

SUMMONS

A Publication by *Be the Men*

ISSUE #4: WHAT'S IN SUMMONS THIS MONTH?

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ABOUT BE THE MEN

Be the Men was started in 2017 to engage Catholic men today. We come from different walks of life, but we are all called to greatness. It's time we answer that call, and not for our own sake - but for our children, our wives, our families, our friends, our community, our country, and our Church.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

We're back again for issue #4 of *Summons*, and I feel like I say this every time, but I'm really excited for this one. In many ways, this is the Man's issue - pretty heavy and real topics for men today. There are definitely some hard-hitting themes that run through the whole issue. Hope you enjoy!

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LOST OUR WAY

Kyle McLemore, Contributing Writer

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ... But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.”

America is living in a state of wealth almost unheard of in human history. Even our poor would be considered well off compared to those of lesser means in any other time in history and indeed compared to most of the world. A recent Forbes article shows that the lowest 10% in our country live better than a large majority of the rest of the world and even better than the richest from many countries around the globe. I mean, how often have you heard of a person in our country starving to death? But, in spite of all of our wealth we're increasingly dissatisfied and even worse, worried to a breaking point. According to a recent Harris Poll, America's satisfaction is at an all time low in spite of our increased prosperity. How can the most abundant of all nations in the history of the world have such a low measure of happiness when what we have all sought after for all of these years is available to all of us?

At some point, we lost our way and began to think that happiness means having things. The thought goes that the more I have the better off and more secure and happy I will be. But is that really the case? According to an article in The Atlantic, white middle class men are more depressed than ever and the level of suicide is so severe in that demographic that it has actually lowered our life expectancy. Think about that for a minute. The class of Americans that are often considered the most privileged, the class that is seen as the standard of American life and what many immigrants have fought for and struggled to attain, is so depressed that they're actually killing themselves. These men have everything that past generations could only dream of. They have more comfort, pleasure, and security than many of the elites from all cultures across human history. And, now that we have all of these *things*, we're miserable. So, perhaps we're beginning to see that *things* or *objects* do NOT buy us happiness.

We've missed the point. For all of this time, we have been striving after *things* instead of happiness or a meaningful life. Our pursuit of a better life for ourselves and our family usually is a masked way of saying we want more money, more objects, or more power and this has led us off on a tangent where we find nothing more than emptiness. As men, I believe we have missed our calling and therefore are missing our ultimate

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fulfillment and shot at happiness. Fatherlessness, divorce, and adultery have run rampant in the last few decades and all of these are, in my opinion, a result of a culture that strives after happiness from things, instead of seeking after true happiness, which often requires sacrifice.

What kind of sacrifice? The self giving sacrifice that every man is called to make for his friends, his family and others. Pope St. John Paul II taught the idea of the Law of the Gift in which the measure of your life is increased by the amount you give it away. This is a foreign concept to us men but one we truly need to take to heart. After all, our Lord taught us that *“Greater Love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* (John 15:13) This is a lesson that all men, and truly all people of each gender, race and creed must take to heart. It is an ideal we have lost in the west and in particularly our country. We must learn to look past the shiny new objects and stop toiling to purchase new things to fill our lives and instead we must realize our calling and strive to reach our full potential as husbands, fathers and friends.

St. Augustine once said, *“You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until the rest is Thee.”* How right he was. No amount of money or pleasure will ever be able to fill the God sized hole in our hearts. If we seek

to fill that hole with wealth, pleasure, sex or other means, then we’ll only fall further and further from our true calling as men and life will continue to be worse in spite of all of the wonderful abundance we find in our midst today. But, if we can learn to depend on God; learn to spend time with him every day through prayer and reading scripture, our life will begin to realign itself with what is right and we will begin to give ourselves away as Christ calls us to. We will begin to sacrifice more for our wives, our children and our friends and when we start give ourselves up in this way our lives will be more abundant and fulfilled than we could ever have imagined. Why is this? Because to give yourself away as a gift is to imitate Christ and to imitate Him is to rest in God.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Mark Quaranta, Contributing Writer

One of the reasons I started *Be the Men* was because of something I witnessed and experienced: as we get older, we stop asking questions.

When we’re young, it’s easy to be curious. There’s no shame in saying ‘I don’t know.’ But, when we become ‘adults,’ we lose that. Maybe pride gets in the way. Maybe it’s just getting

comfortable and set in our ways.

But, this lack of curiosity leads to stagnation and complacency. That's true for our careers, our health, our marriages, and especially for our faith lives. Our growth is stunted.

Specifically with our faith, we barely scratch the surface, keeping the status quo for years and years, and never progress. We end up being spiritual boys in men's bodies.

Spiritual growth and maturity require a desire to ask questions and get answers. But, so often, the desire simply isn't there.

Part of it likely stems from the fact that sometimes the truth is hard to accept, and it's hard to hear that you're wrong. It's much easier to just say - "that's true for you but not for me," and call it a day. (We see why relativism is such a problem.)

But, at the same time - no one wants to be lied to. We don't want the lie.

I want to live a life of truth. If I'm doing something wrong or incorrect, I want to know. If I could be doing something better, I want to know. I don't want to be told I have a great golf swing when it's horrendous.

And, that's the other side of asking questions - we must be willing and open

to deal with the answers. It can be humbling - being told the truth, that we're doing something wrong. But, if we want the truth to penetrate our lives, it's going to be uncomfortable at times. No one said Sainthood was easy, right?

So, where do we even begin?

To start, we can surround ourselves with people who are pursuing truth, who take their faith seriously, who can share in our journey as we share in theirs. We witness this all the time - we act like the people we spend the most time with. That's true if they like sports, or if they curse, or if they read great works and practice the sacraments. Good friendship provides support and accountability. We don't have to walk alone.

Don't settle for complacency. Don't fall for the lie. Ask questions, seek answers, and knock on doors.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." Mt 7:7-8

**(SOON-TO-BE) SAINT OF
THE MONTH:
Bl. PIER GIORGIO
FRASSATI**

Mark Quaranta, Contributing Writer

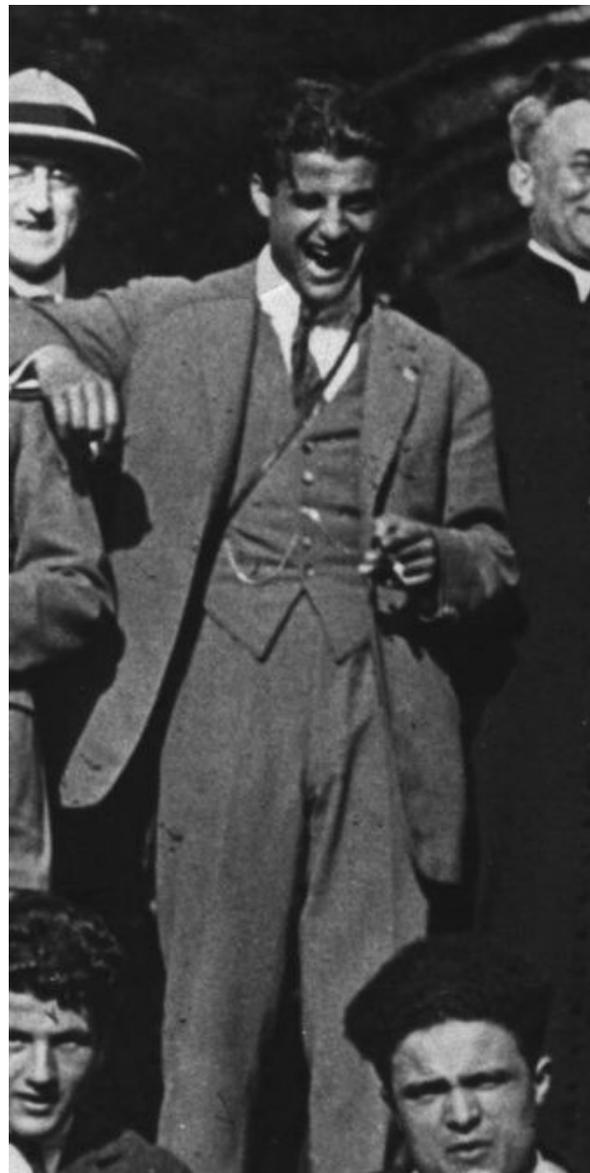
A little while back, I wrote a Daily Email about Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. I apologize if some of this is repetitive, but he's such an amazing role model for men today, that I wanted him in this issue.

As men, I think we sometimes struggle identifying with certain Saints. Even someone like St. Teresa of Calcutta who's an amazing Saint. She was a little Albanian sister who lived in India caring for the sick. I'm a married, American man wearing jeans and polo working on a computer all day. Don't get me wrong - there's plenty I can learn from following St. Teresa, but you also can't deny the differences in our lives.

And while Pier Giorgio lived in Italy in the early 1900s, he's still very much a saint for our times - a man's man.

Just look at this picture of Frassati.

In a single snapshot, you can see so much of his personality.



Pier Giorgio loved to play jokes on his friends, always laughing, always smiling. He loved sports, art, music, poetry.

He was a tremendous athlete, hiking and climbing mountains with friends. For each trip, he would convince a priest to join them so they could have Mass. There's an icon picture of Frassati after he reached the peak of a mountain. He wrote on the back, "Verso L'alto," which

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means ‘toward the top.’ It’s become a mantra for those with an affinity for Pier Giorgio.

He was also a pool shark. He’d make wagers that if his opponent won, Pier Giorgio would pay them money, and if Frassati won, they’d come to Mass with him. He’d often show up with droves of people to attend Mass.

His family was wealthy and influential, but didn’t always support him in his faith. Pier Giorgio would sneak off in the mornings to attend Mass, give his bus money to the poor, and minister to the sick.

The sacraments and caring for others defined his life.

At the age of 24, he contracted polio from one of his frequent visits to families in need.

At his funeral, his family was baffled that so many people showed up. They didn’t know he was supporting all of these families. And, the families in need had no idea who Pier Giorgio was until he died. He never told them his real name.

And today, this 24 year old is on his way to Sainthood and has already been dubbed, the Man of the Beatitudes.

PRAYER OF THE MONTH:

St. MICHAEL

Mark Quaranta, Contributing Writer

The Prayer of the Month is probably one you have at least heard before. From the late 1800s until Vatican II, Mass ended with the Prayer to St. Michael. Some churches still make this practice. But, what you may not know is where this prayer comes from and why it was written.

Many times with different prayers, we assume that they come from Scripture or that we just don’t know where they originated. But, the Prayer to St. Michael is directly traced back to Pope Leo XIII in the 1880s.

As the story goes, Pope Leo XIII was celebrating Mass when he was struck by a vision. His face became pale and fearful. Needless to say, the vision was not a pleasant one.

While we don’t know exactly what he saw, there are a couple legends out there. Some say he witnessed demonic spirits attacking the Eternal City of Rome. One legend goes so far as to say that the Pope heard a conversation between Christ and Satan.

Satan says to Jesus: *“I can destroy your Church.”*

Jesus replies: *“You can? Then go ahead and do so.”*

Satan: *“To do so, I need more time and more power.”*

Jesus: *“How much time? How much power?”*

Satan: *“75 to 100 years, and a greater power over those who will give themselves over to my service.”*

Jesus: *“You have the time, you will have the power. Do with them what you will.”*

Whether this is true, which history doesn't necessarily affirm, the truth still stands - the past 100 years have been turbulent to say the least. Our Church is under attack. The family is under attack. Now, more than ever we should turn to this powerful intercessor against evil.

PRAYER TO ST. MICHAEL

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the
wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
and do thou,

O Prince of the heavenly hosts,
by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan,
and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

GRAVE DANGER

Mark Quaranta, Contributing Writer

“Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

Whether we admit it or not, we are in grave danger.

