

Supplemental Information for  
*Why Catholic? Journey through the Catechism*  
*Life In Christ – Walking With God*  
To group leaders of  
Christ the King Parish, Springfield, Illinois

By Deacon Al Laabs  
March, 2011

Session 8: "Family"

### **Suggested Environment**

Note again that we are reverting to the table arrangement suggestion from year one but I would continue to make the *USCCA (United States Catholic Catechism for Adults)* a part of each table arrangement since many of you who used it think highly of it and I will recommend sections for some of the sessions in this second half of year three to share or to read before you lead the session.

Note also for this session you might have a picture of your family as part of the display. I'm going to do that for our session since we love to show off the grand children too. You might even suggest in advance for your group to bring family pictures...it's always nice to get to know one another in a bit more depth and centered on family, what could be better? Maybe offering a prayer at the end for children and grand children would be a great idea too.

As a session leader I would recommend your reading and perhaps encouraging your members who have the red *USCCA* to read sections "The Family and Society" (pages 379-380) and "The Charter of Family Rights" (pages 380-381). I will have more to say about that second recommendation on family rights later. It is fairly clear that the family is in crisis in our society and the bottom line perhaps should be recognition of our need to pray and find solutions to the many issues facing the families of this nation and many others in the western world.

However, a final word of caution is in order. By now you should also know your group well enough so if there are issues centered in families you may want to be sensitive to that type of concern too. After all not all families are Ozzie and Harriet types for us who remember that idealized portrayal.

### **Lifting Our Hearts**

And taking off on that final note, don't hesitate to introduce this prayer by calling attention to the song title, "Make Us A Family," even though you may not sing the song. The prayer itself has the overtones of praying for those in need of the support of family. After all, we often call ourselves "brothers and sisters in Christ" and we are family by our shared heritage of baptism into the life of Christ. The reality is that there are many facing challenges of family living that merit our prayer within our own parish.

## **Sharing Our Good News**

As usual an opportunity to see what group members did or thought about doing following last week's session.

## **Exploring the Catechism**

A good way to begin this section would be to read both *CCC 2070 and 2071*. The point being made is that while we may find that the commandments in their total scope are accessible to human reason, because of our fallen nature, it was important for God to reveal them directly to us created humans. They are accessible to human reason because of some of the issues covered in previous chapters, for instance, human development and progress cannot take place without order, peace, and rules in society. So the commandments create a common good and a set of relationships that apply to us as necessary ground rules for living together in peace and harmony. Keep in mind that the previous chapter pointed out the first three bear directly on our relationship to God while the remaining seven we will continue to discuss point us towards a set of guidelines for living together peacefully.

God created us out of love and those first two sentences in this section point us outward from ourselves in love to God and neighbor. Honoring father and mother not only allows for an order in this basic unit of society as we shall see, but also by implication point us in a similar relationship to all other family members (by extension, church family, extended family, societal family).

While it has always been interesting to use our imagination to try to fill in the blanks about those hidden years when Jesus grew and lived with Joseph and Mary, we can be sure that they were very formative years and filled with ordinary human tasks and challenges. The Gospel reading that is suggested opens that dialogue about the concern that Mary and Joseph must have had when they discovered their son missing after the visit to the temple. Having "lost" one of my girls in mall for about five minutes, I can still recall in my heart the panic I felt. This reading sets up the possibility of a good discussion on the care and concern parents have towards their children.

## **Scripture: Pondering the Word**

### **Luke 2: 41-52**

- 41 <sup>12</sup> Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover,  
42 and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom.  
43 After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.  
44 Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances,  
45 but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions,  
47 and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.  
48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."  
49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" <sup>13</sup>  
50 But they did not understand what he said to them.  
51 He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.  
52 And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

Here are two footnotes that are part of the NAB Bible that is on the USCCB site:

<sup>12</sup> [41-52] This story's concern with an incident from Jesus' youth is unique in the canonical gospel tradition. It presents Jesus in the role of the faithful Jewish boy, raised in the traditions of Israel, and fulfilling all that the law requires. With this episode, the infancy narrative ends just as it began, in the setting of the Jerusalem temple.

<sup>13</sup> [49] I must be in my Father's house: this phrase can also be translated, "I must be about my Father's work." In either translation, Jesus refers to God as his Father. His divine sonship, and his obedience to his heavenly Father's will, takes precedence over his ties to his family.

Perhaps footnote 12 above is the best commentary on this selected passage.

### **Sharing Question**

Sharing ways of problem resolution in families I think is a worthwhile exchange. So I would encourage discussion of this question. I think it is important to point out that resolving issues requires mutual respect in both directions as the next section will point out—parent to child as well as child to parent.

