

Love Is Our Mission

The Family Fully Alive

Chapter 5: Creating the Future Reading Guide

If you have not yet done so, please watch the introductory video for Chapter 5. 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 reading 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 the chapter straight through, read it one section at a time. In chapter five there are five sections, each with its own heading. The first is "Marriage gives spiritual context to the possibilities created by biology" and covers paragraphs 68-71.

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. While doing so, 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 Chapter 5. 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.

Marriage gives spiritual context to the possibilities created by biology

Directed questions

- What is the relationship between the title of this section and the content of this chapter, which is, “how married love integrates the fertility of men and women with the sacrament of God’s covenant” (§69)?
- The catechesis says that “marriage is a response to the possibility of procreation between men and women” (§70). What does it look like for adults, children, and society when procreation is *not* in the context of marriage?
- What does it mean to say that “marriage places procreation in the context of human dignity and freedom” (§70)?
- What connection do you see or what connection ought there to be between “God’s covenant fidelity” and “his Triune communion as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” on the one hand and “biological fecundity” on the other (§71)?

Your response:

The spiritual vocation of parenting

Directed questions:

- Discuss the relationship you see between (a) the kinds of extenuating circumstances Christian spouses should take into account in regard to their fertility and (b) the basic criteria of “love in the shape of service, sacrifice, trust, and openness to God’s generosity” (§72).
- Why do you think the catechesis makes the spiritual formation of children the most important dimension of their upbringing?
- The catechesis could be said to argue that parents have the twin goals of raising their children to be good citizens of the earthly city and good citizens of the heavenly city (§76). How do you see the two goals interrelating?

Your response:

Life in the domestic church

Directed questions

- What is your understanding of the family as the domestic church?
- What does the term discernment mean in this section of the catechesis?
- The catechesis seems to be saying that parents should have a vocational approach to raising their children. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- Why are our personal weaknesses and the difficulties we face not obstacles to authentic Christian family life?

Your response:

Our cultural context requires families to be discerning

- What place does Pope Francis see for the Word of God in family life?
- Why is discernment important for parents when it comes to how their children are exposed to modern culture?
- Why do you think the catechesis claims that teaching children the facts of the faith is less important than teaching them how to pray or adults being good role models for them?

Your response:

The family and the parish depend upon each other

- How do you see the domestic church—the family—in relation to the larger Church?
- To what extent do you see the parish church supporting families, including families that have been wounded?
- In your parish, how do you see families supporting other families, including wounded families?
- Why do you think the catechesis places an emphasis on adoption and foster care of children?

Your response: