

Fr. Perozich comments —

As a priest I get requests for advice of what to do and how to handle difficult situations in the church and in life.

This homily by a spiritual writer helps with these situations as well as responding to what the writer of the following article claims as a crisis of fatherhood in the church among us clerical leaders all the way to the Holy Father.

I share Dr. Mark Nowakowski's article because these are similar to the comments I receive from the faithful lay Catholics in the pew regarding us clerical church leaders, trickling down from Pope Francis through his cardinals and bishops, through us priests, all of whom share in the fatherhood to lead God's children to eternal life in Jesus Christ.

From a homily by a spiritual writer of the fourth century

(Hom. 18, 7-11: PG 34, 639-642)

May you be filled to the complete fullness of Christ

Those who have been considered worthy to go forth as the sons of God and to be born again of the Holy Spirit from on high, and who hold within them the Christ who renews them and fills them with light, are directed by the Spirit in varied and different ways and in their spiritual repose they are led invisibly in their hearts by grace.

At times, they are like men who mourn and lament over their fellow men, and pouring forth prayers for the whole human race, they plunge into tears and lamentation, on fire with spiritual love for mankind.

At other times they are enkindled by the Spirit with love and exultation that, were it possible, they would clasp in their embrace all mankind, without discrimination, good and bad alike.

Sometimes they are cast down below all mankind in lowliness of spirit, so that they reckon theirs to be the lowest and most abject of conditions.

And sometimes they are held by the Spirit in ineffable joy.

At one time they are like a brave man who puts on the king's full armor and goes down into battle; he fights bravely against the enemy and defeats them. In like manner, the spiritual man takes up the heavenly arms of the Spirit and marches against the enemy and engaging in battle tramples the foe beneath his feet.

At another time the soul is at rest in deepest silence, tranquility and peace, existing in sheer spiritual pleasure and in ineffable repose and a perfect state.

Again, the soul is instructed by grace in a certain understanding in the ineffable wisdom and the inscrutable knowledge of the Spirit on matters which neither tongue nor lips can utter.

Then again, the soul becomes like any ordinary man.

In such varied ways does grace work within them and many are the means by which it leads the soul, renewing it according to God's will and training it in different ways so that it may be set before the heavenly Father pure and whole and blameless.

We, too, therefore must make our prayer to God and entreat in love and in great hope that he may bestow upon us the heavenly grace of the gift of the Spirit. We pray that we, too, may be guided by that Spirit and that he may lead us into the fullness of divine will and refresh us with the varied kinds of his repose, that by the help of this guidance, exercise of grace and spiritual advancement, we may be considered worthy to attain to the perfection of the fullness of Christ, as the Apostle says: *that you may be filled to the complete fullness of Christ.*

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On the Theological Impossibility of Dealing with Abusive Fatherhood

 [onpeterfive.com/on-the-theological-impossibility-of-dealing-with-abusive-fatherhood](https://onepeterfive.com/on-the-theological-impossibility-of-dealing-with-abusive-fatherhood)

Dr. Mark Nowakowski February 5, 2022



Like the Priesthood, and certainly even more fundamental than any clerical calling, biological fatherhood manifests its form in a single biological act which then reaches through a multiplicity

of identities to the very existential zenith defined by God's own self-revelation.

It is a reality which lies at the cornerstone of human experience and being itself, and as such the men who embrace the full ontological gravity of their office become heroes to their children of the kind which reverberate through eternity. Heaven is certainly filled with such men, largely unsung in their lifetimes and yet wearing a luminous crown at the foot of the throne of heaven.

Conversely, it is the Priesthood which finds its fundamental form in the perfection of fatherhood, yet moving beyond biological charges to a self-sacrifice directed to the community at large. **This mystical fatherhood of the cleric – which participates more perfectly in the Fatherhood of God – provides the example and inspiration for the biological fatherhood and its self-sacrificial and priestly character.**

Where God is concerned, Fatherhood is indeed the most serious business.