### **Exploring the *Catechism* (continued)**

Sections 2204 to 2206 in the CCC are the defining sections referring to the family and I think are worth reading together. The notions of *domestic church* and a *privileged community* were touched on the previous year when we encountered the family in the sacrament of marriage. In many ways, I wish we could jump to Pope John Paul's apostolic exhortation titled, "On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World." Should you wish to recommend this to your group, there is a link to the document itself known in Latin as *Familiaris Consortio* in the last page of this commentary. Here is just a little section from what Pope JP II wrote so beautifully:

### *“The Precious Value of Marriage and of the Family”*

“3. Illuminated by the faith that gives her an understanding of all the truth concerning the great value of marriage and the family and their deepest meaning, the Church once again feels the pressing need to proclaim the Gospel, that is the "good news," to all people without exception, in particular to all those who are called to marriage and are preparing for it, to all married couples and parents in the world.

The Church is deeply convinced that only by the acceptance of the Gospel are the hopes that man legitimately places in marriage and in the family capable of being fulfilled.

Willed by God in the very act of creation,(3) marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to fulfillment in Christ(4) and have need of His graces in order to be healed from the wounds of sin(5) and restored to their "beginning,"(6) that is, to full understanding and the full realization of God's plan.

At a moment of history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family,(7) the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family, ensuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and thus contributing to the renewal of society and of the People of God.”

This may be quite beyond the scope of this session 8 because of its depth and length but I would never hesitate to encourage your participants to go beyond what this abbreviated text presents. Particularly because documents such as these are readily available on line and hence can be read at only the cost of time. With all the challenges that families face in today's culture, it is so important that we at least know source documents that can point out the teaching of the Church in this area.

It certainly think it is worthwhile to spend a little time discussing some of the challenges that your group members are aware of and concerned about in today culture. We as Church are certainly not immune to the effects of brokenness experienced by so many. So while I would encourage discussion in this area, there may be individuals in the group who are or have struggled with issues of divorce and separation so be aware and sensitive to their concerns.

Similarly, the paragraph that mentions child abuse may bring up issues again since at the time I am writing this a major “storm” of a grand jury is brewing in Philadelphia, home to some 1.1 million Catholics. Sadly this again raises the past handling of clerical child abuse and will cause all of us who love our Church more anguish.

I especially think the last paragraph in this section, written by Alfred Delp, S.J. is a powerful statement that positions the family at the center of formation and renewal in society. In a way it is an expansion of that old saying that “whatever you are began at home.” And isn't it true that we have so many cryptic sayings that try to crystallize the impact of the family on an individual, such as “the acorn never drops far from the tree.” Whatever ones you have heard before, or you may hear this evening, use them as a summary statement of the need we have

to pray often and frequently for families struggling to teach values and a resurgence of our society's dedication to recognizing the importance of family life.

One final comment I think is necessary. Someone may wonder, how does the Church feel it can say so much about this area of family when what God has said in this commandment is "Honor your father and mother?" I would suggest that you take a careful look at the very first paragraph I quoted above from JP II's apostolic exhortation. Notice the authority that the "Church" is claiming in the very first line..."Illuminated by faith...compelled....good news...to all the world." Here is a good example of the Church using the authority given to it by Christ and the scope of its Tradition (with the Capital "T"), speaking out in an apostolic way to broaden the message of the "Good News" that was handed over to the original apostles who were commissioned to teach and baptize all nations. Much of what we will read as Church teaching on relationships that directly bear on these last seven commandments stem from this important role Christ has given his Church to interpret and proclaim the good news necessary for our salvation.

### **Sharing Our Faith**

Both questions in this section are very worthwhile and I would suggest maybe adding one more. It might be interesting to get a discussion going on "how do we really pass on values?" One of the mom's in our parish mentioned to me a struggle she has with one of her older girls who wonders why she has to go to church every Sunday when some of her friends in Catholic school do not. We can do all we should to model and live exemplary values but ultimately this mystery of God-given free will requires every child/adult to accept a value on their own. Nonetheless, see if someone has some good ideas to share about passing along what is valuable to us as parents.

### **Exploring the *Catechism* (continued)**

This section is fairly self explanatory as are the sections of the *CCC* that are referenced. Again, some conversation may come up because of the broad statements that extend care and responsibility for others (especially the elderly, poor, and the vulnerable) that can be found at the end of *CCC* 2199. This again is an example of the Church teaching about an understanding of the nature of man, God's creation, and the relationship between natural law and God's revelation.

