

Love Is Our Mission

The Family Fully Alive

Chapter 7: Light in a Dark World

Reflection Guide for individuals, couples, and small groups

If you have watched the introductory video for this chapter and then prayerfully read and responded to the catechesis using the reading guide, you will already have a solid understanding of the material.

The aim of this last step is to help you go even deeper—to synthesize the material in this chapter of the catechesis and to apply it to your life. The goal here is to grow in wisdom about marriage and the family so that we might live the truth and be happier. We want to be good soil on which the seeds of Christ’s teachings on marriage and the family bring forth abundant fruit (Mt. 13:8). We also want to be able to communicate these teachings to others in the spirit of 1 Pt. 3:15-16: “Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you” with gentleness, reverence, and a clear conscience.

The “tools” we will use for small groups are the talking-piece discussion, the basic question, the written response, and the open-ended discussion. These are explained below and adapted for couples and for individuals studying on their own.

1. Opening Prayer

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. Talking piece discussion

A talking piece is an object of some kind (like a crucifix, a small statue of a saint, a prayer card). When you are handed the talking piece, you have permission to speak. If you don’t have it, you are not supposed to talk. When you are done speaking, pass the talking piece to the next person.

The aim of the talking-piece discussion is to let the Holy Spirit speak through your mind and heart. When you share a personal experience or some insight you have gotten, both you and the other members of the circle benefit. When you have the talking piece, the idea is not to agree or disagree with what someone else has said—certainly not to show you are right and someone else is wrong—but to speak from your head and heart.

The group should sit in a circle, close enough so that everyone can easily see and hear each other.

While virtually any question can be the basis of a talking-piece discussion, we recommend you use the following question to open your small group discussion:

- What are you most moved to say about this chapter of the catechesis?

A couple can also use a talking piece because it might help them listen to each other better.

For individuals, we recommend you make this entire time of reflection a time of prayer. The ideal place would be in front of the Blessed Sacrament, but it can also be done in any suitable place. One could use a journal or just respond in mental conversation with God.

3. Basic question

A basic question is a question simple enough to encompass an entire subject. In this case the subject is some evils that threaten the family today.

- Am I willing to resist the evils that the Church says no to, and if I am, how can I do so for the sake of everyone who is harmed by them?

4. Written Response

Take some time to respond to this basic question in writing. This lets you go deeper than you normally would and helps you articulate your thoughts.

5. Open-ended discussion

Now, the session can shift into a more free-wheeling discussion of the basic question above. The discussion should be moderated by the group leader so everyone gets an opportunity to speak.

Couples can discuss their responses and insights with each other.

An individual can talk with Our Lord about what he or she is learning and experiencing and then silently listen for God's response.

6. Closing prayer

End with a closing prayer. The following petitions are based on chapter seven of the catechesis. Of course, participants can add their own petitions if they wish.

The response is *Lord, give us your light*.

- ❖ O God, help us to see that it is not just the other person but it is we ourselves who do not always love as we ought. Help us own our faults, name them, and repent. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, help us to serve families by alleviating our own or our neighbor's material or spiritual poverty, especially by strengthening the family. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, help us to see that living only for pleasure and for material things is not worthy of us and in fact harms us. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, give us the courage to speak the truth about pornography and masturbation, that they are not just sins but erode our ability to live the virtues necessary for marriage and family life. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, help us to become missionaries of responsible parenthood as the Church teaches it. May we find the words to explain why contraception is wrong and damaging to marriage and the family. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, help us to treat persons with same sex attraction with respect while courageously standing up for the truth about marriage. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, help us defend marriage and the family in civic life as realities prior to any form of government. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, we pray that our own families will be fully alive—places in which your love is visible and radiant. We pray to the Lord.

End with the *Prayer for the World Meeting of Families* (p. 117 of the catechesis).