If the form of fatherhood can be traced from a simple moment of biological coupling upwards to the ultimate nature of Love Himself, so too **it should not surprise us when a crisis in this crucial office – beginning in the family with derelict fathers – manifests itself not only in biological fatherhood in society at large, but spiritual fatherhood as well.** If fathers are absent from their families today and abandoning their wives and children, we should not be surprised if even a Holy Father – the man charged to father us all – is absent from his office.

The recent Papal documents squeezing, restricting, and attempting to suffocate the growth and life out of the *beautiful rite* – our liturgical birthright – have struck [many astute commentators](#) as being as close to a dereliction of duty – and an anti-Catholic action – as any pope has taken in recent memory. Not surprisingly, this has led to many learned conversations on

the Papacy itself, examining the nature of the office at least as far back as the Baroque era. The implicit questions seem to be: “How can this be? How can the Holy Father err so badly? Where did the Church go wrong? How can we believe that the gates of hell cannot prevail against us, when it seems clear that evil now holds the high ground and has taken the citadel?”

There seems to come a moment in all of these conversations when people throw up their hands in dismay, simply not knowing any sensible answer to this terrible mess. In such moments of crisis, it may be helpful to step back from the dogmatic and theological questions regarding the nature of the Papacy and look back towards the nature of the fundamental office of fatherhood. In short, there are many kinds of fathers. **Under a benevolent and loving father, life is simply good, and nobody wants to leave. Under a tyrannical and abusive father, the opposite is true, and everyone wants the man gone.**

But what do you say of a father who vacillates between abuse, tyrannical overreach, being absent, and then some moments of tenderness or apparent resolve, followed by gaslighting masquerading as mercy?

To be the child of such a father must seem as disorienting as it is impossible. And Catholics at large find themselves precisely under the authority of such a perversely mercurial and ultimately tyrannical father.

It may not be too much to suggest that the Papacy, as the height of the office of fatherhood, was simply not designed to bear the weight of such a contradictory and tyrannical man. And just like the child in the household of such a man often cannot figure out what to do, faithful Catholics of our age are left confused, bereft of hope, and in a theologically impossible situation. So what to do?

Do we pray and fast for this Pope, and write sweet letters of supplication?

Do we stand up to him when he is being a bully, or beg him to understand us? Or do we just hide under the table and hope that his wrath passes elsewhere?

Do we tolerate or ask for clarification when he is being obtuse?

Do we turn the other cheek at gaslighting, or – like many a son coming of age – stand up to it?

It may be that all we can do is simply endure, at least until the balance of things changes. If the nature of biological fatherhood cannot be effectively exercised by a dysfunctional man, there is little reason to think that the penultimate fatherly office of the Papacy can endure or even be the least coherent when held and abused by the wrong kind of man.

Abuse of fatherhood, it seems, leads – whether in the natural family or the spiritual family – to an incomprehensible and impossible situation.

The Papacy can bear imperfect men and allow them to still shine out where possible. The Papacy can bear obtuse men and give them an opportunity for moments of great clarity. The Papacy can bear great men unto the status of revered sainthood. But under the yoke of an abusive man, the Papacy becomes an oxymoron and an absurdity, just as it would be in a normal everyday family.

However, this does not mean we can remove the Papacy from the Church, any more than we can remove fatherhood from the family. This doesn't solve the problem.

But as anyone who has dealt with an abusive personality in their life ultimately comes to know, it is not our moral responsibility to explain or make sense of the abuser's actions, let alone to find sense in the senseless.

As Catholics, in the end we must endure the impossible situation and pray for better days. But in matters of faith and understanding, it may be comforting to realize that theologically

squaring the circle of this impossible situation may indeed not be our burden to bear.



[Dr. Mark Nowakowski](#)

Dr. Mark Nowakowski is a [scholar and composer](#) whose music has been performed internationally and released on the Gramophone-praised Naxos Records album, “Blood, Forgotten.” His writings on Catholicism, music, aesthetics, and music technology appear in numerous publications regularly, while he also maintains an active schedule as a composer and professor of music. A proud native of Chicago, he currently lives with his wife and three children in Ohio.

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