There's a spiritual war raging around us. We can't see it, we don't hear it, the injuries aren't physical. But, it's there.

It's the battle of good versus evil with our souls caught in the crossfire.

The Devil wants us to file into his ranks to the chant of “I will not serve.” The path of rejecting God, in favor of the self. This is the path of sin.

A lot of times when we consider this tension of good versus evil, we think *‘well, I'm obviously not a bad guy. I haven't killed anyone, the stuff I do isn't hurting anyone, I should be good.’*

But this is a fallacy and a lie. Sin is a big deal. And, the devil tries to convince us it's not. He wants us to believe that bad is sometimes okay and okay is good enough. He wants us to rationalize sin because “in general, our lives are ordered toward God.”

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We make tiny compromises and little choices that we think don't matter, but they do. It's these small actions that set us down the path of sin.

"Hell can't be made attractive, so the devil makes attractive the road that leads there." St Basil the Great.

This is the path the Devil wants for us. And, he does all he can to make it look as appealing and attractive as possible. There's no room for sin in Heaven. We can keep living our lives like it's fine and dandy, or we can sober up. We can call sin for what it is. We can go to Confession, embracing the sacraments. We can stop the lies.

We are in grave danger. The stakes are high, and the choice is ours.

SHAPING YOUR SOUL

Kyle McLemore, Contributing Writer

Recently, my prayer life has felt a little dull. In fact, if I was honest with myself I would have to admit that at a point I was looking for excuses to get out of some of my devotions. I've experienced a dryness in prayer at times that has led me to leap from one devotion to another in order to "reinvigorate" my prayer life. Sometimes, I've leaned more on the Rosary, sometimes on Lectio Divina and

when I really need a boost I go to the Spiritual Exercises. However, all of these had begun to feel a little dry and nothing really excited me. So, I began to pray less thinking that I might need to pull back in order to allow myself to rekindle that excitement of prayer. After all, absence makes the heart grow fonder, right? No.

In the midst of this lull in prayer, the First Things Podcast interviewed an author, Rachel Fulton Brown, who wrote an historical overview of Mary and the Art of Prayer. For the sake of time I will refer you to that podcast for more details but what I was taking away from the podcast was this: prayer is not about the feelings that you get or having a grand vision where you learn some deep divine secret. Prayer, at its core, is about shaping your soul through discipline. Ms. Brown focused on Medieval prayer practices and specifically how prescribed and routine prayer was in the medieval period. What she found was that for the Medieval Christian, prayer wasn't about sensory experience or feeling or "what I get out of it." It was more about devotion to a certain set of routine prayers that would begin to shape one's soul. This was such a stark contrast to how I had been feeling in regards to prayer that it took me a little by surprise. It was as if God was reminding me that I don't need to look for good feelings but instead need to stay devoted to my time with him, even if I struggle. In fact, St. John of the Cross wrote about this very problem

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and warned of “spiritual gluttony” where we seek to spend our time in prayer more for the feelings and warmth we receive instead of focusing on WHO we are with and what is happening to our soul. But, I had allowed prayer to become abstract and I had allowed myself to become a spiritual glutton.

Let’s look at it this way. A year ago I started lifting weights after a long break. At first, I ran around doing crossfit style routines where I was lifting as many different weights as possible as quickly as possible (i.e. spontaneous and not disciplined). I was getting in better shape and I felt better, but I wasn’t getting any stronger, which was my main goal. So, I started to simplify my routine. I focused on strength with very little other work outside of what was absolutely necessary and I turned the rest of my life towards achieving this goal by cutting down on running, eating properly and focusing on getting better sleep which is easier said than done! In a little over a year I had increased my deadlift by 168 lbs. That sounds insane but in reality it was a very long and slow process of picking up a little more weight on the same lifts every single week, without fail (don’t be too impressed, I was weak to start with). This was not a pretty or glamorous process. I didn’t have a week where all of the sudden my deadlift jumped by 50 pounds spontaneously. Instead, it was a long, slow process of achieving a specific purpose and that is

exactly how prayer should be.

