

MEETING 7 MARITAL RELATIONSHIP AND DIALOG

Meeting Goals:

- **Recognize God's plan for marriage.**
- **Understand and appreciate the meaning and characteristics of marital love.**
- **Know the importance of dialog as an effective method to resolve conflicts.**

1. OPENING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)
2. REPORTS OF ACTION Were you able to do your chosen action last week?
 - Work towards a fair and equal relationship with your spouse in areas where there is inequality.
 - Teach your children, both sons and daughters, to do household chores (making beds, washing dishes, house cleaning, caring for younger siblings, etc.).
 - Remember to treat women around you with the same respect as men.
 - Your chosen action.
3. BIBLE STUDY (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

Genesis 2:18-20

¹⁸ *The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

Matthew 19:4-6

⁴ *"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?"⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh."*

Ephesians 5:20-31

²⁸ *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—³⁰ for we are members of his body.*

Bible Sharing

- What do the readings above tell you about God's plan for marriage?
- In St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, how should husband and wife love each other?
- Why does God make marital love very special and important?

4. SOCIAL ACTION (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

*The following are four characteristics of marital love identified by **Pope Paul VI in Humanae Vitae, 9:***

a. Fully human

"It isn't a simple outpouring of instinct and feeling, but is also primarily an act of free will, intended to stay and grow through the joys and sorrows of daily life ...".

b. Total

"It is a unique form of personal friendship with which the spouses generously share everything without undue reservations or selfish calculations . . ."

c. Faithful

"... Loyalty can sometimes be difficult, but it is always possible, noble and worthy."

d. *Fruitful*

"Marital love is not exhausted in the communion between the spouses but is intended to go on creating new lives ..."

Good marital relationship respects the character and personality of both partners. This mutual respect is achieved through sincere dialog in which both share their individuality without wanting to make the other an extension of one's self. Both partners should be free to be themselves and to have their opinions respected, even if they are different. Dialog is real communication between two people, listening with attention to each other express feelings, needs, desires, goals, joys, frustrations, etc.

a. Observe (from your experience)

- How do I see myself? Do I feel respected as a person? Do I have space for myself? Am I fulfilled?
- How do I see my partner? Do I respect and enjoy that he/she is different from me? Is he/she a person who is fulfilled and grows?
- Do I consider dialog with my spouse important? Do I spend quality time in dialog with my spouse?

b. Judge (as a Christian)

- What is marital love in my understanding?
- What obstacles prevent marital love from being fully human, total, faithful and fruitful?
- Why is it difficult for people to communicate with each other? Do we have any negative attitudes which hinder a true dialog with our partners?

c. Act (choose one action individually or as a group and make sure to accomplish it)*

- As married couples, give each other freedom to be yourselves and respect each other's opinions even if they are different.
- Spend quality time with your spouse at least once a week and foster genuine dialog between each other.
- Pray together and ask God to bless your marital love and to make your love stronger each day.
- Choose your own action.

*You will share what action you chose at the beginning of the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a short, encouraging talk from a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)
6. NEXT MEETING (assigning a couple or an individual to conduct the next meeting, scheduling time and place)
7. CLOSING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)

MEETING 8 THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT OF CHILDREN

Meeting Goals:

- **Understand the importance of children according to God's plan.**
- **Reflect on the interpersonal relationships among family members.**
- **Appreciate the conditions for true and effective dialog in the family.**

1. OPENING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)

2. REPORTS OF ACTION Were you able to do your chosen action last week?

- As married couples, give each other freedom to be yourselves and respect each other's opinions even if they are different.
- Spend quality time with your spouse at least once a week and foster genuine dialog between each other.
- Pray together and ask God to bless your marital love and to make your love stronger each day.
- Your chosen action.

3. BIBLE STUDY

Psalm 128:1-3

¹Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him. ²You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. ³Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. ⁴Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the Lord.

John 16:21

²¹A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born, she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

Ephesians 6:1-3

⁶Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—³“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Bible Sharing:

- How do we know that God considers children very important in the life of a married couple?
- Do you agree that the joy of having children is worth all the sacrifices that parents make for them? Explain.
- In what way is the relationship between parents and children a reflection of God's relationship with us?

