her religious and moral cultivation was the first object with her uncle; his tenderness and judgment were constantly blending their efforts for the improvement of her heart and mind.”

Toussaint had a heart for serving others and a heart for the formation of his little Euphemia. Naturally these two loves would intersect:

“On Euphemia’s saint’s day, I always took her with me to the cake shop, and we filled a large basket with buns, jumbles, and gingerbread, which we carried to the Orphan Asylum...I tell her, ask one of the sisters if she will give them to the children. When they were sent for, Euphemia stood on one side with me to see them come in, and when they received the cake they were so glad, and my Euphemia was so happy!”
[Quotes from *Memoir of Venerable Pierre Toussaint*]

**Your Challenge for Applying this Good Example:**

Step 1: Look on a Catholic calendar and notice when the next saint’s feast day for one of your children is occurring (or perhaps the next birthday, baptismal day, etc.).

Step 2: As the day approaches, consider where and how you can help the child to give anonymously to others and still be able to see the reaction on the faces of those whom he or she serves.

Step 3: Take the anonymous action together.
Checklist

☐ Live the Catholic Faith – Example from Saint Philip Howard
☐ Cultivate Eternal Perspective - Example from Blessed Bartolo Longo
☐ Pray the Rosary Daily and Deeply - Example from Blessed Bartolo Longo
☐ Go to Mass Every Day and Eliminate Excuses - Example from Saint Isidore the Farmer
☐ Order All Your Responsibilities to God's Kingdom - Example from Blessed Laszlo
☐ Celebrate Your Monthly Wedding Anniversary – Example from Blessed Frederic Ozanam
☐ Write a Love Letter to Your Wife – Example from Blessed Franz
☐ Read the Holy Recommendation of Your Wife – Example from Blessed John Colombini
☐ Be Kind to Your Wife Always – Example from Saint Homobonus
☐ Be the Primary Educator in the Faith for Your Children – Example from Blessed Laszlo
☐ Write a Vision of Life for Your Children – Example from Saint Louis IX
☐ Write a Philosophy of Formation – Example from Saint Thomas More
Form Each Child to Understand and Embrace Vocation – Example from Saint Ferdinand III
Schedule Family Prayer – Example from Saint Louis Martin
Take Your Family on a Pilgrimage – Example from Saint Richard
Maximize Sunday – Example from Saint Louis Martin
Develop a Small Habit of Penance for Generational Sins – Example from Saint Francis Borgia
Share the Rosary – Example from Blessed Bartolo Longo
Let Mary Console You in Your Trials – Example from Saint Joseph
Freely Offer Sacrifices – Example from Saint Timothy the Lector
Unite Your Sufferings with Jesus and Mary – Example from Blessed Jacopone
Nickname Your Children – Example from Saint Louis Martin
Bring Life to Each Child – Example from Venerable Pierre Toussaint
Engage the Culture with Christ – Example from Blessed Erkenbert
Serve Anonymously with Your Wife – Example from Venerable Pierre Toussaint
Serve Anonymously with Your Child –
Example from Venerable Pierre Toussaint

About the Author

Jim Havens is VP of Mission and Communication for The Station of the Cross Catholic Radio Network, author/founder of Catholic Family Men, and has more than a decade of experience building up Catholic parishes, schools, and organizations. He graduated from Franciscan University of Steubenville in 2006 (M.A. Theology).
Born into a Catholic family, Jim was baptized as an infant and Confirmed as a teenager, but early on the allure of the secular culture won out and his bad choices resulted in Jim becoming enslaved to grave sin during his high school years.

But as a young adult, Jim unexpectedly opened up in prayer one evening and experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus and then with the Blessed Virgin Mary. It propelled him down a path of seeking truth that led to a full-hearted return to the Sacramental life of the Catholic Church in 2001. His return included a powerful experience of the reality of Jesus and His Catholic Church as the 100% real deal worth giving everything for.

Over the next many months, Jim relied on the grace of God and battled for a new freedom from the slavery of serious sin via a life of prayer that centered on the Rosary, the Sacrament of Confession, and the reception of the Eucharist in a state of grace.

For more than 15 years, Jim has continued living a life of ongoing conversion as an intentional disciple of Jesus. It has been an incredible adventure of entering more and more into his true identity as an adopted son of the Father in
Jesus and following the promptings of the Holy Spirit wherever they may lead.

Jim is grateful to share the treasure of Jesus and His Catholic Church and is available to consider speaking requests.

Married to his best friend Becky, they are raising four children with a fifth due in May 2017. The Havens Family resides in Rochester, NY.

Make an Eternal Impact.

Help support The Station of the Cross.

The Station of the Cross Catholic Radio Network is an apostolate dedicated to proclaiming the fullness of Truth with clarity and charity. We are blessed to receive and faithfully echo the revelation of Jesus Christ, handed on by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

Catholic Family Men is a branch of The Station of the Cross that builds up husbands and fathers in Christ in order to bless families and sanctify the world.

The Station of the Cross neither asks for nor receives financial support from any diocese. The
vast majority of its annual income is in the form of donations from individual supporters like you. As a not-for-profit charitable organization your donations are tax-deductible.

To make a donation by phone using your credit card, please speak with one of our customer service representatives at 877-888-6279 during our business hours of M-F from 9AM-5PM(EST).

To make a donation by check, please send a check payable to “The Station of the Cross” to:

**The Station of the Cross**  
6325 Sheridan Drive  
Williamsville, NY 14221

Click [here](#) to make a donation online.