

Love Is Our Mission

The Family Fully Alive

Chapter 9: Mother, Teacher, Family: The Nature and Role of the Church 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 the mission of the Church, especially in connection to marriage and the family.

- If we were to say that the mission of the Church is to give life and to teach, what do these tasks involve and who is responsible for 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 nine of the catechesis. Of course, participants can add their own petitions if they wish.

The response is *Lord, give us your life and teach us your love.*

- ❖ O God, may every person in the world understand and experience that the Church is “our mother and teacher, our comforter and guide, [and] our family of faith” (p. 101). We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, may every person understand and experience his or her new identity in Christ by being born from above in the holiness of Christ as sons or daughters of God and his bride the Church. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, may every person understand and experience that the Church is not constituted on any human virtue, holiness, or achievement but on the self-giving love of Christ which we are called to imitate as best we can with the help of grace. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, that we children of the Church will follow the sometimes difficult “path of penance and renewal” as we are “transformed in Christ’s love until Christ is fully formed in all of us” (§179-180). We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, may we conform ourselves to the spiritual and moral truths of the Gospel, which are preserved intact by the teaching authority of the Church. We pray to the Lord.
- ❖ O God, may Christian spouses proclaim the truth of the Gospel, which the Magisterium of the Church safeguards, by the witness of lives continually transformed by the love received in the Sacrament of Matrimony. 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).