

CHAPTER 4 – ASSIGNMENTS

Part 1: THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 108–109

MY SEXUALITY

Individual exercise

NOTE! Think through the questions below individually, without talking with each other about them.

A course leader can, if he/she wants, read the questions aloud, slowly, while you (the course participants) think about them. If memories or thoughts arise and you find it difficult to relate to them, you can, at any time, ask for help from the priest or the other course leaders. If there are issues you want addressed more thoroughly or want more information about, please ask the course leaders.

Reflect back on your life: When and how did you become aware of your sexual identity, and what significance do you think these experiences will have for your relationship to your future spouse?

- Think back on your childhood. Which number are you in the flock of siblings, or are you an only child?
- Was it love that characterized relationships within the family? How did the family members physically express that they were fond of/loved each other?
- How early can you remember being aware of your sexual identity?
- Have you ever wanted to be the opposite sex, and if so, why?
- Was there a big difference in how boys and girls were treated in your childhood home?
- How were you prepared for the changes your body would undergo in puberty? Was it at home or at school that you received this knowledge? How did you experience puberty?
- How was sexuality talked about in your environment – openly, or only reluctantly? What impression did you have of the theme? Did you get the feeling that sex was something good and joyful, or that it was laden with taboos or perhaps sinful? Or did you get the impression that sex was something you should/needed to experience before you were 16?
- Was your sexual integrity respected by your family, schoolmates, neighbours, milieu, earlier boyfriends/girlfriends? Have you ever suffered sexual abuse, and if so, how has your relation to sexuality been after that? Have you received help, or do you want help to deal with it?
- Does it feel natural to talk about sexuality with your future spouse? Are there things you would like to talk about but which you lack courage or words with which to talk about them?
- How do you think your relation or attitude to sexuality will influence your life together? What do you think your experiences will mean for your future together?
- If either or both of you have had sexual relationships in the past, how do you think this will affect your relationship with each other? Have you talked with your future spouse about this?

Some of these questions will perhaps trigger memories or themes which the two of you should discuss as a couple. If so, take time to talk together before the next course session.

ASSIGNMENT FOR § 110–118

WHAT DOES SEXUALITY MEAN TO US?

Work on as a couple

a. Discuss the following questions:

- What do we want to express with our sexuality?
- What do we want sexuality to mean in our relationship?

b. Discuss the difference between 'having' sex and *giving* yourselves to each other:

- Is the difference between these two attitudes important for our life together? Why?
- Can we demand sexual intercourse? Present arguments to support the answers you give.
- How can we ensure the man's and the woman's equal value in our sex life?

In group discussion time, feel free to exchange viewpoints, but do not share anything of a private character.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 119–123

CHASTITY BEFORE AND IN MARRIAGE

Group discussion

a. What thoughts do you have about the concept of chastity?

b. We live in an era and culture where sex before marriage is usually taken for granted. What are the consequences of this? What do we gain by waiting to have a sexual relationship until we are married?

c. What do the two of you think about the Church's definition of chastity *in* marriage – to love with an undivided heart for the rest of your life, in total devotion to, and respect for, your spouse, with a non-self-serving desire to do good to him/her and with openness to receive children?

Work on as a couple

d. Tell each other how you experience physical touching. What do you like? What do you not like? Do the receiver and the sender perceive the same sign of affection in the same way? Or are there big differences in how the two of you interpret the message behind the sign of affection? How can you, in a caring way, tell each other which types of affection you want/do not want?

PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS

Give each other at least five non-sexual signs of affection each day. Train yourselves to use a wide register of signs of affection that clearly signal 'I love you', yet without implying sexual actions. Train yourselves to talk naturally together about your sexuality and about the differences in reactions and sexual feelings that are rooted in biological differences between men and women.

SUGGESTED READING

- *YOUCAT*, 400–425.
- John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of The Body*, Slough, UK: Pauline Books and Media, 2006.
- Christopher West, *Good News About Sex & Marriage (Revised Edition) – Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching*, Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004.
- Christopher West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners: A Basic Introduction to Pope John Paul II's Sexual Revolution*, Revised Edition, Baltimore, MD: Ascension Press, 2009.
- Syster Sofie O.P., *Till man och kvinna skapade Han dem*, Artos, 2011, ISBN: 978 91 7580 547-4.
- Karol Wojtyła (later Pope John Paul II), *Love and Responsibility*, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1993. (Originally published in Polish as *Milosz I Odpowiedzialnosc*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo, Znak, 1960).