

Love Is Our Mission

The Family Fully Alive

Chapter 3: The Meaning of Human Sexuality Reading Guide

If you have not yet done so, please watch the introductory video for Chapter 3. It will give you a window into the chapter and make your reading and study of the catechesis more fruitful.

It will be beneficial for you to spread your reading of the chapter over a number of sessions. Take time, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, to consider in your mind what these things might mean (Lk 1: 29) and then ponder them in your heart (Lk 2:19 & 2:51).

1. Before reading

Begin your time with a prayer, asking for God's help to understand what you are about to read. Here is a traditional Catholic prayer asking the Holy Spirit for assistance:

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

2. Reading the catechesis

Rather than reading a chapter straight through, read it one section at a time. In chapter 3 there are three sections, each with its own subheading.

Begin by asking yourself what the subheading probably means. Then read and reread the section from start to finish at a rate comfortable for you. Underline what you consider to be especially important statements and write questions and comments in the margins. These are great active reading techniques.

3. After reading a section

After reading the section, take some time to “digest” what you have just read. One way to do this is by responding to the text.

We recommend you answer in writing, *one* of the following generic questions or *one* of the directed questions. The generic questions can be asked of any section of this book. The directed questions pertain to the section specifically.

Generic questions

- What did you think the heading meant before you read the section? Has your understanding of it changed after reading?
- What most surprised or impacted you in this section?
- What most confused you or what did you disagree with the most in this section?
- If you were to summarize this section, what would you say it was about in one or two sentences?
- What action does this section call you to take? Does this change seem possible to you? What barriers do you think would stand in the way of you taking this action?

The following are directed questions for each section of this chapter. Choose one of them to answer in writing if you don't select one of the generic questions. A space is provided for you to write your response.

The natural physical world bursts with spiritual goodness

Directed questions

- What do you think the phrase “the meaning of human sexuality” means?
- What are examples you see around you of the Catholic belief in the goodness of material things, of physical reality?
- According to our catechesis, “in the sacraments, material things are consecrated and made visible signs of grace” (§37). How do you think this applies to the sacrament of Matrimony?

Your response:

Male and female sexuality participate in our spiritual purpose

Directed questions:

- What do you think it means to say, “For the Christian, body and spirit are profoundly integrated” (§39)?
- How do “procreation and communion, biology and God’s covenant, nature and supernatural” interrelate (§41)?
- What do you think this statement means: “This call to love, communion, and life involves the entire being of man and woman, body and soul” (§43)?

- According to § 44, what are some of the implications of Adam seeing Eve as “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh”?
- We live in a time in which some claim there is or should be no difference between men and women, while others claim that gender is changeable, and yet others say there may be dozens or more genders. Why does this catechesis argue that “sexual difference,” that is, masculinity or femininity, “has a universal significance”? (§ 45).
- The catechesis says, “Sex is never simply a physical or emotional impulse. It always involves more.” (§46). What is this “more”?

Your response:

We have sexual ethics because sex has spiritual significance¹

Directed questions

- How are marriage and celibacy the only two ways that “do justice to the summons of being male and female in God’s plan” (§47)?
- What is your experience of chastity as a worthwhile “burden” or “discipline” (§48)?
- What is the virtue of chastity, according to the catechesis (§49)?
- What do you think this statement means: “Chaste **married love** situates *eros* in the context of love, care, fidelity, and openness to children. Chaste **celibacy**, through its continence, concurs that sexual intimacy belongs in the context of love, care, and fidelity” (§50)?

Your response:

¹ The following definition may be useful in understanding this section of the catechesis.

Covenant: an oath by which persons give themselves to each other for life, which invokes God as witness and asks for his help to keep it. <http://bit.ly/1EM8ldR>