

CHAPTER 3 – ASSIGNMENTS

Part 1: LOVE AND HONOUR EACH OTHER

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 73

‘Love is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.’ (1 Corinthians 13: 7)

Work on together as a couple

Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia* (chapter 4), gives an explanation of the apostle Paul’s Hymn to Love, offering many suggestions on how love in marriage can be lived fully and truly. Read the text together. You can find it here:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia.html or on the [Catechetical Centre’s webpages](#) in combination with a PowerPoint presentation.

- a. Pope Francis talks about how love can overcome difficult aspects of human reactions. For each of you, which statements are most relevant for you personally?
- b. Share your thoughts about which of the pope’s statements you find most striking or noteworthy and would like to use as guidelines in your own relationship. We encourage you to write them down.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 75–80

PRAISE AND SIGNS OF AFFECTION

Work on together as a couple

- a. Each on your own, write down which type(s) of positive attention you most appreciate: pleasant surprises/gifts, praise or compliments, physical affection, spending time together, that your sweetheart does you a service?
- b. Tell each other what you prefer. Is it possible to adapt to each other’s preferences in the way you give each other positive attention? What would you like more of/less of? Tell each other how you experience receiving positive attention from the other.

REFLECTION ON § 83

WE GIVE OUR LIFE TO AND FOR EACH OTHER

Group discussion

- a. Jesus says: ‘This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends’ (John 15: 12–13). What are your thoughts on the love Jesus describes?

b. In what ways can spouses give their life for each other? Think of various relevant situations.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 84–86

HOW DO I EXPRESS MYSELF?

Work on together as a couple

a. Each on your own, review the questions below. First, think through what applies for yourself. Then tell each other what you have answered and talk about how you perceive each other. Write down what makes the biggest impression on you regarding what your sweetheart tells you about his/her patterns of reaction and forms of expression.

How do I act?

Am I sensitive and do I easily start crying? Or am I tough and can tolerate lots of opposition, resistance or difficulty? Do I easily understand how others feel? Can I put myself into their shoes? Do I express myself mostly through words or through body language? Am I a good listener – or do I like to dominate conversations?

What is my temperament like?

Calm and phlegmatic, or hot-tempered and impetuous? Dreaming and distant, or engaged in the present? Restless, nervous or passionate, sensual? Am I tender, loving, caring and empathetic, or am I distanced, cold, perhaps also cynical, insensitive and rough?

How do I react: to stress, in times of anger and when I am hurt?

Which words and which body language do I use in such situations? Do I behave in a restrained or self-controlled way? Does it happen that I resort to violence in conflicts? Why?

How do I react when I am afraid?

Do I become withdrawn or feel paralyzed – or do I start exerting energy in order to cope with the fear and to find solutions?

How do I show positive feelings?

How do I express joy, satisfaction and wellbeing? How do I tell others that I appreciate them or the efforts they have made?

How do I show negative feelings?

Do I express irritation, anger, discontent, jealousy and so forth? Do I unleash an arsenal of verbal abuse or swear words? Do I raise my voice? Or do I keep cool, calm and collected?

How do I ask for things?

Do I ask with friendliness, without embarrassment, in a straightforward way? In a commanding, condescending or sour way? Am I pestering, impatient, repetitive? Do I ask with great restraint and embarrassment, or speak indirectly – rather than getting straight to the point? Or am I too filled with anxiety or too proud to ask for anything at all, choosing rather to do everything myself?

How do I receive compliments?

Does receiving compliments make me happy, and do I show my happiness to the one who compliments me? Am I easily flattered or do I accept flattery uncritically? Do I thank timidly without putting too much emphasis on the compliments? Do I get embarrassed or feel shame? Or do I display false modesty and actually enjoy being praised in front of others?

How do I express thanks?

With genuine happiness? Inattentively and automatically? Do I completely forget to thank others? Or do I find it embarrassing to owe anyone 'a debt of gratitude'?

How do I behave in discussions?

Am I impartial, fair-minded, able to stick to the facts, analytical – or do I criticize and make derogatory comments? Do I listen and behave constructively – or do I dismiss or brush aside the other's contributions? Do I focus on details and flourishes? Am I domineering, tactical, calculating – or evasive, silent or anxious?

b. After the two of you have compared your answers, you can think about whether there are patterns of behaviour and communication that you want to work on changing, perhaps even seek professional help to improve. Tell each other how you want to work on aspects of your own behaviour.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 87–88

OUR COMMUNICATION FILTERS

Work on together as a couple

Try to be aware of which filters the two of you normally 'wear'. Try to find ways to remove them. Help each other in a caring way.

Examples:

- Do I look at my sweetheart when she/he talks with me?
- Are language differences of cultural backgrounds hindrances to understanding each other?
- Do I only hear what I expect to hear – or do I try to understand what my sweetheart actually wants to say, e.g., by asking follow-up questions?
- Do I notice voice inflection and mood when my sweetheart talks to me?
- If I'm in a bad mood, do I tend to interpret statements negatively?
- Do I show that I notice the signs of physical affection that my sweetheart gives me?
- Do I look up from my telephone, computer or the thing I'm working on when someone talks to me?
- Which situations make me less attentive (when I'm under stress, hungry, have a lot to do, etc.)?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Give each other at least five compliments every day for the next 14 days! If there is something your sweetheart does that you do not like, practise talking about it in a constructive and considerate way.

SUGGESTED READING

Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts*, Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2015.

Pope Francis, *Amoris laetitia*, 2016.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 2005.

H.J. Markman, S.M. Stanley, S.L. Blumberg, *Fighting for Your Marriage* (3rd edition), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Syster Sofie O.P., *Till man och kvinna skapade Han dem – en introduktion til kroppens teologi*, Artos, 2011.