Focusing my prayer life in this way, on more prescribed prayers, has greatly allowed me to cast off my worries and rely less on feelings to persevere in my prayer. Instead, I now have a set routine that allows me to grow little by little closer to God. I’m not so worried about receiving anything out of prayer or even what my prayer will look like that day but instead focused on putting all I can into my prayer. Do I sometimes fail? Yes, and more than I would like to admit. But, I’m still a novice in many ways and I’m easily distracted. Knowing what I need to do, however, has increased my devotion to God greatly and it has bled over into all aspects of my life. Remember that nothing you can do in this life is more important than prayer because nothing has the ability to shape your soul more than actually spending time with God on His terms. This is obviously much easier said than done and so for a little encouragement I will share with you with a short story about a great spiritual master, St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

Bernard was riding his horse up into the Alps to give a retreat, and as he passed a farmer along the road he heard a loud grunt. He stopped to look down at the him, and the farmer remarked, “I envy you, with nothing to do but pray while I have to kill myself working in this rocky soil.”

Bernard said, “Well, praying can be even

harder work that digging around those stones.”

“I doubt that very much,” the man said, “With that beautiful horse and the gorgeous saddle, what do you know of hardship?”

Up till then Bernard hadn’t given any attention to his mount. He said, “It is a beautiful horse, isn’t it? I’ll tell you what, if you can say the Lord’s Prayer from beginning to end without taking your mind off it, I’ll give you this horse.”

“That’s so generous of you,” the man said; and he began praying, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be...do I get the saddle too?”

Persevere brothers and know that nothing will bear more fruit in your life than the disciplined road of prayer. To quote Jocko Willink, “Discipline equals freedom.” Pray well and be free.

VICE OF THE MONTH: ANGER

Mark Quaranta, Contributing Writer

For most of my life, I was a baseball player. From my early days as a 5 year old playing for Captain Bob’s Crabs up until my last at bat in college at Central Connecticut, that’s who I was.

I was a good player, blessed with some natural talent, size, strength. I played smart and had pretty good instincts for the game. But, I had a one major shortcoming. And, no it wasn’t Uncle Charlie (aka the Curve). It was my temper.

Most people don’t believe it now, but I struggled with anger most of my childhood. I was able to control it to a certain point, but in college, the stress and the pressure I put on myself got the best of me more than I like to admit. Coupled with being a perfectionist, it spelled trouble in a sport where the best of the best still fail 70% of the time.

What I didn’t know then that I know now is this: Anger, rage, fury, whatever you want to call it, while it might feel like a great display of power - it’s really a sign of weakness. At the time, I thought it showed that I cared, that I really wanted to succeed. In the moment, I could feel emotion well up, and I needed to let it out. And, it felt good.

It was almost addictive. But, sin is like that. In many ways, it feels good. But a little while later, it doesn’t.

No one wants to hear or think that they are out of control. It’s a scary thought - I can’t control myself. But, that’s what was happening - I couldn’t control myself.

And, when we’re spinning out of control - the other dominoes start to fall. Vice

breeds vice. And even if you don't struggle with anger, maybe it's lust or pride.

These sins leave gaping holes in our defenses. The way to patch that hole is a life of discipline, or self mastery.

Ironically, the Archbishop of Baltimore spoke at my college graduation and he opened with this: *"Mastery of the moment is mastery of life."*

We often witness discipline in the lives of others and chalk it up as too extreme for me, it's too difficult. But, discipline and self control are quite simple - it's mastering the moment.

Back in college, I wasn't angry all the time - it was often a single moment, a tipping point that started it all. And, it's the same for lust, jealousy, for all of our vices.

It's exhausting to think of having our guard up constantly, but all we need to do is take care of the here and now, this moment.

"Mastery of the moment is mastery of life."

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