

## CHAPTER 4 – ASSIGNMENTS

### PART 2: SERVING LIFE

#### ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 125–128

##### GOD’S LIFE-GIVING LOVE

###### Group discussion

a. Read the Bible text below. What thoughts does it trigger in you? What does it say, between the lines, about God’s view of human life?

You created my inmost self,  
knit me together in my mother’s womb.  
For so many marvels I thank you;  
a wonder am I, and all your works are wonders.  
You knew me through and through.  
My being held no secrets from you,  
when I was being formed in secret, textured in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes could see my embryo.  
In your book all my days were inscribed,  
every one that was fixed is there.

(Psalm 139: 13–16)

b. Christians are called to have the deepest respect for life from conception to natural death. What significance does this have for a society, that each human life is recognized as infinitely valuable? What can we as Christians do to promote the ‘culture of life’, a culture in which all human life is valued and received with care and love, regardless of characteristics?

###### Discuss as a couple

c. Are there special events in your life which have made you more aware of the value of a human life? What do the two of you think about being God’s co-creators by becoming parents of your own children? What will you do so that the children you may be given will experience that they are welcomed, wanted, loved and valued?

#### ASSIGNMENT FOR § 129–130

##### THE GOSPEL OF LIFE VERSUS THE CULTURE OF DEATH

###### Group discussion – Choose one of the following points to discuss

a. In his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, in paragraphs 7–17, Pope John Paul II presents an alarming analysis of the contrast between, on one hand, the work to promote and ensure human value and human rights, and on the other, the scientific and systematically-programmed threats against life, legitimated in laws the world over, because we have lost sight of God – and thus also lost sight of the human being. In which situations do people today make themselves rulers over life and death? What right do humans have to rule over the life of others?

b. In Norway, there is steadily increasing openness for more extensive prenatal diagnosis. What role does the severity of a developmental abnormality play for the value of a human being? What do you think about the ethical dilemmas that parents face on account of early prenatal diagnosis? Is it right to say yes to diagnostics that have no other purpose than to sort out foetuses with developmental abnormalities?

c. Read the following text from the book of Isaiah. What relevance does it have for our era's attitudes to persons with disabilities? What support measures provided by social welfare would you want for families who are expecting a child with a developmental issue? What about for people who are disabled, sick or terminally ill?

Woe to anyone who argues with his Maker,  
one earthenware pot among many!  
Does the clay say to its potter,  
'What are you doing? Your work has no hands!'  
Woe to anyone who asks a father, 'Why are you begetting?'  
and a woman, 'Why are you giving birth?'  
Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel and his Maker:  
I am asked for signs regarding my sons,  
I am given orders about the work I do.  
It was I who made the earth and I created human beings on it,  
mine were the hands that spread out the heavens  
and I have given the orders to all their array.  
I myself have raised him in saving justice  
and I shall make all paths level for him.  
He will rebuild my city and bring my exiles home  
without ransom or indemnity, says the Lord Sabaoth.

Isaiah 45: 9–13

## **ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 131–138**

### **OUR ERA'S VIEW OF PREGNANCY AND CHILDREN**

#### **Group discussion**

- a. Discuss the reasons and motivations for why many today postpone or avoid pregnancy. Which motivations do you think are defensible? Which cannot be justified?
- b. The average age for giving birth to a first child is steadily rising. Many couples deliberately postpone having children until relatively late in life. What are the short-term and long-term consequences of this trend in society, especially since we know that women's fertility is significantly reduced after 35 years of age?
- c. Are there still taboos and shame associated with being pregnant outside of marriage? What help can we give in such situations? How can we promote a positive view of children?
- d. What are the advantages and disadvantages of there being several/many children – when they are babies, youths and adults, when aging parents' health begins to decline?

## ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 142

### FERTILITY AND PARENTHOOD

#### Group discussion

- a. Does contraception allow a genuine collaboration with God? Present arguments to support your answers.
- b. Discuss or find aspects for several points of view: Which consequences do you see from severing the relation between sexuality and fertility? What can this mean for biological parenthood? What consequences can it have for children?

#### Assignments to do as a couple

- a. How does the use of contraceptives affect the totality of our communication and self-sacrifice? Are we comfortable with this?
- b. What do we need of information and knowledge about natural birth regulation in order to respect and preserve the life-giving dimension of sexual intercourse?
- c. How can we, in our marriage, best live as *stewards of life*?

## ASSIGNMENTS FOR § 139–143

### WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR OUR CHOICE?

#### Assignment to do as a couple

Which factors will influence your choice of family planning method(s)? Use the sheet with the overview of methods and the forms available on the [webpages of the Catechetical Centre as resources](#). First, fill out each your own form. Thereafter, compare them and work further with the assignment questions.

- a. Discuss the factors there where you have marked different boxes.
- b. Address each individual point and explain to your partner the main reason for your choice.
- c. Which methods do the two of you feel the need to know more about?

### PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

- Together, babysit for some family friends or take some small friends on a daytrip. How do you envision a life with babies, teenagers and adult children?
- Talk with friends who have small children. Ask them what they think is most important about giving life to a new human being and how they experience the parental role.
- Evaluate what is relevant for the two of you regarding the question of regulating birth. Gather as much information as possible. Use recommended websites, information from your pharmacy or ask personnel at the Catechetical Centre.

## SUGGESTED READING

- Sister Sofie O.P., *Till man och kvinna skapade Han dem*, Artos 2011.
- Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995, particularly the introduction and chapter 2.
- Dr. Evelyn Billings and Dr. Ann Westmore, *Billings Method*, Leominster, UK: Gracewing Publishing, 1994.
- John F. Kippley and Sheila K. Kippley, *The Art of Natural Family Planning*, 4th ed., Cincinnati: Couple to Couple League, 2000. ISBN 0-026412-13-2. (Very informative and useful book!)
- Marilyn Shannon, *Fertility, Cycles and Nutrition*, 4th ed., Cincinnati: Couple to Couple League, 2009.
- Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993. (Originally published in Polish as *Milosz I Odpowiedzialnosc*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo, Znak, 1960.)
- Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 1968.
- The Nordic Bishops' pastoral letter on *Humanae Vitae*, 2010.
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 1652–1654, 2258–2301 and 2366–2379, <https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM>
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the instruction *Dignitas Personae – On Certain Bioethical Questions*, 2008. [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20081208\\_dignitas-personae\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html)
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the instruction *Donum Vitae – On Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*, 1987. [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19870222\\_respect-for-human-life\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html)

## RESOURCES ON INTERNET

Respect: Katolsk rörelse for livet (a Catholic movement promoting respect, protection and care for life, associated with the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm), link in English <https://respektlivet.nu/en>

The Couple to Couple League, [www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org) (Offers an Internet-based course in natural family planning.)

Menneskeverd, [www.menneskeverd.no](http://www.menneskeverd.no)

Jentehjelpen, [www.jentehjelpen.no](http://www.jentehjelpen.no) (Free, worldview-neutral organization offering help to pregnant women of all ages who want to bring their pregnancy to term.)