As an expansionary note here, let me mention what I had touched on earlier that is found in the *USCCA* section called the "Charter of Family Rights." That is actually taken from the document by JP II already referenced. I have attached as a separate page the actual charter section from the pope's exhortation that includes the list of Family Rights. You may want to make a copy of this and distribute it. Those in the group who have the *USCCA* book will find this list in somewhat different order on page 381. As you scan the list note the many related directions that would have major impacts on laws and policies within world societies. The Church is always bound by the Spirit to lead mankind towards the goal of perfection. So some

of the “rights” may seem idealistic; but nonetheless they are seen by the Church as within the nature of created mankind.

The final point that bears discussion is found in CCC 2239 and 2242. This involves the tension between a law that is “contrary to the dignity of the person or natural law.” Society may not agree with the Church’s assessment of such positions as abortion, death penalty, artificial insemination, and a number of other related developments like “death with dignity.” Those tensions are there as we are so well aware and probably will grow more difficult as time passes. So we are cautioned in CCC 2242 that we have an “obligation” in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, the rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. Keep in mind the civil disobedience that fostered the Civil Rights Movement years back and protests over our war in Vietnam.

### **Sharing Our Faith**

I must confess I smiled at the first bullet point question about Mary and Joseph’s parenting style. Other than their great concern for their son as evident in the scripture cited above, not much else has been written about their style of parenting. Perhaps we can guess at it from insights provided by Jesus himself. For example, his great knowledge of his faith and familiarity with OT scripture would seem to indicate that Mary and Joseph were very devoted Jews and encouraged their son in the same direction. I think it might be helpful to focus on the bullet point that suggests sharing issues around caring for aging parents. The section above presents this responsibility as an extension of what children owe their parents and I know many in our age group (60’s) are dealing with this issue right now. Even for groups that have younger members this is a concern since I am recalling a conversation just last week with several friends that focused on a strategy to “take the car keys away” from someone who is heading for a major accident. How to do this in a loving, caring way is always a challenge.

### **Living the Good News**

I think everyone of the suggestions there has merit as a follow up to this week’s conversation. So encourage some action on the part of the group.

### **Lifting our Hearts**

A good prayer ending with a nice gesture of offering peace but I would also encourage an opportunity to mention intentions and collectively ask the Lord to hear our prayers.

**Addendum Note: Any feedback you would like to give is most welcome. Please reply to**

[allaabs1770@gmail.com](mailto:allaabs1770@gmail.com)

**Addendum Note Two: see next page for section from JP II’s apostolic exhortation that contains the list of Family Rights.**

**For session leaders: Excerpt from JP II's apostolic exhortation on the role of the family...  
This is a link to the entire document: [Familiaris Consortio](#)**

### *The Charter of Family Rights*

46. The ideal of mutual support and development between the family and society is often very seriously in conflict with the reality of their separation and even opposition.

In fact, as was repeatedly denounced by the Synod, the situation experienced by many families in various countries is highly problematical, if not entirely negative: institutions and laws unjustly ignore the inviolable rights of the family and of the human person; and society, far from putting itself at the service of the family, attacks it violently in its values and fundamental requirements. Thus the family, which in God's plan is the basic cell of society and a subject of rights and duties before the State or any other community, finds itself the victim of society, of the delays and slowness with which it acts, and even of its blatant injustice.

For this reason, the Church openly and strongly defends the rights of the family against the intolerable usurpations of society and the State. In particular, the Synod Fathers mentioned the following rights of the family:

- the right to exist and progress as a family, that is to say, the right of every human being, even if he or she is poor, to found a family and to have adequate means to support it;
- the right to exercise its responsibility regarding the transmission of life and to educate children; family life;
- the right to the intimacy of conjugal and family life;
- the right to the stability of the bond and of the institution of marriage;
- the right to believe in and profess one's faith and to propagate it;
- the right to bring up children in accordance with the family's own traditions and religious and cultural values, with the necessary instruments, means and institutions;
- the right, especially of the poor and the sick, to obtain physical, social, political and economic security;
- the right to housing suitable for living family life in a proper way;
- the right to expression and to representation, either directly or through associations, before the economic, social and cultural public authorities and lower authorities;
- the right to form associations with other families and institutions, in order to fulfill the family's role suitably and expeditiously;
- the right to protect minors by adequate institutions and legislation from harmful drugs, pornography, alcoholism, etc.;
- the right to wholesome recreation of a kind that also fosters family values;
- the right of the elderly to a worthy life and a worthy death;
- the right to emigrate as a family in search of a better life.(112)

Acceding to the Synod's explicit request, the Holy See will give prompt attention to studying these suggestions in depth and to the preparation of a Charter of Rights of the Family, to be presented to the quarters and authorities concerned.