4. SOCIAL ACTION (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

Children are a wonderful gift from God. He made people in his image and likeness and created sexuality and marriage for men and women to be happy and have children and to be co-creators with him. The gift of children is both a joy and a responsibility

As Christians we know that we are loved infinitely by our Father in heaven. For a child this love is "felt" in the love that parents have for each other and for their children,

and the love children have for and from their brothers and sisters, making the family a network of relationships.

Children's love for their parents involves gratitude for giving them life, love and support. Brothers and sisters may envy each other, compete and fight, but these conflicts are educational. Co-existence in the family teaches children to respect and be respected, to give and receive, to speak and listen, to share with each other. Despite their conflicts, however, brothers and sisters are the best company for playing and laughing—the light that drives away loneliness.

As in the marital relationship, dialog is the key to harmonious family relationships. To love is to accept our children as they are, not as parents wish them to be. Acceptance means that children have a right to think and feel differently from their parents. Dialog requires the ability to understand, involves trust and respect, and promotes confidence.

Communication is knowing how to listen, to engage one's self in understanding what others wants to say, uniting with their feelings and getting into their shoes, neither judging nor arguing.

a. Observe (from your experience)

- Are we grateful to God for our children and do both parents share the responsibility of bringing them up?
- Are there any opportunities in our Church or community to prepare us to be good parents?
- Is there good communication between parents and children and among brothers and sisters in our family?

b. Judge (as a Christian)

- Do we, as parents, love and accept our children as they are, even if they think and feel differently from us?
- Is there a climate of caring and respect in our family or do we relate to each with indifference?
- Is our relationship with God as his children reflected in our relationship with our own children?

c. Act (choose one action individually or as a group and make sure to accomplish it) *

- Celebrate a special meal with the whole family and engage in happy conversation.
- Have a dialog with each of your children at least once a week.
- Visit and help a neighbor family who may have problems with their children.
- Choose your own action.

*You will share what action you chose at the beginning of the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a short, encouraging talk from a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)
6. NEXT MEETING (assigning a couple or an individual to conduct the next meeting, scheduling time and place)
7. CLOSING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)

MEETING 9 THE HUMAN FAMILY

Meeting Goals:

- **Appreciate the Old Testament teaching which regards the family as a blessing from God to his faithful people.**
- **Understand the concept of family roles and relationships as exemplified by the Holy Family of Nazareth.**
- **As members of society, reflect on our social and environmental responsibility as part of the human family.**

1. OPENING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)
2. REPORTS OF ACTION Were you able to do your chosen action last week?
 - __ Celebrate a special meal with the whole family and engage in happy conversation.
 - __ Have a dialog with each of your children at least once a week.
 - __ Visit and help a neighbor family who may have problems with their children.
 - __ Your chosen action.
3. BIBLE STUDY (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

Psalm 128

¹*Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him.*

²*You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.*

³*Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.*

⁴*Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the Lord.*

Luke 2:48-51

⁴⁸*His parents were astonished when they saw him, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you."*

⁴⁹*He answered them, "Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?"* ⁵⁰*But they did not understand his answer.* ⁵¹*So Jesus went back with them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them.*

1 Peter 4:8-10

⁸*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.* ⁹*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.* ¹⁰*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*

Bible Sharing:

- How do we know from the Old Testament that the family is highly valued?
- In what way is the Holy Family of Nazareth just like a normal family?
- What are our duties towards each other and our responsibilities towards the earth that God has given for our use?

4. SOCIAL ACTION (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

Since the Old Testament, the critical importance of marriage and the family in the plan of God has been evident.

The family of Nazareth is a model of the family in the New Testament. Jesus was "obedient to Joseph and Mary" and grew "in age, wisdom and grace before God and men." Jesus' being lost and found in the Temple shows how the young Jesus is starting to test his freedom, like a child his age. During his public life, Jesus proclaims the Kingdom and declares that those who accept it are his new family. The Church is the family of faith.

People need rewarding social relationships to fulfill their lives. The individual, the family and society influence and determine each other. Better people make better families, just as better families make better people. Better families make a better society and vice-versa.

Unfortunately, social reality is complicated and there are serious human problems such as the following:

- *Destruction of nature. God gives us the earth to care for and to share with all humanity.*
- *Poverty and inequality. Nobody has right to excess while others do not have enough.*
- *Corruption. A good society results from a good government.*

a. Observe (from your experience)

- Are families in your country basically stable and the roles of parents and children respected?
- Is there a sense of community, helpfulness and sharing in your neighborhood?
- Do most people help "save the earth" by using water and electricity wisely and recycling plastics and paper?

b. Judge (as a Christian)

- What is the reason why love and respect are lacking in some families?
- In your community, is there a social commitment to serve the poor and the needy and do families help each other?
- What are the ecological or environmental problems in your area and what can be done to solve them?

c. Act (choose one action individually or as a group and make sure to accomplish it) *

- As a parent or other family member, work towards improving your relationship with another family member.
- Set an example of social commitment and visit the poor or give money to charity.
- Do your share in "saving the earth" by turning off lights, saving water and keeping your surroundings clean.
- Choose your own action.

*You will share what action you chose at the beginning of the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a short, encouraging talk from a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)
6. NEXT MEETING (assigning a couple or an individual to conduct the next meeting, scheduling time and place)
7. CLOSING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)

MEETING 10 FORMING PEOPLE

Meeting Goals:

- **Acknowledge love, first learned in the family, as the principal force that makes people grow and develop.**
- **Appreciate marital harmony as the core of family happiness and stability, making the home a secure place for all family members.**
- **Reflect on the qualities that make the family an institution in which all members grow in harmony.**

1. OPENING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)
2. REPORTS OF ACTION Were you able to do your chosen action last week?
 - As a parent or other family member, work towards improving your relationship with another family member.
 - Set an example of social commitment and visit the poor or give money to charity.
 - Do your share in "saving the earth" by turning off lights, saving water and keeping your surroundings clean.
 - Your chosen action.
3. BIBLE STUDY (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

Proverbs 3:11-12

¹¹ My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke,
¹² because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

Matthew 12:33

³³ "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit."

Ephesians 6:4

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Bible Sharing:

- Why does the Lord discipline those he loves or why does disciplining involve love?
- How does the message in Matthew 12:33 relate to family life and relationships?
- Considering Ephesians 6:4, share some successful ways you have used to teach your children about God.

4. SOCIAL ACTION (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

The first mission of the Christian family is the harmonious development of parents and children. For the couple, marriage is a permanent bond of love, based on an attraction and a common goal to grow together as persons, without one "sacrificing oneself" for the other. Marriage must be founded on a full commitment to each other, requiring constant effort. Love and fidelity between spouses is the best gift they can give their children.

In the family, children must be esteemed and treated with dignity and respect. All children need to know love, which is first experienced in the family.

Elderly family members, such as grandparents, must be valued and integrated into the family life. The family bond should also extend to relatives who are another link

to human relationships. A range of social relationships help people grow and develop in many ways, opening them to more experiences and providing occasions to practice tolerance and forgiveness. Giving and receiving, sharing and discussing are daily experiences in which different generations come together and mutually help each other achieve greater wisdom and become better people.

a. Observe (from your experience)

- In general, is the home a place where love and communication are evident between spouses and between parents and children?
- In your country today, are most families nuclear or extended?
- Is there much that young and old family members can learn from each other?

b. Judge (as a Christian)

- Do most parents work at balancing their attention towards their own relationship as a couple and towards the upbringing of their children?
- Do both parents take an active role in the children's development or is it considered the responsibility of just one parent?
- Do relatives meet often and celebrate special occasions together, thus providing opportunities for different generations to come together and relate to each other?

c. Act (choose one action individually or as a group and make sure to accomplish it) *

- Go on a lunch or dinner date with your spouse to strengthen your relationship and to grow together as spouses and parents.
- Visit an elderly family member and spend some time in conversation together.
- Help a needy relative with a gift of food or cash or other thing useful.
- Choose your own action.

*You will share what action you chose at the beginning of the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a short, encouraging talk from a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)
6. NEXT MEETING (assigning a couple or an individual to conduct the next meeting, scheduling time and place)
7. CLOSING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)

MEETING 11 SERVING LIFE

Meeting Goals:

- *Reflect on the importance of life and thank God for giving parents the gift of transmitting life as co-creators with him.*
- *Recognize some personal and social values which must be taught to children.*
- *Resolve to work towards promoting a "culture of life" in our society.*

1. OPENING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)
2. REPORTS OF ACTION Were you able to do your chosen action last week?
 - Go on a lunch or dinner date with your spouse to strengthen your relationship and to grow together as spouses and parents.
 - Visit an elderly family member and spend some time in conversation together.
 - Help a needy relative with a gift of food or cash or other useful thing.
 - Your chosen action.
3. BIBLE STUDY (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

Genesis 1:28

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."

John 1:2-4

² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Revelation 11:18

"The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

Bible Sharing:

- Share any reaction you have regarding the passage from *Genesis*.
- In John's Gospel above, "He" refers to Jesus. What meanings can you attach to this passage?
- Those who destroy the earth will be destroyed. In what way are you guilty and what can you do to amend your specific situation?

4. SOCIAL ACTION (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

It is the responsibility of the family to serve life because life is transmitted through the family. God makes all parents co-creators with him—to have children and to educate them. Moreover, we are called to serve and defend all life on earth.

In the past big families were the norm, but the increase in world population forces parents to think about responsible family planning. However, no life that is generated should be destroyed, and abortion is wrong.

The privilege of bringing children into the world includes the obligation to educate them. Parents are the first educators of their children. Children must be taught self-esteem and discipline, given freedom to make choices and receive a good

education. They also need sex education through gradual teaching on the meaning of sexuality. Socially, children must learn to respect others, to give and receive love and appreciation, to speak and to listen, to be understanding, tolerant, reasonable and forgiving.

Because the world's limited natural resources must be spread among more people, modern life has increasingly become competitive. These problems have given rise to a selfish, consumerist mentality that sees children as an obstacle to personal happiness and sick people as a burden. However, all human life is created by God and must be valued.

*Modern technology generates progress but also gives rise to ecological problems. Saving the earth is essential to promote the family as a living space for the development of people. (based on **Familiaris Consortio**)*

a. Observe (from your experience)

- Is human life, born and unborn, highly valued in your society?
- Are your friends who are parents teach values to their children or do they leave the teaching to others?
- Do you and your neighbors “reduce, reuse and recycle” to save the earth?

b. Judge (as a Christian)

- Has there been a change in attitude towards having children among married couples today?
- Does education in your country train children sufficiently in the personal and social values mentioned above?
- Are people aware of the relation between protecting the environment and preserving human life?

c. Act (choose one action individually or as a group and make sure to accomplish it) *

- Pray together as a family to thank God for the gift of life and for having each other.
- Visit or call a neighbor or friend who is sick or lonely.
- Take a reusable bag with you when you go shopping and remember to “reduce, reuse and recycle” with the whole family.
- Choose your own action.

*You will share what action you chose at the beginning of the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a short, encouraging talk from a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)
6. NEXT MEETING (assigning a couple or an individual to conduct the next meeting, scheduling time and place)
7. CLOSING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)

MEETING 12 CELL OF SOCIETY AND DOMESTIC CHURCH

Meeting Goals:

- *Reflect on the necessity of mutual support between the family and society in promoting the well-being of its members.*
- *Recognize that faith education and family prayer make the family a domestic church.*
- *Appreciate the family's potential to evangelize and to help others, especially the poor and the needy.*

1. OPENING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)
2. REPORTS OF ACTION Were you able to do your chosen action last week?
 - Pray together as a family to thank God for the gift of life and for having each other.
 - Visit or call a neighbor or friend who is sick or lonely.
 - Take a reusable bag with you when you go shopping and remember to “reduce, reuse and recycle” with the whole family.
 - Your chosen action.
3. BIBLE STUDY (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

Deuteronomy 6:6-7, 9

⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. . . ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Luke 2:22-24

²² When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

Romans 13:1, 2, 4

¹ Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. . . ² Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. . . ⁴ For the one in authority is God's servant for your good.

Bible Sharing:

- What does the passage from *Deuteronomy* say about function of the home?
- How is the Holy Family a good example of being a domestic church?
- Why should people obey the laws of the State?

4. SOCIAL ACTION (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

The experience of love and sharing in the home is the first contribution of the family to society. Because the family is the basic unit of society, or more specifically the State, must recognize the family as an institution with basic rights, to be respected and supported.

