

## **Reflection on Divine Filiation**

**Recollection for Priests**

**Villa Maria Retreat Center  
Springfield, Illinois**

**January 22, 2026**

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

- I. Topic for our reflection is Divine Filiation.
- II. Earlier this month we celebrated the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.
  - A. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River.
  - B. I have been to the Holy Land three times: in 2005, 2006, and 2019.
    1. My second trip, which took place twenty years ago this summer in 2006, was a pilgrimage that included my mother.
    2. I have photographs of my Mom taking off her shoes and wading in the Jordan River.
    3. She wanted to enter the same waters where Jesus was baptized.
  - C. In the Gospel for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (Mt 3:13-17), Saint Matthew tells us that, after the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon Jesus, “a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.””

D. When we are baptized, we are adopted as a son or daughter of God.

This is called “divine filiation,” from the Latin word *filius*, which means son, and *filia*, which means daughter.

1. Divine filiation means we are also beloved by God, who is pleased to welcome us into His family. As Jesus loves His Father, we are called to love God as well.
2. In this regard, reflecting on our own baptism should bring a sense of gratitude, as we thank God for the great gift of welcoming us into His divine family.

III. The description given to me for today’s topic says that “Divine Filiation is the foundation of our spiritual life. It involves practicing all virtues and duties with the mentality of a son of God and helping the faithful to experience this reality.” Let’s look at each one of these points.

A. Divine Filiation is the foundation of our spiritual life.

B. Divine Filiation “involves practicing all virtues and duties with the mentality of a son of God.”

1. *Superhabits* book by Andrew Abela, Ph.D., Dean of the Busch School of Business at the Catholic University of America.

- a. Dr. Abela uses words that are more accessible to the modern ear, e.g. “superhabit” instead of “virtue” and “gentle firmness” instead of “meekness.”
  - b. We must have agreement on what the virtues are, e.g., chemists must agree on the periodic table of elements. We cannot have some chemists listing some elements and other chemists with a different periodic table.
  - c. Dr. Abela’s work is based on the *Treatise on the Virtues* of St. Thomas Aquinas (see chart of virtues).
2. Good habits are called virtues. Bad habits are called vices.
  3. The seven capital or deadly sins are pride, envy, anger, avarice, gluttony, lust, and sloth.
  4. My list of the virtues that counteract the seven capital or deadly sins are as follows:
    - a. The antidote to pride is humility – not acting with arrogance, but giving credit to others where credit is due.
    - b. The antidote to envy is gratitude – since envy is coveting or wanting what someone else has, gratitude helps us to focus on

appreciating the gifts that God has given to us and being satisfied with those gifts.

- c. The antidote to anger is patience, by which we try to withhold a negative emotional reaction while trying to correct whatever sparked our anger in the first place.
- d. The antidote to avarice is generosity—instead of greedily seeking more for oneself, avarice is countered giving generously to others.
- e. The antidote to gluttony is asceticism, that is, seeking to restrain one's desires in the quest to arrive at a higher level of spiritual fulfillment. Other antidotes to gluttony are temperance, sobriety, abstemiousness, self-control, etc..
- f. The antidote to lust is chastity or purity, mindful of Our Lord's teaching that the pure of heart are blessed, for they shall see God (Matt. 5:8).
- g. The antidote to sloth is diligence—carrying out one's tasks and responsibilities with a sense of dedication and zeal. It is good to note that the word "diligence" comes from the Latin word, *diligo*, which means to esteem, prize, love, or delight in

something. Diligence means we esteem our work and do it with love.

5. I encourage all of you to do an examination of conscience every day at the end of the day, as I do, to review not only whether we have committed any deadly sins and, if so, to make a perfect act of contrition and resolve to confess them as soon as possible, but also to examine the positive ways in which we have grown in virtuous living. Avoiding sin and growing in virtue with the help of God's grace is the formula to sainthood, that is, sharing in the eternal happiness of God's kingdom forever.

C. Our pastoral duty is to help the faithful experience the reality of Divine Filiation, i.e., helping them to see themselves as sons and daughters of God.

IV. Here are some helpful quotes about Divine Filiation:

- A. St. Augustine: "The Son of God, his only son by nature, deigned to become Son of man, so that we who are sons of man by nature might become sons of God by grace." (*The City of God*, 21, 15).

- B. St. John Paul II, in his Address on October 7, 2002, delivered the day after he canonized St. Josemaria Escrivá, said that God led Saint Josemaria to “understand deeply the gift of our divine filiation. He taught how to contemplate the tender face of a Father in God, who speaks to us through the most varied vicissitudes of life. A Father who loves us, who follows us step by step and protects us, understands us and waits for a response of love from each one of us. The consideration of this paternal presence, which accompanies him everywhere, gives the Christian an unshakable confidence; at every moment he should confide in the heavenly Father. He never feels alone, nor is he afraid. In the Cross, when it appears, he does not see a punishment but rather a mission entrusted by the Lord himself. The Christian is necessarily optimistic, because he knows that he is a son of God in Christ.”
- C. St. Josemaria wrote in *Friends of God* (no. 26), “Anyone who does not realize that he is a child of God is unaware of the deepest truth about himself.”
- D. St. Josemaria wrote in *Christ is Passing By* (no. 64), “God is waiting for us, like the father in the parable, with open arms, even though we

don't deserve it. It doesn't matter how great our debt is. Just like the prodigal son, all we have to do is open our heart, to be homesick for our Father's house, to wonder at and rejoice in the gift which God makes us of being able to call ourselves his children, of really being his children."

- E. We read in the First Letter of Saint John (3:1-2): "See what love the Father had given us that we should be called children of God, and so we are. ... Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."
- F. In the Second Letter of Saint Peter (1: 4), we are told that, by the grace of the Holy Spirit we are children of God and have "... become partakers of the divine nature."

May God give us this grace. Amen.