

CHAPTER 1 – ASSIGNMENTS

Part 2: INTERFAITH AND INTERCULTURAL MARRIAGES

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 29–31

FREEDOM TO BELIEVE – WHAT CAN WE AGREE ON?

Assignments to do as a couple

- a. Each of you individually, reflect over the following questions: What does my faith/my worldview mean to me? How do I express my faith/convictions in practice? Which religious rituals and traditions will I take with me into our marriage?
- b. Each of you individually, write down aspects that are important for your personal exercise of faith or faith practice. Tell each other what you want the possibility to do and what you want respect for.
- c. Then talk together about what the two of you can agree on concerning beliefs, what you can celebrate together, and what the two of you must allow each other to practise separately. How can you create room for regular conversations about faith and worldviews?
- d. The Catholic partner must, in some dioceses, sign a document saying that he/she promises to raise the children in accordance with the Catholic Church's faith, and that the non-Catholic spouse has been made aware of this; in other dioceses, the priest affirms with his signature what the Catholic has promised and what the non-Catholic has been informed of. How will the two of you meet this challenge in a constructive way?
- e. To read/hear from sacred texts in another language than one's own can give a renewed and deeper understanding of these texts. Of all the texts that have great significance for you, which ones could you imagine sharing with your spouse? Are there other things the two of you can do to become better acquainted with each other's faith or beliefs?

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 32–34

OUR CULTURAL INHERITANCE – MUTUAL RESPECT

Assignments to do as a couple

- a. Each of you on your own, write a list of elements from your culture that you appreciate and would like to assimilate into your married life. Describe elements of your partner's culture that you appreciate and would like to assimilate into your marriage. Share with each other what you have written down.
- b. Tell each other about gender-specific traditions from your culture that relate to the wedding ceremony, childbirth, baptism and family gatherings. What behaviours, actions and so forth are expected of the women, men, older family members and children?

- c. How will you relate to each other's background? How will you show that you fully respect each other? List three to five values from your respective cultures that you want to continue in your marriage.
- d. What practical things can the two of you do in your everyday life to promote as much equality and mutuality vis-à-vis each other's cultural background? (Examples: save money for a trip to visit the immigrant's family, establish contact with persons who have the same background, take a class together that relates to each other's culture, etc.)

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 35–38

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Do as a couple

- a. Describe for each other how your families traditionally view falling in love, being in love and engagement. How do they think a marriage should be lived out in practice, and how do they expect family life to be? Tell each other about specific customs relating to the various stages leading up to marriage and establishing a family.
- b. Do the two of you sense that there are great differences in your views on love, marriage and family? What aspects do you find especially valuable and want to continue in your own marriage?
- c. Make a list of what the two of you agree on wanting to continue in your marriage.

Group discussion

- d. In Galatians 3: 26–28, St. Paul says: 'For all of you are the children of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus, since every one of you that has been baptized has been clothed in Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female – for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

What implications does St. Paul's statement have for you being a Christian and at the same time male or female, having a nationality, cultural background and perhaps a social status?

- e. You may read together the Letter to Diognetus 'The Christians in the world':
www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20010522_diogneto_en.html Then share your thoughts.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

- In the period before the next course night, give your partner as much insight into your faith and culture as possible. Watch films or take each other to events that show some of what is characteristic for your respective homeland, religion, art, customs, food culture, music, dance, literature, cinema and so forth.

Prepare two special meals for each other, one typical for the woman's homeland, the other for the man's homeland. Choose dishes that are as different as possible from what the other is used to. They do not need to be fancy; they can be reasonably-priced everyday dishes.

SUGGESTED READING

- *How to survive being married to a Catholic*, Redemptorist Publications, Hampshire 1997. ISBN 085231 089 7, Can be found on www.amazon.com.
- Johannes Paul II, *Ut unum sint (On commitment to Ecumenism)*, 1995. www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html
- Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 1993. www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/documenti/testo-in-inglese.html
- Markman, H.J., Stanley, S.M., and Blumberg S.L. *Fighting for Your Marriage*, 3rd edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.