

CHAPTER 2 – ASSIGNMENTS

Part 2: ETERNAL VALUES IN A NEW ERA

ASSIGNMENT FOR § 52

GOD'S ETERNAL LAW

Group discussion

Vatican II points to the teaching on God's eternal law. St. Augustine defines it as 'the reason or the will of God, who commands us to respect the natural order and forbids us to disturb it'. St. Thomas Aquinas perceives God's eternal law as the 'divine wisdom that leads things to their proper goal'. God's wisdom is *providence*, that is, a love that is caring. God 'cares for man not "from without", through the laws of physical nature, but "from within", through reason, which, by its natural knowledge of God's eternal law, is consequently able to show man the right direction to take in his free actions'. (*Veritatis splendor*, 43)

How do we sense God's eternal law in our times and in our life? Are we using our reason and free will for the wellbeing of mankind, the Earth and society?

ASSIGNMENT FOR § 59–62

JESUS EXPOUNDS ON THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about the sixth commandment and gives us an expanded understanding of what adultery means: 'You have heard how it was said, "You shall not commit adultery". But I say this to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Matthew 5: 27–28). Jesus lets us understand that spouses must love each other *with an undivided heart* – with a love that is true in thought, word and deed.

Group discussion

a. Which practical situations can fall into the category of 'coveting your neighbour's spouse'?

Discuss as a couple

b. How will you as a couple relate to situations or people that can pose a potential danger to your marriage?

c. Which strategies will you choose to avoid the temptation to be unfaithful to each other?

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 65–67

THE CONSCIENCE

Group discussion

a. 'A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. Everyone must avail himself of the means to form his conscience' (CCC, 1798).

The Church teaches us that some actions will always be 'inherently evil', that is, they will always constitute a lack of respect for the life and integrity of others.

Give examples of situations in which following God's commandments can seem almost impossible, but which will nevertheless be correct. Try to think through the consequences of following God's commandments and the consequences of following our own will.

b. Is having a bad conscience unambiguously negative?

c. Read about the conscience in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1776–1802 or *YOUCAT*, 286–302.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 68–69

FREEDOM

Group discussion

a. Discuss the concept of freedom. In liberal societies, it is often claimed that freedom means the right to do whatever one wants. From a Christian perspective of human beings, do we have such a right? Or are there other considerations that must also be emphasized and taken into consideration in our practice of freedom?

b. What kind of freedom has God called us to practise? What kind of freedom do we have within marriage?

c. How prepared are we Christians today to sacrifice our own comfort or even our life for our faith? Why is freedom of conscience inscribed in the United Nation's declarations on human rights?

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

From now until the next class, practise being totally honest and open with each other. Remove all your masks, all unnecessary excuses, etc. Dare to stand forth as who each of you truly are, with your opinions, values and the ways of being that are most natural for you.

If there are things you have not yet wanted to tell each other but which could be important for your relationship, now is the time to speak out about them. If you are in doubt about whether something should or should not be brought to light, consult a priest, an experienced married couple or someone else you trust. Not everything needs to be exposed in detail, and not all family matters deserve attention. Getting to know each other well is not a matter of ‘dissecting’ each other, but each of you should at least gain insight into the events and persons who have played key roles in each other’s formation.

SUGGESTED READING

- *YOUCAT – Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church* (12th edition), San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015, 348–468.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992, 2052–2557.
- Pope John Paul II, *Dominum et vivificantem*, 1986.
- Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 1993.
- Karol Wojtyla (later Pope John Paul II), *Love and Responsibility*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993 (first published in Polish in 1960).