Both the State and the Church have the obligation to help families fulfill their functions. Parents have the right to choose their children's schools and must help their children to be critical and selective in using mass media and social media. In support,

the State should regulate the media programs. The family and the State should support each other in their functions as both seek the common good.

The Christian family must open itself to serve society and to help the poor and the disadvantaged. As home is the first school of social values, children need to learn the dignity of work, justice, compassion, cooperation and social service.

The Christian family lives its role as domestic church by obeying the word of God. Faith must be established through family catechism, with parents as the first catechists. The Christian family must educate its children on the religious values of love of God and of all people, sons and daughters of the same Father. They should also be taught to love and serve the poor and the needy and to protect nature,

Family prayer contributes to the character of the home as a domestic church and transforms minds and hearts to be more like God.

The future of humanity is in the family! All people of good will should endeavor to save and promote the values and needs of the family.

*We believe in the family! Let us live our family dynamics with joy and let it be the Good News! (based on **Familiaris Consortio**)*

a. Observe (from your experience)

- When and how are children in your country taught social values and social responsibility?
- Do most parents take an active part in educating their children in religious values?
- Do most families pray together and do charity work together?

b. Judge (as a Christian)

- Do you live with a commitment to service in society and set a good example for others?
- Are lawmakers of your country seriously concerned about promoting the well-being of the family and protecting its rights? Example?
- What is "Church" for you? Is your family a domestic church?

c. Act (choose one action individually or as a group and make sure to accomplish it) *

- Spend time to review some catechism lessons with your children.
- Read a Bible passage everyday and meditate on its meaning.
- Go through your clothes cabinet and donate clothes to a charity.
- Choose your own action.

*You will share what action you chose at the beginning of the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a short, encouraging talk from a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)
6. NEXT MEETING (assigning a couple or an individual to conduct the next meeting, scheduling time and place)
7. CLOSING PRAYER (suitable prayer/song)

COME, HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, we need you;
Come, Holy Spirit, we pray;
Come with your strength and your power;
Come in your own special way.

Come like a spring in the desert;
Come to the weary of soul;
Lord, let your sweet healing power,
Touch us and make us whole.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Spirit of God, come to us, come to us;
Alleluia, Alleluia, Spirit of God, dwell in us.

I LOVE YOU, LORD

I love you, Lord,
And I lift my voice
To worship you,
Oh, my soul, rejoice!

Take joy, my King,
In what you hear.
Let it be a sweet, sweet sound
In your ear.

LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH

Let there be peace on earth,
And let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth,
The peace that was meant to be.
With God as our father,
Brothers all are we.
Let me walk with my brother
In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me;
Let this be the moment now.
With every step I take.
Let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment
And live each moment
In peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin
With me

PASS IT ON

It only takes a spark
To get a fire going;
And soon all those around
Can warm up in its glowing.
That's how it is with God's love;
Once you've experienced it,
You spread His love to everyone;
You want to pass it on.

What a wondrous time is spring,
When all the trees are budding.
The birds begin to sing,
The flowers start their blooming.
That's how it is with God's love;
Once you've experienced it,
You want to sing, it's fresh like spring,
You want to pass it on.

I wish for you my friend
This happiness that I've found.
You can depend on him,
It matters not where you're bound.
I'll shout it from the mountain top;
I want my world to know
The Lord of love has come to me;
I want to pass it on.

ALLELUIA HE'S AN ANSWERING GOD

Alleluia, He's an answering God
Alleluia, He's an answering God
I prayed in Jesus' name,
And then the answers came,
Alleluia, He's an answering God

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

MEETING NUMBER	DATE	LEADER/LEADERS	PLACE
1			
2			
3			
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12			

POSTER ANNOUNCEMENT

INVITATION TO GROWING IN THE FAITH THROUGH THE CFM

The Christian Family Movement is forming small groups of couples, single parents and all interested individuals, to meet once a month for prayer, discussion and social action. These meetings, attended by a chaplain, help us grow in the faith, provide a network of friends to create a family support system, and make us aware of social problems so we can take positive action.

Please invite your friends and come at Time on Day, Date to Place and find out if this shared journey towards spiritual enrichment is for you!