

CHAPTER 1 – ASSIGNMENTS

Part 1: CALLED TO MARRIAGE

ASSIGNMENT FOR PARAGRAPH (§) 1

HOW DID WE BECOME A COUPLE?

Assignments to do as a couple:

- a. Which events or experiences have had significance for the two of you getting together? Make a small sketch: draw your joint history starting from when you started noticing each other and up to today.
- b. Coincidences can radically change the course of people's lives. Are these moments of pure coincidence or can there be other explanations? What thoughts do you have on this? Can the two of you point to events or circumstances which you experience God having played a role in, enabling your love to develop?

If the couples themselves are so inclined, they can share portions of their stories and their thoughts with the group.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 5–11

HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE OUR CALL TO MARRIAGE?

Talk together as a couple:

- a. What thoughts do the two of you have regarding the idea that God has called you to get married? Do you have any experience of receiving such a vocation (calling)? If so, what does it consist of?
- b. What leads you to choose each other for life?
- c. Feel free to share some thoughts with the rest of the group, yet without at any time feeling that you are betraying yourselves or putting yourselves in a compromising position.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 12–13

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Discuss together as a couple

Read the following passage together:

'Thus a man and a woman, who by their compact of conjugal love "are no longer two, but one flesh" (Matthew 19: 6), render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions. Through this union they experience the meaning of their oneness and attain to it with growing perfection day by day. As a mutual gift of two persons,

this intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on the spouses and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them.

Christ the Lord abundantly blessed this many-faceted love, welling up as it does from the fountain of divine love and structured as it is on the model of His union with His Church. For as God of old made Himself present to His people through a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Savior of men and the Spouse of the Church comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony. He abides with them thereafter so that just as He loved the Church and handed Himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal.

Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is governed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church, so that this love may lead the spouses to God with powerful effect and may aid and strengthen them in sublime office of being a father or a mother. For this reason Christian spouses have a special sacrament by which they are fortified and receive a kind of consecration in the duties and dignity of their state. By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfil their conjugal and family obligation, they are penetrated with the spirit of Christ, which suffuses their whole lives with faith, hope and charity. Thus they increasingly advance the perfection of their own personalities, as well as their mutual sanctification, and hence contribute jointly to the glory of God.'

(From the Second Vatican Council's pastoral constitution, 'On the Church in the Modern World', *Gaudium et spes*, 48.)

- a. Which aspects of this description of the marriage sacrament encourage you the most?
- b. The sacrament of marriage will give you gifts of grace *every day* of your married life. With trust in what God promises to give you through the sacrament of marriage, what in particular do you want to ask God to help you with?

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 14–17

WHAT IS OUR BASIS FOR GETTING MARRIED?

Group discussion:

- a. What types of pressure can there be to get married? What are the consequences of getting married on account of pressure from other people or due to social or financial circumstances?
- b. How do you view marriages that are entered into with reservations (e.g., regarding length of time, happiness, etc.)?

Discuss as a couple:

- c. Do the two of you think you are getting married of your own free will, on a completely independent basis – that is, without pressure from family or people in your environment, and without feeling pressure from your current situation in life (e.g., unemployed, wanting a

permanent residence permit for Norway, pregnancy, housing situation, financial situation, a previous marriage)?

If the two of you think there are certain pressures influencing your decision to get married, please ask the priest or team leader for advice.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 20–23

A VISION AND A HOPE FOR OUR MARRIAGE

Work on as a couple:

- a. Individually and without talking together, write or draw a personal vision of what you hope marriage will bring you as a couple. Include the aspects that are important for you as individuals and what the two of you want to make room for in your life together (use 5–10 min.).
- b. Compare your visions and talk together about what each of you have written or drawn. Are you surprised about anything? Ask each other why you have chosen precisely these aspects.
- c. Now write/draw a joint vision. Include your hopes and the projects and goals you want to realize together through your marriage (use ca. 10 min.). As an aid to formulating a joint vision for your marriage, you can ask yourselves the following questions:
 - Are we willing to give ourselves, mutually and unconditionally, to each other?
 - Are we able to accept each other such as we are?
 - What intentions do we have with our marriage?
 - What thoughts do we have about building a family together?
 - How many children do we want?
 - Which values are important for us to maintain?
 - How will we earn a living?
 - What do we want to be for other people?
 - How can we help each other continue to develop or to further our education?
 - Are there special issues we are passionate about, which we want to work on together?

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

Write each other a letter before the next course session. In it, tell why you want to get married to your sweetheart and which hopes, expectations and dreams you have for your future together.

To whatever extent possible:

- Can you set aside fixed times for God, already now, but also in your future daily life?
- If you do not already do so, start praying every day for each other and for your marriage.

SUGGESTED READING

- Pope John Paul II, encyclical, *Familiaris consortio*, 1981, 11–17.

- *YOUCAT – Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church* (12th edition). San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015. The sacraments in general, 172–178, and the sacrament of marriage, 260–263.
- Pope John Paul II, Letter to Families, *Gratissimam sane*, 1994, 6–11.
- Vatican II Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, 47–52.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), 1992, 1601–1666.